CARNAL CREEPS: HOW SEXUALLY-CHARGED MONSTERS EVOLVED WITH SHIFTING SEXUAL ATTITUDES

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I. The Lascivious Landscape of Monsters

Horror is not often taken seriously. Indeed, it is easy to laugh at the established tropes of horror, especially modern entries in the genre, presenting us with such feats as promiscuous teenagers being skewered, paranormal activity in new houses, and monstrous parasites bursting from a human body. Beneath these repetitive and arguably distasteful story elements, however, lies something more being said. Perhaps the paranormal activity in the new house represents the entrapments and anxieties of homeownership. Perhaps the monstrous parasite represents the fear of having one’s body invaded by some new, unseen thing, like many people may have felt during the onset of the AIDS crisis. And maybe the promiscuous teenagers being skewered is a reflection on the sexual prudishness (or caution, depending on how one views such things) of the culture in which it was created. Long before these modern examples, horror was revealing the sexual anxieties of its cultures through literature. Horror, along with other speculative fiction, including science fiction, is one of the literary genres which can best serve as a barometer for social anxiety during its time. Horror is a genre that tells a tale more than just the plot in its pages. It provides a glimpse of the fears of the society in which it grew, for it delivers, and perhaps attempts to exorcise, the fears of its contemporary reader. It can provide insight into the aspects of a culture that may otherwise be ignored due to their taboo nature. Like nightmares, horror can be a release from the things we fear but are unable or unwilling to identify or articulate.

Horror generates representations, sometimes anthropomorphized, of the underlying fears of a society such as disease, poverty, xenophobia, race and class issues, and, naturally, sexual anxieties. Sexuality was as much of a prime source of anxiety as any other in the western world, particularly during the period when some of the most influential horror
literature appeared, such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. Many of these stories have been analyzed for their sexual under-(or over-)tones by countless scholars over the decades. Taken together, however, and a survey of the sexual fears of a culture begin to emerge, and we can notice trends and shifts through the decades. As the sexual anxieties change, so, too, does the horror…and so, too, do the monsters. The monsters or entities within horror stories provide us with a landscape of the sexually frustrated subconscious, beginning with a Romantic work and then into the Victorian period and post-Great War.

By examining the sexual fears represented in horror, a roadmap to the psychosexual journey of the stories’ cultures begins to emerge, particularly in the Victorian period and the western world after the Great War. Both periods are marked by significant changes in sexual trends and propriety. As the commonplace acceptability of sexuality and gender began to shift, so too did the public’s perceptions, and so too did its horror and what it found to be horrific. The writers of these periods astutely tapped into the fears and represented them with monsters, ghosts, and acts of horror, whether they were aware they were adding to their zeitgeist or not. And so, the monsters in the horror of these cultures, particularly the monsters that represent sexual fears, begin to evolve with those sexual fears, and many are still appearing today. As H.P. Lovecraft said in his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” “It has always existed, and always will exist” and that horror “drives writers of totally opposite leanings to try their hands at it in isolated tales…” (18). In this paper, I will argue that analyzing the horror literature of the Victorian and post-Great War periods will provide us a roadmap to the sexual psychological journey of those cultures. Both periods are marked by significant changes in sexual trends and propriety, such as the rise of feminism and the public trial of Oscar Wilde for the crime of homosexuality.
II. Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, the Proto-Victorian and Her Maternal Monster

The Victorian Period was a time of great change, and the public and the media they consumed reflected the ways that this change was dealt with. The class system became more rigid and the class divides became deeper due to an explosion of urbanization and industrialization. Scientific advancements increased to a level that made the general public who were not scientifically inclined a bit wary, and newly emerging conversations about social justice and equality made some fearful of losing the status quo, especially on the heels of the French Revolution. Author, historian, and women’s studies professor Judith Walkowitz explains, "Historians and cultural critics" have linked these anxieties "to a range of psychological and social crises troubling literary men and their social peers in the 1880s: religious self-doubt, social unrest, radical challenges to liberalism and science, anxiety over imperial and national decline" and more (17). And along with all of these anxieties there was anxiety concerning sexuality, gender expectations, and what was and was not considered moral decency.

Violations of these sexual and gender norms began to appear in Victorian horror, and it raises the question of why. Was it simply because any horror writer will naturally gravitate towards including any and all things that would unnerve an audience, including sexual deviancies? Or were the writers attempting to make a statement and seeking to challenge sexual norms and their audiences? The most likely answer is that it is a combination of both and depends on the writer. The writers of these works could no more effectively remove themselves from the cultures of their societies as a fish can remove itself from water, though Henry James, according to Walkowitz, may have tried when he moved to London (16).
But we can begin even earlier with a novel that Susan J. Wolfson, a Shelley scholar who edited the Longman Cultural Edition of the title, claims to be pre-Victorian but also proto-Victorian due to its themes and style (xv). *Frankenstein* is not only a milestone in horror, but also unique for its time thanks to its female author. Women writers were not as common in Romantic England, and they were even less common as horror writers (Wolfson xxiii). Due to the combination of Shelley’s gender and the content of her book, this makes *Frankenstein*, the book itself, a challenge to contemporary sexual decorum. Women writers, when tolerated, were to write of issues of the domestic sphere, qualms of love and class, issues that those in the middle would face as they attempted to rise to the top. Love, marriage, and motherhood were all acceptable, not excitement, life-and-death scenarios, violence, or existential crises. "In sending forth her hideous progeny – monster and women – Mary Shelley has, however..." says scholar Vanessa Dickerson, "qualified the passivity she reveals in the opening lines" (82).

Surprisingly, Suparna Banerjee (a Victorianist and women’s studies scholar in Kolkata and prominent voice in Indian perspectives on English works) would later argue that Shelley was not straying too far from the domestic sphere with her single horror novel, after all (2). There are the horror components that have only relatively recently become standard, but the story is not a typical horror story, even before there was such a thing. There is suspense, violence, isolation, and all the other elements we have come to expect, but beneath it all lies an allegorical tale that subverts gender roles and twists the domestic framework into horrific and virtually unrecognizable ways. "Shelley tried to negotiate between the conflicting claims of the ideal of domestic femininity and the public value of self-assertive activity" and "detects a parallel between the conflicted dialectic of private (feminine) and public (masculine) values in the
domestic relations portrayed..." (Banerjee 9). The twisting of gender expectations would have troubled Romantic readers, even if they were not aware of it.

Beneath its surface of horror and science fiction, \textit{Frankenstein} is a maternity tale (Spock 268). It is a twisted tale of \textit{terrifying} maternity. Shelley wrote what she knew, particularly what many women knew during the time; motherhood. She tapped into a deep fear and strict taboo which was enough to unsettle male and female readers. Shelley's book is most effective because she is coming from a familiar place, with familiar themes, but she uses it to horrify her audiences. She uses her novel of reanimated flesh and artificially-constructed life to convey a message of motherhood that she would not be able to convey otherwise. As Banarjee says, in \textit{Frankenstein} the "'vitalist debate' between matter and spirit is played out in the larger, but related, context of Nature-Culture binary opposition that is one of the cornerstones of anthropocentric...thought reflected...in the Baconian paradigm of science" (Banarjee 10). In other words, Shelley used a pseudo-scientific framework (what we could later refer to as science fiction) to explore a more spiritual question of right and wrong that science, including the Baconian Method\textsuperscript{1} presented by Francis Bacon, could not answer. She did not so much disguise her message as horror, but used horror as a protective shield for the message

As author and scholar of Victorian sexuality Jill Matus suggests, Shelley creates a literary representation of the taboo fears of women at the time; the unspoken and terrible fears that many women felt when confronted with the prospect of motherhood, childbirth and child-rearing were

\textsuperscript{1} Oxford Reference, citing The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, defines the Baconian Method: "The method of induction advocated by Francis Bacon, especially in Part II of the Novum Organon. The aim of science is to establish laws; for this purpose an exhaustive enumeration of instances of phenomena, together with the way in which they vary, and the occurrence of negative instances, must be made. Experiments then test the results that emerge. The method is a forerunner of Mill's methods. It is sometimes erroneously supposed that the Baconian method is confined to simple enumeration of instances selected in a mechanical fashion, and generalization therefrom." http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095440685
even more frightening situations in the Romantic period than they are today, thanks to our medical advancements (230). Women who became pregnant were faced with an uncertain future, being often torn between the desire to care for a child and the “human” desire to reject a child when society makes it a burden, but were demonized for expressing such conflicts (Matus 4). Women faced the very danger of dying during childbirth thanks to the high mortality rates, which would be made even more dreadful if the woman did not truly wish to be a mother in the first place. But most women, no matter what, would never dare utter a word of these concerns.

Women were faced with so few choices during the Romantic period; they could be maiden, mother, crone, or, to a lesser degree of social acceptance, spinsters (Matus 232). But the role of mother was the most sacred of all of these. The role of mother was given nearly holy status, while paradoxically the act of sex was sinful and not to be spoken of. To say anything ill of motherhood, especially to admit that one feared it or did not want to be a mother, would be forsaken by the culture. There was no higher attainable goal than motherhood for a woman, and to confess to otherwise was nearly sacrilegious (Matus 233). The patriarchal society of Romantic England could not or was unwilling to comprehend or accept the notion that a woman may want to make other choices than to be a mother, despite the cultural awareness of the dangers of pregnancy.

*Frankenstein* is about the horrors that motherhood can bring. What happens when a human being creates life, brings a new life into the world, and then finds it repulsive? Victor Frankenstein loses his mother to death early in his life, and then seeks to learn how to create life. There are two possible motivations here: one is that he is hoping abstractly to someday be able to restore his mother from death, or at least prevent such a loss from happening again permanently. The other is that Frankenstein is attempting to *be* his mother and carry on her existence through
his own. This includes her ability to create life, an ability that was viewed as exclusive to females. In the 1831 revised version of the novel, Victor expresses the importance of parenthood when discussing his own childhood: a child was "an innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them [the parents] by heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery..." (Shelley 193). Unfortunately for himself and his "child," Victor does not live up to his childhood ideal of parenting.

Victor brings life into the world and then rejects it. He abandons the creature and leaves him to hopefully die in helplessness, not so dissimilar to modern stories of mothers abandoning newborns in dumpsters on the local news. "The reasons why parents sometimes get off on the wrong foot with [a] child are quite varied...Being human, they have irrational expectations and can't help feeling let down" (Spock 269). But in those situations, society sees the mother as the monster. Victor partakes in similar behavior, though his was with far more effort and choice. Victor takes great effort, resources, and dedication to create life: not something that could happen by accident. He then abandons his creation when it becomes a real, breathing lifeform, repulsed that it did not turn out the way he wanted and the burden of the responsibility laying heavily upon him. Essentially, he leaves his newborn child to fend for itself or die.

But have readers held Victor accountable to abandoning maternal instincts as they would if he were a woman? Women who commit such actions, fictional or real, are utterly villainized by society and seen as monsters. It is important to note, then, that Shelley, as a woman writer, did not let Victor off easily from his choice, and the character suffers greatly the consequences of his actions: "Alas! The strength I relied on is gone; I feel that I shall soon die, and he, my enemy and persecutor, may still be in being" (Shelley 180). Female readers could, perhaps, relate to Victor on such a level that they could understand why he would take such actions, but must
nevertheless suffer for them as they would have in the real world. Shelley appears to have given Victor the symptoms of post-partum depression, before psychoanalysis even existed and such a thing could be identified (Spock 268). He fears what he has brought into the world and what effect it will have on his life, all of it coming so sudden after the "birth" that it is like a state of shock. Shelley is portraying through Victor what many women went through after birth, but what was nearly a century away from being diagnosed.

The ability to create life was something so strange and mysterious throughout so much of human history, that its mystique had still lingered well into the Romantic period. There was an underlying tendency to both adore and fear women for this ability, a sort of atavism from an earlier time before childbirth was fully understood, which clung to the western subconscious, making it seem as something primal (Matus 16). This would have women be seen as something closer to nature than men were (men were meant to conquer nature), and so another unique element to *Frankenstein* emerges. Victor is simultaneously stealing a woman's ability to create life, something that may seem unnerving to some readers, as it is a man entering a realm in which he should not want to go. But in order to steal this ability, Victor must conquer nature itself, defying the natural order, playing god, claiming power, something that a patriarchal society has often cheered. The critical "consensus has been to view Frankenstein's science as a negative manipulation of nature, an attempt, specifically, to usurp woman's creative power through scientific technology" (Banerjee 1). He therefore is pursuing a feminine goal through masculine means.

There are an abundance of sexual anxieties that Shelly is tapping here, the least of which is the dominance of men over women despite (or perhaps because of) the fear they had of feminine power. For as powerful as men could be, as conquerors and heads of households,
without the feminine power to create life, they were essentially powerless. Victor had the potential to strip that power away from the realm of women, but he found the consequences were horrifying. Women in the real world, and actual readers of the novel, may have found the consequences of their own motherhood roles horrifying, as Wolfson includes, in her edit of *Frankenstein*, the article from a medical doctor, Dr. Spock, encouraging women not to be fearful of their babies (268). To express their horror at their creations, if they had any, would make *them* the monsters.

Just as women's complicated and very human emotions to childbirth and marriage were made largely invisible to English society, so too were women themselves, and so too were the women in *Frankenstein*. Victor's mother, Walton's sister Margaret, and Victor's beloved Elizabeth are ironically central to the actions of the novel, but are still mostly unseen, since their presence, or particularly their absence, drives much of the motivations for Victor and the monster. As feminist scholar Vanessa D. Dickerson points out, “Like ghosts, the females in the novel are quintessentially ambiguous figures: present and absent...physically and politically inanimate mortals” (80). The narrator's sister is the one the captain is relaying the story to, and therefore to the reader, but Margaret is never described nor does she ever respond. Victor's mother dies early on, but still provides deep psychological motivation for Victor's actions, and, therefore, all the events of the novel. Elizabeth is present, but barely, and her death at the hands of the monster is what we could anachronistically refer to as she being "fridged": her death is intended to provide motivation for Victor and further the story along.

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2 In pop culture, specifically comic books, the term “Women in Refrigerators,” coined by writer Gail Simone, refers to a female character dying or being otherwise harmed to motivate a male character or move his story forward. [http://lby3.com/wir/](http://lby3.com/wir/)
None of these female characters is ever truly fleshed out or developed in any way. They are treated as invisible, and their lack of representation is indicative of the wholesale lack of representation that women during this period in England faced in nearly all aspects of life. Women faced drastically disproportionate positive representation in literature, government, and the law, especially by today’s standards. These characters act as mere means to various ends, simple tools to be used to get something accomplished, which is exactly how women may have felt at the time. Modern author and Pulitzer Prize-winner Junot Diaz once said that to make someone feel like a monster, you deny them representation in media, “deny them, at the cultural level, any reflection of themselves”\(^3\). How ironic that this book about a literal monster accomplishes turning women into "monsters" by not portraying them or giving them voices, especially since they are so crucial to the action.

Shelley may have been simply following the writing conventions of her time, but certainly she understood the invisibility plight of women. Perhaps not ironically, Shelley's authorship of this novel full of invisible women was, and in some cases has continued to have been, called into question. The patriarchy attempted to make her invisible and silence her from her own work, applying credit to her husband Percy (Wolfson xxxii). Shelley essentially had to come out as the author of the work, proving herself to be its creator and being accepted as such only with her husband's visible approval (Wolfson xxiii). The written word was one of her only options to make her voice public during this time, and there was still an attempt to remove it from her.

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One female character who does receive some visibility in the book is poor Justine, Victor's younger brother's nanny, who is another victim of silencing, unable to protect her charge. She is rendered very visible while on trial, confessing to a crime she did not commit: She was "exquisitely beautiful. Yet she appeared confident in innocence and did not tremble... for all the kindness which her beauty might otherwise have excited was obliterated in the minds of the spectators by the imagination of the enormity she was supposed to have committed" (Shelley 62). Justine is, essentially, especially considering the "gaze" of the onlookers, is now viewed as a monster, despite her outward beauty.

The other more visible female is Safie. Born of Middle-Eastern descent, she is a foreigner who is attempting to acclimate to European, rural culture, and she is also given the most strength and character of any woman in the novel. Inspired by her mother, Safie's "maternal legacy enablers [her] to reject her unscrupulous father...who would immure Safie 'within the walls of a harem,' a place of exclusion and restriction" (Dickerson 87). The creature is able join her on her quest to learn English and become accustomed to British life, and so comparisons between the two become natural. She and the monster are both foreign in some way. She is simply an immigrant from another culture and country, while the creature is truly a foreign lifeform due to his unique conception and "birth." The undeniable link between a foreigner and a monster is hard to ignore, since both characters are literally put side by side and embark on a similar educational journey together. These speak volumes for how the Romantics viewed foreigners, and foreign women especially. Her backstory is one that is nearly as rich as the monster's, and involves sexual enslavement and arranged marriages. She is portrayed as exotic, and that is surely how the contemporary reader would have seen her, and all the sexual assumptions that came with that assumption were applied to her. Safie "rebels" and "bodies forth in a way that the other women
in the novel do not...more active and [with] substantial agency" (Dickerson 88). More so than any other character in the novel, she and the creature are equal, simply because she is a foreign-born woman. Because of her exotic nature, she is equal parts more monstrous, mysterious, and sexualized.

Sex and reproduction raise their heads in this novel in one other regard, as the monster demands that Victor create him a mate to ease his loneliness. Beyond wishing for a fatherly (motherly?) figure, the creature’s primary goal is to end his solitude. Victor, however, fears that, should the monster be able to breed, its race would overrun the planet and wipe out humanity. Such is a notable fear often attributed to foreigners or the “other” in western culture. Stereotypes are still abound of foreigners, immigrants, those of lower economic classes, those of other religions, etc. reproducing in far greater number and far faster than those who consider themselves the normative population, breeding out those who see themselves as normal. It is easy to see the parallel here, of the “others” and monsters exposing the same fear, attributing both with a more animalistic quality.

Shelley created a monster that, consciously or not, is a literary manifestation of sexual, gender, and maternal fears for its contemporary readers. *Frankenstein* is just one example of a monster representing these fears, and, like Victor’s creature, future monsters would eventually appear that represented the fears of their respective cultures, as well. Frankenstein’s monster’s counterparts from the Victorian period onward display an evolution of sorts as the sexual tensions in England shift. Science and psychology will begin to take hold, and those within different classes and genders will begin to challenge the status quo.

III. Victorian Vampires and the Invasion of the Domestic
As we enter the Victorian period, some sexual shifts begin to happen. The word "Victorian," says Victorianist Michael Mason, "must convey the idea of moral restrictiveness which necessarily and even primarily applies to sex" (3). Women who were utterly invisible and limited in representation within fiction and as writers began to become more visible and find their places in the zeitgeist. The sexism and was still rampant, but there is one rather significant correlation: Victoria came into power. The immensely popular queen's reign was one of expansion and great change for England, beginning with the change of a powerful woman in power. Industrialization and urbanization increased the class divide, while the expansion of the British Empire led to a clashing of cultures and an interest in other worlds. Science, medicine, and psychology as we know them began to boom.

With this change came conflict, including conflict among the sexes. Many of the sexual and gender traditions remained, but many women began to question their roles in society and push against these rules. According to historian Judith R. Walkowitz, women began forcing themselves into public spaces, refusing to take no for an answer, making themselves seen and heard, despite the fact that "public spaces" were seen as dangerous and immoral spaces for women (46). Women began critiquing through writing and otherwise, becoming more vocal, about their places in society, and began criticizing the restrictions placed upon them. These restrictions included their limited choices in roles, such as wife, mother, governess, etc.. Women were prohibited on a cultural level from engaging in passionate emotions, especially anger, and faced consequences in slip ups, which, not surprisingly, led to more anger. Women were expected to be pure and virginal, but also serve their husbands sexually and become mothers; to discuss feminine anatomy, hygiene, or sexual desires was also culturally prohibited. Women
were not expected to and were highly discouraged from actually enjoying sexual intercourse, since “personal sexual fulfillment was not at stake” (Mason 227).

And so it is not surprising that the horror literature of the Victorian period began to represent these shifts and changes in society and the fears and anxieties associated with them. There was a "shifting in some important ways, the prevailing imaginary landscape of London from one that was geographically bounded to one whose boundaries were indiscriminately and dangerously transgressed" (Walkowitz 29). These fears begin to manifest as Victorian literary monsters. These fears were activated by the books containing these literary figures, increasing their fear while reading, making them more effective as horror, but this was also perhaps a form of catharsis. By giving the fears form, even literary form, they are materialized and therefore easier to cope with and comprehend. These changes in society were given substance and materialized on the pages of horror novels, allowing the readers to better comprehend and articulate what it was that truly made them anxious.

This fear of women in power, the mysteries of the feminine, and the fear that dissatisfied women could affect the natural order became manifest in the novella *Carmilla* by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. *Carmilla's* themes of female empowerment and shrewdness were prevalent. While Shelley's tale decades before told a tale of female invisibility, Le Fanu provides us a female-centric story of a female entity who uses her invisibility to her advantage. For the title character of the novella, a vampire, is able to maneuver and seduce despite being under the watchful eye of a man, Laura's father, thanks, in no small part, to the assumptions made about women's passiveness and lack of ambition. Elizabeth Signorotti, professor of English at Binghamton University, explains that "Laura's and Carmilla's lesbian relationship defies the traditional structures of kinship by which men regulate the exchange of women to promote male
bonding" (07). This vampire story, which predates Dracula by two decades, lays some of the sensual and sexualized groundwork for this erotic monster type that Stoker would later use in his own novel (Geary 19). All the while, the two address similar but still distinct sexual-social fears.

Carmilla, actually Mircalla, adopts all of the perceived weaknesses of the female sex and adapts them to be strengths. She uses her patriarchal-imposed invisibility to maneuver about silently in the shadows to pursue her desires, and "to usurp male authority...excluding male participation" (Signorotti 607). She is taken into the family home with little hesitation or suspicion, treated as a cherished guest and nearly a second daughter. Carmilla represents a fear that was lingering in the minds of the Victorian patriarchy, this idea that women would claim whatever power was available to them, power that men themselves had imposed upon them by limiting their options. It was a fear of a woman's resourcefulness.

There is an idea presented in Carmilla that women can go and do things that men cannot, which was contrary to the notion of men's supremacy. Carmilla is able to move about the house and into Laura’s room, stalking her prey, all because there was not the same amount of suspicion placed upon her as there would be if she were a male. She is able to catch her "coveted victim" Laura off guard in "artful courtship", with no one on the outside questioning their closeness (Le Fanu 82). Lesbianism was an unspoken taboo that was rarely acknowledged as a reality in Victorian England (Signorotti 616). So, the possibility that Carmilla may have lesbian machinations for Laura and try to seduce her was simply not even considered, and Carmilla is allowed to have free reign and open access to her young hostess: "I saw Carmilla, standing, near the foot of my bed, in her white nightdress, bathed from her chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood" (Le Fanu 44). Here is an example of a woman using what was otherwise oppression
(societal invisibility) to her advantage, proclaiming her perceived weakness as a power to fulfill her desires.

Society was expressing a fear of social unrest stemming from gender inequality, ultimately leading to a brand of feminism dubbed “the New Woman” by century’s end, says feminist scholar Jean Lorrah (33). The patriarchy feared that women, many who saw Queen Victoria and her accomplishments as queen as inspiring, may undermine the social order because they were not happy with the roles allotted to them. These women may use the very systems designed to keep them oppressed and silent as weapons against the establishment, forcing their ways onto unsuspecting men, and, like vampirism, such desires may prove to be contagious.

Indeed, even in modern times, vampires have been found to be more frightening to what we refer to as conservative audiences, as they hit the nerve of certain conservative fears, just as they did for some audiences in the Victorian period. The idea of sexuality and gender being weaponized by women to advance women's social statures to a degree more equal to men was an outrageous and terrifying notion. And subverting what is natural by using the status quo to their advantage in a way to advance their own desires is the Victorian vampire's modus operandi.

Vampires are foreign infiltrators that represent the corruption of national traditions thanks to foreign influence, something that the ever-expanding British Empire was facing as it stretched itself around the globe, inevitably inviting other cultural influences. Vampires blend in and use seduction to get what they want, corrupting others along the way, and spreading their evil, which seems about what most nationalistic fears stem from both then and now. They are not us, but

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4 In 2009, a survey of horror films was conducted which revealed that, in the modern U.S., vampire movies were more popular when a Democrat is in office and zombie movies are more popular when a Republican is in office (West).
they can look like us, which means they are free to roam about and prey on unsuspecting people, causing those very people to forsake the traditions in which they were raised, bringing more and more to their side like an epidemic. As scholar and vampire enthusiast J. P. Telotte explains, a vampire represents "a fundamental perversion of normal human participation in the world" (10). The above description can match arguments raised to support a variety of social fears, from other religions, to feminism, to homosexuality.

So, a vampire's methodology bears a striking resemblance, and is, it seems, an exaggerated reflection, to the spread of sexually-liberated thought, seen as a rapidly multiplying plague by some (Mason 39). Sexual liberation was seen by others as sexual corruption, and along with social advancements, the economic and scientific advancements also challenged traditions and beliefs of the time, furthering the anxiety. There was a notion that the only a return to the old ways could save society from its inevitable collapse, due to its immoral and ungodly direction. Only the old status quo, the old beliefs, and the old systems could protect the people from the onslaught of sexual and gender deviancies that were plaguing society, because new-fangled science or all the money in the world could not save one's immortal soul.

The character Jonathan Harker says as much in one of his journal entries early in the novel Dracula: "And yet, unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere 'modernity' cannot kill" (Stoker 41). Knowing this, the other, and obviously most prominent Victorian vampire novel by Bram Stoker becomes even more interesting. On one hand, the novel could be read as being written from a conservative mindset, conservative here, meaning, the conservation of traditional English culture: the vampire Dracula is a representation of many conservative Victorian fears, as he scoffs at English conventions, seeking to seduce others to come to his dark and foreign ways. He represented "the specter of a
chilling, purposeless materialism confronted by many whose view of humanity and the world no longer was dictated by Christian doctrines,” says professor of English and vampire scholar Robert F. Geary (22). But then again, considering what Stoker scholar Barry Mcrea claims of Bram Stoker's background, that he was a man of possible gay persuasion who was closely affiliated with the openly gay writer Oscar Wilde, it could also be a skewed and twisted version of the domestic sphere and an outsider's frightening view of heterosexuality (253). In this context, rather than Dracula being a tale of preserving the old ways, it could be read as a tale of how frightening the old ways can be to an outsider who cannot assimilate.

For the former, Dracula could be seen as a parasitic bottom-feeder, literally draining on the base of a healthy society (young people) in order to survive. He accomplishes this by completely disregarding all social norms of regulations of approaching women, as any good predator must. He invades privacy, able to slip in through locked doors and windows in the dead of night, able to take what he needs from his female victims. Dracula can assume other shapes and forms, able to blend in and go undetected. Whereas Carmilla used her passive gift of being a female to move about undetected, Dracula must make more of a concentrated effort and become something other than European male to accomplish this. Another Stoker scholar, Kathleen Spencer, says, "The construction of categories defining what is appropriate sexual behavior...what constitutes the essential being...is no neutral, scientific discovery of what was already there," and Dracula subverts these constructs (111). Dracula cannot be passive in his disguises; he must take action to become something else, which again highlights the fears of male and female sexual deviancies: women used their forced-upon status to recruit others, whereas men use force.
But Dracula is more visible to society than Carmilla, since his base form appears to be that of a European male of high class. This puts him in a place of power, for, as scholar and the editor for Longman’s edition of *Dracula*, Andrew Efenbein, explains, "British men regarded themselves as champions of freedom and liberty even as they profited from a system that allowed women little education, no say in public affairs, scant legal protections..." etc. (412). But he is also a foreigner, and his infiltration of the people of Carfax shows how the British feared their empire falling from within due to foreign influence that could easily blend in. Like the Middle-Eastern wife in *Frankenstein*, those born of foreign soil were still seen as exotic and more erotically-inclined than English society allowed. Dracula is portrayed as not adhering to English sexual norms primarily because he is an evil monster but, and this cannot be ignored, because he is a foreigner who cares little for English rules. "Only relations with vampires are sexualized in this novel; indeed, a deliberate attempt is made to make sexuality seem unthinkable in 'normal relations' between the sexes (Roth 6). Dracula could just monstrously feed on blood, like the film adaptation *Nosferatu* that would follow later, but instead he is able to attract his prey.

The women in this novel represent the fears that many men within the patriarchy had for "their" women. They feared some dire influence, foreign or native, swooping in and violating their daughters, corrupting their purity and leaving them tainted by societal standards. A tainted woman, after all, was essentially worthless and was doomed to a life of unmarried spinsterhood or worse. The men in this story look on helplessly as the pure women in their lives are violated and tainted by Dracula, until Van Helsing appears to explain to the good doctor that none of his modern medicine can save these women: only a return to the old ways of legends, spirituality, and crucifixes. Readers could see the horror on the page of an innocent daughter falling into
temptation and rendered into something sinister, and only a rejection of all these modern, sinful ways can help. As Lorrah puts it, Dracula "is rife with rape, incest, adultery, sado-masochism, and homosexuality, all carefully kept at the symbolic level..", and only faith and traditional values could protect one from such social sexual horrors as these (31).

Mina is tainted in one of the most chilling scenes in the novel. Dracula has Mina drink blood from a wound in his chest, essentially reversing the wholesome and sacred notion of a mother nursing a child. "He pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nails opened a vein in his breast. When the blood began to spurt...[he] seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound" (Stoker 289). This genderbending imagery is effective and frightening, challenging any prudish reader in Victorian England or modern times with its multilayered image of sacrilege of two staples of society, motherhood and heterosexuality. Mina's life is spared, but she is still forever tainted by these events, only able to find salvation and be accepted as a wife by a man who was equally tainted by Dracula, Jonathan Harker. "Seven years ago, we all went through the flames;" says the Note at the end of the novel, "and the happiness of some of us since then is, we think, well worth the pain we endured" (Stoker 377).

Jonathan finds himself psychologically castrated by Dracula, who treats Harker as one of his brides: "The novel begins with an engagement (between Jonathan and Mina) and moves to a cohabitating couple (Jonathan and Dracula)," says queer theoriest Barry McRea (259). Harker is held against his will in Dracula's castle, not necessarily a prisoner with bars, but a forced guest, a caged bird, and is subjected to multiple forms of gaslighting5, and it was understood that English brides lost freedoms when they entered married life (Mason 116). Harker is tempted by the

5 The Oxford English Dictionary defines "gaslighting" as a verb to mean "Manipulate (someone) by psychological means into doubting their own sanity."
brides, nearly raped ("there was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive...she actually licked her lips like an animal...seemed to fasten on my throat" [Shelley 43]), only to have them swiftly recalled, reminding the brides of their place and teaching Harker his. He is not permitted to take any actions without Dracula's approval, not allowed to come or go as he pleases, barely allowed to eat unless Dracula provides for him: Dracula is the "man of the house," and Harker, a soon to be husband, is given firsthand experience what it feels like to be reduced to subservience and be the "weaker" sex. He feels the indignity in this emasculating entrapment, and overcompensates in his own mind by keeping his professional station and how such social movement will impress Mina present in his diary, despite all of the horrors he has encountered, as if to reassure himself of his masculine role outside the castle (McCrea 260). Jonathan, like Mina, is forever tainted by Dracula and must live with the shame of being emasculated. The eventual marriage at the novel's end makes the two an even pair, beginning their marriage on nearly equal footing than the average couple, both having had their gender/sexuality warped and traumatized by the same man/monster.

The Victorian period was simultaneously “uniquely prudish” and with “burgeoning sexual emancipation” (Mason 13). What was just presented would be the sexual anxieties of the more prudish persuasion, but there is the aforementioned question of Bram Stoker's own sexuality and whether he truly belonged to the heterosexual normative structure. Stoker may have been writing about what he saw as the domestic framework and marriage from "the closet," and was an outsider looking in (McCrea 253). What is presented, then, is a hideous version of heterosexuality that was perceived by an author who found it to be alien to himself, "the secret prisons and violations of respectable married life" (McCrea 253). Comparing the novel to a Jane Austen marriage plot, McCrea argues, "the exhilarating but frightening experience of young
heterosexuals in a marriage-plot is the recognition that their private, physical desires are not fully their own," and that these urges belong to "ritual," and other "established social devices" (256). The novel begins and ends in marriage and the middle is an exercise in many of the frightening things that can go wrong with heterosexuality, just as Shelley dared to write about the horrors of motherhood.

Rape, domination, subjectification, violation, parasitism, and more are all things that Stoker may have viewed as likely possibilities that come with the territory of heterosexual marriages in Victorian culture. This may be why, then, Mina and Jonathan are given a happy ending, a peaceful life with a child, only after they have both suffered and are able to enter the marriage on equal terms. When "the Count is identified, Jonathan is reassured that he is not mad. From then on, thanks to his wife's common sense, he is able to function as well as any of the other men" (Lorrah, 37). Both characters have to be traumatized, the one with inherent power have the power stripped away and the one without power have to overcome a powerful obstacle, before they can truly appreciate their relationship and each other.

The end of the Victorian period saw shifts in writing styles and, of course, shifts in sexual anxieties: "In its treatment of anxiety and hysteria, neurasthenia and repression, the nineteenth century took a firm step backward," though there were scientists, doctors, and writers who had begun explaining sexual anxiety that "have recently begun to make sense" (Pearsall 419). These shifts were also regional, and we will now look "across the pond" at works that share some traits with Victorian style, but are separated by geography, chronology, and attitude. The Victorians presented us with shapeshifting, death-defying monsters which lived as parasites in the domestic sphere. Other writers, elsewhere in time and place, would create monsters that were parasitic and nebulous in shape in very different ways, expressing their own societies’ sexual anxieties.
IV. The Creeping Intangible: Poe, Henry James, and the Onset of Intangible Monsters

Gleaning from the sources already covered, and plenty not covered in depth, one can see that most of the monsters within the horror genre of the period were physical beings. They were true monsters, creatures that existed through what we could refer to as natural means, because they were created through science (Frankenstein's creature) or were beings that already existed in the world and were simply "discovered" within the fictional universes of their books (vampires). We could add plenty of others to this list: the Invisible Man, Mr. Hyde, the White Worm, Martians, etc., but all share a common trait that they are physical, living beings with some form of "natural" explanation and have actual mass and essence. This made the monsters corporeal and imminent, because they had the ability to enact physical harm and change to the world around them and, of course, to their victims. But something that has mass and is alive, it stands to reason, can also be killed, and our examples above prove as much.

Henry James encompasses so much of the gray area that was the late Victorian period with his works, teetering between the older Victorian themes and messages with the slowly emerging Modernist concerns manifesting as well. His work fits quite snugly because it is both Victorian and not, English and American, and also begins a trend in the shift in sexual themes and how they were expressed as monsters as the decades went by. The Victorians hardly lived in a bubble, as England’s global reach was far, and there are works that share much in common with Victorian literature but were separated by region or time. In particular, the novella *The Turn of the Screw* represents a shift in sexual manifestations within horror. Henry James wrote his ghost story in the tradition of Victorian ghost stories, along with the very influential M. R. James, and it featured many of the same Gothic elements that M. R. James had helped make popular, including a layered narrative, a ghostly "pursuit" and a tragic death (Haefele-Thomas.
Both writers have had their sexuality questioned by biographers and both have had their ghost stories analyzed over the past few decades through the lenses of queer theory in the tradition of "homospectrality" or queer Victorian ghosts (Hoeveler 115). A "Warning to the Curious" is one of the most commonly queer-critiqued works written by M. R. James and it features two men who become entrenched in a curse thanks to an object sought by a stranger, a buried crown. M. R. James's ghosts had a tendency to be external, often to linked to some external object, like the crown, or some external secret. But Henry James tweaked this formula, presenting us with ghosts that were linked to internal secrets.

The monsters in most Victorian literature were physical entities, but Henry James provided us with entities which were far more ambiguous. Were they real? Were they eminent or imminent? A great deal of scholarship has been dedicated to debate over the existence of Henry James's ghosts and whether they were actual ghosts or simply figments of the governess's imagination and tortured psyche⁶. His ghosts are a hybrid and bridge of what was and what was to come. Monsters in the Victorian period dominated an intimate, domestic sphere: they would invade your home, your relationship, your children, your "self," and, in the broadest term of the word "domestic," your country. Leading up to the time of the Great War, monsters were becoming larger than life, intangible beings that were not easy to place or identify and that lived elsewhere. Dominating on a psychological level, however, is what both Victorian and post-

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6 Some notable contributions include:
Victorian periods' monsters have in common, something that we could argue all monsters have in common.

Like the Victorian monsters, Henry James's ghosts haunt the domestic spheres and are very intimate. He praised Wilkie Collins for "introduc[ing] into fiction those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysterious which are at our own doors" (qtd in Lytton 207). But like the early 20th century monsters, they are intangible and their forms are murkier something outside of human comprehension or reality itself. In fact, their reality is questionable. There was no question about Frankenstein's monster or Carmilla; they absolutely existed in their universes and there was no denying their reality. The reader did not question the existence of these beings. But Henry James's ghosts are quite another story. The novella never provides the reader with a solid answer as to the reality of the ghosts. Are they disembodied spirits of two disgraced people who died in the throes of a possible sex scandal? Are they manifestations of the governess's paranoia and maniacal desire to the protect the children, even if it means there is no threat? Are they some combination thereof?

Gender studies scholar Priscilla L. Walton notes the sexual undertones of the ghosts, the children, the governess, and the novella as a whole, which it deals with class and gender through the governess (Walton 348). She also makes note of the heavy use of the “gaze” in the novella, a literary and cultural device, as a means of grappling social power (Walton 352). As the master, the children’s uncle, gazes upon the governess, judging her physically, objectifying her. The governess then spends the remainder of the story struggling to reclaim the gaze, going from gazer to gazee, object to subject. She is gazed at by the ghosts, and returns their gaze, gazes at the children, and so on: "Although Quint is posited as the gazer...the gaze shifts...when the governess finders herself able to 'watch' him...usurping his position by becoming the gazer"
(Walton 353). "It made me drop on my knees beside the bed and seize once more the chance in possessing him," the Governess says, in one of her unwinding outbursts, "'Dear little Miles...I just want you to help me to save you!'" (James 95). She is in a constant push and pull for control through the story, feeling helpless yet unwilling to submit, which, due to the ambiguity of the ghosts' existence, may mean that she is looking for a solution for a problem that does not exist.

There is little indication that Henry James himself was a misogynist, according to English professor, biographer, and editor Peter G. Beidler (8). *The Turn of the Screw* and Henry James’s portrayal of the governess are absolutely reflections of their times, a time in which misogyny was rampant by today’s standards but also a more progressive era than ones past (Matus 233). American and English cultures at this time, however, saw women as emotionally unstable creatures who were easily given to “hysteria,” fantastic fits, and “paranoia,” especially without a male presence to oversee them. (Matus 228). This idea, a stereotype truly, is being expressed through the governess: the fear that a woman who gets the wrong idea in her head and left in a position of authority without supervision may create turmoil. Yale professor and James scholar Henry Sussman says that the governess is framed for the reader as a woman who is hopelessly in love with her absent master and employer, and that the absence of “sexual gratification” positions her as a prime candidate for suffering “hysteria” (230). According to Beidler, a male character in the same position as the governess would not be regarded as so untrustworthy or hysterical as she (248).

If the governess is, indeed, simply hysterical, embodying the stereotype that a woman who is unsupervised cannot be trusted, then that would mean that the ghosts are not real. But if the ghosts are interpreted as real and, therefore, the governess is clear of “hysteria,” that does not mean there is not still some gender and sexual anxiety at play. If we accept the reality of the
ghosts, then there is the issue of the ghosts' implied transgressions through life. Mrs. Grose explains that Miss Jessell was a “lady,” Quint a “hound,” and both were “infamous,” as she heavily implies to the governess and the reader that an affair between the two had taken place (James 58). This inappropriate affair would later haunt them in life and death, just as they would haunt others. The fact that sexual conduct between two consenting adults would prove such a sin as to damn these two characters, providing justification and reason as to why they would ultimately become evil, vengeful spirits, says a lot about the progress of sexual fears in English society. We are given little more information about the two, other than they were sexual beings. Could there be some other mortal sins not involving sex that Quint and Jessell are guilty of? As readers, we do not know, which suggests that sexual deviance is sin enough to damn one’s soul to a ghostly existence. Still, we can detect a change, as this tale, which is written during the Victorian period but not by an Englishman, is far more blunt and heavy-handed about its sexual themes than the true Victorian tales before, though it still uses implication and innuendo rather than transparency. But for the readership, there would be little question as to what was being implied here; acts of impropriety and lewdness that few Victorian-era novels would have dared to tread. This was a sign that the society was becoming, though very slowly, more open about its discussions of sexual deviance. Matheson states that the story represents “transgressive sexuality” and exhibits the “trope of the unrepresentable, of unspeakable horrors [which] plays the most central role.” (Matheson 723). What is unmentionable in a story, in this case non-normative sexuality, is the most unspeakably evil.

Nothing says this more than the implication that the children of the story had been the victims of pedophilia and that the ghosts had been their aggressors, since Quint, while alive, "was much too free" with Miles (James 51). If there were any doubt what Mrs. Grose meant by
telling the governess such a thing, the Oxford English Dictionary lists one of the uses of the word “free” to mean “coarse” and “lewd” in regards to speech. Queer theorist Ellis Hanson says that Miles and Flora exhibit characteristics of the “gothic child, which is to say the modern sexual child” (368). To even suggest such a thing in late 19th century England or America was taboo and uncomfortable, much as it is today. But Hanson claims that Mrs. Grose’s descriptions in regards to Quint’s activities with Miles – “to play with him”, “to spoil him” – bordered on the “ambiguity of innocence and corruption” and should be understood to indicate a pedophiliac relationship (369). Of course, whether the children had been molested or not is a hotly debated question of scholarly interest and has no clear answer, but some scholars⁷ make convincing arguments that plenty of contemporary readers would have come to the same conclusion (Hanson 366). Whether or not Henry James meant for it literally in the story is almost moot; if the readers could detect the suggestion, then the conversation, using the novella as discourse, had begun.

If readers detected a hint of pedophilia in The Turn of the Screw, it meant that the topic was on the public consciousness. Certainly, people in 19th century England and America knew that pedophilia existed, but for them to even find it feasible for it to appear in what could have been a typical ghost story at the time, as Flora and Miles represent a “milestone” in the representation of the “sexual child” (Hanson 367). If the readers could pluck this subtext from

⁷ Among them are:
the novella with little more than innuendo, then it suggests that the topic was becoming more broadly known and addressed than it had before, even if it only slightly so (Hanson 371). This does not mean, nor does it have to, that everyone in society was talking about the issue openly, but it does mean that the awareness of it was increasing to the point that finding it hinted at in a ghost story was no longer in the realm of impossibility.

At work here is the belief that mere knowledge of sexual matters had a corruptible influence, especially over children. Even without the interpretation of blatant pedophilia and child molestation, Hanson argues that the children, especially Miles, exhibit a heightened awareness of sexual matters that children should not know. Miles “seems to know” and children are not supposed to “know” of such things, and this triggers the audience’s “bafflement and alarm”, as well as their interest (Hanson 386). The idea of protecting children from sexuality is one that was strong in the Victorian and Modernist Periods and is still strong today. This fear then is being expressed by James in his story, as these young children who have been corrupted by sexual knowledge are literally haunted by it, as the ghosts are literary embodiments of that knowledge.

The fear here is a representation of the extreme fear that parents may have felt would be the worst-case result of their children being exposed to sexuality too soon. The children are cursed and forever altered, their innocence completely lost and their personalities changed. They become suspicious characters, not to be trusted, and sometimes even a bit threatening. The ultimate result of this curse is death, as the brother dies mysteriously while the governess tries to save him. Of course, like many things about this novel, the boy's death is open to interpretation; was it the Governess pushing too hard to force him to remember what he had been trying to repress, was it the ghost himself that killed him directly? "It's he?" Miles pleads, and the
governess berates him to answer, "'Whom do you mean by 'he'?" (James 120). Or had the
 governess been neglecting the child all along until his poor heart simply couldn't take it
 anymore? "'Peter Quint – you devil!'", he answers, though we are not sure exactly whom Miles is
calling a "devil," Quint or the Governess (James 120). Regardless of the interpretation of exact
details of his death, it all resulted from a fear within society that was expressed by the governess
that sexual knowledge will have harmful effects on a child.

In “The Imp of the Perverse,” Edgar Allan Poe writes of entities that compel their victims
to act against their better nature, even in ways that cause self harm or harm to others, "an innate
and primitive principle of human action, a paradoxical something" (Poe 23). Often used as a
metaphor for making a self-threatening decision simply for the thrill, the Imp causes the narrator
to murder an innocent person with a poisoned candle, the victims inhaling the fumes, and the
murderer inheriting his estate. Poe’s works predate The Turn of the Screw and Dracula, and,
though “The Imp of the Perverse” is not a novel, provides an interesting interpretation on these
literary monsters that complements the idea that the monsters represent the fears of society,
including sexual fears. According to H. P. Lovecraft, Poe had vast influence on writers to come
after him, including James, for “before Poe, weird writers worked largely in the dark; without an
understanding of the psychological basis of the horror appeal” (56). Poe's essay-turned-story
presents the idea that even some of Poe's other tales follow this same formula, compelling the
characters to act against their better nature, causing their own misfortune and become the bearers
of their own justice as well as torment to others. We certainly see this in Dracula, as Dracula's

8 A youthful Henry James had a disliking of Poe’s works. He is infamously quoted as saying “An enthusiasm for Poe
is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection.” French Poets and Novelists (1878; rpt. Freeport, N. Y.
1972), p. 76.
victims are quite literally placed under his hypnotic spell and act in accordance of his will and not their own, and we see it even more so with Henry James.

The assertion posed by *The Imp of the Perverse* fits perfectly with *The Turn of the Screw*, especially if we interpret the ghosts as being real. The ghosts, under this interpretation are Poe's imps, leading the children or the governess or both to act against their nature. It's even possible that while they were alive the ghosts were imps, coercing the children to having knowledge of a sexual nature beyond their age ("we perpetrate them because we feel that we should not" [Poe 64]). The ghosts as imps lead the children to be defiant, conspiratorial, and to commit acts against the governess to drive her batty, with all parties falling victim to their corrupt influence. The children become something sinister and are something other than children, thanks to their ghostly imps, "little wretches" denying the existence of the ghosts, leading the governess (and the reader) to distrust them (James 81).

If we see the children as victims of the governess rather than the ghosts, however, then the ghosts are still imps, simply hers. "It harassed, because it haunted," Poe describes the imp (Poe 80). The impish ghosts drive her to suspicion and paranoia. Due to their presence, she begins to see the children as something other than children and she begins to treat them as simultaneously innocents who need rescuing and threats to be guarded against. She is goaded into terrorizing the children by the ghosts, led to believe that the children are conspiring against her and are up to no good. She suspects the children may have carnal knowledge of the ghosts and of intimate knowledge of their deaths, driving her to pressure them into admitting their guilt, and driving them all mad under the force of the untrusting nature awakened within her by the ghosts.
This interpretation of Poe’s imp transcends Poe’s own tale, applying to “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Black Cat,” even the raven in “The Raven,” and also transcends *The Turn of the Screw*, as it can be applied to other works of horror. The aforementioned titles are indicative of Poe's imp, driving forces that lead their victims to self-destructive behavior. Is that not what a true monster is? A monster subverts what you know, what you believe to be reality, and sometimes good and evil. Poe's imp can be an inanimate object or innocuous animal, or it can be a fully formed monster that serves a similar purpose. Carmilla and Dracula are very effective imps, causing Mina and her friend to commit acts of sexual deviance, such as nursing blood from the vampire's chest, or dismissing Carmilla's suspicious acts and protecting her. Each of these imps causes the characters to violate the gender norms of the domestic sphere, and this is just as true for James's ghosts which, though not flesh and blood like Dracula and perhaps not even physically real at all like the raven, are just as impish in their ability to tempt and coerce the characters into action.

As monsters in Victorian literature were primarily physical beings, James's ghosts were entities that were more intangible, representing a shift. Naturally, there had still been ghost stories in the Victorian Period, but the ghosts in *The Turn of the Screw* are unique due to their sexualized nature and their effects on the real world, making them more akin to the Victorian monsters. But despite how intangible they are, despite how their ambiguity belies whether they are real or not, they are still steeped in a psychosexual nature like the vampires and raise questions of gender norms like Frankenstein's creature. The ghosts represent a transforming from the Victorian monster to the more modern monster that was to come.

The Victorian monsters, like Poe indicates with his imp thesis, served a purpose and tormented the protagonists in their stories not just by haunting them or chasing them or killing
them, but by inflicting far more serious damage. They would not pursue their victims or torment their victims for the mere purpose of devouring them or killing them (though, in certain cases, like with Dracula and Frankenstein's creature, that was an inevitable side effect), but imp entities seek more than anything to change their victims. Frankenstein's creature wanted Victor to change and reciprocate the monster's yearning for him, providing fatherly love. Carmilla and Dracula both wanted their prey to become like them, bending to their will, becoming their slaves. The ghosts also sought to change their victims, and whether they were actual disembodied spirits from beyond the grave or simply figments of the governess's imagination does not change their cause, but it does add a unique, ambiguous twist. James’s ghosts are more difficult to pin down in reality, and this trait would continue into the post-Great War era, as the Victorian period came to a close.

The world began to change and so did its literature and so did its monsters. Freud’s psychoanalysis, women’s rights movements, and more would pave the way for a more sexually open England and America, as the "New Woman" movement had evolved and women's liberation began gaining steam, meanwhile the lower classes began demanding legal reforms to protect their lives from unscrupulous employers (Trask 144). The Victorian Period held a death-grip on sexual regulations in the form of gender norms and propriety, relegating sexual misconduct under the rug, treating it like scandal, reserving it for underground and lower classes who would shamelessly engage in such behavior. But as women and lower classes began to slowly rise in status, and the power began to slowly level a bit, those strict and rigid rules upon sexuality began to loosen. Even greater change was ahead, however, as World War I would bring about great change to politics, class, and economic systems, rocking the western world.

V. “Weird” Monsters of Modernity
The “weird” monsters would rise from their Victorian counterparts, similar but different, largely inspired by Poe. Lovecraft said, “Poe’s spectres thus acquired a convincing malignity possessed by none of their predecessors, and established a new standard of realism in the annals of literary horror” (57). These more modern monsters would reflect the dark, haunting, ambiguous sentiment of Poe, but contained dashes of the global, cosmic horrors of H. G. Wells’s Martians from *The War of the Worlds*. The Great War would have a tremendous influence on how monsters were portrayed and which fears western society would express.

By the early 1900s, sexual scenarios began appearing in literature that were less ambiguous and relied less on innuendo than decades past, even literature that was read by the higher classes, and it can be assumed that if this shift was happening in media then it was happening in everyday lives, as well. "By the end of the Great War,” says Mason about the generation after the Victorians, “anti-Victorianism was evidently no longer an invading virus quarantined in 'private conversation,' but a settled condition of English intellectual culture" (Mason 10). Neither English nor American cultures were quite ready for blatant sexual goings-on and out and open references to pedophilia and homosexuality, but the topic was becoming more open thanks to public discussions, similar to those that took place surrounding Oscar Wilde. But there was still a resistance to discussing women who could be promiscuous, have healthy sex drives, and still be functional members of society (Trask 332). Much was still brought about in code, but the codes were becoming less and less veiled.

All this drastic cultural change meant a drastic change in monsters and what they represented. As sexual rigidity began to loosen, so did sexual fears. The Victorian monsters each inhabited a space where they challenged certain aspects of the domestic sphere, especially gender and sexuality. But as the rules of these spheres began to become less strict, the very rules that
such monsters were violating were becoming less sacred and therefore their violations less frightening. Literary monsters naturally began to evolve as a response to these cultural shifts and changes in attitudes. Sexual fears began to change from being exclusively fears of the intimate and domestic homes, dealing with motherhood and marriage and wives and daughters becoming corrupted, to being much broader, such as the idea of sexual “delicacy” or sexual propriety that was tied directly to a culture’s identity: once it was destroyed, a piece of the culture was too (Mason 38).

Fears of foreign power and influence accelerated during and after the Great War (Trask 122). There was some indication of these fears in Dracula, the long-standing and very human fear of a foreigner infiltrating proper western society and spreading foreign ways and subverting the innocent citizens. But this was still confined to the domestic sphere, as Dracula preyed upon women and sought to corrupt them to make them his brides or his meals. WWI offered a broader, more global mindedness and with that came broader and more global fears. Dracula was insignificant compared to what was to come from post-war horror writers in terms of physical and cosmic scale. Dracula could, at best, spread his terror throughout a household, a neighborhood, perhaps even an entire village. But these monsters, like the war faring superpowers with super weapons that now existed, could prove a threat to all of civilization if they so desired. Namely, they were big. While Henry James's monsters were intangible because they were ghosts who teetered between reality and fantasy, monsters post-Great War tended to be intangible because they were, quite literally sometimes, too large to truly comprehend and were not merely ambiguous with their existence in our reality, but were outright otherworldly: truly foreign beings. These monsters sprung from the tradition of the “weird,” a commonly
accepted term for H. P. Lovecraft and his contemporaries of the early 20th century, used by prominent Lovecraft scholar S. T. Joshi.

On the American side, the “weird” brought us monsters that better fit the fears of the time and horror stories that were reflections of their writers' sexuality, and therefore reflections of the sexual anxieties of the Modernist period. Sexuality in the Victorian Period was tightly contained and boxed, or at least society intended to keep it that way, and so the monsters were respectively tightly contained and boxed. Their boxes were flesh, reality, domesticity, things that could be killed, etc. By the end of the Victorian Period, the sexual box had begun to leak, and the monsters took more intangible and daring forms. By the early 20th century, the box virtually exploded, and sexuality and the monsters that sprung to life from it, could no longer be contained within such confines. These were global monsters from other worlds, but unlike H. G. Wells's Martians which had a clear goal of wiping out human civilization, these monsters are far less calculating and lack such precision. They simply exist, and catastrophe awaits humans as these monsters bump into our world and as we bump into theirs.

While Poe's imps sought to compel their victims to act against their better natures and to corrupt them, and I argued that the Victorian monsters we have covered have their own "impish" qualities, the monsters of H.P. Lovecraft and his “weird” contemporaries had no such drive. They did not need to be merely psychological, infiltrate, or be subtle. Their influence had a corruptive influence just by their mere presence and their mere existence. Primarily, though, a proper imp, as Poe clearly envisioned it, made an enemy out of oneself, which is an argument we could certainly make for James’s governess. Stories were appearing throughout the Victorian period onward carrying on the tradition of the “doppelganger.” Poe, James, Robert Louis Stevenson, Joseph Conrad, even Freud, all embraced this concept of the "double," always
mysterious, sometimes sinister (Thompson 95). Some of these stories verge on the homoerotic. Algernon Blackwood was one of the early "weird writers," as biographer S. T. Joshi calls them, and was a favorite of other "weird writers," Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, a pioneer of the English ghost story, like M. R. James (72). Many stories featuring "doubles" are concerned with the "unlived life" of the narrator, which currently, and perhaps anachronistically, sounds like another way of saying "repression" or the "the closet."

Algernon Blackwood's story “The Listener” considers what repression can do to a life. The nameless narrator who has moved into a lonely apartment and begins to suspect there is another presence inhabiting his space, writers in his diary, "I wish I were not quite so lonely—and so poor. And yet I love both my loneliness and my poverty. The former makes me appreciate the companionship of the wind and rain, while the latter preserves my liver and prevents me wasting time in dancing attendance upon women" (Blackwood 5). The narrator immediately begins to experience a "doubling" from an "other" which invades his privacy (Thompson 99). But it is the narrator's own loneliness and desire to do more, his repression from living the life he wants and pursuing pleasures including pleasures of the flesh with women, that is his true enemy and the true haunting. Writers such as Blackwood and Henry James had begun to note the potential psychological effects of repression and isolation, as both the Governess and Blackwood's narrator (how interesting that both are nameless) battle with the ambiguity of their own minds, as these "ghosts" are left open to interpretation as something internal.

As the Modernist period truly began to form, the entities began to shift again. So far this paper has noted a shift from physical, cultural monsters that invade the domestic sphere, to intangible monsters that may (or may not) invade one's mind, and soon will come monsters that are physical beings, but so grand in scope that they encompassed the physical qualities of the
former and the psychological qualities of the latter. To face a “weird” monster meant madness, not just death or corruption. It would not just be one's life stolen or even a single murder, but the “weird” monsters could mean complete genocide or the complete reevaluation of reality itself, causing anyone who encountered them, on a level far greater than seen in Victorian horror, to question their own sanity, humanity, and reality. H.P. Lovecraft said, “With this foundation, no one need wonder at the existence of a literature of cosmic fear” (18). The monsters of the Cthulu Mythos, unlike the Victorian monsters before them, are not strictly earthbound entities of limited size and shape, but are sizeable monstrosities from another world, inhabiting our own for centuries, and the methods for their destruction are less concrete than stake through the heart or fire.

According to Lovecraft biographer and speculative fiction critic R. Alain Everts, Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born and raised in America, but with what we could call "Victorian" values, particularly when it came to sex, as his mother was a "Victorian prude" (1). Like many of his contemporaries, Lovecraft was raised with a sort of prudishness concerning sexual matters, and carried that prudishness into adulthood. However, his sexually repressed nature would ultimately clash with the emergence of more transparent sexual exploration and conversation that began to emerge in the early 20th century. Along with many other cultural fears such as xenophobia, sexual anxiety manifests itself through some of Lovecraft's horror stories through his monsters, though at one time Lovecraft's stories were regarded as "sexless" as himself, other scholars find that is not the case (Derie 248).

Many of Lovecraft's horror stories, including *At the Mountains of Madness*, “From Beyond,” and “The Horror at Red Hook,” just to name a few, portray an underlying world of horrors that lives beneath or between our own. It is an unseen world, and those who manage to
visit it are plagued by tormented visions and madness at the alien activities they have witnessed, if they manage to survive and return to their own world at all, such as the narrator who is driven to suicide after encountering Dagon (“Dagon”). The fear of the foreigner is obvious and present here, but what else can be detected? Take for consideration the underlying theme of a hidden world full of strange and alien things, such as the alien dimension seen in “From Beyond”: it could be argued that, due to his upbringing, this is also how Lovecraft viewed sexuality. Indeed, even in the more open early 20th century, sexuality still inhabited the realm of the unseen, something that brewed beneath the surface of society, always present, lest the human race go extinct, but rarely ever seen. In order to truly see it, one had to find realms of darkness and shadows (or less poetically, behind closed doors and in secret) where sexual acts could occur. But if one stumbled in a particular direction, down the wrong alley in a city, like Detective Malone encounters in “The Horror at Red Hook,” one may stumble upon a world of prostitutes and degenerates, engaging in fornication openly and among company. Such a thing may seem just as horrific and alien as an island of cultists and cosmic monsters through the eyes of someone raised with Puritanical views on sex. Such a thing, which belongs in the realm of the unseen and the shadows, the unspoken, could seem terrifying.

According to Lovecraft’s wife, he was a virgin when they consummated their marriage, and he remained sexually reserved throughout their marriage (Everts). She had had relations and even children before from a previous marriage, and was able to be the more assertive partner in that regard. His wife provides us with insight as to how Lovecraft saw himself, thanks to how he was raised to regard gender norms, sexuality, and his place within them. Lovecraft may have brought how he viewed himself, and his fears of how the world viewed him, into his writing, giving us insight into what he considered frightening.
According to a neighbor of the Lovecrafts, Lovecraft's mother was a very aggressive and dominating woman who would criticize his appearance, particularly when it came to his physical attractiveness to the opposite sex (Derleth). Lovecraft's mother raised him to essentially be a prude, and made him feel insecure about his own masculinity. By indicating to him that he was not dressed well, not handsome, did not present himself a particular, and so forth, she made him feel emasculated and worthless. English and American society in the early 1900s, though comparatively progressive than eras past, still held masculinity as a preferable trait and found femininity to be an inferior quality (Trask 201). Femininity coming from a man, of course, was disgraceful, and there was little worse than a man who would surrender his male privilege to be a dandy, which America and England had faced during the very public trial of Oscar Wilde for homosexuality.

Lovecraft's mother's efforts to emasculate him succeeded, and he found himself very insecure around women and with sexual relations. He was insecure with his place in the world as a man (Everts). Just as Stoker may have been looking at domesticity through the horrified eyes of someone in the closet, seeing it as something strange, Lovecraft may have been seeing sexuality from a similar manner as someone who also did not fit gender norms. Being emasculated made Lovecraft feel small, so it is no wonder that the stories in his horror are full of very large, cosmic monsters, monsters that encompass the land and dwarf all humans, making anyone, particularly men, who approach them feel small, insignificant, and powerless. Joshi claims that, inspired by the geographic adventures of his time, particularly Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Lovecraft presented to the reader a realm of the unknown and mysterious that resided beneath or parallel to our own, which is exactly how someone who is sexually reserved may feel about the real world around them (38).
Lovecraft's father was a visitor to these dark realms, and, indeed, he became afflicted with madness, which fits the themes of Lovecraft's stories perfectly. Lovecraft's father may have been a customer of prostitutes, visiting brothels throughout his travels. One of these ill-fated visits left him afflicted with syphilis before his marriage, which transformed him physically and, more importantly, mentally (Derie 668). Left untreated and without the aid of modern antibiotics, Lovecraft's father slowly descended into hallucinations and became delusional, witnessing hallucinations, not an uncommon symptom of untreated syphilis. Lovecraft was able to see this happen to his father all because of his father's visits to those dark and frightening realms of sexuality, an interpretation of the situation his mother was sure to pass on to her son, according to biographer Kenneth W. Faig, Jr. (70).

By Lovecraft's own admission, his aversion to sex began primarily when he learned of human anatomy, and he found the mechanisms that were in place to be abhorrent (Derie 283). An article in the *New York Times* in 1945 once mentioned that Lovecraft's aversion to sex was bested only by his aversion to fish (Eil). It may not be strictly coincidence then that one of Lovecraft's novellas, *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, the only one published in book form in his lifetime, contains mention of fish-people breeding with humans. Zadok explains that the Deep Ones, an amphibious race of humanoids living beneath the sea that resemble fish and frogs, are able to breed with humans. Lovecraft's fear of sex seemed to ooze into his work, taking symbolic form, and never in his works is sex associated with anything positive or normal. In the rare instances that sex is mentioned outright or alluded to in his works, it is often of alien origin, sometimes literally, and it is not portrayed as a willing act of equal participation between two partners, but as an aberrant mechanism of nature, exploited by the very unnatural creatures in his books to reproduce and perhaps conquer. Though the humans in Innsmouth allegedly mated with
the Deep Ones willingly, it was to suit a purpose, as Zadok explains, “When it come to matin’ with them toad-lookin’ fishes, the Kanakys kind o’ balked…Them things told the Kanakys that ef they mixed bloods there’d by chil’dren…they’d take to the water…” (Lovecraft, "Shadow Innsmouth").

Lovecraft’s xenophobia and racism are well-documented⁹, so the element of the Deep Ones being able to breed with humans seems to be a manifestation of two of Lovecraft's deep-seated hatreds and fears. “But the real thing behind the way folks feel is simply race prejudice,” says the narrator’s informant in Innsmouth, “and I don’t say I’m blaming those that hold it” (Lovecraft, "Shadow Innsmouth"). Here he has combined his fear of foreigners with his fear of sexuality. Derie also makes note of some possible incestuous atmosphere taking place in Innsmouth, as the town is so isolated and unwelcoming to strangers (1711). The citizens of the town all seem to have a peculiar look, which hints at stereotypical inbreeding: “Once or twice, I saw listless-looking people…and groups of dirty, simian-visaged children playing around weed-grown doorsteps” (Lovecraft, "Shadow Innsmouth").

There is also the heavily implied mating of a human woman with the Old One Yog-Sothoth in the short story "The Dunwich Horror,” as well, Derie notes, also has a touch of incest (1610). The grotesque, anatomical alliance between the Yog-Sothoth and the albino Lavinia produces two offspring; Wilbur, who is human and horribly deformed, and a barn-sized, invisible, destructive, writhing force that brings madness upon looking at it, that “looked more

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⁹ See:
like the father than [Wilbur] did” (Lovecraft, "Dunwich Horror"). Yet despite the literal monstrousness of this conception, there is something else that sets them apart from the other folks of Dunwich, “where incest is the default or normal state and non-incestuous relationships are abnormal” (Derie 1610). Again, Lovecraft presents a tale where there is no “good” sexual relations portrayed, and if these ancient and alien monsters are exaggerated representations of other races that exist in the world and are amplifications of the fear of the "other," then it is not surprising that the breeding of the monstrous foreigner with that of what Lovecraft would have considered a typical human (white, American, etc.), would create inhuman creatures. And such was the attitude presented to many individuals of mixed race origin in the early 1900s, for they were indeed often treated like monsters (Trask 533).

And this may be the crux of the sexual fears on display in Lovecraft's work. These are fears that were surely not confined to Lovecraft himself, but existed throughout the American culture of the time, and we could argue are still strong today. The fear of the foreign, the fear of sexual deviance, and the fear of these two forces together would be things that would resonate with Lovecraft's contemporary readership. With the world a more global place in the eyes of English and American societies thanks to increased communication and a World War, the fears expressed in Dracula of a foreigner infiltrating western society and corrupting the women became magnified. In the United States, especially, there were "foreigners" right here at home, which had been brought to the country by those in power generations before. Such was the white perception of African Americans; ironically domestic “foreigners” roaming the streets, daring to exist in the same space, a threat to white women.

What differs so greatly in the fear of sexually deviant foreigner in Lovecraft's tales from the sexually deviant foreigner in Dracula on display in both eras is that, for the Modernist
Period, the fear is largely that the threat is already here. Dracula was an intruder who came to England on a ship from a foreign and secluded land, defiling his unsuspecting victims by intruding into their spaces. The Lovecraft monsters, particularly the Old Ones in the Cthulu Mythos, are threats that are already here, in America and elsewhere, right here on Earth, that have been here so long they predate modern civilization. They live atop mountains, beneath oceans and lakes, in hidden valleys, some on isolated islands, but the point is they are here and one could stumble upon them just as easily by getting lost on the wrong road as one could getting lost at sea. In the case of "The Dunwich Horror," a creature that was the result of bad breeding is able to lay rampage upon local villages, a creature that had been present and nearby for decades: all it needed to do was decide to attack. And that is what is unique about the Modernist monsters and the reflection of the world that they represent; they are a threat, a threat that includes sexual threats, and they are already present and waiting throughout the world, able to take on entire civilizations in a way that Dracula could not. Victorian monsters were ones that could disrupt individual lives and the domestic sphere, while Modernist monsters could disrupt the world on a global scale, more akin to the newly awakened super powers on display in World War I, sexual threats "that of town versus country" (Mason 37). Sexual prudishness still existed, but it was not at the forefront of the worst things that could happen like it was in the Victorian times. It was not the height of terrible things, thanks to World War I, since the world had seen much worse. But it was still there, but on a grander scale. These monsters would not just challenge gender norms or compromise proper sexual propriety, but could literally breed new threats with human women, potentially breeding the world into chaos.

Lovecraft was very influenced by authors writing during the Victorian Period, and sought to emulate them more than his contemporaries (Lovecraft, “Supernatural Horror” 48). His
writing style, with its lengthy descriptions and use of very complex sentences, could be said to resemble that of his prudish attitude towards sex; Victorian. Lovecraft was heavily influenced by Poe, and the two share many American Gothic elements, and both used psychological elements in their stories. In his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” he says, “In the eighteen-thirties occurred a literary dawn…” Lovecraft says in regards to Poe, “It is our good fortune as Americans to be able to claim that dawn as our own, for it came in the person of our most illustrious and unfortunate fellow-countryman, Edgar Allan Poe” ("Supernatural Horror" 48). Madness is a recurring theme in their works, with Poe's madness often attributed to a crime or sin and Lovecraft's madness was attributed more to a character witnessing something beyond comprehension. Lovecraft seemed to have a view of the world that the world could not be comprehended completely and that there were things beyond comprehension lurking about, “a master’s vision of the terror that stalks about and within us” (Lovecraft, “Supernatural Horror” 58). We see this in the plots of stories, in the words that he crafted, by explaining that a name like Cthulu could not be properly pronounced in English, only an approximation, and in his early exposure to sexuality through anatomy. Lovecraft expressed through his writing that the world could be fully unknown and its unknown elements could be a danger.

Sexuality and gender were only beginning to be fully understood in the early 20th Century, though many would argue that we still do not fully understand of them. Psychoanalysis and psychology were still budding practices, which means that there was still much to be learned about gender and sexual motivations. Both of these areas still remained as part of the mysterious unknown that Lovecraft so feared, and that he continued to fear well after marriage. As his wife Sonia explained, he maintained his aversion to sex long after losing his virginity to her, seeing it more as a method of conception, similar to how his monsters seemed to see it in his literature,
than as an act of pleasure or an expression of love. And many in the Anglo-American western traditions at the time continued to believe a similar notion, holding double-standards for women when it came to sexual pleasure, and believing that sexual knowledge could be harmful and must be kept hidden (Mason 63).

In contrast, one of Lovecraft's contemporaries and collaborators and other influential early 20th Century horror writers, Clark Ashton Smith, was far more sexually liberated and had more liberal attitudes towards sexuality in general (Guillard 54). Smith, then, did not convey nearly as much sexual anxiety in his work from a personal level, but his work still conveys anxieties that society had towards sex as a whole by highlighting those anxieties with their oppositions. Smith did not treat sexuality as something unknown force that existed below the consciousness of the public, but as something that was to be experienced and something that would manifest naturally in all walks of life, including horror.

Smith was no stranger to sexually-charged writing. Over the span of his career, he wrote erotic poetry, submitted stories to erotic magazines, wrote flirtatious letters to women, and even translated Charles Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal*, a collection of erotic poetry that was banned in its native France (Guillard 54). In his personal life, Smith was a dandy of a man who engaged in a torrent of affairs. Smith fell in love with a blonde woman in his youth, and she passed away (Derie 3347). From then on he would only pursue romance with brunette women, which included a wife and multiple mistresses over the years. He was also known to engage in sexual cuckoldry, a theme which would show up in some of his writings. He also linked love and death very closely, due to his life experiences. Though Smith had a more open attitude toward sex and was far more experienced than Lovecraft, it does not necessarily mean that his views were much more positive. Sex was still linked with heartache and loneliness in works, and his works could
put on full display the disruption that sex could cause in an otherwise normal and healthy existence.

Like Poe, Smith often wrote of relationships with the dead and gone, lamenting a great loss, and calling to the spirits of the dead, keeping the love alive, for "a great many of Smith's 'tales of horror' are just as much 'tales of love'" (Derie 3356). In some of his stories, this even borders on necrophilia. Because Smith was more sexually liberal than Lovecraft, some of his tales embrace human sexual nature, even the aspects of that nature which may rely on the perverse, rather than shove them down. Smith still tied love and sex with death and destruction, but mostly because they were two sides of the same coin, not the same thing.

One of Smith's stories in particular was very similar to one of Lovecraft's, as they shared a common inspiration. Smith's tale, "The Nameless Offspring," also portrays the results of a monstrous copulation between human and inhuman entity (Derie 3384). Smith does not simply hint at this copulation, however, like Lovecraft, instead he is actually more open about this copulation. Smith was not afraid to portray this alien conception, leaving little doubt or room for interpretation for his readers as to its nature. “She did not seem to remember struggling to free herself from the coffin, but was troubled mainly be recollections of a pale, hideous, unhuman face which she had seen in the gloom…stooping over her as she lay…[it] ran like an animal on all fours, though its limbs were semihuman”. Nine months later, Lady Agatha gives birth to a “monstrosity” (Smith, "Nameless Offspring"). Monstrous impregnation happened, like a twisted version of the heroic virgin birth, and readers were forced to conceive the monstrous conception in their own imaginations, without the luxury of shying away or writing it off. It is worth noting that, according to Lovecraft’s letters, this story and “The Dunwich Horror” were both inspired by Arthur Machen’s “The Great God Pan” (Derie 3384).
It was this very sexually-charged nature of a work such as this that caused many of his works to be originally rejected from publication, with the publishers believing that the public was not prepared for such sexual horror (Derie 3405). And so, Lovecraft and Smith were both, in their own ways, highlighting the sexual anxieties of their culture. Lovecraft was siding with the element of society that found public discussions and portrayals of sex distasteful at best and horrific at worst. Smith, on the other hand, challenged this cultural prudishness by including sexual imagery in his works, horror or otherwise, forcing his readership to confront the concepts. Both writers were doing their part, from two sides of the issue, to show the world the sexual anxieties lying under the surface of early 20th century American society. One of Smith’s greatest contributions to Lovecraft’s Cthulu Mythos, in fact, was the introduction of “sexual congress” between the Great Old Ones and other “Mythos entities,” establishing that the creatures mated with each other and generated “a Family Tree of the Gods” (Derie 3405). And so, the fear that the monster, the “Other,” representative so often of other races or those who are different, would engage in hypersexual congress and outbreed humanity, a fear brought to us much earlier in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, raises its head yet again.

V. Sexual Revolutions, Monstrous Evolutions

Shelley created a monster that was a monstrous representation of maternity. The Victorians created parasitic monsters that seduce and taint innocent women. Along the way, outside of England, ethereal entities rooted deep in psychology came about. Then finally, after the Great War, sprung “weird” monsters, global-threatening deities capable of tainting humanity (and human bodies) with their spawn. The evolution of sexuality within western culture also caused many of its monsters to evolve, and the evolution has not stopped. To see this evolution, continue, one need only look to modern adaptations of the very same monsters mentioned in this
research, particularly their film versions. Modern film versions of these sexually-charged stories take what was implicit and turn it explicit.

In 1961, a film adaptation of *The Turn of the Screw* was released called *The Innocents*, which itself was adapted from a play. The now-named governess engages in a game of cat-and-mouse with the children whom she believes are being possessed by the ghosts of Quint and Jessell for the sole purpose of continuing their sexually indiscreet relationship beyond the grave. Hanson’s articulation of the “sexual child” is brought to life here, as Miles addresses his governess in a manner far too familiar and mature, even going so far as to lay a wildly inappropriate kiss upon her lips, a kiss upon which the camera lingers, creating a sense of unease. A decade later, a film called *The Nightcomers* was developed as a prequel to James’s story, featuring explicit erotica, even sadomasochism and incest.

Lovecraft’s “weird” horror is imbued with blatant sexuality on film, ironic considering Lovecraft’s aversion to explicit sexuality. In Lovecraft’s original text, “The Dunwich Horror,” it is hinted that a human woman is impregnated by an inhuman entity, causing her to give birth to the twin, not-quite-human children. The 1970 film version increases the monstrous impregnation by two, with the addition of implied rape, as the protagonist, Nancy, is revealed to be pregnant, likely with half-human Walter’s child, by film’s end.

In 1992 *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* premiered. This film puts sexuality on full display, leaving little to the imagination. From the assault of Dracula’s sultry brides upon Jonathan, to the reverse breastfeeding scene, a monstrous rape of a hypnotized Lucy, and a romantic subplot between Mina and Dracula, the film fully embraces the sexual subtext of the original novel and
magnifies it. Previous incarnations of Dracula had portrayed him as an attractive but shrouded man, but this portrayal shows him as a very sexual being.

*Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein*, the 1994 film adaptation that attempted to be the most faithful adaptation to that point, seems to pursue the maternal theme visually. The creature’s “birth” treats the audience to a shirtless Victor, reminiscent of the “kangaroo effect,” and he attaches a mechanical chamber to a large phallic tube connected to a pulsating pouch, which releases electric eels into the chamber like depositing sperm. The eels give the being in the mechanical womb life, and its emergence from the tank is accompanied by a discharge of slippery, viscous fluid. Victor helps the very nude creature take its first breath, holding its slippery body upon his bare breast. This imbues the scene with a sense of biology rather than technology, a twisting of natural imagery. Finally, upon his first good look at his creation, Victor’s face drops in disgust, disappointed at the sight of his “child,” and he walks away, recalling Dr. Spock’s article about how disappointing a newborn’s appearance can be. What was a subtle theme that scholars mined for in Shelley’s text had now become a visual on the big screen.

The 2001 adaption of Lovecraft’s *Shadows over Innsmouth*, called *Dagon*, presents the trivial human/merperson copulations, only passingly mentioned in the text, as a centric plot point. This includes a scene of discovery of scaly gills on a beautiful woman during a sexual encounter, and the protagonist learning that he is, in fact, one of the offspring of such a monstrous pairing himself.

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10 The “kangaroo effect” as explained by the Cleveland Clinic can be found here: https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/newborn-kangaroo-care
Most recently, the novella *Carmilla* received a 2014 web series of the same name, a horror comedy show in a modern Canadian setting. The heavily implied lesbianism within the text is brought unambiguously to the small screen, as Laura and her mysterious, vampiric college roommate Carmilla establish a romantic relationship through the series’ three seasons.

Sexuality in American and English society had evolved. It morphed from a place of implication and innuendo into a place of explicit exposure. What was subtle subplot and theme had become enshrined on the screen, glaring in rapid motion. Conversations concerning sex had transcended from mouths within a household or words on a page to the TV screen in the main room of a home. The monsters followed this shift, as the aspects of sexuality that they represented in their original texts had become more frequently and openly expressed in media. Dracula’s subtle seductive abilities became one of his most recognizable traits; the children in James’s novella left their ambiguous and merely possible carnal knowledge for on-screen versions actively tying each other up in sexual displays; Lovecraft’s works became B-movie horror, with nudity and sex a frequently-used trope, causing the filmmakers to take the slightest hint of sexuality in Lovecraft’s works and embellish it.

As western culture’s views on sexuality shift throughout the decades, even centuries, it takes its stories along for the journey, causing the monsters that represent sexual anxieties to change form. As the sexuality changes, so do the monsters, and so do the very things that the audience finds frightening, distressing, and acceptable. Monsters, by their nature, prey upon our fears, exploiting the anxieties that we suffer as a society and manifesting them in our fiction, taking literary bodies. And such changes will doubtlessly continue in the coming decades, as new taboos are challenged and even established, creating new monsters (or old monsters with new
forms) to address them. As the world changes, the world’s monsters will change with it, each becoming a reflection of its time.
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