

DEFANGED AND DESIRABLE: AN EXAMINATION OF VIOLENCE AND THE LESBIAN  
VAMPIRE NARRATIVE

Chelsea Graham

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green  
State University in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2016

Committee:

Piya Pal-Lapinski, Advisor

Stephannie Gearhart

© 2016

Chelsea Graham

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

Piya Pal-Lapinski, Advisor

The vampire, like any sort of Gothic monster, operates as a conduit for various societal pressures. However, the vampire is seen as particularly adaptable in how it restructures itself as a figure of fear in multiple time periods. This work examines the various forms and fears the lesbian vampire embodies and why society is continually fascinated with such a figure. One of the key texts in my project is Sheridan LeFanu's novella, *Carmilla*, published in 1872. LeFanu's story predates Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and is one of the first major explorations of the lesbian vampire trope including victimology, seduction tactics, and even popular adversaries. Although there are many adaptations which feature a lesbian vampire, my project will be limited to Scott's film *The Hunger*, produced in 1983, and season one of the recent Youtube series, *Carmilla*, produced in 2014. In these various adaptations, I have noted a cycle of violence surrounding the vampire, her adversaries, and victims. What is interesting is how this cycle seems to change with each adaptation of the lesbian vampire's story depending on the time the story is set in. What is interesting about this trend of shifting cycles and loci of violence is what happens to them when society begins to accept the lesbian vampire and no longer fears her.

I dedicate this project to all the people who always found the monsters the most interesting part  
of the story.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family and friends for their continuous praise and support throughout this project. Without their unconditional love and motivation there is a chance this work would have never been completed. First off, I would like to thank my fiancé, Alicia, for patiently listening to every concern and fear I had during all stages of the writing process and never losing faith that I would eventually succeed, even when I didn't believe it myself. I love you and could not ask for a more supportive partner. I also have to thank my friend and roommate, Erin, for talking me down from many a thesis-inspired ledge and for being there for me to bounce ideas off. I would also like to thank my Mom, who listened to my views, themes, and schemes for each chapter and for reassuring me that breaks and fun are necessary things. I would also like to thank my Dad for not letting me give up, even when I certainly wanted to.

I also am indebted to my fellow cohort members, Dani, Michael, Hillary, Tanja, Shane and Ross. The thesis meetings at Flatlands and Grounds allowed me to work on my thesis and still get some socializing done at the same time. You guys are the best and made two academically intense years fly by with your continuous support and humor. Thanks for urging me to come out and socialize, even when I felt I had no time, you guys always seemed to know when I just needed some time with friends. All of our bizarre antics and inside jokes/wars kept me sane and happy!

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the guidance and continual support from my advisor, Dr. Piya Pal-Lapinski. Her enthusiasm for my project and love of vampire literature opened up all sort of possible avenues for me, and I am so pleased to say that she has inspired me to continue working on this project. I also have to thank my second reader, Dr. Stephannie Gearhart, for introducing me to adaptation theory and encouraging me to gain some confidence in my work. You are both brilliant and I know I could not have done it with you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| INTRODUCTION .....  | 1    |
| Erzsebet Bathory, Blood Countess and Inspiration for Queer Vampires .....   | 4    |
| Daughters of the Blood Countess .....   | 8    |
| Defining Adaptation .....   | 9    |
| CHAPTER I. VIOLENT SEDUCTION IN LEFANU’S <i>CARMILLA</i> .....  | 15   |
| Female Friendships and Feminine Knowledge.....  | 18   |
| Dangerous Education and the Threat to Patriarchal Society .....   | 22   |
| Sexuality as Contagion .....  | 25   |
| Loci of Violence in Sheridan Le Fanu’s <i>Carmilla</i> .....  | 28   |
| Linking Sexuality and Violence.....   | 34   |
| The End of <i>Carmilla</i> or the Beginning? .....  | 39   |
| CHAPTER II. “YOU BELONG TO ME” THE LOCUS OF VIOLENCE IN SCOTT’S <i>THE HUNGER</i> .....                                 | 42   |
| Transformative Erotic Violence in <i>The Hunger</i> .....   | 45   |
| The Locus of Violence in <i>The Hunger</i> .....  | 49   |
| Sexuality as Contagion in the form of AIDS .....  | 54   |
| The Fear of Aging and Commodification of Youth in <i>The Hunger</i> .....   | 59   |
| Summary of the Violence Cycle and its Continuation in <i>The Hunger</i> .....   | 61   |
| CHAPTER III. “Y’KNOW I AM REALLY STARTING TO HATE THIS HEROIC VAMPIRE CRAP”: LESBIANISM AND DOMESTICATED VAMPIRES ..... | 62   |
| An End to Speciesism: Acceptance of Lesbian Vampire .....   | 66   |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Queer Representation beyond a “Coming Out” Narrative.....                                     | 71 |
| Shifting Locus and Types of Violence.....   | 74 |
| “So you’re a giant black cat huh?” A Happy Ending for the Lesbian Vampire .....               | 81 |
| CONCLUSION. PRETTY GIRL WITH A SLIGHT BITE: CAN THE LESBIAN VAMPIRE<br>EVER BE STAKED?_ ..... | 86 |
| WORKS CITED.....  | 92 |

## INTRODUCTION

There is something alluring and dangerous about a girl with a nice set of fangs. Vampires have always been a creature of fascination for me. I was never fond of princesses or the damsels in distress, but the female monsters that tormented these women were figures I felt oddly validated by. Female vampires, in particular, were a focal point, not only for me, but also for many others who admired the vamp's ability to balance beauty and violence. Monsters have always provided a body onto which cultures can personify their fears and concerns and the vampire is certainly no exception to this theme. However, the female vampire represents a rare instance of this embodiment of fears because she is not only a monster but also a woman. In a sense, the female vampire's sex alone is a reason for her portrayal as monstrous "other" since society has been/is fearful of femininity. Bernadette Calafell states in her book, *Monstrosity, Performance, and Race in Contemporary Culture* that monsters are made, not born (Calafell 5). I agree with Calafell that monsters do not emerge in a cultural vacuum, and the female vampire is certainly no exception to this rule; what is villainous about the female vampire directly corresponds to society's feeling about women.

Femininity has historically fascinated and repulsed cultures, and due to this fear, the female vampire emerges as a figure who is already frightening due to her sex. However, the second layer of monstrosity that the female vampire embodies is her sexuality and the queerness of this sexuality. In general, part of a vampire's allure is their ability to function as monsters who exemplify taboo or deviant sexualities and lend themselves to queer readings. The vampire has served as a vessel for social concerns surrounding two taboo subjects; sexuality and homosexuality for quite some time. Richard Primuth's article "Vampires Are Us" discusses the vampire's legacy as a motif for fears surrounding sexuality saying, "Sexuality and



homosexuality have been a part of vampire stories in popular culture, mostly as a subtle undercurrent, since at least the 19th century. In the Romantic and Victorian Eras, vampires often served as sexual metaphors” (Primuth 17). The figure of the vampire as queer, and in particular, as a lesbian woman is a reading that has drawn my attention to this particular monster. The lesbian vampire is certainly a problematic figure to follow, but I believe tracking the lesbian vampire narrative reveals important shifting societal feelings towards lesbianism.

In particular, my research reveals that, depending on the specific social moment from which the lesbian vampire narrative emerges, the amount and locus of the violence in the story shifts. This presence of violence also represents an additional problem in the lesbian vampire, namely, the lesbian vampire is also “othered” by the violence presented in her vampire nature. The vampire may be sexy and seductive monster, but she is also a dangerous figure that both brings violence and has violence inflicted upon her. The vampire’s violent nature is generally part of the allure of the monster. For example, this violence is attractive in blood drinking scenes that eroticize death and blur the lines between pleasure and pain for the victims. While this linking of vampire, homosexuality and eroticized violence may have functioned as a warning against the “dangers” of homosexuality in earlier texts, how does this violence work when culture has come to accept the lesbian vampire? This question of how to separate the violent sexuality of the vampire from homosexuality, and still have an alluring yet frightening queer monster is one which contemporary narratives struggle with. This question of how the contemporary lesbian vampire maintains the balance between abjection and acceptance of her sexuality is explored by Ellis Hanson in his essay, “Lesbians Who Bite: Abjection as Masquerade”. Hanson states that lesbianism has traditionally functioned as one of the fears society projects onto the lesbian vampire, he also accuses many films that feature a lesbian

vampire as being pornographic; a monster designed for a male viewer to both desire and fear.

While I can agree with some of Hanson's claims about intended viewership and the use of lesbianism as a cause of fear/attraction, I do question his claim that the lesbian vampire is a figure who seems to acknowledge and reclaim her own abjection. Hanson states that more contemporary lesbian vampires are aware of the taboo nature of their sexuality and actually use this deviance to attract and ensnare victims (192-193). For this reason, Hanson critiques the recent social trend of taming the vampire as it negates her reclamation of abjection:

“Nevertheless, the conception of desire is so anodyne that it cannot grapple with any of the more difficult questions about sexuality that have made the vampire a stock figure in popular fantasy. Her vampires have no teeth. They are not dangerous, just misunderstood” (188). Hanson brings up a very valid concern about what happens when violence is negated from the lesbian vampire's narrative, and according to his essay, many of the readers of such “tame vampire” narratives were bored by the lesbian vampire's domestication. Hanson's concerns about the domesticated vampire are also echoed in Brode and Deynaka's *Dracula's Daughters*, which warns that the acceptance of lesbianism is a threat to the legacy of the lesbian vampire: “Lesbian images have become so ordinary that we barely register them anymore; the cultural climate of ‘tolerance’ has led to the lesbian vampire's near extinction” (22). Indeed, greater social acceptance of lesbianism has contributed to a shift in the lesbian vampire narrative, but I am not sure if this claim of extinction is the ultimate fate of the queer female vampire. The vampire has always presented itself as a remarkably adaptable monster that has managed to remain relevant by changing with society rather than becoming stagnant and stale. According to Primuth, the vampire is made to adapt and embody a vast array of social concerns and fears and it is this adaptability that continues to keep the lesbian vampire as a popular and frightening figure well into a

contemporary time of acceptance and tolerance for the LGBT community (21). The lesbian vampire has, in fact already secured her status as an adaptable and enduring figure in horror.<sup>1</sup>

### Erzsebet Bathory, Blood Countess and Inspiration for Queer Vampires

In a sense, many of the texts I examine in this thesis can be read as adaptations of the life/legend of Hungarian Countess Báthory, more commonly known as Elizabeth Bathory. The Countess's alleged cruelty and perversity have often served as inspiration to authors of vampire fiction. However, it should be noted that factors such as the time and setting in which Countess Bathory lived make it extremely difficult to separate the life of the infamous lady from the legend which has risen around her. Overall, the only accounts we have of Countess Elizabeth Bathory's life consist of a record of a sensationalized arrest and trial featuring testimonies extracted from her accomplices/servants through torture. Even though scholars have written extensively on the life of the Countess, the story of what really happened remains sparse and unclear<sup>2</sup>. The Countess's letters translated by Kimberly Craft present an educated noblewoman addressing the routine needs of her staff and household and give no indication of a sadist who tortured murdered anywhere between 50-650 young woman in her various castles and holdings. In reality, the only things historians know about the Countess are as follows:

- Elizabeth Bathory was born in Nyírbátor, Hungary, in 1560 or 1561 to Anna and Stephan Bathory (both members of the Bathory family, though on different sides)
- She was extremely smart, and well educated for the time she lived in. Elizabeth was said to be able to speak and write in multiple languages, a claim that was unusual even for noble men.

- She is said to have suffered from a form of what was then considered epilepsy, which caused her to have horrible headaches and random bouts of extreme rage.
- She was promised to Ferenc Nádasdy at age 11 in what was most likely a political marriage (McNally 17-33)
- It has been confirmed that she had three children who lived to adulthood, Anna, Orsolya (Orsika), Pal (Paul), and one son, Andras, who died while still a child. Some researchers name additional children including one child born out of wedlock but this cannot be confirmed according to records and the Countess's will.
- She was widowed in 1604 and still retained control over her husband's lands and wealth.
- She was Protestant despite royalty's pressure for Catholicism
- She was captured by György Thurzó, the Palatine of Hungary on Dec .30, 1610 and never appeared in court. She was sentenced to life imprisonment for her crimes of cruelty and murder in Čachtice Castle until her death on August 21, 1614. (Craft)
- Her accomplices Fitzko, Ilona Jó Nagy, Dorottya Szentes and Katalin Beneczky were placed on trial and alleged that they had aided in the murder and torture of 50-53 servant girls alongside the Countess and were sentenced to death for their part in the murders.
- A majority of the Countess's victims were peasant girls, but a few towards the end of her reign were from lower ranks of nobility.
- The Countess's accomplices accused her partaking in numerous torture methods including:
  - Tossing girls naked out into the snow and dousing them in cold water until they froze to death.

- Pressing needles under servants' fingernails and beating them when they removed them.
- Placing girls in cages lined with spikes and suspending them from the ceilings.
- Various forms of whipping and beating with a cudgel.
- Biting off chunks of girls' flesh (Craft).

These are really the only facts that can be gleaned about the Countess and her life. However, the fiction that abounds from these alleged facts takes on a life of its own, especially those centered on Elizabeth's various torture methods. Although fact and legend are impossible to untangle when it comes to the life of the Countess, I feel that since the very legend of the woman has inspired many vampire tales, both fact and fiction surrounding the Countess needs to be explored. The earliest account of the Countess's bloodthirsty nature is addressed by the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould's, *The Book of Werewolves* (1865), which addresses multiple accounts of lycanthropy and other gruesome crimes. Within this text, Baring-Gould references a story relayed to him by folklorist Michael Wagner about a Countess who murdered and tortured numerous girls and most importantly, bathed in their blood.

Baring-Gould's account redacts the Countess's name, due to the claims that the family was still part of prominent nobility in the land, and refers to her only as Countess Elizabeth. *The Book of Werewolves* is the only account that brings up the accusation of blood bathing, something that was not even raised at the Countess's trial. However, Baring-Gould's description of the Countess's beauty regiment has become one of the most prominent features of the Blood Countess's legend, and epitomizes her cruelty:

Elizabeth formed the resolution to bathe her face and her whole body in human blood so as to enhance her beauty. Two old women and a certain Fitzko assisted her in her undertaking. This monster used to kill the luckless victim, and the old women caught the blood, in which Elizabeth was wont to bathe at the hour of four in the morning. After the bath she appeared more beautiful than before (Baring-Gould, 118)

This infamous blood bathing scene appears to have sealed the Countess's fate as a vampire, even though no reports of her bathing in or drinking blood were brought up at her trial. According to Janet Robinson's article, "Your Tale Merely Confirms that Women are Mad and Vain": The Uncanny Rendering of Countess Elizabeth Bathory's Life as a Vampire Legend": "This slight shift in mythological identity sealed her fate forever, inexorably tying her to the enduring popularity of vampire lore" (140 *Dracula's Daughters*). Clearly, the facts and fictions of the Countess's life have given rise, not only to vampire legends, but also to a surprising number of people who have sought to redeem the Countess. Many scholars have tried to claim the Countess's vilification resulted from Hungarian society's fear of a powerful, educated and wealthy woman, a truly unheard of thing during the Countess's lifetime. <sup>3</sup>Another popular redemptive portrayal claims the Countess was a victim of a political conspiracy placed in motion by her own family and the Palatine who arrested her. While the facts of Elizabeth's life may be unclear, the Blood Countess's legend describes a monstrous woman who killed 650 girls, bathed in blood to preserve her beauty, delighted in sexual perversion and torture, and went unpunished for her crimes for a long time due to her aristocratic status and this the narrative that has appealed to many artists over the centuries.

## Daughters of the Blood Countess

I have detailed the legend of the Blood Countess, not to further contribute to the sensational rendering of her life and possible crimes but more so to show how features of the legend including bloodlust, taboo sexuality and homosexual urges have carried through to modern adaptations often featuring a dominant queer female vampire protagonist/antagonist. The texts that I am examining here include Sheridan LeFanu's 1871 novella, *Carmilla*, Tony Scott's 1983 film, *The Hunger* and the recent *Carmilla* web series written by Jordan Hall and released in August 2014. LeFanu's *Carmilla* and *The Hunger* can most readily be seen as adaptive of the legend of the Blood Countess because of their use of a dominant aristocratic antagonist who preys on young lower class women and a running theme of eroticized violence. The web series version of *Carmilla* also keeps this theme of eroticized violence, albeit in a much milder form than the previous texts. Nonetheless, a common thread that runs through each of these narratives is the cycle of violence. I am interested in how the vampire interacts with or contributes to this cycle of violence and what social trends may have influenced this interaction. Depending on the specific social moment the text emerges from, the violence towards the vampire and her homosexual relationship with her victim seems to have lessened in degree, with the biggest shift occurring in the web series. As society becomes more accepting of lesbian and bisexual women, the violence in more contemporary lesbian vampire narratives lessens but is unable to be completely removed from the narrative. If part of the allure of the vampire is her inherent violence, a "tame" vampire misses some of the taboo danger that enthralls victims and readers/viewers. However, if the vampire's sexuality is no longer the driving force behind her deviant attractiveness, where is the violence of the narrative placed? My work not only follows the placement of violence within the vampire narrative through adaptations of the life of the

Blood Countess, but also questions what happens when the vampire, while still displaying a degree of violence, no longer acts as the main threat to her victim.

### Defining Adaptation

Given my claim that LeFanu's *Carmilla*, *The Hunger* and the *Carmilla* web series are adaptations of the Bathory legend, I believe it is worth defining my definition of adaptation and how adaptation theory plays a part in this definition. What constitutes a text's label as adaptation varies in degree depending on which adaptation theorist is consulted. Most of my definition of what constitutes a label of adaptation is in agreement with theorist Linda Hutcheon, who makes a very valid case in *A Theory of Adaptation* for adaptations being regarded as works worth studying in their own right. She argues that an adaptation's amount of fidelity to the source text they are adapted from should not be the sole or even defining feature in appraising the quality of the adaptation (Hutcheon 6). She sums up her definition of what factors designate a text as adaptation are as follows:

In short, adaptation can be described as the following:

- An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works
- A creative and an interpretative act of appropriation/salvaging
- An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work (8)

According to Hutcheon's definition of what makes an adaptation, fidelity to the original text does not even make the list of qualifiers and in this respect, I am in agreement with her. I would also add, however, that a similar theme presented in the source text and the adaptation also warrants the label of adaptation. For example, even though *The Hunger* does not feature the same characters or setting of either LeFanu's *Carmilla* or the Bathory legend, it is still an



adaptation of both works in terms of the common themes shared including: fear of the corrupt aristocracy, viewing same sex desire and sexuality as dangerous and deadly, the “othering” of the European monster, and a fear of aging and mortality. Most importantly, the use of violence presented not only in *The Hunger* but also in also the other texts I am examining is another theme that ties these works together as related to one another.

One of Hutcheon’s first characteristics for a text to be considered an adaptation includes, “An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works” (8). This kind of transposition is present in LeFanu’s *Carmilla* and the 2014 web series version of the storyline. These two texts share the same characters and a similar plot, but rather than have the events of the novella occur in a 19<sup>th</sup> century castle in Stryia, the 2014 version places the characters within the 21<sup>st</sup> century setting of Silas University. A similar act of transposition can also be seen, albeit more loosely, in *The Hunger* with Miriam’s constant need for a new companion being reminiscent of the lengths the Countess went to in order to acquire more victims/serving girls. In terms of Hutcheon’s first point, then all of the texts I am examining can be viewed as transposing elements from either LeFanu’s novella or the Countess’s life itself.

The second point listed by Hutcheon is “A creative or interpolative act of appropriation/salvaging” (8), which I believe is best emphasized in the web series version of *Carmilla*. The original novella is written in an epistolary form where the reader learns of the events of Laura’s interactions with Carmilla through letters from Laura to the reader. The web series version manages to keep this format and its effects by telling the story through Laura’s video blog posts for a journalism project. By creatively keeping this feature as a part of the narrative, the web series is still able to maintain the character/reader relationship LeFanu’s novella did, but make it accessible to a more contemporary audience.

The final qualifying trait, i.e., “An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (8), is yet another feature which I would attribute as present in the web series version of *Carmilla*. There are various points throughout the first season that reference indirectly or directly LeFanu’s text which emphasizes how the contemporary narrative engages with and acknowledges the novella. One such moment of engagement with a source text occurs when Carmilla tells Laura about her tragic backstory through the use of sock puppets. The sock puppet theater version of Carmilla’s backstory essentially echoes the events of LeFanu’s novella in terms of Carmilla awakening as a vampire and being roped into her mother’s schemes to act as a lure for young noble victims. Although the web series does not directly state that is engaging with the novella, there appear to be elements (like the sock puppet theater) that acknowledges the intertextual nature of the web series.

It is also important to recognize that it is possible for the life of an individual to inspire adaptations. Multiple creative works can be cited as having been inspired by real life events or people. For example, Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* adapted the fate of the whale ship Essex, and the life of mathematician John Forbes Nash resulted in the 2001 film *A Beautiful Mind*. These texts demonstrate that a biography, such as the life/legend of Countess Elizabeth Bathory, could be read as the inspiration for adaptive works such as *Carmilla* and *The Hunger*. Hutcheon does not specifically address biography as a text that could be adapted, during her analysis of the Carmelite nuns and how their actions resulted in novellas and an opera she does seem to agree that historical narratives are texts that can be made into adaptations (95). At one point, when discussing how the nuns’ story inspired a novella, Hutcheon states that historical narratives are texts that can produce valuable adaptations: “This historical account became the frame for the Baroness’ story of a fictional character named Blanche de la Force, a pathologically fearful

young woman who joins the Carmelites order out of both a religious vocation and a generalized terror of both life and especially death” (97). Hutcheon claims that historical accounts can in fact result in adaptations, and I would argue that the life of the Countess functions in a similar manner in terms of vampire texts. Even though Hutcheon does not explicitly state that biographies can be adapted, she does state that adaptation cannot really occur without some reference to historical events: “By their very existence, adaptations remind us there is no such thing as an autonomous text or original genius that can transcend history, either public or private” (111). Given that adaptation does not occur in a vacuum, I would argue that Hutcheon’s statement about how historical narratives and events inspire various retellings are adaptations proves that a biography could function as a source text for an adaptation. I would also argue that stories which are inspired by historical events or biographies also fulfill Hutcheon’s three characteristics for adaptation including: 1) An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works 2) A creative and an interpretative act of appropriation/salvaging and 3) An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work (8). According to both Hutcheon’s analysis of the how the Carmelite nuns’ story inspired both a novella and an opera, and how works inspired by the life of the bloody Countess also accomplish these three goals, it becomes clear that Elizabeth Bathory’s life could easily function as a source text for Sheridan LeFanu’s *Carmilla*, Scott’s *The Hunger* and the web series version of *Carmilla*.

While I agree with much of Hutcheon’s definition of adaptation, there are some areas where I divert from her theory. For example, at one point during her work Hutcheon describes what sort of texts are not capable of being included in the category of adaption: “Plagiarisms are not acknowledged appropriations, and sequels and prequels are not really adaptations either, nor is fan fiction” (9). While I agree with most of this passage, Hutcheon’s assertion that fan fiction

cannot be an adaptation challenges my assertion that the *Carmilla* web series is an adaptation of LeFanu's novella. The main issue Hutcheon appears to take with fanfiction, sequels, and prequels is these works' goal of extending a storyline so it is seen as unending, an action that differs from adaptation, "There is a difference in never wanting a story to end—the reason behind sequels, prequels, according to Marjorie Garber—and wanting to retell the same story over and over in different ways" (9). I question Hutcheon's claims in regards to fan fiction because if what is important about the text is how it repeats or enhances similar themes and motifs of the source text, why would a fan fiction label disrupt any of these things? Many pieces of fan fiction, including the web series, demonstrates the three qualifiers that Hutcheon considers as features of adaptation. Fan fiction is especially useful for Hutcheon's second point of creative appropriation, since fan fiction often takes elements of the source text and places them within a fresh or innovative setting, plot or period. Additionally, I would argue that what essentially makes something an adaptation is a work's uses of similar motifs and themes as the source text and in this regards, fan fiction would not be exempt.

Ultimately, I would define an adaptation as any sort of text, be this literary, film or even fanfiction, that embodies similar (or updated) themes or motifs as the source text that it draws from. In this regard, I am particularly drawn to Hutcheon's assertion that adaptations can present a modernized or shifted focus from the source text, as adaptations are made to present the concerns of the times from which they emerge: "Stories do get retold in different ways in new material and cultural environments; like genes, they adapt to those new environments by virtue of mutation—in their 'offspring' or their adaptations. And the fittest do more than survive; they flourish" (32). This idea of adaptations "mutating" to become accessible and applicable to the current cultural concerns is one that I feel corresponds with my own readings of the waxing and

waning relationship between violence and homosexuality presented in each of the texts I examine. The infamous legacy of the Blood Countess legend lives on not only in stories which feature the Countess herself, but also in the stories of female vampires who face the obstacles of their own violent nature and a hostile society to get the girl. Contemporary culture and the enduring popularity of the vampire assures us that the vampire is not going away anytime soon. The question is, what form will the monster take when traditional markers of monstrosity are (thankfully) beginning to be seen as natural and possibly even human? Will readers and viewers still love and fear the lesbian vampire with a much softer bite?

## CHAPTER I. VIOLENT SEDUCTION IN LEFANU'S *CARMILLA*

Countess Bathory and her possible crimes may have served as an inspiration for perhaps the most important works featuring a lesbian vampire, Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla*. The novella created many of the tropes of the lesbian vampire narrative such as bloodlust, eroticized violence and sexual deviance, all themes which can be traced back to the Countess's legend. Which re-surface in many modern day incarnations of Sapphic vampires including Miriam, an aristocratic immortal who takes a new mate for each era she lives, from *The Hunger* (1980) Gilda, a former slave turned vampire who seeks companionship and family, from *The Gilda Stories* (1991) and many more. These now familiar vampire features were shaped by a specific time period and social atmosphere, but it is important to note how LeFanu's work laid the foundation for what are now recognized as common lesbian vampire tropes. The vampire is an adaptable figure whose popularity rests on its ability to embody specific social fears and concerns unique to the time from which it emerged. In the case of Sheridan LeFanu's novella, it is necessary to recognize the social fears present in the 19<sup>th</sup> century since the vampire serves as a conduit for these fears.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, social concerns surrounding the female sex and the presence of female sexuality abounded, and the female vampire proved an effective representation of these lingering fears. LeFanu's novella is often times interpreted using a psychoanalytic approach which highlights social concerns about sex and sexuality. One common interpretation of *Carmilla*'s vampirism as being a stand in for fear of the feminine can be witnessed in Laura Grenfell's article, "'Carmilla': The 'Red Flag' of Late Nineteenth Century Vampire Narratives?" Grenfell argues that *Carmilla* can be read as an examination of male fear and anxieties surrounding menstruation and the awakening of female sexuality that it signals. An additional

social concern, which Grenfell attributes to the novella, is the sexually charged female friendship Laura shares with Carmilla. Pairing up both the sexual awakening of Laura alongside the friendship she shares with the vampire, Grenfell states that the novella uses fiction to address social concerns surrounding the close female friendships that were common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This social uncertainty surrounding female sexuality and menstruation is expanded on in Tamar Heller's article, "The Vampire in the House: Hysteria, Female Sexuality, and Female Knowledge in Le Fanu's 'Carmilla'" where she discusses the male characters' desire to contain and restrict Laura's access to the corrupting feminine/sexual knowledge Carmilla possesses and attempts to pass on to Laura. Jean Copjec, likewise, examines the fear of the feminine in her article, "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety", which examines the role of the female vampire as a negative representation of maternity and how this sort of bad mother figure can contribute to social anxiety surrounding femininity and motherhood. While each of these interpretations are viable in their own right, the commonality between of them appears to be a lingering patriarchal fear of a dominant female figure whose mysterious all-consuming femininity presents as a threat.

While this femininity is considered threatening, and even monstrous, there is still an attraction to it this sort of dangerous yet alluring woman. Jean Copjec comments on this idea of the desire/fear dichotomy presented in the female vampire saying that the vampire presents as an attractive "Other" who is both irresistible but also frightening to her victims (33). Judith Halberstam, furthers this discussion of how the vampire acts as a conduit for social fears and concerns through her otherness and marginality in her chapter, "Technologies of Monstrosity" which discusses the use of the fear of the feminine in Stoker's *Dracula*. Halberstam comments on the vampire's use of sexuality and "otherness" saying: "Vampiric sexuality blends power and femininity within the same body and then marks that body as distinctly alien" (100). Since

femininity and female sexuality embody an area of the unknown, topics such as lesbianism, and female sexual desire were anxieties easily projected onto LeFanu's vampire. Halberstam goes on to explain that reading the vampire as homosexual, or some other taboo sexuality, is evidenced not so much by the vampire's presence, but rather by the sexual anxieties the monster evokes in their victims:

The vampire is not lesbian, homosexual or heterosexual; the vampire represents the productions of sexuality itself. The vampire after all, creates more vampires by engaging in a sexual relation with his victims and he produces vampires who share his specific sexual predilections. So the point really is not to figure out which so-called perverse sexuality Dracula or the vampire in general embodies, rather we should identify the mechanism by which the consuming monster who reproduces his own image comes to represent the construction of sexuality itself. ("Technologies of Monstrosity" 100)

Although Halberstam is referencing Stoker's *Dracula* in this passage, her assertion that vampires represent social fears surrounding various taboo sexualities pertains to LeFanu's vampire, Carmilla. Halberstam claims that vampires may not be exclusively identified as homosexual or heterosexual, but claims that their sexuality presents as a dangerous but alluring "other" which causes the victims and readers alike to question their own sexuality. Halbertsam's claim of sexuality functioning as a contagion in many vampire tales is also reflected within LeFanu's novella and in many popular social beliefs surrounding sexuality.



### Female Friendships and Feminine Knowledge

Whether this contagion is homosexuality or female sexuality in general, *Carmilla* is a female vampire whose influence is portrayed as detrimental, not only to her victims but also to the very fabric of 19<sup>th</sup> century society in the novella. If Halberstam's theory of the vampire embodying deviant sexuality is true, then *Carmilla*'s sexually charged gestures towards Laura, the narrator and victim of the story, represent various features of female sexuality which provoked anxiety in 19<sup>th</sup> century society. Halberstam certainly reads *Carmilla*'s character as an embodiment of the 19<sup>th</sup> century anxieties surrounding lesbianism and femininity saying: "‘*Carmilla*’ is also a written narration from Laura, presumably, however, contrary to *Dracula*, I would argue that *Carmilla* is not only given a voice but also is portrayed as possessing dangerous amounts of knowledge about sexuality" ("Technologies of Monstrosity" 91). In this example, Halberstam acknowledges that the gendered reading of *Carmilla* has yielded an overwhelming fear presented in the novel surrounding female sexuality and a woman's possession of sexual knowledge. These fears of female sexuality have all been embodied in the surprisingly formidable form of the young noble woman, *Carmilla*.

Of course, Halberstam is not the only one who uses a psychoanalytic reading of gender and sexuality to bring out the theme of the men fearing female sexuality in the gothic. Tamar Heller also analyzes *Carmilla* using a method of analysis which focus on how gender issues inspire anxiety to point out how female knowledge and the men's fear and lack of control over this knowledge is what leads to *Carmilla*'s questionable demise by the end of the novella. Heller states that the men eventually try to contain/protect Laura from the knowledge of female sexuality which *Carmilla*, as a female vampire, possesses, and when this fails they punish *Carmilla* for daring to impart such knowledge to Laura (87-89). Heller's analysis of the novella

not only interprets the vampire as an embodiment of feminine sexual knowledge, and the fear such knowledge represents, but also examines how this form of knowledge is policed in a patriarchal society.

Carmilla is a feminine force that needs to be contained because the knowledge she offers not only corrupts her victims, but also exists outside of patriarchal understanding and control. This lack of control over feminine sexuality was particularly prominent in terms of 19<sup>th</sup> century female friendships. Carmilla and Laura's relationship is at first socially endorsed and exemplifies the close female influence Laura is denied at the beginning of the novella, due to being motherless and without the friendship of other noble girls. Although it would have been viewed as socially appropriate for Laura to have a close feminine companion, there was still some concern surrounding how much the women in such friendships confided in and depended on one another. Due to this closeness between women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their friendships were regarded with a degree of suspicion because such interactions were considered part of the privatized female sphere and as a result, inaccessible to men. This suspicion of how close the women would become and a general lack of knowledge surrounding their interactions lead to an underlying social fear regarding the homoeroticism which could be present in female friendships. This fear of the sexually charged and corrupted female friendship is commented on in *Our Vampires Ourselves*, by Nina Auerbach. Auerbach states that, unlike the male vampires, a female vampire was able to embody a more erotic component in her interactions with her victim because of this normalization of the female friendship: "One might assume that her vampirism immunizes her from human erotic norms, but most members of her species were more squeamish: no male vampire of her century confronts the desire within his friendships" (41). Auerbach's argument demonstrates that while the male vampire's relationships contain elements

of the erotic, they are never acted upon or acknowledged, while the opposite is true of the female vampire and her victim.

The willingness/ability to act upon these homosexual desires through the female friendship is what makes Carmilla and Laura's relationship as predator and prey unique from other vampire/victim relationships. Carmilla's ability to initiate Laura into this knowledge of female desire is possible because of her ability to have a close friendship with her victims prior to their demise. Throughout the course of Carmilla and Laura's friendship with each other, Laura gains feminine knowledge of relationships which she would not typically been privy to if it had not been for Carmilla's friendship/influence. An example of this passing on of forbidden knowledge occurs when Laura attempts to learn more about her companion. Laura asks Carmilla if she had ever been in love and the vampire responds to this question rather romantically saying, "I have been in love with no one, and never shall," she whispered, 'Unless it should be with you' How beautiful she looked in the moonlight! Shy and strange was the look which she quickly hid her face in my neck and hair, with tumultuous sighs, that seemed almost to sob, and pressed in mine a hand that trembled" (LeFanu 34). Carmilla's passionate response to Laura's innocently phrased question can be interpreted as the vampire educating her victim in the idea of courtship and romantic relationships. Laura reacts to this episode with uncertainty and a bit of embarrassment, almost as though she recognizes that this knowledge should not be imparted to her from this source, but rather from a man. The text then further describes Laura's reaction to Carmilla's affections that evening and her feelings of uneasiness: "... and the remainder of that evening passed without any recurrence of what I called her infatuations. I mean her crazy talk and looks which embarrassed, and even frightened me" (LeFanu 35). Although Laura considers Carmilla's impassioned speeches to be "crazy talk", she is still made aware of the feelings that

are associated with courting and love, even though she feels it is strange experiencing such feelings for another woman. However, there is a danger to Laura being granted this knowledge since it comes from Carmilla, who is a socially unapproved educator in this regard. Socially, Laura should be educated in courting practices and knowledge of love from her father, governesses or other adults. However, Laura is given this knowledge from a source not approved of by the patriarchal society.

In a moment of frustration with Carmilla's often cryptic responses to Laura's questions, Carmilla does warn Laura that the things she will learn from her could be dangerous and she may not be able to impart all of such knowledge to her at once:

You were quite right to ask me that, or anything. You do not know how dear you are to me, or could not think any confidence too great to look for. But I am under vows, no nun half so awfully, and I dare not tell my story yet even to you. The time is very near when you shall know everything. You will think me cruel, very selfish, but love is always selfish; the more ardent the more selfish. How jealous I am you cannot know. You must come with me, loving me, to death; or else hate me and still come with me, and hating me through death and after. There is no such word as indifference in my apathetic nature (LeFanu 37).

Carmilla warns Laura, but in a sense, her warning is not meant to dissuade Laura's inquiries but to delay her questions until the right moment. Carmilla counts on Laura's curiosity to keep her interest and continues to pull the girl into a relationship with her. It is also interesting that Carmilla acknowledges the danger and perhaps taboo nature of the knowledge she possesses by warning Laura that she must either trust her completely or hate her: "You must come with me,

loving me, to death; or else hate me and still come with me, and hating me through death and after” (37). Carmilla here asks not only for Laura’s complete trust and loyalty, but also implies that the knowledge she imparts is something that will taint Laura regardless of her willingness to love or hate the vampire. In this sense, Carmilla’s use of female friendship is particularly dangerous because she uses it to impart forbidden sexual knowledge to Laura outside of the socially accepted confines of the patriarchy, and provides her with knowledge about romance that could be damning to the girl.

### Dangerous Education and the Threat to Patriarchal Society

Carmilla’s knowledge of sexuality places her as a threatening force to the social structure presented in novella. Part of the reason Carmilla is so frightening to the men in the narrative is because she possesses knowledge of female sexuality that they do not have control of or access to. What I believe also contributes to Carmilla’s perception as a threat to the men in the narrative is that she passes on her forbidden knowledge of sexuality to Laura. In her article, "Unnameable Desires in Le Fanu's Carmilla", Amy Leal discusses Laura’s education in not only feminine desire, but also in homosexuality, as a threat to a social structure which privileges heterosexual relationships: “Carmilla's passion for Laura not only threatens her life, but also the power structure of Victorian society” (38). Carmilla is perceived by the men, and perhaps the readers as well, as a threat not only because of her vampire nature, but also because of what this nature exemplifies in terms of homoeroticism. The fear of lesbianism is represented in the novel through the men’s violent reactions towards Carmilla when they discover her status as a vampire and her preference for female victims. If Carmilla is able to impart forbidden knowledge of courting, romance and homosexuality to Laura away from the confines of the patriarchal watch of the men, then the vampire could stand as a threat to the dominant male heterosexual social

structuring of society, particularly through relying on men for marriage and sexual pleasure through marriage.

One of the ways in which readers are made aware of the threat of homosexuality and uncontained female sexuality in the narrative is in Carmilla's interactions with Laura. Often, when Laura describes her various encounters with Carmilla, these moments mimic sexual responses. Before the women meet in person, Laura is plagued with dreams of a woman who enters her nursery and bites her on the breast (LeFanu 4). While this moment is described as a having fearful elements in it, Laura also describes being "soothed" and, in a sense, pleased from the initial contact with the vampire:

She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling, I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again. I was waked by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moments, and I cried loudly. The lady started back, with her eyes fixed on me, and then slipped down upon the floor, and, as I thought, hid herself under the bed (LeFanu 4)

Readers can glean, through various word choices, that this episode is a possible first introduction to some form of pleasure for Laura; Carmilla, doesn't simply touch Laura, she "caresses" her and the result is Laura feeling "delightfully soothed" (4). Through this act of aggression (the bite on the breast), Laura is given access to feelings of desire she is not yet supposed to possess.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that Laura's first sexual encounter occurs through an act of aggression and violence, and is not exactly a gentle introduction to such

knowledge but a more traumatic one. This linking of violence with sexuality and pleasure could be read as a warning of the dangerous repercussions of unfettered sexual knowledge. Oddly enough, this is first recognized as problematic not by the men in the novella, but by Laura. Laura often remarks on feeling uncomfortable with her friend's amorous advances towards her and ponders if Carmilla is actually a boy in disguise: "What if a boyish lover had found his way into the house, and sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade, with the assistance of a clever old adventuress" (LeFanu 23). The idea that Carmilla's feelings of romance and those feelings she arouses in Laura are not suitable in a female form is a thought that crosses Laura's mind. The sexual knowledge Carmilla passes on to Laura is also inappropriate because this sort of knowledge was only acceptable when explained by a mother figure. Since both Laura and Carmilla are motherless, Carmilla's possession of this knowledge is not only questionable, but her passing on of it to Laura violates certain social codes. This is commented on in "'Carmilla': The 'Red Flag' of Late Nineteenth Century Vampire Narratives?" by Laura Grenfell, who describes this breach of social conduct: "Being motherless, the girls have, however, been denied access to certain knowledge which, it seems, is taboo for Carmilla to relate. Laura says of Madame Perrodon's surrogate mothering that her 'care and good in part supplied to me the loss of my mother'" (163). Laura's lack of a maternal figure demonstrates not only Carmilla's role as a corrupted conveyer of sexual knowledge, but also may allude to the vampire's role as a destructive maternal force. If there is to be any knowledge of feminine desire or sexuality discussed it was restricted to only being issued from socially approved sources. In this sense, Carmilla is once again disrupting social orders and decorum which point her out as a social other who needs to be contained.

### Sexuality as Contagion

Readers are made aware of Carmilla's socially destructive capabilities through Laura's descriptions of her interactions with Carmilla. Laura's discomfort with the feelings Carmilla brings out in her are also evident in her descriptions of Carmilla's sudden displays of affection: "In these mysterious moods I did not like her. I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with vague sense of fear and disgust" (LeFanu 22). Laura's response of desire, fear and even disgust to Carmilla's act of taboo desire reflects society's complex reaction to feminine aggression and sexuality. While Laura may derive some pleasure from Carmilla's attentions, she is still put off by them, perhaps because these romantic moods represent a threat to the dominant discourse of heterosexual romance Laura has been taught to value. Carmilla's desire for Laura is something the other girl cannot process, due to homosexuality being outside of the discourse of desire and romance that are familiar to her. However, despite Carmilla's advances being somewhat unwanted by Laura, the other girl does not deny that she is "drawn to" the vampire, "but there was also something of repulsion" (LeFanu 19). The idea that Laura recognizes and names a sense of "repulsion" while at the same time being attracted to Carmilla, represents her trying to work out the desirability of someone whose advances she has been taught to reject (LeFanu 19). Carmilla represents things that would be forbidden to Laura by polite society, i.e. desire, sexuality, lesbianism and violence. LeFanu also describes Laura's feelings of discomfort surrounding the sexuality Carmilla shows her describing them as physically draining. This physical assault on Laura by Carmilla's feeding habits underscores the point that Laura is physically, as well as socially, affected by Carmilla's teachings.



When Laura has been subjected to Carmilla's nightly visits and random displays of affection for an extended period of time, she begins to develop feelings of languor similar to those displayed by her friend. This resulting languor suggests two possible interpretations regarding the text's treatment of female sexuality and sexual knowledge. The first possible interpretation is the fear that Carmilla's sexual knowledge is infectious and can be passed on. The second interpretation reflects the 19<sup>th</sup> century belief that women who are granted such sexual knowledge from an unapproved source become physically ill or display hysterical symptomology. This feeling of illness and helplessness is described multiple times in the novella, but one more subtle, and often overlooked, example is the trancelike state Laura is placed under whenever Carmilla touches her. During one such incident, Laura complains that even though she wants to pull away from Carmilla she physically cannot: "...I must allow, I used to wish to extricate myself; but my energies seemed to fail me" (22). Laura becomes physically weakened when confronted by Carmilla's feelings towards her and this effect could be read as a cautionary statement about how a feminine experience of sexuality without the guiding influence of the patriarchy could be physically dangerous for the women who embark on it. Laura's lethargy and languid behavior only seem to worsen the more familiar she gets with Carmilla's advances. Carmilla even goes as far to mention that being on the receiving end of her attentions/sexual knowledge leads to a sort of death drive, as she explains in the following passage: "Her soft cheek was glowing against mine. 'Darling, darling,' she murmured, 'I live in you; and you would die for me, I love you so'"(LeFanu 34). Carmilla's declaration of love for Laura is portrayed as an all-consuming love, which results in the death of the human partner. This sort of all-consuming love demonstrates how lesbianism and sexuality, which was not endorsed or enforced by a patriarchal society, was viewed as deviant and dangerous to people

“afflicted” by it. However, what makes this form of sexuality so detrimental is the implication that one woman can easily corrupt and infect another. In LeFanu’s work, Carmilla and Laura’s relationship is not only frightening because of its socially destructive implications, but also because it is one which can be passed from vampire to victim and continue after the original carrier’s death.

Carmilla’s character can also be read as disruptive of social structures due to her lineage and class differences from the other characters in the novella. Carmilla’s blatant sexuality and homosexual advances towards Laura are not the only character features which LeFanu used to present the vampire as a threat to society. It is known that Sheridan LeFanu was an Irishman, and his own complex feelings about his home country may have contributed to the male characters’ distrust of Carmilla. In the novella, it is made clear that Laura and her father are English, and also foreigners who have taken up residence in Stryia. This places them in a colonizing role, and they are often depicted as living lives which are separate and elevated from the lives of the peasant natives. While this role as colonizer would typically place them in a position of power, their foreignness and unfamiliarity with the customs and culture of the land they now inhabit, ends up hurting them. Both Laura, her father and their other aristocratic friends fail to recognize what Carmilla is until the General arrives. Prior to the General’s arrival the only person who may have some idea of who/what Carmilla is includes a hunchbacked peddler who offer folk remedies to Laura and Carmilla. He recognizes and remarks about Carmilla’s sharp teeth shortly after selling the girls charms that are supposed to ward off vampires. Although Carmilla chases the hunchback away in a fit of royal fury at a “peasant’s” audacity, this character is the only one who recognizes a vampire, and oddly enough, he is a native and lower class citizen. Laura and her father can be likened to the English forces who, repeatedly, have sought to colonize and

control Ireland only to ultimately fail due to a lack of knowledge about the population and culture of the native people. For this reason, Carmilla could be read as a metaphor for LeFanu's complicated relationship to Ireland, a place which is wild, dangerous and ultimately resistant to English rule and threatens its stability. Carmilla exists as a reminder of a lineage that the English characters strive to erase and forget. Any knowledge she possesses is archaic and essentially corrupt.

#### Loci of Violence in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*

Clearly, Carmilla's "gift" of knowledge and vampirism to Laura is one that can be read as a form of violence presented in the narrative. After all, Carmilla's knowledge is essentially deadly to her victim's humanity. However, the violence presented by Carmilla is still a different form of violence than the violence perpetuated by the male characters of the narrative. Carmilla's vampiric nature certainly makes her actions tainted with violence, especially with her feeding off her victims. However, the violence she embodies is unique due to its transformative elements. Carmilla does not try to hide the fact that she is capable of great violence, but the reason behind her violence is what sets her apart from the violence inflicted on her by her male captors. At one point when Carmilla is trying to inform Laura of her violent nature, she states that the sort of violence she deals out has a transformative quality particularly in regards to death. After Laura's father mentions his fears surrounding the recent deaths of the young village women, Carmilla confronts Laura's fear of death by commenting on how this state can be deemed transformative if done in a specific manner:

But to die as lovers may—to die together, so that they live together. Girls are caterpillars while they live in the world, to be finally butterflies when the summer

comes; but in the meantime there are grubs and larvae, don't you see—each with their peculiar propensities, necessities, and structure (31).

Shortly after this passage, both Laura and Carmilla are excluded from Laura's father's conversation with a local doctor about Laura's illness and the deaths of the peasant girls, implying that young ladies should not be exposed to knowledge of violence. Carmilla, obviously, takes offense at this and explains in the above passage how certain forms of violence and even death can yield transformation and growth. While this logic could reflect Carmilla's attempts to excuse her own violent tendencies, she does bring up a valid point about how women are subjected to a specific status while living. Noting that girls are "caterpillars" and "larvae" until summer time could be Carmilla's way of referencing that women, such as Laura, will remain as grubs until she transforms them from this state with her knowledge and vampire nature. Essentially, since Laura's access to knowledge of sexuality, love and desire are carefully regulated by the patriarchal decorum of Victorian society, she could be considered stunted in Carmilla's terms of social growth. Carmilla is violent and she proves this with her attacks on the local peasants and slow drain of Laura, but the sort of violence she commits carries the goal of continuity rather than destruction. Girls will eventually become butterflies, and Laura will die only to live a life of enlightenment Carmilla believes her knowledge and nature can bring to her.

One of the more insidious features of vampirism is the vampire's ability to reproduce by infecting their victims. This infectious characteristic of vampirism works in a couple ways with Carmilla; Carmilla not only infects Laura with deviant sexual knowledge, but also subverts heterosexual methods of reproduction by replicating portions of her vampirism in Laura. This sort of reproduction appears even after the aggressive feminine threat embodied by Carmilla is vanquished; her teachings exist in and grow to fruition in her victim. This fear of non-natural

reproduction and continued sexual threat is what motivates the men in the narrative to take action against Carmilla. Oddly enough, however, the men seem clueless about how to address the threat of Carmilla. It is not until other figures, such as the General and doctor recognize the signs of the vampiric activity that the men in the narrative even know to take action against the vampire.

General Spielsdorf mentions the reproductive quality of vampirism when he shows up at the estate to avenge his vanquished niece: “It is the nature of vampires to increase and multiply, but according to an ascertained and ghostly law” (LeFanu 82). Although Carmilla is presumably dead by the end of the novel, due to being beheaded by the men, her feminine knowledge and acts of aggression have already been passed on to Laura. As a result, Halberstam’s idea that: “... punishment of the woman lead to yet another system of paranoia, female aggression, and female violence” could be implied by Laura’s questionable feelings regarding Carmilla’s death (“Reading Counterclockwise 130). In the novel’s ambiguous ending, Laura finds herself still longing for Carmilla despite the vampire’s supposed destruction. She remembers her friend not only as a monster but also as a “beautiful girl” and ends her narrative saying: “Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations—sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church; and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I head the light step of Carmilla at the drawing-room door” (LeFanu 83). Laura has already experienced Carmilla’s various acts of feminine aggression on her body through nighttime attacks and a desire-laden friendship and because of these factors she is already infected. Even though the vampire is dead, the novel’s ending could imply that there is no guarantee that Laura will not continue the cycle of female paranoia and aggression taught to her by Carmilla. The continuing cycle of female vampirism is also commented on by Amy Leal in “Unnameable Desires in LeFanu's ‘Carmilla’”: “Laura and her distant cousin Bertha, we

presume, are busy vamping other nubile Karnsteins, thereby leaving the ground open for sequels” (49). This idea of Carmilla living on through the infection of her victims demonstrates the social fears about what may result if women became aware of their sexuality and the role this plays in reproduction. These concerns of reproduction contribute to the threat of the vampire as a being that can reproduce itself outside of the laws of nature by biting its victims. Halberstam claims that the perverse reproduction of the vampire could occur on knowledge based level that occurs when one woman imparts some forbidden sexual knowledge to another resulting in a sort of “parthenogenesis” (“Reading Counterclockwise” 88). Carmilla’s ability to pass on knowledge to Laura and partially “infect” her with the effects of vampirism could be considered an act of parthenogenesis described by Halberstam.

Oddly enough, the violence and reproduction of this violence possessed by Carmilla goes largely unnoticed by the men in the narrative. Only when it is revealed that Carmilla is a vampire, are the men prompted to curb Carmilla’s influence by inflicting their own brand of violence on her later on in the narrative. I will discuss this in detail later on in this chapter, however for now I would like to examine more closely the fact that Carmilla’s form of violence is so unrecognizable to the men that it goes undetected for so long. Initially, the men fail to recognize features of Carmilla’s vampiric nature and her subtle forms of violence both to Laura and to Victorian society. A good example of this occurs when the men do recognize what/who Carmilla is and wish that they had noted her true nature sooner. The General comments on how when it is revealed to him that his niece’s illness is of supernatural nature he initially thinks the doctor to be mad, “Nothing, you will say, could be more absurd than the learned man’s letter. It was monstrous enough to have consigned him to a madhouse. He had said that the patient was suffering from the visits of a vampire!” (LeFanu 72). The General’s failure to notice his niece’s

decline and disbelief at her initial diagnosis are both factors that he attributes to preventing him from acting soon enough to save his beloved niece. In terms of not recognizing some of Carmilla's threatening nature and her effect on Laura, Laura's own father is also ignorant. The only person who seems to take notice of Carmilla's odd habits within the house is Laura, whose opinion is often unheard. A good example of this includes the fact that Laura is the first to comment on Carmilla's likeness to the portrait of the young Countess that the family possesses, saying: "Carmilla, dear, here is an absolute miracle. Here you are, living, smiling, ready to speak, in this picture. Isn't it beautiful papa? And see, even the little mole on her throat" (LeFanu 33). Although her father does acknowledge the likeness, it is notable that Laura is the first to recognize this. Her father, for most of the narrative, is surprisingly dismissive of Laura complaints and comments on her friend's odd behaviors.

According to Amy Leal, the men in narrative often fail to recognize Carmilla's supernatural nature because they do not possess knowledge of the feminine. Leal describes the men's lack of knowledge and their inability to decode Carmilla's various restrictions on her name: "Yet for all their extensive knowledge, the men nonetheless never quite make out the true nature of Carmilla's love for Laura any more than they can clearly delineate a definitive meaning of any of her names" (49). Although the men are educated and possess knowledge, they fail to recognize the threat Carmilla poses because they cannot even begin to comprehend the idea of lesbianism. This idea is further commented on by Auerbach who maintains that although the men do not recognize or understand Carmilla's nature, the text still does lead to her destruction at their hands and Laura's loss of autonomy in the narrative: "The men are unable to see Carmilla clearly, her death/their intervention kills the authority Laura had. This leads to an anticlimactic ending, only revitalized by Laura's end narration" (46). Unfortunately, Auerbach's claim that the

women lose their authority in the narration due to the entrance of the men is true. Once the men take over the narrative and decide to kill Carmilla, Laura's narration fades and does not come in again until the end when she sheds a small amount of doubt about Carmilla's apparent demise. However, even though the men may not understand Carmilla, or the subtle form of violence she embodies, the male characters are still able to dispatch of the vampire with their own form of violence.

The role of violence within Sheridan LeFanu's novella occurs multiple times throughout the narrative. Readers see violence within Laura and Carmilla's relationship and in the numerous peasants and other nobles Carmilla feeds upon. These moments of violence between Carmilla and her victims are the typical sort of violence one would expect from the vampire trope: the victim is seduced and the vampire feeds. I would like to expand on how this violence is motivated through examination of other possible areas of violence in the narrative besides the interactions between Laura and Carmilla. One of the other overlooked moments in which violence is enacted in *Carmilla* when the men attempt to contain and correct the threat of the vampire. These areas of violence within the story demonstrate a complicated message of what LeFanu intended readers to assume was the more destructive force in the novella: the vampire or the men who seek to destroy her. Examining both of these features further demonstrates which elements of 19th century society were treated with fear and uncertainty.

The more prominent area of violence within the narrative involves the relationship between Laura and Carmilla. However, the type of violence and nature of the violence Carmilla imposes on Laura can be read as possessing a sexual element. As stated earlier, it is not uncommon for a vampire's actions to be coded as having a sexual basis and Carmilla is no exception. LeFanu certainly could not have outright stated the lesbian nature of Carmilla and



Laura's relationship, however, the vampire trope provides a convenient outlet to communicate homosexuality in the text, as Grenfell states: "The fear and longing in Laura also mirrors that of many who experienced same-sex desires at a time when admitting homosexuality was tantamount to imprisonment and had not long before been punishable by death" (Grenfell 42). According to Grenfell, the purpose for sexualizing Laura's encounters with Carmilla, would then be for them to function as subtle allusions to lesbianism.

### Linking Sexuality and Violence

Throughout the novella, Laura's responses to the violent acts Carmilla inflicts on her mimic sexual arousal and responses. However, what does this association between homosexuality and violence represent? Many of the interactions between Laura and Carmilla involve the typical vampiric trope of blood drinking and shape shifting, what is interesting is how these portions of the text detail Laura's responses to Carmilla's violence. Often times Laura's responses to Carmilla's bites and other moments of violence are described as a sort of taboo pleasure. Such a moment can be read in when Carmilla seduces Laura:

Sometimes there came a sensation as if a hand was drawn softly along my cheek and neck. Sometimes it was as if warm lips kissed me, and longer and more lovingly as they reach my throat, but there the caress fixed itself. My heart beat faster, my breathing rose and fell rapidly and full drawn; a sobbing, that rose into a sense of strangulation, supervened, and turned into a dreadful convulsion, in which my sense left me and I became unconscious (LeFanu 43)

In this quote, some of the ways in which Laura reacts to Carmilla's violent attentions bring about a response from Laura that is similar to a description of an orgasm. Even though there is violence

in the action, for example, Laura is strangled and rendered unconscious, there are still descriptions of pleasure. Laura describes Carmilla's touches not as a grasp or clutch, which would emphasize more violent aspects, but as a romantic caress that causes her heart to race and her breath to quicken. LeFanu's text abounds with moments such as this where the violent actions between Carmilla and Laura contain a sexualized tone. Although LeFanu may not have been able to explicitly name the lesbian desire between his two protagonists the way in which he sexualizes Carmilla's "attacks" on Laura could very well point to an early fetishization of lesbianism. LeFanu's presentation of violence within the romance between Laura and Carmilla could be read as a social fascination with a sexuality, which was considered a dangerous taboo.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century's society's fear and fascination with homosexual desire and the threat it poses becomes more apparent in the violence enacted by the men in *Carmilla*. The main male characters in the text can be read as upstanding patriarchal social ideals. For example, Laura's father is an aristocratic gentleman representing Victorian class sensibilities in a "barbaric" foreign landscape, General Spielsdorf is a decorated military officer representing order and efficiency, and the Baron Vordenburg represents a former line of noble vampire hunters and, like Carmilla, a surviving member of a fading aristocratic class. However, while these men can be read as substitutes for features that would have been favored by 19<sup>th</sup> century society, the narrative discourse of the novel does not present these men as victorious until the end of the novella. These representatives of patriarchy are ironically baffled and clueless to Carmilla's violent nature for most of the story. For example, Laura's father often dismisses some of Carmilla's habits of over sleeping and lethargy attributing them as common features of nobility and fails to note any initial oddities in his guest. The General also describes falling for Carmilla and her mother's charms and being foolishly unaware of the harm caused by the vampire until

the death of his niece (LeFanu 63). The Baron, who aids in the quest to vanquish Carmilla, is also not immune to the beguiling charms of the vampire. The Baron's ancestor is revealed to have been one of Carmilla's former lovers who, in his grief at her death, moved Carmilla's remains so that she would live as a vampire unhampered by those who may discover and wish to hunt her down. The Baron describes his ancestor's mistake in "saving" Carmilla as an act of failure and shame on his family:

...the dead Countess, who in life had been his idol. He conceived a horror, be she what she might, of her remains being profaned by the outrage of posthumous execution. He has left a curious paper to prove that of the vampire, on its expulsion of its amphibious existence, is projected into a far more horrible life; he resolved to save his once beloved Mircalla from this (LeFanu 82).

The Baron's ancestor's guilt and written location of Carmilla's moved grave may have aided the men in killing her in the end, but initially, his own family line can be blamed for Carmilla's reign of violence in the first place. The Baron seems to view his quest to destroy Carmilla as a final attempt to rid the world of corrupt aristocratic influences. Carmilla and the Baron's ancestor lived in a time when the aristocracy was a class full of vice and corruption, and in order for the new nobility to come into power, these relics have to be destroyed. If these men are meant to represent the pillars of a patriarchal society, then what does Carmilla's deception of all of them mean? Perhaps LeFanu could not overtly depict a lesbian relationship, but he clearly questioned the supposed authority of reputable agents of a patriarchal society.

While these men fail to recognize the danger Carmilla initially presents, when they discover the vampire's nature, they are quick to destroy her. The most violent moments in the

text come when the men confront Carmilla and dispose of her. What is interesting about this violence is how the men function as a containing force and how Carmilla is punished for daring to upset the social order they represent. Carmilla has threatened the patriarchal structure of society and in doing so, she has been singled out as a force which needs to be disposed of. In order for traditional gendered patriarchal 19<sup>th</sup> century to continue flourishing, the feminine sexual threat Carmilla presents needs to be vanquished. In *Carmilla*, the very thing the characters fear and are trying desperately to contain are issues related to female sexuality and the predatory excessive femininity the vampire represents. One of the first attempts at containment that occurs is when a doctor is brought to the estate to examine Laura due to her bouts of lethargy and nightmares. Despite the fact that Laura is aware that something is wrong with her, when she asks her father to explain what he and the doctor discovered about her condition, she is told not to worry about it. Rather than allow Laura to gain knowledge about her own illness, the doctor patronizes her saying, “‘Nothing my dear young lady, but a small blue spot, about the size of the top of you little finger; and now,’ he continued, turning to papa, ‘the question is what is best to be done?’” (LeFanu 51). Even though the narrative is in Laura’s voice throughout the novella, she is easily silenced once the men are made aware of her distress.

Prior to their intervention, Laura was aware that she is not well and clearly was seeking answers, however when she asks for these answers from the doctor and her father, the answer to her inquires are deemed too violent of knowledge for a “dear young lady” such as herself. The fang marks on Laura’s neck could be read as a physical mark of what forbidden female knowledge has already been placed on her, and yet she is not allowed any more access to such knowledge when the men are made aware of it. In their attempts to reassert control over the aggressive female force embodied by Carmilla, the men in this scene decide to handle the

containment of the monster on their own, as Laura could be already tainted by this aggression and should not have had access to sexual knowledge outside of male control in the first place. While this moment is a subtle one, it emphasizes how quick the men are to contain and shut Laura out of the conversation when they realize that a serious breach of knowledge has occurred.

The more prominent moments of containment in the narrative occur when the men decide that in order to contain the feminine threat and protect the patriarchal order they must kill the vampire. Carmilla's death scene is quite graphic and it is interesting that not only do the men stake her through the heart, but they also decapitate her:

The body, therefore, in accordance with the ancient practice, was raised and a sharp stake driven through the heart of the vampire, who uttered a piercing shriek at the moment, in all respects such as might escape from a living person in the last agony. Then the head was struck off and a torrent of blood flowed from the severed neck (LeFanu 79)

It is interesting that Carmilla's containment and punishment for her female aggression and sexual knowledge involves the complete disassembling of her body. It is especially significant that she is decapitated, perhaps literally silencing her for good. In removing Carmilla's head, the men are separating her from her main weapons of her aggression: her fangs and her ability to speak. Carmilla appears to be successfully contained and punished for her aggression in the typical gothic fashion described by Halberstam who states that, "Within a psychoanalytic model, it seems, paranoia is an overwhelming fear of the feminine that necessitates a systemized defense against identification with a feminine subject position and with female pleasure and homosexual desire" ("Reading Counterclockwise" 115). In this sense, the men should have easily contained

and punished the female vampire for her threats to the patriarchal structure of Victorian society. The locus for the physical violence are issued from the men as conduits of 19<sup>th</sup> century social order, rather than the by the vampire in the narrative. It would seem that judging by the men's choice to decapitate Carmilla, that the threat to social order has been eliminated.

### The End of Carmilla or the Beginning?

However, there is one problem with Carmilla's death, and this is that it is notoriously ambiguous. Readers and critics have often puzzled about Laura's sadness surrounding the death of Carmilla, despite the desire and aggression she represented. Amy Leal interprets this general confusion surrounding the ending of the novel as either praising patriarchal power or perhaps extending sympathy to homosexual desire being unrealized: "Critics have been divided about whether to read Carmilla as a retort to or an affirmation of a patrilineal power structure and its strictures on female desire" ("Unnamable Desires" 48). As stated earlier, Laura does not appear to be completely freed from whatever acts of aggression Carmilla has enacted upon her by the end of the novel. It is possible that LeFanu leaves Carmilla's lasting influence on Laura as a subtle reaffirmation for homosexual desire. On the other hand, this same influence and Laura's longing for her vampire friend could also be interpreted as an insidious warning of feminine sexuality as a dangerous contagion.

How LeFanu intended Carmilla's violent death and its aftermath to be interpreted is a mystery. However, what is certain is that there appears to be a set locus of violence in the narrative involving the homosexual relationship and societal perceptions of it. *Carmilla* is often hailed as novel displaying an obvious homosexual relationship. Sue Ellen Case describes the novella in this manner in her essay "Tracking the Vampire" saying: "'For the purposes of queer

theory, the most important work in the dominant tradition is ‘Carmilla’ by Sheridan LeFanu, the first lesbian vampire story, in which the lesbian, desiring and desired by her victim, slowly brings her closer through the killing kiss of blood” (72). If Carmilla is to be read as Case, and other theorists claim, as one of the first prominent lesbian vampires, then it would also mean that readers and theorists must examine the violence inflicted on and by Le Fanu’s protagonist. More importantly, readers are forced to consider a linking of violence and homosexuality that occurs within the novella. Such a link would have perhaps been appropriate for LeFanu’s time, but today linking violence and destruction with homosexuality is perhaps a feature that the vampire can no longer embody.

CHAPTER II. "YOU BELONG TO ME" THE LOCUS OF VIOLENCE IN SCOTT'S *THE HUNGER*

The legacy of violence within the lesbian vampire narrative continues from LeFanu's novella into other adaptations of the lesbian vampire trope such as film. Although the many queer female vampires of film and television are unique in their own ways, many of them can trace common motifs and tropes back to those detailed in LeFanu's *Carmilla*. One feature, which has been carried through to more modern representations of the lesbian vampire narrative, includes the shifting source of violence. According to Broman and Doan in *Images of the Modern Vampire*, representations of the vampire constantly shift to remain relevant to current social fears: "The vampire myth has been extensively written about as a metaphor for perverse sexuality, for social fears---fear of the Other, fear of evil, fear of the unknown, fear of the spread of disease (particularly AIDS)—and as a metaphor for colonialism" (101). Keeping this feature of the vampire myth in mind, it makes sense that the vampire embodies different social fears and the violence the vampire enacts (or is subjected to) changes to fit these new fears. The lesbian vampire narrative contains a necessary amount of violence, however, the amount and source of this violence is directly dependent on the society which produces the vampire. A text, which embodies this shifting relationship between the lesbian vampire and violence, is Tony Scott's 1983 horror film *The Hunger*. *The Hunger* may not be a direct adaptation of LeFanu's *Carmilla* in terms of fidelity to LeFanu's text, but as my work will prove, the film's main antagonist/protagonist vampire, Miriam, possesses many similar traits to Carmilla and Countess Bathory. In addition to this similarity, the text's treatment of the queer female reflects and addresses the cultural concerns of the 80s surrounding homosexuality and disease.



Scott's film is based off a novel by Whitley Strieber of the same title, and details the adventures of a decadent centuries old vampire named Miriam and her companion, John. The film takes place during the height of the eighties and American consumerist culture. The vampire pair appears at the opening of the film stalking a busy nightclub for their next pair of victims, while the gothic band Bauhaus (ironically) plays the song, "Bela Lugosi is Dead" on stage. The pair eventually chooses a young punk couple, whom they take home, seduce and kill. All of these actions are spliced with images of caged monkeys screeching and attacking one another violently until a concerned scientist runs in to break them up. As the film unfolds, viewers are made aware of two, soon to be, converging storylines; one following Miriam's declining partner, John, who is suddenly unable to sleep and is aging rapidly as a result, and the storyline of Dr. Sarah Roberts, a researcher who is seeking to make the connection between aging and sleep. John's rapid decomposition eventually pushes the two storylines together as Miriam seeks to find answers through Sarah's research about how to slow her lover's rapid decline. However, it is revealed that all of Miriam's lovers eventually age and become living corpses and John is going to meet the same fate. As a result, Miriam begins to set her sights on Sarah as potential replacement companion.

Although Scott's film met with lackluster reviews<sup>4</sup>, it has become a fan favorite and exemplifies an important evolution in terms of the locus of violence. *The Hunger* harkens back to some of the fears presented in LeFanu's *Carmilla*, particularly when it comes to the treatment of female homosexuality. *The Hunger* takes place in the 80s and, despite society moving forward in terms of LGBT recognition, the lesbian vampire is still regarded with distrust and fear in the film. This lingering fear of lesbianism is described by Broman and Doan, who describe the viewer's relationship with the lesbian vampire as a fantasy/fear dichotomy which is in constant

play (especially for the male viewer): “The lesbian vampire is a male sexual fantasy but also a male fear; her predatory nature is dangerous to male supremacy. She is a negative stereotype as well as an object of desire and hedonism” (105). Unlike the male characters and readers in LeFanu’s novella, the male viewers of *The Hunger* may possess more knowledge of lesbianism, due to advancements in LGBT rights and the feminist movement, but it is important to acknowledge that this did not banish fear. A cultural movement that occurred during the eighties which could be cited as having influenced some social anxieties presented in *The Hunger* is the lesbian feminist movement. Proponents for lesbian feminism expressed frustration at the erasure of lesbian women from both the gay rights movement and feminism. Some of this frustration resulted in more radical movements such as lesbian separatism, which argued that lesbians would benefit from withdrawal from patriarchal society and gain more autonomy as a result of this withdrawal. In a sense, lesbianism was viewed as the ultimate political act<sup>5</sup> against a heteronormative patriarchal society since men were not a necessary social component for the lesbian woman (Bunch 129). Lesbianism gained visibility during this period, but this visibility also brought social anxieties about women abandoning their hegemonic gender and sexual roles. According to Broman and Doan, all narratives that feature a lesbian vampire are essentially playing on male fear/fascination surrounding the lesbian vampire and her ability to present a threat to the patriarchy: “The erotic power of the female vampire and the male fascination with lesbianism has meant that lesbianism is implied in nearly all representations of female vampires” (105). This motif of the lesbian vampire as socially destructive force is one that is present in Scott’s leading female vampire. Aside from the lesbian’s potential to disrupt or call into question patriarchal social structures, perhaps another reason why the lesbian vampire still presents as a scary subject well into the 80s is simply because society still fears the female aggression the

lesbian vampire exhibits. Ken Gelder comments this continual fear of female aggression presented in the form of the vampire in his book *Reading the Vampire*:

The gender reveals in the vampire tale, moreover, reflect the confusion caused by the tension between archetypal androgyny—the instinctive tendency to fuse the opposites—and stereotypical dualism, the sociocultural tendency to polarize them. If feminine aggressiveness is denied (if woman’s role is reduced to one of submission, of suffering and being still), it will reassert itself with the fury of a “writhing fiend”—as Carmilla does. So terrifying is this return of the repressed, that the man succumbs and submits ironically becoming feminine himself (99)

Although Gelder addresses *Carmilla* here in terms of female aggression, in this chapter I will demonstrate how Miriam, the protagonist of *The Hunger*, is partaking in similar acts of female aggression and, like Carmilla before her, society punishes her for her acts of violence and attempts to alter a patriarchal social order.

Often times, both Miriam and Sarah can be read as examples of the strong, independent sexually liberated woman but, as Gelder points out, any sort of feminine dominance can be perceived as threatening due to its ability feminize men. Miriam emerges from a different time, which could claim more enlightened views of women and homosexuality due to the rise of gay rights and lesbian feminism, but the location of the violence in the text and its treatment of homosexuality, female aggression, and dominance demonstrates a social viewpoint that may not be as evolved as viewers would like to think.

### Transformative Erotic Violence in *The Hunger*

Miriam follows in Carmilla's footsteps in terms of the vampire tradition of seducing a victim before turning them into a vampire or killing them. Also like her predecessor, Miriam's seduction tactics are not without their moments of violence. However, it can be claimed that Miriam's violence, like Carmilla's, is transformative to an extent; Miriam does inspire a similar awakening of sexuality in Sarah that Carmilla does in Laura. Miriam's seduction of Sarah mirrors Carmilla's seduction of Laura in terms of the characters beginning as friends and the friendship evolving into more romantic relationship. Albeit, Miriam and Sarah's relationship does progress into a sexual one at a far quicker rate than Carmilla and Laura's ever could. As soon as Miriam notices John's decline she not so subtly sets her sights on Sarah. Initially, Miriam's attraction to Sarah could have been in favor of the anti-aging research the other woman is studying, but this goal quickly takes a sexual trajectory when it becomes apparent that John will not recover from his advanced aging. Even John recognizes his mate's need for a companion and as he declines in health, questions her about his replacement asking, "Who is next? Who is to keep you company when I am gone?" (Scott, *The Hunger*). Miriam never offers John the answers he seeks, but instead placates him enough to quicken her seduction of Sarah. In manner similar to Carmilla, Miriam cannot help but inspire inexplicable feelings of attraction in her chosen victims. This attraction feature is what leads to Sarah showing up at Miriam's home shortly after John's death inquiring half-heartedly about John and awkwardly admitting, "I don't know why I am here" (Scott, *The Hunger*). However, if Sarah had any reservations about Miriam, these quickly disappear when Miriam invites her into the mansion and she shares a drink with a woman she barely knows. What then occurs is a sex scene between the two women, which culminates in Miriam biting Sarah and infecting the other woman. Up until Miriam delivers the

bite which turns Sarah, Miriam behaves like a model seductress. However, the female vampire can never achieve romance without some form of transformative violence and it is in the act of infecting her victim that the façade of benevolent seductress falls away. Robert Latham addresses the transformative qualities of Miriam and Sarah's physical union in his book *Consuming Youth*:

...as Miriam first drinks from Sarah's veins, then nurtures Sarah with her own deathless blood. The scene thus culminates in a powerfully utopian images of consumption, one that is vampiric and yet reciprocal—in other words not a unilateral exploitation, but a mutual liberality that is transfiguring and joyous (115)

The notable feature of Latham's description of Miriam and Sarah's sex/transformation scene is his focus on a moment when Miriam and Sarah treat each other as equals and reciprocate each other's desires, rather than the moment Miriam bites her partner. According to Latham, Miriam's actions of turning Sarah into a vampire is not portrayed as violence for the sake of violence, rather this violence is a necessary step in Sarah's evolution. However, it cannot be ignored that the film regards this moment of transformation with suspicion and uneasiness. For example, the "utopian" love scene and music of "Lakme" suddenly take on a more sinister tone the moment Miriam sinks her fangs into Sarah's wrist. Despite Miriam's biting of Sarah having a transformative component, the female vampire's act of turning her victim does result in the first spark of violence in the vampire's act of seduction as author Andrea Weiss states, "Violence disrupts interpretation that the vampire is pure loving seductress and serves to prompt links of lesbian sexuality and depravity" (93). According to Weiss, the lesbian vampire may have transformation as a benefit to the violence of her bite, but this transformative element actually gives way to the necessary violent portion of the vampire character. The lesbian vampire can

only play the part of “pure loving seductress” for so long before giving in to the desire to consume her lover/victim. It can be interpreted that this initial act of violence committed by Miriam against Sarah, leads to the problematic link the text begins to make between lesbianism unnaturalness and violence.

Although Miriam and Sarah’s relationship begins with greater visibility of female homosexuality and female independence, the film’s depiction of lesbianism and femininity rapidly devolves into something problematic and largely negative shortly after the sex scene. In his essay “Lesbians who Bite: Abjection as Masquerade”, Ellis Hanson makes the observation that homosexuality and feminism are vilified in *The Hunger* with the intent of depicting cultural anxieties surrounding LGBTQA visibility and feminism. Hanson even goes as far as to say that Tom, Sarah’s boyfriend, serves as a representative of the viewers’ desire to root for some form of heterosexual normalcy to triumph: “Film and novel both encompass certain cultural anxieties about the New Woman and her place in the workforce. Tom is portrayed as attempting to salvage the last remains of Sarah’s femininity and familial order, he fails however” (211). This fear of what the dominant, sexual woman could do to the established patriarchal order is a fear that has already been explored by Carmilla and Laura in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but resurfaces again in *The Hunger* perhaps showing that society is still afraid of lesbians’ potential for revolt against patriarchal society. Although the film does vilify lesbian sex to some extent, there are moments in which Miriam’s relationship with Sarah is depicted as more sensual than her relationship with Tom as Hanson states, “The men in the film are dull and ineffectual, and Sarah’s lack of sexual interest in Tom becomes a running joke. Sex between women is portrayed as sensual and beautiful, rather than just weird” (212). Despite the fact that viewers may have been uncomfortable with some aspects of lesbianism, the sexual scenes between Sarah and Miriam do

depict more sexual chemistry than the heterosexual relationship she shares with Tom. While this acknowledgement of sensuality in accordance with homosexuality is important to note, this same feature could also contribute to the fear that lesbian relationships could place dominant heterosexual relationship's social privilege in jeopardy. Hanson comments on this fear in his examination of Tom and Sarah's lackluster dinner scene after Sarah has slept with Miriam:

The steak comes to represent heterosexual desire, her love for Tom in particular. She desperately gorges herself, only to throw up in the toilet afterward. The filming of the conversation between Sarah and Tim is especially witty. He is aggressively nosy, and she is snappish and vague. While he is interrogating her, she is glancing at a nearby swimming pool and picturing to herself a fantasy of a lesbian frolic that he is slowly beginning to suspect (218)

The film's focus on the sensuality of lesbian sex and the destruction it poses for the dominant heterosexual hierarchy is a perfect example of the fear/desire dichotomy the lesbian vampire has become known for. In this sense, Miriam and Sarah's relationship exemplifies a similar transformative violence to that of the violence exhibited between Laura and Carmilla. Sarah's tryst with Miriam grants her sexual liberation and insight to a relationship that is fulfilling despite being outside of traditional patriarchy sanctioned heterosexuality. Sarah is not only transformed into a vampire and lesbian by Miriam, but she also may have experienced a class transformation through her interactions with the aristocratic vampire. Latham comments on how Sarah's relationship with Miriam grants her access to a higher social class that she was not a part of before: "Miriam's sexual courtship of Sarah is also a class seduction, a conflation of libidinal and political economics" (116). Sarah gives evidence of this class transformation during her dinner with Tom, where when questioned about the expensive looking necklace Miriam has

given her, she responds with, “That’s the kind of woman she is. She’s European” (Latham 115). According to Latham and Hanson, Sarah has been transformed through her interactions with Miriam in a variety of ways: she experiences the sensuality of lesbian sex which liberates her from a strictly heterosexual experience, she gets educated in the ways of a higher wealthy social class granting her access to resources, and of course becomes a vampire, a being which is above the rules of human society. Sarah’s initial interactions with Miriam may start off as transformative and beneficial, but this potential for positive transformation soon turns into a tainted, toxic relationship which negates these outcomes.

#### The Locus of Violence in *The Hunger*

While Miriam turning Sarah highlights more transformative aspects, the relationship between the two women becomes brutally violent with no positive aspects when Sarah begins to comprehend the loss of her humanity, and blames Miriam for this loss. Essentially, Miriam and Sarah are the main causes of each other’s demise rather than say a herd of angry men that were responsible for dispatching Carmilla. Latham describes the precise moment of devolution between the two women as occurring the moment when the reciprocal quality of their relationship disappears when Miriam claims dominance over Sarah:

This reading gains support from the fact that the lesbian bond between Sarah and Miriam abruptly shades into a fierce competitive struggle, in which Miriam asserts her ownership of Sarah (‘You belong to me’)---an unequal power relation that was always implicit in the ‘love song’ of the princess Lakme’ and her slave Mallika—while Sarah disgustedly condemns Miriam’s deviant allure (‘You’re crazy’) (116).



During the infamous sex scene, Miriam and Sarah's lesbianism can be fetishized, the scene is meant to be attractive to viewers. However, the moment Sarah begins to show a lack of interest in her male partner, viewers panic since heterosexual dominance and normalcy have been threatened and need to be reasserted. Obviously, the best way to reassure viewers and reassert heteronormativity is to stage a rapid devolution of the lesbian relationship in the film and reaffirm the link between lesbianism and unnaturalness. The result is a locus of violence that displays social fears and concerns surrounding lesbian relationships and the threat they pose to heterosexual dominance.

Miriam and Sarah's relationship is viewed as sensual and agreeable strictly during Miriam's seduction of Sarah up until they sleep together. However, the moment Miriam bites Sarah, the narrative takes a more violent discourse. As soon as Sarah begins to realize that something is wrong with her, and her medical background holds no answers, she confronts Miriam by storming into her home angrily demanding, "What did you do to me?" (Scott, *The Hunger*) Sarah's accusations prompt a response of disbelief and disdain from Miriam who believes she has given Sarah a gift. Part of Miriam's hurt could be interpreted as Sarah's apparent rejection of the transformative violence she has shown her. Initially, Miriam attempts to convince Sarah that what she has shown her is nothing to fear saying, "You're frightened but there is nothing to be afraid of, just trust me" (Scott, *The Hunger*). Miriam's reassurances are reminiscent of Carmilla's assurances to Laura that the sexual feelings she directs towards her are a positive natural attribute. However, unlike Laura, Sarah's reacts violently to Miriam's attempts and this sparks a physical confrontation between the two that results in Miriam throwing Sarah across the room in a fit of rage. As Sarah sprints from the house in fear and anger, Miriam calls after her saying, "You'll be back. The hunger knows no reason! And then you'll need to feed, and

you'll need me to show you how" (Scott, *The Hunger*). It is interesting to note that as Sarah flees the house, Miriam notices that during their fight Sarah managed to scratch her across the cheek drawing blood. Miriam's wounds perhaps allude to the idea that Miriam has not chosen an equal as a mate, but someone too powerful to be subservient to her.

This first physical fight between the two characters highlights that the locus of violence within *The Hunger* is not necessarily a threat from outside forces, but rather one within the relationship itself. By having a majority of the violence in the narrative emerge from the couple in the story, it becomes apparent that while lesbian sex and dominant forms of femininity are displayed more vividly, the text still condemns these relationships. The relationship between the women is violent, competitive and possessive and the narrative not so subtly casts a disapproving tone on it. An added element that highlights the "dangers" of relationships other than heterosexual ones can be read in Miriam's increased possessiveness of Sarah. Shortly after biting the Sarah and having her gift rejected, Miriam takes every opportunity to stake her claim on Sarah saying, "You belong to me" and constantly asking Sarah to trust, despite her neglecting to tell Sarah that she will not in fact remain young for forever (Scott, *The Hunger*). This possessive attitude and omission of important information does little to improve the film's depiction of lesbian relationships and the sensuality that was featured in the sex scene is quickly forgotten as the relationship comes to emphasize control, clinginess, and toxic dependency leading to death for both Miriam and Sarah's humanity.

. When Sarah can no longer handle her transformation into a vampire she is forced to depend on Miriam to help her manage and understand her new nature. However, this momentary dependence is short lived as Sarah rejects the first victim Miriam brings to her in hopes of getting her to feed. Unfortunately, this initial refusal to feed only leads to Sarah attacking Tom

when he stops by the house demanding to see his fiancé. When Sarah emerges from feeding on and killing him, she finds Miriam in the music room and although Sarah's eyes are vacant and her face and body smeared with her former lover's blood, Miriam tries to make light of the situation and asks Sarah: "It's not nearly as difficult as you imagined is it? You're a part of me now" (Scott, *The Hunger*). Rather than acknowledge the fact the Sarah's humanity has now been destroyed, Miriam chooses to focus on the idea that Sarah is now a part of her. Miriam's continued insistence that Sarah is no longer an autonomous person presents a problematic view of their relationship, and represents a shift in Miriam from seductress to controlling fiend. After realizing and recognizing Miriam's controlling and unnatural behavior, Sarah begins to panic about what she has become. Sarah panics about her vampirism, but also panics about her newfound lesbian sexuality. This internalized homophobic panic is commented on by Hanson, who describes Sarah's feelings of fear in the following passage: "Her lesbian panic, her internalized homophobia, is articulated metaphorically as a fear of the vampire when she eventually learns the truth about Miriam" (218). According to Hanson, the film uses Sarah's fear of the vampire as a not so subtle acknowledgement of Sarah's fear of her own homosexuality and the unnaturalness of this part of her.

This fear quickly transforms into violence when Sarah chooses to stab herself in the throat with her ankh necklace as Miriam kisses her. Sarah's choice to stab herself with the ankh necklace takes on an ironic component for a few reasons. As Miriam explains to Sarah, upon gifting her with the ankh, the necklace symbolizes eternal life and the eternal life/youth that Miriam *claims* to offer her victims. The idea that Sarah would choose to attempt suicide with a symbol that his supposed to emphasize her immortality presents perhaps the falsity of Miriam's promise and also Sarah's rejection of Miriam's alternative sexuality. According to Latham,

Sarah's suicide attempt with the ankh also demonstrates her rejection of the consumerist culture Miriam has indoctrinated her into:

The struggle between the two women culminates when Sarah, realizing she can never escape from Miriam's erotic/predatory clutches, plunges a blade into her own throat in an attempt to take her undead life, thus rejecting the consumerist bounty—and perhaps, by implication, the homoerotic experience--- that Miriam has offered her (117).

While I can understand why Latham would read this scene Sarah's rejection of consumerism, I believe his second point about Sarah's rejection of the "homoerotic experience" is the main component that prompts Sarah to attempt to take her own life. The scene of Sarah's suicide is particularly clear in its link between lesbianism and destruction. For example, before Sarah stabs herself, the two women begin kissing and viewers are lead, momentarily, to believe that perhaps Sarah has begun to accept her fate. However, the kiss quickly turns violent in the next moment when blood begins pouring into Miriam and Sarah's connected mouths as a result of Sarah's choice to stab herself. The juxtaposition between the intimate act of a kiss and Sarah's suicide is a thinly veiled message the film sends about the violence and toxicity of lesbian relationships. At the crux of this violence appears to be the familiar message of female sexuality and homosexuality as being a dangerous deviation from heterosexuality. Auerbach attributes the failure of vampirism to a lack of sharing and claims this lack of sharing only serves to solidify the unnatural label to female sexuality (59). This lack of sharing can easily be applied to Miriam and Sarah's relationship, especially because after turning Sarah, Miriam no longer wishes to acknowledge the other woman's autonomy as is emphasized by her repeated requests of: "Forget what you were and begin to love me as I love you" (Scott, *The Hunger*). However,

Miriam's crippling of the relationship does not go unchecked, just as she has destroyed Sarah's humanity; Sarah's suicide is what leads to Miriam's destruction. In having both women be the cause of each other's demise, the film inadvertently portrays lesbian relationships as pathological, codependent and toxic not only to the people involved but also to society in general.

### Sexuality as Contagion in the form of AIDS

In LeFanu's novella there was a theme of sexuality and knowledge of sexuality as being a destructive contagion, this is also replicated in *The Hunger*. However, the film does take this trope of sexuality as contagion in an even more literal direction due to social fear of AIDS that was prominent at the time. Hanson comments on *The Hunger's* use of the vampire blood disease as a metaphor for the fear surround the transmission of AIDS (216). Although most of the violence in the film is centered on the violence between Miriam and Sarah, the framing of vampirism as a blood born disease can easily read as a representation of society's linking of AIDS and homosexuality. Not only does the film link AIDS and homosexuality, but this link is enforced by society's connection of promiscuity and death in homosexual individuals. John Dollimore comments this specific link of promiscuity to homosexuality and homosexuality to a death drive in his essay "Promiscuity and Death". Dollimore states that society has always regarded gay sex as linked to anonymity and promiscuity and while this link was also already frowned upon, the AIDS crisis made promiscuous gay sex even more dangerous and deadly (294). The assertion that promiscuity leads to death took on an even more intense rhetoric when people began to claim that AIDS was a specifically gay disease that was meant as a form of punishment for deviant and promiscuous sex. By linking acts of forbidden sexuality to a disease,

which essentially destroys the humanity of those it, afflicts the film offers a chilling commentary on what society considers deviant forms of sexuality and disease.

John, played by David Bowie<sup>6</sup>, is Miriam's lover prior to Sarah and serves as the best representation of the sexuality as contagion metaphor continued in the film. Although John and Miriam's relationship can be read as a heterosexual one, there is still a sense of taboo sexuality applied to them in the opening of the film. The story opens with John and Miriam at a dance club where they prey on and seduce a young punk couple into leaving with them. This sexual promiscuity exhibited by the vampires and reading them as swingers, places this heterosexual pairing outside of endorsed monogamous heterosexual behaviors. This rejection of monogamy in the vampires places them outside of social norms and contributes to the film's treatment of vampirism as a punishment for sexual transgressions. Hanson reads Miriam and John's relationship as a bisexual one, which he believe adds an additional stigma to the pair due to society's belief that bisexuality lends itself to promiscuity and lack of commitment:

Bisexuality becomes the preferred mode of this betrayal, most likely because it is already popularly associated with hedonism, with narcissistic gratification, and with a promiscuous prowling from lover to love and from gender to gender. In this film, bisexuality represents the wish to be the subject of the promise, to be the alluring locus of everlasting life even if it turns out to be an everlasting undeath. This queer vampire embodies seduction in the age of technological reproduction  
(216)

According to Hanson, Miriam and John's relationship, along with the other bonds she forms with past lovers, are tainted not only by unapproved bisexuality, but also by the fact that Miriam lies

to her lovers about their vampire state. Miriam falsely promises each of her lovers, upon turning them, that they will remain forever young, issuing the promise of, “Forever, and ever” (Scott, *The Hunger*). However, this promise leads to a harrowing process of rapid aging and decay for the partners. Miriam’s lies to her partners about their illness portrays her as a deceitful infected lover who neglects to inform her partners of the illness she has passed to them until it is too late.

Another additional sub textual fear which is highlighted in John and Miriam’s relationship, is this deceit about what John’s life as a vampire will be like. Before John’s illness begins to take hold, he appears as a young vital man in the prime of his life. Ironically enough, viewers never really see how John feels initially about being turned into a vampire. In Sarah’s transformation, viewers are able to view her struggle with coming to terms with her new murderous nature, with John we are not privy to this struggle and are left to wonder if there was such a struggle. Author Kendall Phillips addresses the little known facts about John’s human life but also states that the one thing viewers do learn about John is his attachment to/lust for eternal youth:

While we learn relatively little about John’s earlier life or even his transition from human to vampire. We do know that his principal desire is for a youth that will stretch forever and ever. This is clear not only from his persistent insistence on Miriam’s promise of eternal youth but also in his careful animating focus of the desire is youth, conceived at once as a consuming subject and a consumable object (261)

John’s clinging to this promise of youth Miriam gives him demonstrates that in the film the fear of death has been linked with socially “deviant” sexuality. John’s unawareness regarding the nature of his vampire illness (not knowing he will decay) represents the constant fear of AIDS

and lack of knowledge about the disease experienced by the population during the time the film takes place. Those who contracted the disease, as well as those who were not affected, knew little about AIDS during the 80s and this led to speculation and panic. Viewers see this fear of the unknown rather early in John's progression with the illness his vampirism has brought on. As soon as he begins to age and becomes unable to sleep, he interrogates Miriam for knowledge on what is happening to him and to her past lovers asking, "How long did the others last?" (Scott, *The Hunger*). Miriam always appears reluctant to give John any information on what is happening to him, which is concerning considering she was the one who infected John in the first place.

Miriam's sudden reluctance to educate John on his condition places her once again in the place of an irresponsible lover who has knowingly sentenced their partner to death. As Hanson pointed out, Miriam's romances and sharing of her "knowledge" are nothing but betrayals and lies. When John begins to decline even faster, he continues to confront Miriam about her broken promises to him, perhaps in an attempt to get her to take some responsibility for the contagions she spreads. In a particularly heart wrenching moment, John, who has aged so much that he resembles a walking corpse, begs Miriam to kiss him saying, "Kiss me, think of me as I was" (Scott, *The Hunger*). Although Miriam tries to embrace and kiss her decaying lover, she is unable to do so and her cries of "I can't, I can't" (Scott, *The Hunger*) appear to demonstrate some remorse for what she has done to him. However, this remorse/regret is short lived when she realizes that John has killed Alice, their young violin student, in a frantic last attempt to revitalize himself. When John realizes that Miriam appears to be unable to love him as a walking corpse, he demands that she kill him and grant him some release. However, it is at this moment that Miriam finally tells John the truth of his condition and that there is no death in store of him,



when she softly responds with, “There is no release my darling, no rest” (Scott, *The Hunger*). Miriam’s admission that her “forever promise” is a lie and that John will not even be permitted the peace that death brings provides a powerful commentary not only on AIDS, but also sexual knowledge and responsibility.

As John’s creator, the film places Miriam in a position as curator of sexual knowledge and a caretaker for the partners she has “educated”. Unfortunately, Miriam’s care for her former partners only goes so far, she entombs them alive and stores them in her attic to remain as relics of her many lives and loves. The portrayal of Miriam as a sexually indulgent being who spreads her contagion without fully informing her lovers highlights a cultural fear of the repercussions surrounding sexual promiscuity and disease. At least Carmilla had the decency to tell Laura that the knowledge she would pass on to her was deadly, Miriam is not so responsible. This fear of the dishonest infected lover is one that continues to resonate within the film as society’s concerns surrounding the AIDS crisis. Viewers are able to see that Miriam seems to regret what happens to those she infects in how she entombs each of them in a space in her attic. However, this gesture is cruel, since her lovers are entombed alive and Miriam leaves them to comfort each other. This latter part is observed when Miriam places John in his coffin in the attic and mournfully tasks her other dead lovers with comforting him saying, “Comfort him, all of you my loves, be kind to him tonight” (Scott, *The Hunger*). Miriam’s tasking of her previous loves to comfort John on his first night in the attic may demonstrate her own sadness at losing yet another companion, but also her irresponsibility when it comes to taking care of her partners in their advanced stages of illness. Rather than care for the people she has made ill, Miriam simply entombs them and quickly seeks out another lover she can deceive as a temporary replacement.

### The Fear of Aging and Commodification of Youth in *The Hunger*

The link between the slow decay of AIDS and the effects of vampirism on Miriam's lovers/victims not only highlights 80s society's fears of AIDS and promiscuity but also highlights a fear of aging. This fear of aging and the commodity of youth is a newer addition to the vampire trope that is not commented on as strongly in *Carmilla*. This value of youth and fear of aging occurring as part of a 80s vampire film demonstrates that, during this time, a cultural fear the vampire embodied was the fear of aging and losing the value of youth that society prizes. In a sense, youth becomes a feature commodified by the capitalistic society of the 80s and so it would only be logical that the vampire embodies both the desirability of youth and the fear of its loss. Phillips comments on this cultural commodification of youth and the vampire's desire to consume it in the film in his description of Miriam as the epitome of a consumer culture: "The cold and elegantly beautiful Miriam stands as the central desire for consumption, and as a vampire it is her curse to continue to consume even those she loves, only to abandon them forever" (262). In Miriam's case (and her lovers') the thing to consume is the youth of the victims. This consumption of youth becomes apparent in how Miriam always chooses young companions and how John in his aging state chooses young victims. John's attempts to hold on to the eternal youth he was promised comes through particularly in his final attempts to feed. He first debates attacking a young man at Sarah's clinic but is interrupted. He does manage to assault and cut a young rollerblader on his trek home, but again, cannot complete the act due to a lack of strength. It is worth noting that these failed attempts to feed demonstrate an envy of both youth and perhaps masculinity. Maybe when he was in good health, John would have had no issue taking down a man in his prime of life but this clearly is not the case when he begins to

age. This lack of ability to feed demonstrates both the value of youth but also society's association of youth and strength. John does manage to take a final victim in his weakened state, but rather than a young man, he opts to kill his teenage violin student, Alice. The decision to kill Alice is also presented as John's punishment of the girl for commenting on his aged appearance. When Alice first enters the home, she asks John if he is "John's Dad" this moment prompts a brisk refusal from John but the conversation continues to unravel when Alice admits that she never really liked John (Scott, *The Hunger*). Alice's final conversation with John and her acknowledgement of his appearance contributes to John's decision to kill Alice and absorb her youth. Phillips also comments on how John's decision to kill Alice is a last attempt to consume her youth saying, "Yet, in his all-consuming desire to be liberated from the movement of time, he consumes the girl's youth in a failed attempt to save his own" (261). John's murder of Alice presents not only as a final attempt to save himself from the effects of time, but also embodies society's fear of aging. Part of the reason why vampires are appealing as monsters is due in part to their ageless bodies and eternal youth, and clearly Miriam uses this feature of the vampire trope to draw her victims to her as is demonstrated in her false promise to Sarah and her other lovers. However, her former lovers punish Miriam for this lie when Sarah's suicide attempt awakens them. Miriam's final moments of life are presented as a horrific act of violent justice as her decaying lovers surround her and in her disgust and fear of them she falls over the banister to the ground floor of her mansion. In her final moments, Miriam rapidly decays and her former lovers are released from their state of constant death and decay. The film's choice of having Miriam's death brought on by aging into the same state as her lovers only serves to further solidify society's fear of aging and reification of youth as the vampire is finally killed by growing old.

### Summary of the Violence Cycle and its Continuation in *The Hunger*

Although Sarah defeats her creator, the ending of the film is ambiguous much like the ending of *Carmilla*. Sarah's suicide is supposedly what prompts Miriam's death and her lovers' release from their entombment, but Sarah appears in the final shot of the film alive and in a new city with a female and male lover of her own (Scott, *The Hunger*). The film offers no explanation for how Sarah survived her suicide attempt and even more interesting is that the apartment she inhabits has a similar decorative scheme to her creator's mansion. The apparent shift in style gives rise to the idea that perhaps Sarah has unwittingly absorbed some features exhibited by her creator. Hanson comments on Sarah's assumption of Miriam's former position as a positive aspect saying, "I thrill to see that Sarah has not committed suicide in a fit of homosexual panic, but continues on into eternity, seducing women from the side of their faithful men, seducing woman after woman" (219). The idea being that perhaps Miriam's vampirism is passed to Sarah who will continue the deadly cycle of consumption and ageless violence. This ambiguous ending is also reminiscent of *Carmilla* in the sense that viewers are left to wonder if her former victim has taken up the role of the vampire. Laura imagines she hears Carmilla's footfalls outside her door, while Sarah overlooks her new hunting grounds with Miriam screaming from her place inside her own coffin in Sarah's attic.

CHAPTER III. “Y’KNOW I AM REALLY STARTING TO HATE THIS HEROIC VAMPIRE  
CRAP”: LESBIANISM AND DOMESTICATED VAMPIRES

Successful conclusions are not typical of the lesbian vampire narrative, or any vampire narratives for that matter. The vampire is, after all, a conduit for societal fears and representative of all that is “othered” and feared by society at a given time. Until recently, the other two lesbian vampire texts I have examined here uphold this motif of the queer female vampire being punished at the end of the narrative by representatives of the hegemonic social structure. The punishment and death of the lesbian vampire signals a reinstatement of the patriarchal order that she has threatened through her queerness and forbidden sexual knowledge. Barbara Creed’s book entitled, *The Monstrous Feminine*, comments on this idea of the lesbian vampire as a threat to established social codes saying: “In my view, the female vampire is monstrous—and also attractive—precisely because she does threaten to undermine the formal and highly symbolic relations of men and women essential to the continuation of patriarchal society” (60-61). As Creed states, the danger of the lesbian vampire has always been the threat of attraction and potential for social destruction. The reason society fears the lesbian vampire is not only for the queerness that marks her as “other”, but also because she holds the potential to topple patriarchal society if her victims choose her over bonds with men. This latter threat of potential destruction is the reason why earlier narratives had to end with the death of the vampire. However, what happens when the locus of violence, which kept the lesbian vampire confined to her coffin by the end of the tale, is absent from the narrative?

One of the things the lesbian vampire has embodied in both LeFanu’s *Carmilla* and in Scott’s *The Hunger*, is a societal uneasiness surrounding lesbianism. This embodiment is

displayed by the amount and type of violence enacted on the vampire by the end of the narrative. However, current social feelings towards lesbianism and homosexuality in general for that matter, have certainly changed, and modern queer vampires are reflecting this change. For example, homosexuality is no longer described, or treated as a diagnosis or illness, and although episodes of homophobia do (regrettably) still occur, such actions are often socially frowned upon. Evidence of some social strides in LGBTQA rights are also reflected in the recent Supreme Court case of *Obergefell v. Hodges* which legalized homosexual marriage nationwide on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015. While marriage equality is just one-step in achieving civil rights for LGBTQA people, this was a huge victory and evidence of a society which is becoming more accepting of nonheterosexual sexualities. Due to recent social strides in LGBTQA rights, the angle of the “queer vampire” as the main antagonist of a horror film may have lost some of its bite.

An example of how a queer vampire fits into this more accepting society is exhibited in a contemporary rendering of LeFanu’s original novella, a YouTube web series. Recently, a web series entitled, *Carmilla* was released by Smokebomb entertainment in August of 2014. The web series is described on the official *Carmilla* wiki page as, “...not the novella (although there are many similarities)” (wiki) and is considered to be a modern adaptation of Le Fanu’s novella. The series began as a low budget YouTube series sponsored by Kotex and, at the time, was only projected to last for one season. However, the series was surprisingly popular, warranting both a season zero prequel and a second season. For the purposes of my argument, the following chapter will focus exclusively on season one of the web series, as this season is the most similar to the original novella in terms of plot, characters, form and theme. Aside from the sheer popularity of the web series, what I found particularly interesting about season one of the series

is that it breaks the motif of violence against the lesbian vampire and hints at a happy ending for the vampire and her victim. Breaking the cycle of violence that seems to be present in every lesbian vampire narrative can be attributed to society's greater acceptance of homosexuality and female sexuality. While this lessened violence towards the LGBTQA characters exemplifies a positive shift in societal feelings towards homosexuality, the question of what happens to the vampire narrative when attraction to the vampire is accepted and the locus of violence shifts still requires further examination.

The *Carmilla* web series has contributed to society's current fascination with vampirism and called attention to LeFanu's work. Previously, there were a few attempted modern adaptations of LeFanu's novella, but many of these films such as *The Vampire Lovers*, *Blood and Roses* and others, likened to the novella only through the presence of a queer female vampire pursuing a virginal female victim. These older films also carry the accusation of merely being erotic glimpses into the secrets of lesbianism for the male gaze. The web series, on the other hand, seems to possess elements in plot and character that are the modern equivalent to the novella. The web series does have its share of plot differences that make it a standalone piece in its own right, but the similarities to LeFanu's work deserve some attention.

As stated previously, the web series is set in the contemporary setting of a college but still maintains LeFanu's epistolary style by having Laura do a video blog for her journalism class. This decision upholds the novella's epistolary style through a video blog and represents an updated form of letter writing, which is just one example of how the series takes features of the novella and fits them for a modern setting. Since the story is told through Laura's blog posts and videos, the setting of the entire series is Laura's dorm room. However, this stationary setting does not seem to limit the dynamics of the cast and the story, as various items in the space take

on significance and contribute to the plot line. For example, readers may not see Carmilla heading out every night to feed on college students, but they do become familiar with her soy milk carton which contains blood for her to drink. The contemporary version of Laura also acknowledges behaviors and attitudes of LeFanu's Laura through her statements about her overprotective father back home and a general naivety she possesses in her attempts to navigate university life. However, Laura's journalism class project quickly becomes a record of her investigation into the whereabouts of her missing roommate, Betty Spielsdorf, and a lack of concern and help on this matter from Silas University staff. The school then replaces Betty with Carmilla, who, like her literary predecessor, is philosophical, moody, seductive and both fascinates and frustrates Laura. As Laura attempts to reveal what has happened, not only to Betty, but also to a frightening amount of other missing girls, she begins to investigate her new roommate and the role she may have played in the disappearances. Of course Laura does not do all of this investigating unaided, she has friends who periodically enter the dorm room and become a part of Laura's goal to track down the missing girls. The characters who aid Laura include: Perry, her floor don, Lafontaine, Perry's friend and the group's resident mad scientist, and Danny, Laura's lit class TA. These characters are related to some of the characters in LeFanu's novella, Perry is based on Madame Perrodon, Laura's governess, and Lafontaine is based on Mademoiselle De Lafontaine her finishing governess. While these characters are loosely based on LeFanu's characters, they quickly establish themselves as substantial and fully formed characters in the web series.



## An End to Speciesism: Acceptance of the Lesbian Vampire

Traditionally, the lesbian vampire has been portrayed as a useful and effective source of fear for viewers and readers. Even contemporary films and books make use of the fearing “othered” groups and individuals tactic. According to Sara Century, this fear of the queer woman is still a common trope in contemporary horror films. The films use the queer woman to place fear not in viewers, but rather in other characters:

While modern horror films are more likely to feature queer women—and not just lesbian vampires—than early films in the genre, they still often frame queerness as taboo. Even these days onscreen, lesbians have something different about them, they’re set off from the rest of the characters by their sexuality. Just like the Dracula’s countess, filmmakers still set up queer women to give us that ‘weird feeling’ (“Vampires, Psychics, and Ghosts : A Look at Queer Women in Horror”)

Century claims that the inclusivity of queer female characters does not necessarily equate to acceptance of lesbianism since other characters still regard the lesbian character with wariness. While Century has raised a valid point which could very well contribute to the “good because lesbians” trope that many films featuring lesbians fall prey to, I believe that this modern day reimagining of *Carmilla* has completely removed fear from the vampire’s queerness and placed it on other areas in the film. Rather than regard Carmilla as frightening because of her queerness or even her vampire nature, Laura and her friends accept both of these traits without much of a fuss.

Carmilla does not seem to give “that weird feeling” to the other characters, in terms of her sexuality. Before Carmilla’s vampire nature is even revealed, the series emphasizes her

preference for other women in one of Laura's rant sessions when Carmilla first moves in. Amidst complaining about Carmilla's less than tidy living habits Laura brings up her numerous female "study buddies" who appear at all hours of the night and make use of Laura's bed (Episode 3). While this revelation may have shocked LeFanu's sexually naïve Laura, this contemporary version of the character is more afraid of Carmilla's unhygienic living habits than she is of the other girl's female admirers. In LeFanu's novella, Carmilla's queer sexuality was treated with fear by the male characters and Laura because of its ability to awaken sexual urges in Laura which threatened the patriarchal order. Lesbianism's threat to the patriarchal social structure is one that seems to have also disappeared from this modern version of the narrative.

Overall, the other characters in the web series do not seem to fear Carmilla because of her sexuality, but rather, she is feared for a short time because of her vampirism and possible part in the disappearance of the girls. In the original novella, Carmilla is feared by Laura namely because of the sexual awakening she brings about in the girl. This same fear is not repeated in the web series. Laura appears to be awkward in her interactions with Carmilla, but the contemporary setting makes it possible for Laura to consider a relationship with the vampire, something unthinkable for LeFanu's protagonist. For LeFanu's Laura, Carmilla's affections were frightening and strange, but this modern version of Laura is only afraid that she has misinterpreted the vampire's signals of attraction. At one point, after Laura has played bait to capture the vampire, a tied up Carmilla implies that rather than kill Laura, she was flirting with her. Laura comes to this revelation on her own, questioning: "Well if you weren't trying to eat me then what were you trying—Oh.....you were hitting on me?" (Episode 19). This realization does not lead to horror on Laura's behalf, but rather embarrassment (and a slight sense of flattery) as she proceeds to question Carmilla about her role in the disappearances. The

revelation of Carmilla's feelings for Laura are not met with horror or revulsion, but actually lead towards Laura vouching for Carmilla's innocence and release when confronted by the rest of her friends (Episode 21). After learning about how Carmilla is not the leading cause of the other girls' disappearances Laura continues to grow closer to Carmilla and is never shown displaying signs of homosexual panic, implying that homosexual urges are no longer something to be feared. In fact, the only characters who seem to view the relationship between Laura and Carmilla as a threat are Danny and the Dean. It must also be noted that neither of these two characters protest the relationship because of its queerness.

Danny is Laura's literature TA and serves as a first crush. Danny also offers to help figure out what is going on at the university and she first appears in episode seven of the series. Danny is portrayed as Carmilla's opposite and makes a big impression early on for daring to stand up to the Dean of students during a campus wide meeting (Episode 7). It becomes apparent that Laura is attracted to her by how awkward she is around her and by her failed attempts at flirting. Carmilla disapproves of Danny right away and this dislike continues throughout the first season. Danny, for the most part, is not overly fond of Carmilla either. However, her dislike of Carmilla and Laura's developing relationship is not due to Carmilla's sexuality or vampire nature, rather she dislikes the dangerous situations the vampire inadvertently places Laura in. Eventually, Danny's overprotectiveness is what causes the rift between her and Laura and leads to the end of a possible relationship between them. Even after the break up, Danny's dislike of Carmilla is primarily because Laura chooses the vampire over her. Danny makes her dislike and disappointment clear by threatening Carmilla before storming out of the dorm room saying, "Hey dead girl, if anything happens to her, I am coming back here with that stake" (Episode 24). What can be gleaned from this interaction is that Carmilla's role as a threat due to the sexual

knowledge she imparts to Laura is no longer the reason other characters disapprove of this relationship. I would venture as far to say that, at least in Danny's case, the disapproval of the relationship stems from jealousy at not being able to "educate" Laura herself.

The only other character who appears to be threatened by Carmilla and Laura's relationship is the Dean of students. The Dean threatening and imposing character is made clear when Lafontaine and Perry first attempt to dissuade Laura from asking for her help with the disappearances (Episode 4). The Dean's potential as a threat only grows when Carmilla reveals that the Dean is the powerful vampire who raised her, and the main acolyte for the cult that facilitates the disappearances. The fact that Carmilla considers the Dean to be her mother figure, and refers to her as "mother" also adds another layer of complexity to the Dean's violence, which I will discuss in greater detail later in the chapter. Although Carmilla fears the Dean, the Dean also seems to feel threatened by Carmilla's relationship with Laura. At various points within the series, the Dean attempts to thwart both Laura's blog posts and threaten Carmilla into handing over the girl. Eventually the attempts culminate with the Dean possessing Laura temporarily through a cursed necklace (Episodes 31-32). During this time, the Dean confronts Carmilla and cautions her that her relationship with Laura will not amount to anything due to Carmilla's vampiric nature, the same thing that foiled Carmilla's earlier relationship with a mortal girl: "She was a cockroach, a wretched crawling thing like this one, and you my glittering girl, are a diamond. Stone cannot love flesh" (Episode 32). The Dean's choice to bring up painful moments of past rejection for Carmilla reveals that the Dean is the only character in the narrative that represents the sexism and possible homophobia of the original narrative. Although she does not overtly dissuade Carmilla's pursuit of Laura due to opposition of queer sexuality, the Dean chooses to dehumanize Laura and Carmilla both by referring to Laura as an insect and Carmilla

as stone. The Dean goes on to explain that the reason the cult chooses female victims is a combination of both tradition and as an act of mercy because "...the world is going to grind them up anyways so it's almost a mercy" (Episode 32). The depiction of the Dean as a representation of older worldviews surrounding the dispensable nature of women in education is even more impactful considering she is one of the main antagonists of the series. Carmilla's eventual choice to defy her mother reflects both how society has rejected these views, and how Carmilla and Laura's relationship is only perceived as a threat to an archaic social order.

In the past, the men in the stories upheld the responsibility of protecting the hegemonic order in vampire narratives. LeFanu's male characters may be a bit slow to realize the threat Carmilla presents to them and society, but when they do recognize the sexual and social threats the vampire represents, they are quick to take action and decapitate her. In the web series, the only male characters seen are the members of the Zeta fraternity. These men, are a far cry from the aristocratic patriarchy members from LeFanu's novella, however, they do share the common feature of failing to understand the feminine knowledge Carmilla represents. In the web series, the Zeta frat members are first mentioned by Danny, in episode seven, when the entire school meets to discuss how to address the missing girls and other on campus issues. During the meeting, the Zetas' insist on a campus wide safety measure that would require members of the frat to escort "hotties 7.5 or higher" around campus (Episode 7). This measure proves not only to be ineffective, but also hindering to Laura's investigations since the Zetas' failed attempts at chivalry involve the boys randomly showing up in Laura and Carmilla's dorm room when neither woman is at risk. The main Zeta members that viewers see are Kirsh and Will, who have been assigned to protect Laura. Will and Kirsh's inability to protect the girls and their laughable dimwitted attempts to serve the campus function as a commentary on the patriarchy's

defenselessness in the face of a feminine force they cannot comprehend. The weakness of the Zetas and their chivalric code is further emphasized by Carmilla's anger towards the boys and her decision to bite Kirsch when he refuses to leave the dorm room (Episode 8). Carmilla's violence towards Kirsch not only frightens him but also causes him to retreat from the room, demonstrating that (at least in Laura's dorm room) the chivalric efforts of the fraternity are essentially useless in the face of the sexual/social knowledge Carmilla represents. However, it should be noted that while the Zetas, in particular Kirsch, fear Carmilla for the strength she possesses, they do not seem to outwardly despise her queerness. This lack of fear in regards to Carmilla's sexuality is one that represents a shift from LeFanu's male protagonists, who seem to view Carmilla's sexual advances on Laura as a key reason for her demise.

#### Queer Representation beyond a "Coming Out" Narrative

The web series has gained so much popularity after the first season that the creators of the show had enough viewership to start a second season. However, there were some concerns raised that the show's popularity had little to do with good writing and acting, but was simply a success due to its featuring of lesbian, bisexual and gender queer characters. Alex Cranz addresses the "good because lesbians" critique that is faced by any film or show which features homosexual characters in her article entitled, "The Carmilla Webseries: on Lesbian Vampires and Creampuffs": "Carmilla skirts dangerously close to the line of 'good but because lesbians'. It's a difficult series to actively encourage others to watch and it has nothing to do with the actresses and actors who inhabit the world written by series writer Jordan Hall". This pitfall of any film or series being considered good because it acknowledges and encourages society's goals of inclusion of LGBTQA people is one that has, unfortunately, led to subpar films being hailed as masterpieces because LGBTQA viewers were thrilled simply to see themselves

represented. While Cranz raises a valid concern about how the *Carmilla* web series could fall prey to this same rhetoric due to the show's minimal budget and rushed production, it avoids this issue by presenting a story line, which goes beyond the traditional coming out narrative.

*Carmilla* web series certainly goes beyond the “coming out narrative” by featuring a much larger plot line of the school being riddled with vampires, an alchemy club and missing coeds and rendering the characters' sexualities as secondary concerns. Daniela Costa interviewed the series writer, Jordan Hall, about the show's plot line and lauded use of queer characters, and Hall commented that the show encompasses more than just a coming out narrative saying, “‘It didn't seem to me that this was a story about people who were coming out,’ says Jordan Hall, the show's writer and co-creator. ‘It seemed to me that this was an adventure story that had a group of lesbians at its core’” (“Carmilla: a web series with bite”). According to Hall, the show is more than just the main cast's sexuality; rather, it is about the adventure of trying to save the school. Hall's “adventure story” that just happens to have a cast of sexually diverse characters emphasizes both the contemporary shift in feelings about queer characters and the normalcy of differing sexualities. Early episodes of season one do not yield scenes of the characters sitting around discussing their sexual orientations, they don't seem to be concerned over boy or girl problems, they have bigger concerns. Ironically enough, Perry seems annoyed that the group faces outrageous supernatural issues instead of these common “coming of age” college problems and in a moment of panic, orders everyone to, “‘Just... be normal. Just... BE NORMAL!’” (Episode 25). Perry's acknowledgement that the show seems to thwart the typical coming out narrative and teen problems storyline makes viewers aware that there are more to these characters than their sexual orientation.

A good example of the series normalizing of other sexualities can be observed within the character of Lafontaine. Lafontaine is presented to the audience as a gender queer character and member of Laura's investigative squad. However, while viewers rejoiced at the inclusion of a gender queer character, Lafontaine's gender identity is not the sole focus of the character's story line. For most of the narrative, Lafontaine acts as the group's resident "mad scientist" and is a key feature in decoding what is going on with the missing girls through their scientific skills. Although these features are the focus of Lafontaine's part in the drama of the series, writers did take time to acknowledge the struggles the character faces with their identity. This moment occurs during a fight between Lafontaine and their best friend, Perry, who has been struggling with her friend's identity shift from Susan to Lafontaine, confronts them about this. During the heat of the fight, Perry refers to Lafontaine as "Susan" to which they respond with: "I don't want to be Susan anymore!" (Episode 26). Featuring this fight between two friends accomplishes a couple of important features. First, the fight recognizes Lafontaine's social struggles with Perry, but this struggle does not become of the defining feature of their storyline. Secondly, this fight displays the show's ability to acknowledge none binary characters demonstrate that diverse genders and sexualities can not only be accepted, but that the characters can be defined by more than just their sexuality and gender expression. The same can be said of Carmilla's character within the series. None of the other characters are shocked by the vampire's sexual preferences, or her vampiric nature for that matter. This latter point is brought up when a shocked Laura asks her fellow vampire hunter friends why no one bothered to inform her that they knew about Carmilla's vampire nature, to which Lafontaine replies, "I just thought you didn't want to be speciesist?" (Episode 15). This absence of fear surrounding the lesbian vampire in the web



series is one that brings up another interesting question about the fear and violence in the lesbian vampire narrative. Namely, what are viewers meant to fear if the lesbian vampire is now normal?

### Shifting Locus and Types of Violence

Clearly, many things about the *Carmilla* web series have challenged what was traditionally feared about the lesbian vampire in earlier texts. The narrative is not completely devoid of violence, but the types and locus of this violence have shifted from the vampire and her sexuality onto a completely different conduit. While this shift in the violence of the narrative reflects contemporary social growth, I cannot help but wonder what this lack of violence on the vampire means for the future of vampire narratives. A tame or domesticated vampire may sound appealing, all the sensuality but with none of taboo bite but what happens when the vampire is “defanged”? In *The Monstrous Feminine*, Barbra Creed explains that the female vampire’s abject nature is what makes her such an effective monster: “The female vampire is abject because she disrupts identity and order; driven by her lust for blood, she does not respect the dictates of the law which set down the rules of proper sexual conduct” (Creed 61). Creed’s claim that a part of the vampire’s effectiveness as a monster rests in her monstrosity and ability to challenge social norms is put to the test within the web series version of *Carmilla*. The new *Carmilla* is no longer the enemy; instead, she is on the side of modern society and fighting against the violence represented by archaic societal remnants. In the web series, *Carmilla* still has her violent moments but these moments advocate a domesticated version of a vampire, one who may be violent but offers a more palatable form of violence than her predecessors.

Rather than have the vampire and the sexuality that she embodies be the main locus of violence in the narrative, the *Carmilla* web series most violent forces center on the Dean and the

cult that she sacrifices the missing students to. As previously stated, the Dean seems to be an advocate for an older social order which viewed girls as disposable and her role in the disappearances contributes to this stance. This combined with the student body's fear of the Dean, all contribute to a reading of the Dean as an example of the evil maternal figure represented by earlier vampire narratives. Jean Copjec describes the abject nature of the maternal and how the trope of the "bad mother" and anxiety surrounding breast feeding has often found a foothold in the figure of the female vampire and in this case, the Dean is a good example of this (Copjec 26).

When Carmilla tells Laura about her past (which the series presents through a comical sock puppet theater), the vampire reveals that the Dean is also her mother and a powerful vampire in her own right. Carmilla explains that while the Dean is not her biological mother, she is responsible for awakening Carmilla when she is initially turned into a vampire and teaches her how to adapt to her new vampiric nature (Episode 20). The Dean's character in the web series is actually quite similar to LeFanu's version of Carmilla's "mother". In both narratives, the older vampire not only educates Carmilla, but also plays a major role in using Carmilla as a lure to ensnaring other young aristocratic victims by faking some sort of catastrophe, for example a carriage crash. In the web series, Carmilla references this portion of the novella when she tells Laura about how the Dean would often fake a carriage crash or family disaster in order for Carmilla to befriend unsuspecting victims (Episode 20). These similarities between the Dean and LeFanu's version of Carmilla's mother both demonstrate the classic fear of the maternal and bad mother embodied by the vampire. The Dean's violence towards not only the other girls at the school, but also towards Carmilla, is also brought up during Carmilla's recitation of her backstory. Carmilla sadly tells Laura about how she once dared to disobey her mother and

planned to run off with a victim she was ordered to sacrifice, and the Dean punished her. The Dean first reveals Carmilla's vampire nature to her lover, kills the girl, and entombs Carmilla in a coffin of blood for years until Carmilla is able to free herself (Episode 20). The Dean's punishment of Carmilla conveys a couple of important details about the type of violence the older vampire embodies. The Dean is one of the few characters in the series who could be read as condemning Carmilla's sexuality and romance choices, as is evidenced by her intervention in Carmilla's previous relationship and attempts to invalidate her budding relationship with Laura. This viewpoint signals the Dean out as a vampire who could represent social fears of previous societal condemnation of homosexual relationships. For this reason, the Dean's violent actions towards both Carmilla the rest of the university can be read as a contemporary fear of past societal beliefs surrounding homosexuality and impeding social progress.

However, there is a way to break free from this monstrous mother figure and Carmilla eventually builds up the courage to fight her mother one last time and act as an advocate for a new social order and a tamer version of vampire violence. This desire to break from the maternal in order to form a new social order is one that is referenced in Angelica Michelis's article "'Dirty Mama': Horror, Vampires and the Maternal in Late Nineteenth Century Gothic Fiction":

The mother emerges here as a nightmarish fantasy that has to be overcome and surmounted in order for the little girl in particular to recognize herself as feminine. Gender identity and especially femininity is thus simultaneously based on and represented as the result of the prohibition of the mother by confining her to the past and by defining her role in the production of identity relevant as only in a negative sense. (9)

In the case of *Carmilla*, Michelis's assertion of the child viewing the mother as a monster that must be erased in order for him or her to develop an individual identity is particularly applicable. Carmilla fears her mother, and has every right to, considering that she suffered greatly for her choice to diverge from the identity her mother has trained her to assume. Despite this fear, Carmilla chooses to oppose her mother in the final battle between the students and the cult (Episode 35). Carmilla's act of rebellion not only represents her emergence into her own sexual identity, but her own violence against the Dean reads as violence which is justified as Carmilla represents a new social order which replaces the archaic one her mother represented.

The additional threat to the main characters is not just the Dean, but also the administrative forces at the school that she upholds. From the start of the series many of the acts of violence which the characters encounter are dealt out by the university administration. These early acts of violence begin shortly after the disappearance of Laura's original roommate, Betty, in episode one. Shortly after Betty disappears leaving only a card of multiple choice reasons her absence and a pile of unknown goop, Laura starts investigating and gets stuck in an endless phone loop with the university (Episodes 1-2). Laura eventually decides that the university does not care about Betty's disappearance and opts to find her on her own: "Since no one else seems to care that a girl is missing...The university doesn't want to help find Betty fine! I have 3 weeks of a journalism project and I have seen all of Veronica Mars" (Episode 2). Laura's realization that the university's bureaucracy will not help find Betty reveals that the university condones the violence done to the students through their inaction. Inaction as a form of violence, or condoning of violence, is an idea that is discussed by Slavoj Zizek in his book, *Violence*. Zizek claims that there are multiple forms of violence in society, but some of them take on more subtle forms, one such form is systemic violence which Zizek defines as: "...'systemic' violence, or the often

catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems” (2). According to Zizek, the form of violence Laura and her companions are currently up against in the web series is the systemic violence enacted by the university staff. The Dean and her cult all sacrifice the captured girls as part of a ritual which supposedly keeps things working in a specific way, so much to an extent that initially, other characters urge Laura to abandon her investigation because they have grown used to this systemic violence because it allows their society to continue to run. In a sense, the students and staff have grown so used to missing girls and other forms of this systemic violence because, as Zizek states, this form of subtle violence enables various social power structures, “We're talking here of the violence inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence” (9). In order for the Dean’s system to remain in place, Laura’s meddling is at first met with getting caught in phone trees and receiving no answers from university staff but when Laura does not fall in line with the more coercive techniques more direct forms of action and “threats of violence” do begin to occur.

When Laura decides to upload her investigation to the Silas University Ethernet, alarms go off and the entire school is immediately called to a town hall meeting where the student body is scolded for Laura’s actions (Episode 6). In the next episode, Laura once again addresses her viewers and explains that the town hall meeting did nothing to address the missing girl situation: “So, did Silas’ byzantine bureaucracy finally call a town hall to discuss the fact that girls have gone missing? Nope” (Episode 7). Laura’s frustration with the university’s refusal to act and their attempts to shut down her investigation only serve to strengthen this idea that it is not Carmilla who is the at the head of the violence directed towards the students ,but the university administration. For the rest of the series, the administrative forces of the Dean become more and

more violent towards not only Carmilla and Laura, but to the entire student body as more people go missing and “accidents” around the school, including giant mushrooms sprouting up and student riots go unchecked. This distrust of the administration at the University implies that what is truly to be feared in this contemporary version of Carmilla is not the vampire, but rather the bureaucracy that she works for and, eventually, revolts against. The university administration board being at the center of violence in the narrative demonstrates that what today’s generation of viewers fears is a crooked bureaucratic order that cares little for the general population.

An additional center of violence in the narrative is the larger power that the Dean and her staff surreptitiously answer to, the monstrous light that consumes the missing students. The “Hungry Light” is revealed as the main cause of strife at the school and it demands five virgin sacrifices every twenty years (Episode 29). The Dean and her fellow vampire followers all serve the Light and feed it chosen girls, but none except the Dean appear to know the complete ritual. This lack of knowledge about the Light is emphasized by how even Carmilla does not know what happens to the girls she is instructed to befriend and bring to her mother. Carmilla’s lack of knowledge about the force, which threatens her friends and killed her previous lover, all emphasize that knowledge of this cult is only kept by a few select older vampires, namely the Dean. This policing of knowledge becomes a running theme throughout the narrative and implies that evidence of old social orders are threatening to social advancement. It is also interesting that after Carmilla chooses to defy her mother and presumably destroy the light, the Dean issues a final warning before her death and accuses the students of overthrowing a power they do not understand (Episode 34). The students, on the other hand, rejoice simply in the fact that a new administration will have to consider their welfare and demands at last (Episode 35). These two final moments, with the Dean issuing her warning about overthrowing social structures and the

students rejoicing highlights that the threat of violence in the narrative is from outdated social orders. However, the students' apparent success in defeating these orders may end some of the violence in the narrative, however now the university has to contend with the aftermath of a revolution and social orders are called into question.

This shift of the violence being placed on agents of old social orders stands in stark contrast to the typical place of violence being on the vampire and her relationship with the victim. While this locus of violence is lessened within the web series, it has not completely disappeared. There are moments of violence between Laura and Carmilla, but these are portrayed in a way that highlight's society's difficulty in reconciling the inherent violence in the figure of the vampire, even a reluctantly heroic one. Unlike the LeFanu narrative, Carmilla seems to be much more concerned with protecting Laura rather than feeding off her, this protective streak can be seen in her gift of a bat wing charm bracelet to ward off other vampires and her saving Laura in the final battle. After hearing about a sword that could kill the Light once and for all, Carmilla confesses how much she cares for Laura by explaining that the only reason she was helping is to save her. When Laura bashfully accuses Carmilla of helping simply on her behalf the vampire responds saying, "Don't be an idiot, of course I'm doing it for you" after agreeing to risk her own life to retrieve the sword (Episode 31). Although Carmilla loves Laura and only seems to be heroic to protect her, there is one moment where she intentionally hurts the other girl by biting her unexpectedly.

This bite occurs after Carmilla fails to convince her brother, Will, not to harm Laura. The two vampires fight and Will runs off to go and tell the Dean of Carmilla's refusal to hand over Laura and Carmilla hastily bites Laura's neck before chasing after Will (Episode 21). Laura is shocked by the bite and proceeds to freak out and react with anger when Carmilla returns from

the chase. However, Carmilla justifies the bite to Laura by saying that she needed the extra energy to pursue Will (Episode 23). Even though this moment is violent and the two characters are not overly fond of each other at the time, Carmilla's bite can be read as a protective measure. In the first chapter of this piece, I explained how LeFanu's Carmilla also is violent in her relationship with Laura, but that this violence was a transformative one that differed from the violence inflicted upon her by the men. In a way, the violence of Carmilla's bite in the web series follows a similar goal. The bite demonstrates a need to protect, perhaps symbolizing that although the vampire may harm her victim this act has taken on a selfless quality quite different from violence purely for the sake of violence. Contemporary society is still fascinated with the sexuality and violence the vampire embodies, but there appears to be a desire to want to clean up the transformative sexual violence of the monster. The vampire is appealing because of its taboo combination of sexuality and violence. This relationship, while intriguing has become problematic to a society, which is trying to extricate homosexuality from violence. This is particularly problematic in Carmilla, since what draws viewers to her character is her refusal to remain in the "safe space" society has allocated for her: "The vampire story itself cannot be allocated a safe space in culture's categories, it is part of the medical discourse, psychoanalytic theory, criminal history, folklore and literature and thus threatens to dissolve any concept of discrete categories by its contaminating and invasive nature" (Michelis 17). The web series attempts to place Carmilla as an advocate for a new social order, one that no longer associates homosexuality with violence, but the problem with this is that the vampire cannot ever become completely devoid of violence. Carmilla's bite to Laura's neck is a form of violence that, although done in the name of protection, is nonetheless a violent act that reminds viewers that



Carmilla may be on their side, but she still presents a taboo combination of sexuality and violence.

“So you’re a giant black cat huh?” A Happy Ending for the Lesbian Vampire

Socially viewers /readers want to separate the inherent violence and sexuality represented by the female vampire and make her into a tame yet still sexually appealing monster. Attempts to clean up the vampire and make her into a domesticated monster explains a recent phenomenon in vampires who present little harm to humans. Attempts at a tame vampire is not a new trend, Anne Rice attempted to provide readers with a domesticated vampire through the character of Louis from her book *Interview with a Vampire*. Author Sarah Tomc’s article, “Dieting and Damnation: Anne Rice’s Interview with a Vampire” discusses Anne Rice’s attempts to domesticate the vampire through a change of diet, and addresses the possible pitfalls of attempts to separate violence from the vampire and civilize him. Tomc explains that Louis meets literary examples of older European vampires who represent the cleverness of the vampire but lack the refinement and domestication modern readers are so drawn to: “They were clever, they might be attractive, but their bodies were too hairy, their sense of smell too acute. When the chic beautiful Louis met the vampires of Eastern Europe, he was, as Rice well knew, meeting one hundred and fifty years of monster stereotype” (96). Tomc explains that Rice’s vampires stand in stark contrast to the “monster stereotype” represented by the older European vampire. This desire to civilize the vampire as continued into modern vampire movies, such as *Twilight*, which features beautiful “vegetarian vampires” who put on a noble struggle not to give in to their baser instincts and feed on their human lovers. Thankfully, the web series version of Carmilla has managed to remain somewhat undomesticated. However, this struggle between civilizing Carmilla and keeping the taboo attraction she embodies is still present in the ending of season one.

In previous vampire texts I have examined, part of navigating the violence the vampire represents involves killing her off at the end of the narrative. By denying the lesbian vampire a happy conclusion, dominant patriarchal orders and heterosexual values are reinforced. According to Creed, the consistent death of the queer vampire has become a well-known trope in the lesbian vampire narrative: “Queer vampires don’t get happy endings. They get staked into goo or ashed or abandoned for someone more alive and straight. Despite all the queer allegories inherent to vampire mythos—with them being aloof outsiders forced to hide their nature lest they be brutally murdered—queer vampires are treated like second-class citizens when compared to their straight or Bi-during-Sweeps sisters and brothers” (25). Thankfully, although Creed’s assertion that queer vampires are often treated like “second class citizens” is now shifting due to greater acceptance of homosexuals, this acceptance emphasizes progress but also requires that the queer vampire attempt to reconcile the violence traditionally attached to queer sexuality. It appears that the web series attempts to do just that by ending season one with Carmilla and Laura sharing a long awaited kiss (Episode 36). After the final battle between the Dean and her cult, it appears that Carmilla has sacrificed herself in order to protect the rest of the student body. Laura is devastated by the news of Carmilla’s demise. However, in the final episode Perry interrupts Laura’s last blog post to warn her that the Zeta’s found Carmilla unconscious at the site of the battle. Danny carries Carmilla’s lifeless form in and after Laura revives her with some blood from her soymilk container, the two are left alone to share a kiss and reunite (Episode 36). This choice to end the series not only with a kiss, but also with Laura giving Carmilla blood serves to normalize not only the queerness of the vampire but also her feeding habits, making her seem less violent and threatening. Even in this moment of deprivation of food, Carmilla neglects to prey on her love interest, opting instead to be given blood from a container rather than a person.

Opting for this food option rather than drinking from Laura is further evidence of attempts to downplay the violence inherent in the vampire. The kiss at the end also attempts to reconcile the erotic violence represented within the vampire. Carmilla is finally granted the relationship with her victim past texts have denied her, but has this reward resulted in a degree of domesticity? According to Cranz, the ending of season one was one moment in which queer vampires were finally granted the ending they have always been denied: “They kiss and all facsimile of the actors disappear. They’re just a plucky young heroine dragging an ancient vampire onto a journey of heroism that would do Joseph Campbell proud and they’re finally together—earning the happy ending all of Carmilla’s forbearers were denied”. In a way, Cranz is correct; viewers should rejoice in the “happy ending” and normalized depiction of lesbian romance that the first season wraps up on. However, what the ending of season one has yet to address is how Laura’s relationship with a vampire is going to progress? Society has made a major leap in accepting the lesbian vampire, but now how do we incorporate her into mainstream society? This is the same concern raised by Karin Hirmer in her article, “Female Empowerment: Buffy and Her Heiresses in Control” when she brings up the problem with allowing the vampire to live: “The main consequence of vampires as a group of characters who are not dusted as soon as their arch is over is that vampires now have to find a place in society” (74). Society has made strides to accept and find a place for the lesbian, but reconciling the violence of the vampire still presents as an issue. Vampires link sexuality and violence making for a taboo but seductive match up for readers and viewers, but can the queer vampire find her place in society and tackle the violence her vampiric nature represents? This answer remains to be found. Perhaps until more domesticated queer vampires are permitted to grace the screen, this remains a mystery, but viewers can take some

pride in the idea that the queer vampires who have been permitted to flourish emphasize that there is more to them than simply the modes of oversexualized monster or crazy hysteric.

CONCLUSION. PRETTY GIRL WITH A SLIGHT BITE: CAN THE LESBIAN VAMPIRE  
EVER BE STAKED?

One thing is certain from the popularization and modernization of texts like LeFanu's *Carmilla*, society is still fascinated with the lesbian vampire. The question that remains is whether contemporary society still fears the queer vampire. The web series version of *Carmilla* has a rabid fan base with many women proudly proclaiming crushes on actor, Natasha Negovanlis's, portrayal of Carmilla. These women are clearly not afraid of Carmilla, they love/are in love with her, to a point where there is now a recognized name for Carmilla fangirls; they are lovingly referred to as "Creampuffs". Carmilla is certainly not the first vampire to acquire a fandom that loves, rather than, fears them, but she may be the most contemporary example of a queer vampire who has gained this devoted of a following. While this move of acceptance and adoration of the lesbian vampire is certainly reflective of greater social acceptance of lesbianism, what does it mean for the lesbian vampire trope as a whole?

My research has presented how the lesbian vampire began as a character that was regarded with fear and revulsion partially because of her sexuality. This much is evident in Sheridan LeFanu's novella, which ended with Carmilla being silenced and decapitated by the male characters. LeFanu's Carmilla is reviled and clearly a threat to society because of her monstrous nature, but also because this nature includes her sexuality. This fear is what has led to the common trope of killing off the queer characters in the narrative in order to reassert heterosexuality as the dominant and socially endorsed sexuality. Judging by the ending of season one of the web series, Carmilla is granted a much kinder ending in this new society which features goals of acceptance and LGBTQA tolerance. Rather than ending her days headless in a coffin with her victim reminiscing on their time spent together, the modern version of Carmilla is

actually allowed to not only get the girl, but also kiss her! Contemporary culture does not want to see the lesbian vampire defeated and decapitated, they want her in a relationship and domesticated. The lesbian vampire's queer sexuality is not the feature, which modern readers and viewers fear. While the sexuality of queer vampire is not the only thing that has contributed to her fearful persona, accepting the vampire's sexuality as something no longer malignant has led to the popularization of the vampire/human relationship and negated this previously fearful feature. Accepting the queerness of the vampire definitely displays social progress, but this acceptance and domestication does seem to upset the delicate balance of desirability and fear that the lesbian vampire embodies. Previously, the vampire was desirable but this desire stems from the vampire enacting or embodying a taboo or deviant sexuality, this feature has been lessened in contemporary vampires and led to a degree of domestication. This viewpoint is one which is by no means a negative view outright, acceptance of lesbianism is social progress but what happens to the violence that is inseparable to the vampire's nature?

The cycle of violence has certainly shifted throughout the texts and times I have examined in this research. LeFanu's novella places its violence on the vampire's seduction of Laura and the men who then destroy the vampire as punishment for this seduction. Scott's *The Hunger* carries on with this trend with the aristocratic Miriam who appears elegant and stately but is extremely violent in her predatory relationship with Sarah. Both Miriam and LeFanu's Carmilla have not only reflected the violence of societal feelings surrounding lesbianism, but these women are also very violent because their vampire nature demands it of them. Carmilla and Miriam cannot ignore the fact that although they may care for their victims, they cannot help but harm them through either feeding off them or turning them into vampires. Essentially put, the older versions of the lesbian vampire are predators. They may be beautiful, desirable and

sexually attractive to their victims, but there is very much a predatory feature that makes violence essential.

Socially, contemporary readers can accept homosexuality being an overt part of the lesbian vampire's character, however, what they appear to have some difficulty managing is the violence associated with vampirism itself. The web series version of *Carmilla* presents a subtle struggle of what to do with the violence in the vampire when socially, we want so badly to accept and embrace her. Karin Hirmer comments on society's changing viewpoint and wish to accept and integrate the vampire into society by comparing them to a friendly neighbor: "All four recent shows have moved on to this concept of the vampire as the neighbor, even if the vampire doesn't live out in the open. The vampire, no longer 'the other' becomes the object or the subject of these shows, leaving the human's marginalized and certainly less interesting" ("Female Empowerment: Buffy and Her Heiresses in Control" 73). Hirmer makes a very valid point in stating that the vampire is now a monster that is able to interact with human society, but I believe there is a struggle present in this vampire as neighbor trope. Contemporary viewers may want to have the vampire as a neighbor but they probably are not willing to accept a violent neighbor. This struggle to make a space of acceptable violence for the contemporary queer vampire is evident in the *Carmilla* web series' location of *Carmilla*'s violent vampire related urges. Relatively little of *Carmilla*'s violence is directed at Laura or her need to feed off her, in fact, viewers are only granted one moment of *Carmilla* biting Laura in an act of desperation. Overall, this new version of *Carmilla* appears to be relatively tame compared to her predecessors who could not help but inflict violence on their victims, and viewers would have to admit that there may have been something obviously erotic about this violence. However, the contemporary version of *Carmilla* has had her fangs somewhat blunted by keeping her violent vampire nature

in check. Nowhere in the season one, do viewers see Carmilla feeding off Laura or other girls at the university; instead, she opts to drink blood hidden in a soy milk container for most of the season. The irony of having Carmilla drink blood from a soymilk container demonstrates that not only has Carmilla found a nonviolent way to feed, but also she has essentially taken on a form of vampire vegetarianism. This taming of the lesbian vampire is something that has complicated the alluring threat that the lesbian vampire previously wielded so well. When the lesbian vampire becomes a friendly monster without the violence of her bite, this characteristic of seductive deviance is lost. The lesbian vampire is certainly still attractive, but the absence of violence in her narrative normalizes this monster and she is no longer very monstrous. Instead the queer vampire becomes nonthreatening and merely just another pretty girl with some unusually sharp teeth. In domesticating the queer vampire an even greater opportunity is lost, this being the ability to explore the link between eroticization and violence. Contemporary narratives have found it easier to leave the link between violence and sexuality unexplored, or attempt to sever it, rather than explore why society has found the vampire alluring because of this link between violence and sex.

The contemporary lesbian vampire has been domesticated. Her violence has to be separated and placed onto an appropriate target for a couple of reasons. One of these reasons being that society has made strides towards accepting homosexuality so tying the vampire's violence to her sexuality is no longer acceptable. The second reason is trickier to enact, the vampire needs to be accepted into mainstream society but viewers/readers are still somewhat attracted to a dangerous woman. What can a contemporary society do when we still have difficulty admitting that there is something alluring about a dangerous vampire? Separating the vampire's allure from her violence is a near impossible task; we are essentially defanging the



lesbian vampire if we strike violence from the narrative, but do we really want to associate this violence with a queer character? Carmilla is certainly granted a more accepted and happy ending in the first season of the web series, but what portions of the lesbian vampire trope need to be sacrificed in order to achieve this happy ending?

Watching the locus of violence shift and diminish throughout the various incarnations of the lesbian vampire certainly reveals the social progression of acceptance of homosexuality. However, it also reveals that there is still a question of exactly how much we can separate violence from the figure of the lesbian vampire. The web series version of Carmilla is still dangerously alluring, this much can be gleaned from the way she flirts with Laura and other minor characters in the series. However, viewers can still see the effects of Carmilla's gradual domestication: she drinks blood from a soymilk container, only bites Laura when necessary, refrains from feeding on the rest of the student body and, judging by the end of the first season, takes a human girlfriend. Carmilla is still seductive and dangerous but this violence only emerges when appropriate. Will the lesbian vampire become so domesticated that she loses the bite she once possessed or will she continue to maintain the delicate balance of accepted and alluring violence? Examining these texts does make one thing abundantly clear, the vampire is one of the most adaptable and enduring monsters society has to offer. However, the domestication and acceptance of the vampire comes with a price. This price consists of society either exploring why we find erotic elements in violence and confronting this link, or simply prohibiting the violent aspects of vampirism and leaving this link unexplored and accept a vampire with dulled fangs. I don't doubt that the lesbian vampire will continue to be a figurehead in fiction, but what sort of character will emerge from the coffin?

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> There are multiple examples of the lesbian vampire being present in narratives as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century in into contemporary television shows, novels and movies

<sup>2</sup> Authors who have written extensively about the Countess include Raymond McNally and Kimberly Craft. McNally's book *Dracula was a Woman*, while considered informative, has been accused of further sensationalizing the facts of the Countess's life. Craft provides a more factual approach to the Countess in her books *Infamous Lady: The True Story of Countess Erzsebet Bathory* and *The Private Letters of Countess Erzsebet Bathory*.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of attempts to rehabilitate and reclaim the Countess's life see Rebecca John's 2010 book entitled *The Countess* and Julie Delphy's 2011 film, also, entitled *The Countess*. Both of these texts attempt to cast a more sympathetic view on the Countess's life and possible deeds.

<sup>4</sup> "'The Hunger' is an agonizingly bad vampire movie, circling around an exquisitely effective sex scene. Sorry, but that's the way it is, and your reporter has to be honest" (Roger Ebert, May 3 1983) "The movie reeks with chic, but never, for one minute, takes itself too seriously, nor does it ever slop over into camp" (Richard Canby, April 29<sup>th</sup> 1983, *New York Times*)

<sup>5</sup> Author Charlotte Bunch discusses lesbianism as a political act and many of the focuses of lesbian feminism in her 1972 essay, "Lesbians in Revolt"

<sup>6</sup> See Robert Latham's book, *Consuming Youth: Vampires, Cyborgs, & the Culture of Consumption* for additional information on the androgyny and gender fluidity Bowie brought to the *The Hunger*. Latham explains that the choice to cast David Bowie as John was intentional as it helped to emphasize the gender fluidity and ambiguity of the vampire that Scott hoped to communicate through his film.

## WORKS CITED

- Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Print.
- Baring-Gould, Sabine. *Book of Werewolves: Being an Account of Terrible Superstition*. N.p.: Omnigraphics Inc, 1973. Print.
- Brode, Douglas, and Leah Deyneka, eds. *Dracula's Daughters: The Female Vampire on Film*. N.p.: Scarecrow Press, 2013. Print.
- Brodman, Barbara, and James E. Doan, eds. *Images of the Modern Vampire: The Hip and the Atavistic*. Maryland: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014. Print.
- Bunch, Charlotte. "Lesbians in Revolt." 1972. *The Feminist Theory Reader*. Ed. Carole Mccann and Seung-kyung Kim. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2013. 129-47. Print
- Calafell, Bernadette Marie. *Monstrosity, Performance, and Race in Contemporary Culture*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.
- Carmilla*. Dir. Spencer Maybee. Perf. Natasha Negovanlis and Elise Bauman. Youtube. Kotex, n.d. Web.
- "Carmilla Wiki." - *Wikia*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Mar. 2016.
- Case, Sue-Ellen. "Tracking the Vampire" *Feminist and Queer Performance: Critical Strategies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.
- Century, Sara. "Vampires, Psychics, and Ghosts: A Look at Queer Women in Horror | Bitch Media." *Bitch Media*. Bitch Media, 20 Oct. 2015. Web. 09 Mar. 2016.

Copjec, Jean. "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety." *October* 58 (1991): 24-43. Print.

Costa, Daniela. "Carmilla: A Web Series with Bite | Daily Xtra." *Carmilla: A Web Series with Bite | Daily Xtra*. Dailyxtra, 25 Nov. 2014. Web. 09 Mar. 2016.

Cranz, Alex. "The Carmilla Webseries: On Lesbian Vampires and Creampuffs." *FemPop Magazine*. Fempop, 03 Dec. 2014. Web. 09 Mar. 2016.

Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. London ; New York, NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1993. Print.

Dollimore, Jonathan. "Promiscuity and Death." *Death, Desire, and Loss in Western Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2001. N. pag. Print.

Gelder, Ken. *Reading the Vampire*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Grenfell, Laura. "Carmilla: The 'Red Flag' of Late Nineteenth Century Vampire Narratives?" *Tessera* (2000): 152-67. Web.

Halberstam, Judith. "Reading Counterclockwise: Paranoid Gothic or Gothic Paranoia?" *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. 107-37. Print.

Halberstam, Judith. "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's Dracula" *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995. 86-106. Print.

Hanson, Ellis. "Lesbians Who Bite: Abjection as Masquerade." *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1999. N. pag. Print.

- Heller, Tamar. "The Vampire in the House: Hysteria, Female Sexuality, and Female Knowledge in Le Fanu's 'Carmilla.'" *The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction*. By Barbara Leah Harman and Susan Meyer. New York: Garland Pub., 1996. N. pag. Print.
- Himer, Karin. "Female Empowerment: Buffy and Her Heiresses in Control." *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*. Ed. Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger. Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania, 1997. N. pag. Print.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- McNally, Raymond T. *Dracula Was a Woman: In Search of the Blood Countess of Transylvania*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983. Print.
- Michelis, Angelica. "'Dirty Mamma!': Horror, Vampires, and the Maternal in Late Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fiction." *Crit Surv Critical Survey* 15.3 (2003): 5-22. Web.
- Latham, Rob. *Consuming Youth: Vampires, Cyborgs, and the Culture of Consumption*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2002. Print.
- LeFanu, Joseph S. *Carmilla*. Kansas City: Valancourt, 2009. Print.
- Leal, Amy. "Unnameable Desires in Le Fanu's Carmilla." *Names* 55.1 (2007): 37-52. Web.
- Phillips, Kendall. "'You Said Forever': Postmodern Temporarily in Tony Scott's *The Hunger*." Ed. Douglas Brode and Leah Deyneka. *Dracula's Daughters: The Female Vampire on Film*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. N. pag. Print.

Tomc, Sarah. "“Dieting and Damnation: Anne Rice’s Interview with a Vampire”." Ed. Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger. *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*. Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania, 1997. N. pag. Print.

Weiss, Andrea. *Vampire and Violets: Lesbians in Film*. New York City: Penguin Books, 1993. Print.

Žižek, Slavoj. *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. New York: Picador, 2008. Print.