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The Monster Within: Disability Narratology and the Representations of Bodily Difference, Disability, and Monstrosity in Gothic Fiction

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THE MONSTER WITHIN: DISABILITY NARRATOLOGY AND THE REPRESENTATIONS OF BODILY DIFFERENCE AND MONSTROSITY IN GOTHIC FICTION

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To: Dean Michael Heithaus
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This thesis, written by Tiffany M. Oharriz, and entitled The Monster Within: Disability Narratology and the Representations of Bodily Difference and Monstrosity in Gothic Fiction, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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The thesis of Tiffany M. Oharriz is approved.

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Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my father who supported me through the entirety of my education and taught me the difference between “Can I” and “May I”. But also, to the queer, the disabled, and the women before me and to the ones that come after, may you persevere and like as your authentic self

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Professor Martha Schoolman, Major Professor

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the various depictions of monstrosity in Gothic literature through the lens of a new theoretical framework, disability narratology — coded patterns operating within literary texts that pertain to the impaired body and its portrayal as monstrous through repetitive tropes that paint bodily differences as horrifying. The villainous other, the monster, is often representative of something more than what the author plainly states. It often works as a stand in for characteristics deemed undesirable within a cultural group. The monster is a complex being within each text, speaking—or not speaking in some instances—and acting through coded patterns that distinguish the villainous other from the acceptable norm that the main character typically represents. Likewise, disability in literature is portrayed as the antithesis of societal norms and acceptability, To do this work, this thesis will analyze three prominent vampire texts, Carmilla, by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, published in 1872, Dracula, by Bram Stoker in 1897, and Queen of the Damned, by Anne Rice in 1988.

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I. INTRODUCTION

No man is born a butcher

-Bertolt Brecht

Monsters are a prevalent theme in literature, spanning from the Middle Ages into the Gothic and firmly nestling themselves in modern fiction. But the monster is a complex being within each text, speaking—or not speaking in some instances—and acting through coded patterns that distinguish the villainous other from the acceptable norm that the main character typically represents. The villainous other, the monster, is often representative of something more than what the author plainly states. The monster often works as a stand in for characteristics deemed undesirable within a cultural group or society. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture,* the monster often occupies the positionality of "an alter ego... an alluring projection of (an Other) self" (17).

The definition of the word monster, which likely comes from the Latin words *monstrare* and *monere*, which mean to demonstrate and to warn, is defined as "an imaginary creature that is typically large, ugly, and frightening" (OED) and is linked to other creatures such as the mutant in most definitions of the word. However, the earliest definition recorded for monster defines it as a deformed or disabled child (Doyle 135). This disability could be classified as a mental or physical impairment, however, much like the term today, disability was often conflated with visual difference. While today, we understand that not all difference is akin to disability, prior practices and discussion often combined the more recognizable and accepted forms of

disability that pertain to cognitive and physical ailments to those of racial, ethnic and gender difference.

The figure of the monster, much like the creatures it is linked to is adapted to each religion and environment it has contact with; put simply, it is a culturally specific figure that morphs or adapts to the people around it, exhibiting characteristics that threaten the status quo. It evolves throughout the ages with the exposure to various cultural groups, spawning a new identity each time it is reincarnated, a phenomenon that Cohen describes as the monster always escaping destruction (4). In Cohen's seven theses on monstrosity, he introduces seven main concepts regarding the monster in cultural groups as a way of establishing its purpose in literature and film. The theses he introduces are as follows: 1. the monster's body is a cultural body, 2. the monster always escapes, 3. the monster is the harbinger of category crisis, 4. the monster dwells at the gates of difference, 5. The monster polices the borders of the possible, 6. fear of the monster is really a kind of desire, and 7. the monster stands at the threshold of becoming. These theses tell readers that this cultural and societal change is possible solely because the monster also refuses easy or simple categorical distinctions (1-20). For the purposes of this paper, I will be utilizing only a few of these theses, 3 - 6 respectively, to explore the vampires in relation to illness and disability. Likewise, for the purpose of clarity, I have chosen to structure the sections in this paper with these theses as they are introduced by Cohen rather than chronologically by order in which the books were published.

To understand how the monster is a cultural body, the thesis that foregrounds all of Cohen's observations is used to understand its origins within the society it

inhabits. Many of the earliest depictions of monsters can be found in religious texts and folklore such as the biblical Lilith or Lilitu – the mother of demons, a figure that is found in both Sumerian and Babylonian traditions and later within Judaism – who was often in stories that were endowed with some form of morality to aid in the governing of the people by establishing a link between the acceptable and the undesirable. The inclusion of these creatures of lore within a text helped keep things as they were. The vampire for example, was usually a precursor of looming social upheavals, such as the treatise on divorce; but at their root, they are social and cultural tools meant to define the other as something to be feared and to keep the people of any given society in line. Edward Said explains these phenomena of difference in *Orientalism* as an exaggeration of difference, which establishes the other, "the East," or the "Orient" as the polarized opposite of the West.

One such depiction of monstrosity is linked to bodily alterity, which can be categorized in a multitude of ways including race, gender, ethnicity, and disability. Disability is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "[an] impairment or limited by a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition" framing disability as only something tangible through medical terminology (OED). However, disability is not so easily defined, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson differentiates disability and ability as "ability and disability are not so much a matter of capacities and limitations of bodies but more about what we expect from a body at a particular moment and place […] we are expected to look, act, and move in certain ways so we'll fit into the built and attitudinal environment. If we don't, we become disabled" while Joseph N Straus expands on these limitations and the body with the following "Disability is simultaneously real, tangible, measurable, physical and an imaginative creation designed to make sense of the diversity of human morphology, capability, and behavior."

(Keywords for Disability Studies). Nonetheless, while many of the medical definitions imply that some form of illness is at the root of disability, as Garland-Thomson explains, societies have historically conflated different bodies, the bodies of "Others" as "impaired," or disabled. That is, "disability also shared ground with the early modern term "monstrosity" and the classical era term "deformity"—the former having supernatural overtones and the latter representing a falling away from godliness into a particular kind of moral and physical ugliness" (Adams, Reiss, and Serlin 6). Eugenics practices in the early 1900s and slavery did this with black and brown bodies, associating intelligence and civility with the white norm, "Eugenics is the modern scientific term that emerged in the late 19th century and early 20th century West to name the contemporary rationales and actions with which modern nation states shaped the membership of their citizenry... Coined in 1883 by Sarah Francis Galton, a prominent English anthropologist and statistician... Promoted as the new science of improving the human race through selective breeding" (Garland-Thomson 74). In doing this, they claimed black and brown individuals were lacking in these aspects of humanity, equating these "different" bodies with the animals they viewed as inferior.

Notions of disability and monstrosity also extended to women who were treated in a similar manner to black and brown bodies because of their weak constitution. The Greek philosopher Aristotle placed the blame of deformed children solely on their shoulder. In *Dead Blondes and Bad Mothers: Monstrosity, Patriarchy, and the Fear of Female Power* Sady Doyle writes, "Women were the original abominations – the ones that all other monsters came from. Mothers passed their own monstrosity down to every daughter they had, and to some unfortunate sons as well. Monstrosity had become the

defining female quality, the essence of womanhood." (138). During the Victorian era, women were encouraged to remain at home, not to study, or to exert themselves as their "weak constitution" would lead to illness (Showalter). But "weakness" was also a form of monstrosity. Menstruating women were isolated because, "a woman could kill a man by having sex with him while she was on her period… women's blood could also kill at a distance, through contagion"; likewise widowed women were regarded as tainted and kept separate because they knew the pleasures of the body and could lead to contamination (Doyle 9).

Monsters, disability, ethnic alterity, and womanhood have all been inextricably tied since the first iteration of the word monster in the 14th century. The word monster was reputed to mean a malformed animal or human, a creature afflicted with a birth defect, a deformed or disabled child (Doyle 135). Moreover, the etymology of monster, to demonstrate and to warn, also denotes specific features of the monster that can explain the prevalence of its use in early fiction. Fred Botting in *Gothic* explains that the monster cannot exist without the norm; they are inseparable, much like "self and shadow" and, similar to Said's ideas regarding the West and its juxtaposition with the East (Botting 10).

The category of disability, much like the figure of the monster used to portray these bodies is mutable and located in a space of liminality – "occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold" – a place of being and unbeing (OED). Cohen describes this liminal space in his ideas regarding category crisis, writing that the monster is "the harbinger of category crisis", a being that exists while occupying a space that is neither one thing nor another, but rather "a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinction" (6). In a similar fashion, recognizing or attempting to categorize

disability is much like categorizing the monster for both are dependent upon the social group defining them, "individuals with disabilities are in the potentially unending, liminal stage of a symbolic rite of passage… Ambiguity and paradox characterize the social situation of liminal persons. They are neither this nor that, child nor adult, woman nor mother. As a result, the liminal individual is often invisible both structurally and physically." (Deegan and Willett). Ellen Samuels describes this connect between disability and liminality in her article "Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time" by stating "Disability and illness have the power to extract us from linear, progressive time with its normative life stages and casts us into a wormhole of backward and forward acceleration" describing one of the many ways that disability operates in places of in-betweenness (2).

However, even with the mutability of the term, it should be noted that most physical or mental disabilities in the Middle Ages were purported to be caused by demons and seen as omens. In other words, disabilities do the work of monsters, as discussed by Cohen in his seven theses serving as a warning to the people of any given social group by policing the borders of society, "To step outside of this official geography is to risk attacked by some monstrous Border Patrol or (worse) to become monstrous oneself." (Cohen 12).

Within the Gothic – a term used to denote a genre of literature that exemplifies the "portentously gloomy and horrifying" aspects often attributed to the Dark Ages – the monster serves, through its many depictions of bodily alterity, both clearly identifiable and obscure, as a means of defining the norm by explicitly demonstrating an opposition to the values and conventions dictated as acceptable within a social and cultural group

(OED). While the monster in Gothic literature is often depicted as the embodiment of the "Other," someone or something from a faraway land, rather than one that is only an "Other" because of their monstrosity; many of the characteristics they possess are a direct reflection of behaviors deemed unacceptable and found within the very social group they threaten. Many of the tales within Gothic literature demonstrate this use of monstrosity to alienate, isolate, and other a group of peoples they deemed unfit or unacceptable. This alterity takes the form of the racial other, the hypersexualized, rebellious, or opinionated woman, the queer individual, the religious dissenter, the sickly person, the deformed, and the mad, to name a few. To fully create this monster, the text often refuses them the chance to speak directly to readers because to do so would only avail them of sympathy.

For this project, through a close reading of the literary monsters within Gothic literature, my aim is to establish a link between societal norms and the demonization of the "Other." To do this I will examine connections between bodily alterity and disability. This connection is important to establish and understand, in order to answer the question of how society's othering of marginal groups leads to the creation of villains in classic "monster" texts wherein the monster is subsequently destroyed and silenced.

The texts I will be examining are *Carmilla*, by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, published in 1872, *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker in 1897, and *Queen of the Damned*, by Anne Rice in 1988. Each of these novels has received significant attention in gender studies and queer studies, but not much has been said about the otherness of the villainous characters and what this monstrosity really represents and how it may contribute to debates within disability studies. Despite the categorical connections between monstrosity and disability, there is little scholarship exploring the way in which we as

readers might view these monsters as stand-ins for disability. These questions are important to answer and discuss in order to understand how silencing techniques and the imposed alterity of these marginal groups influence today's societies. However, it is important to note that while I analyze the literary trend of monstrosity as a means of categorizing disability, I am not conflating the two. A disabled body is not inherently monstrous solely because it is different.

Disability is not monstrous, but societies have historically viewed people with such ailments that present themselves as tangible visual representations of disability as monstrous. Tobin Siebers calls this "an aesthetics of human disqualification, [which is a] symbolic process [that] removes individuals from the ranks of quality human beings, putting them at risk of unequal treatment, bodily harm, and death" (Siebers 23). Likewise, Michael Davidson discusses aesthetics and brings attention to how common exclusionary practices, "ugly laws, and freak shows of the modernist era provided individuals with an opportunity, …to imagine themselves as not "ethnic," not "feeble minded," and not disabled." (Davidson 29). The "ugly laws" or Anti-vagrancy laws came into effect in 1881, and "were instituted in a variety of U.S. cities to prevent "unsightly" or disabled persons from appearing on the street" (Davidson 29). So, while the monster as a stand-alone creature is understood as something to be feared, evoking in readers extreme emotions, this fear is deeply rooted in a fear of difference and not always a fear of the supposed monstrous actions but of appearance and contamination. As many of these monstrous characters are denied the ability to speak to readers themselves, their depictions through the narrative of the acceptable norm must be questioned.

II. Narrative Prosthesis and Disability Narratology

Disability theorists David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, define narrative prosthesis as a "perpetual discursive dependency upon disability" (205). Which in essence means that any given depictions of disability within a narrative is used to serve as a distinctive plot device, more so than any other reasoning one might attribute to the disabled body within a text. This framework essentially functions as an ironic use of the disabled body that serves as an aid to move stories along. While this project does not intend to counter or argue the validity of narrative prosthesis, and in some instances may utilize the concept of narrative prosthesis in the analysis of the aforementioned texts, the main goal of this work, is to analyze the monstrous figures in these text with the new theoretical framework I refer to throughout my research as disability narratology, defined as coded patterns operating within literary texts that pertain to the impaired body and its portrayal as monstrous through repetitive tropes that paint bodily differences as horrifying. In most Western literature, disability is used as a representative of fear, hatred, and despair. While they serve similar functions, they are intrinsically different in the way they handle portrayals of disability. Whereas narrative prosthesis establishes an ironic use of the disabled body as an aid to move stories along, disability narratology works as a queering of disability within a monster text from a disabled perspective.

Most modern societies have been trained to view disability as a singular isolated case, affecting only one individual at a time, a unique situation of difference that occurs within a vacuum. In interpretation, disability is social rather than individual. In earlier explorations of disability, the blame of birthing a disabled or "deformed" child was place squarely on the shoulders of the mother, it was believed that illness and disability was

connected to the environment and social bonds built by the mother. Some of the superstitions have nestled themselves into modern old wife's tales such the appearance of the child being linked to the moon's rays (Mexican superstition) or the people the mother looks at (Brazilian superstition), or neonatal teeth in babies. While the neonatal phenomenon may be attributed to luck in some culture, in others, babies with these teeth may be consider monsters or bad luck. However, disability is not just social, but the classification and categorization of it is modern, "after all, madness was a disease of the highly civilized and industrialized... We seldom meet with insanity among the savage tribes of men... Among the slaves in the West Indies it very rarely occurs" (Showalter 24).

Disability, like monstrosity, has historically served as a portent of negative change, and a bad omen for many cultural groups. Additionally, it can be found within literary devices as a reflection of these cultural beliefs that help shape its meaning. In medieval Europe, visible disability presented in young children was perceived as a warning from God that "some great misfortune always befalls the city where such *things* are born" (Doyle 135). However, this phenomenon has continued into modern day settings specifically in subconscious thinking, culminating in the stigmatization of some cultural groups and their treatment through practices of infantilization and forced sterilization. Although there are some groups that view illness as a call to a higher power as with the Hmong people[1] who view epilepsy as a sign that the person should be a shaman.

[1] See *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman

For most groups, disability is viewed as problem that must be mitigated, “The victim thus replaces the condition, becoming the figure of mystery and murder”, which in turn leads to the prevalent use of prosthetics such as artificial limbs, walking sticks, hearing aids and more, both in real world settings and within literary devices such as film and literature (Sontag 64). But the most notable feature of the disabled body within literature, is in its portrayal, in its very narrative presence. The disabled body often, is rarely written as person who happens to have a disability, but rather as *the* disability. In literature and in the real world, disability is presented as something that must be rectified or eliminated, often through the use of a prosthesis. The word prosthesis itself is Greek in origin, the root pros meaning to add, or in addition. Moreover, the prosthetic device denotes, especially within literary devices, an illusion of normalcy, noted by Katherine Ott, as “The popularity of social Darwinism further increased the stigma of having a body that might use a prosthesis, and municipalities began to outlaw begging, a common livelihood for such people… Medicine, science, and engineering have regularly deployed prosthetics to “fix” bodies perceived as having deficits, such as skeletal “deficiencies” (140-1). In a real-world setting, it allows the person who dons the prosthetic to occupy a position of a more acceptable and governable difference. While the use of a prosthetic device is not a problem in and of itself, individuals should be afforded the *choice* to use them without fear of alienation and restriction. The use of a prosthetic device should not be used as a means of “normalizing” the disabled to what is deemed acceptable.

The process of narrative prosthesis works within the scope of a novel to highlight how disability is portrayed as a plot device. Consider then Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick.* Ahab is likely one of the best-known disabled characters in literature. He has whalebone

affixed to his body in the form of a prosthetic. The “peg leg” is an objective representation of the novel’s plot, Ahab’s quest for revenge. His prosthesis is also a visual reminder of the Captain’s loss. Much like the pervasive literary trope described by Mitchell and Snyder in their definition of narrative prosthesis, his whalebone leg is a plot point that defines who Captain Ahab is, and not simply a part of who he is. *Moby Dick* relies on Ahab’s disability to fuel the story. This text encapsulates the ideas presented in *Narrative Prosthesis,* explaining how disability is objectified in literature. Michael Davidson, notes that this monsterization of difference is “western art’s linkage between moral life and bodily deformity. Similarly, Shakespeare's Richard III’s hunchback is a physical embodiment of his corrupted sense of power... The function of such narrative prostheses is to provide readers with a model of bodily difference from which they may distance themselves” (Adams, Reiss, and Serlin 27). While this type of reading is important to the discourse in disability studies, the work I will be doing with these texts, speaks to and from a disabled perspective that notes how disability, in its hidden and less overt forms, is used in texts as a justification for the elimination of monsters because of this difference.

A key difference in these analyses lies within the character’s identities, place and social positioning within the novel. Disability narratology works within the scope of the text to understand how societal norms shape and create monsters to be feared by isolating transgressive qualities they want expunged from their folds. This theoretical framework analyzes the hidden forms of bodily difference, ones that may not be made explicitly clear in the text without understanding disability and illness and the effects it has on one and those around them. It explores an analysis of illness and conditions such as

sleepwalking and postpartum depression and positions it alongside other qualities that may be "disabling" to one's and evaluates the positioning and creation of these "subversively monstrous" bodies. Given the clear representation of disability within *Moby Dick's* Captain Ahab, the focus of an analysis that utilizes disability narratology would attempt to read alternative forms of disability that are not explicitly stated in the text and examine them in conjunction with the societal implications of acceptable and deviant to pinpoint the villainy in the character. Ahab's whalebone peg leg would not really serve this type of reading because of its clear depiction of a physical impairment and disability. The leg itself is not what makes him a villain. Melville does an interesting thing with Ahab and his prosthesis, through Ishmael, he explains Ahab's rage, "every little untoward circumstance that befell him, and which indirectly sprang from his luckless mishap, almost invariably irritated or exasperated Ahab." (415). His whalebone leg serves as a reminder of what he has lost and inevitably lead him to abuse and mistreat those around him. Utilizing narrative prosthesis here would highlight the leg as the visual indicator of his villainy because it is an overt call to difference. Whereas, if he did not have this explicit form of disability, disability narratology would analyze less overt depictions of disability, perhaps exploring the possibility that he may have some form of mental illness, or other deviances including sexuality.

While the texts I will be analyzing still objectify bodily alterity presented as disability, race, gender, and ethnicity as a means of moving the story along, the focus of disability narratology is to analyze the coded or subversive patterns that make these monsters possible within their texts, through the unsaid, and through the portrayals of the silenced Other. This is different from narrative prosthesis because, it denotes a series of

patterns used to claim authority rather than frame the other outside of oneself. While narrative prosthesis is an exceptional tool for disability readings because it works with overt displays of disability, it is a theoretical approach that cannot be used universally in all forms of literary analysis of disabled bodies. While Ahab, as we discussed above, has an explicitly disabled body, monsters outside of their hybrid forms, often do not give any visual indication of their disability and difference.

III. The Cultural Body – A History

One of the most notable monsters within gothic fiction and film is the vampire, a mythical creature that consumes the blood of human victims (Butler 7). Like its monstrous cousins, the werewolf and the witch, the vampire is traditionally embedded into a text as a being that must be controlled or eliminated. The Nachezehrer of northern Germany, the Kallikantzaros of Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece, the Penanggalan of Malaysia, the Viking Draugr, the Upyr of Russia, and its Polish friend the Upier are just of few examples of vampires found around the world (Stein and Stein 174). Adaptations of these beings have haunted the stories and mythology of their respective cultural groups for centuries. However, the first time the word ‘vampire’ was used as a term to describe people rising from the grave in the way we have come to know them in the modern sense was in 1725, when it was used by a medical officer in service to the Austrian Crown (Butler 9).

Multiple versions of the vampire can be traced back to prominent religious figures that were once objects of worship. In Mesopotamia they had the Ekimmu, and while these spirits did not consume blood which is considered the traditional diet of a vampire – specifically the vampire of the Gothic – they were said to draw the life force out of

their victims. Other notable religious examples of this creature are Lamia, the snake deity found in ancient Greece and within John Keats' poem of the same name was also said to drink the blood of others, and to consume children after the death of her own and the Gashadokuro of Japan, a giant skeleton that bites off the heads of travelers to drink their blood (Williams 96).

One of the most notable instances of suspected vampirism in history is the case of Mercy and Edwin Brown of Exeter, Rhode Island in 1891. The dead Mercy, like many during this time, was suspected of vampirism after her death from tuberculosis. After her death, her brother Edwin's health declined; he was dying like the others in his family had died, presumably from the same illness that claimed Mercy's life (Little par 10). To combat the spread of illness by this suspected vampire, Edwin and his neighbors exhumed Mercy's body and burned it, they mixed the ashes of her liver and heart into a medical tonic which allowed Edwin to consume it. This custom was a normal occurrence due to a belief that often-attributed vampirism to a familial curse, "Since vampires traditionally only haunted relatives, an entire family could become vampires from generation to generation. such big sentence age by a vampire was equivalent to suffering from a family curse, an idea similar to the Christian belief that one is born into original sin as a result of Adam and eve's transgressions." (Tichelaar 211).

In other parts of Europe and the Americas, there were numerous cases of vampirism reported. When someone was suspected of vampirism, the people would gather to open the suspected vampire's casket, where they found bloated corpses with bloody mouths, which helped to fuel their suspicions. To combat this and their fears of

the vampire, these corpses were staked, a practice used to keep them in their grave rather than its distinction as the primary method of killing a vampire in literary devices. The action of staking the corpse not only kept the body in the grave but had the effect of disrupting gasses that resulted in the corpse releasing an audible moan. Additionally, when they were inspected closely it appeared that the corpse's nails and hair had continued to grow postmortem. Modern scientific understanding suggests that these are characteristics of all corpses. For instance, the blood found in a suspected vampire's mouth is called "purge fluid" and it is a perfectly normal part of the decomposition process. (Little par 3). Nevertheless, for the people facing the unknown and unexplainable illnesses, vampires were a real threat and plausible explanation to the happenings of their town. Vampires signaled a time of unrest for the people who prescribed to a belief in them. All around the world, stories about their origins arose. Mercy was not an isolated incident. People were scared of dying and while these depictions of vampires varied from culture to culture, the fear they instilled remained the same, it was the fear of death and illness; a fear that is understandably a prevalent one for individuals facing disease epidemics. However, in much of Europe, the response to illness was often just as ghastly as the monster they blamed and feared.

Well into the nineteenth century, when the vampire novels first gained popularity, Europeans were still practicing a form of cannibalism akin to vampirism that anthropologists now refer to as medical cannibalism. The most notable of these practices included the drinking of fresh human blood with the intent of curing or alleviating the symptoms associated with epilepsy. The blood sought was specifically that of a person who died a violent death such as that of an executed criminal, (Conklin

347). While this form of cannibalism, referred to by anthropologists as exocannibalism and defined as occurring when the eater and the eaten have no familial or true social relationship to each other, is not discussed as often as that of endocannibalism – when the eaten are usually the recently deceased and share a form of kinship with the eater – its ties to the vampire mythos, specifically that which is seen within Gothic literature, and should not be overlooked. Essentially, vampirism was a response to disease and alterity within societal groups that mutated in literature to outline transgressive behaviors that were deemed deviant by hierarchal groups that labeled them pejoratively as barbaric and uncivilized. These practices fell out of favor with the ruling class and as such became a characteristic of the monster. We see this reflected in literature through characters such as Count Dracula and Lord Ruthven. Dracula as the "Other", who spreads disease through an intimate kiss with the virginal women of London that mimics the penetration of sex, "poses a sexual threat in the novel that flourishes upon myths that Eastern and dark skinned men, including Africans and Jews, have greater sexual prowess than Western European men." (Tichelaar 232).

Despite the vampire's cultural roots mostly found in religious texts, and those attributed to anthropological ethnographies like the one mentioned above, the most pervasive depiction of the vampire mythos is found within western literature – where it is mostly portrayed as villainous – such as in Bram Stoker's 1897 notable gothic epistolary novel *Dracula*, its predecessor *Carmilla* and *Queen of the Damned.* These literary vampires, sometimes referred to as nosferatu, like their folkloric ancestors, were figures of fear. The cultural vampire, much like its fictional literary counterpart, was found during times of great strife and health epidemics – tuberculosis and cholera

outbreaks – which in turn served as a blueprint for their depictions in novels. In both cases, the vampire is a monster shrouded in the very real fear of illness. Although there is no word or definition recorded in Romanian or Hungarian dictionaries for nosferatu, scholars suspect that the word is in essence a bastardization of the word nesuferit which means "plaguesome" (Kratter 37).

IV. Dwelling at The Gates of Difference – Disability in Vampire texts

Erik Butler, author of *The Rise of The Vampires* states "the vampire enjoys greater popularity than any other monster" (7). While vampires were historically a part of folklore, they didn't make their first appearance in literary fiction until 1819, when John William Polidori, personal physician to Lord Byron, wrote the short story *The Vampyre*. Lord Ruthven, the vampire of this story may not visually represent the vampire of modern times, beings who have been attributed with pale skin, elongated fangs, and an eversion of the sun; but he is the progenitor of the aristocratic "romantic" vampire that preys on virginal women and drains them of their blood. Much like his literary offspring, Ruthven possesses supernatural qualities seen in modern vampiric characters such as superhuman strength and hypnosis – which later depictions of the vampire refer to as compelling their victims. Shortly thereafter, between the years of 1845-1847 James Malcom Rymer and Thomas Peckett Prest began the serialized gothic horror story *Varney the Vampire* told weekly in the "Penny Dreadful" pamphlets. These chapters were later published as a book in 1847. While Polidori's Lord Ruthven is the first to introduce the vampire to the general public, it was Varney that offered the first literary iteration of the vampire as we now know it, a monster with sharp fang like teeth that leave two puncture wounds on the necks of his victims. It is believed that Varney inspired the vampires that

followed, namely Carmilla, the female vampire from Styria who uses two needle like fangs to pierce the breast of her female victims, who in turn inspired Bram Stoker's renowned Count Dracula.

However, beyond its superhuman like qualities such as heightened strength and speed, the vampire is often perceived as a sexual deviant, and transmitter if illness. Their superhuman qualities often left them outside of the scope of a disability reading because disability is often viewed in terms of physicality and not the unseen. These beings however should be viewed in terms of their own disabling qualities outside of their physical attributes because disability is more than just the physical and given the era in which a specific vampire was written, areas of their identity such as language, ethnic heritage, religion, gender, and sexuality may be considered a monstrously disabling quality to the dominant ruling class. Often, outside of their ability to infect others, spreading the vampire "disease" or "virus" if you will, these individuals engage in practices that were taboo in the society hoping to oust them. While homosexuality was not unknown, it was considered transgressive, especially after the trial and prosecution of author Oscar Wilde. This form of sexuality and sexual expression was not seen an acceptable one.

Likewise, women were expected to marry and have children, engaging in romantic relations with the same sex jeopardized their position in society. Nevertheless, even with the understanding that a queer identity, like one's race and ethnic background is not the same as a medical disability, these along with gender coalesced and were considered disabling qualities. Moreover, many of these monsters are described in their respective texts as sickly and pale. Their vitality is only regained after victimizing

someone by feeding from them. Like the vampires in these texts, disability has continuously been linked to the abnormal, which in turn was connected to immorality which is reflected in their depictions and sexuality. Furthermore, many of these characters are described as "mad", as in insane rather than the emotional. Madness in Dracula is used to denote a moral failing of the antagonist that is linked to his state of mind and cognitive ability. Renfield referred to as madman and lunatic and while Dracula himself is not described as mad, he induces madness in his manic fits that waver between fury, ferocity, and a calculated calm. These shifts in temperament often occur within moments of each other, such as when Harker accidently cuts himself in Castle Dracula (31).

> Feebleminded[2], sleepwalker, criminal, woman, racial other – these are just some of the classifications that merit the use of the term disabled within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through the lenses of the philosophers and theologians that came before. Nirmala Erevelles notes, "The concept of feeblemindedness came to operate as an umbrella term that linked ethnicity, poverty, and gendered and racialized conceptions of immorality together as "the signifier of tainted whiteness" … The fear of degeneracy associated with a "tainted whiteness" extends not only to Jewish Americans, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and American Indian women but also to lower class white women based on their assumed shared "biological" inferiority and their reproductive incapacity to bear children that would assimilate into mainstream white society" (146).

[2] As it pertains to the name of a disorder in the Victorian era – a deficiency of the mind

These disabled bodies were categorized and set on display within various "extraordinary" avenues of entertainment, specifically the freak show. Eugenic practices attempted to tackle the racially different body while the educated minds of these centuries focused on contending and adapting prevalent ideas involving gender and health distinction. "The public's morbid fascination with the sexualized bodies of Saartjie Baartman, the South African woman known as the "Hottentot Venus," or other racialized freaks such as Ota Benga, and Hiram and Barney Davis, "the Wild Men of Borneo," was proof of the brutal conflation of race and disability" (Adams, Reiss, and Serlin 146). This is best described in a reading of Akasha from *Queen of the Damned*. Her disability lies within the context of her racial alterity, best summarized by her relationship to Khayman, who has an "Ancient expressionless mask of a Face... Like the face of my queen" (252).

Not only is Akasha marked by her racial distinction but also by gender. One specific and pervasive idea by Aristotle involving women as monsters was cited in numerous discourses pertaining to deviance of femininity, "the female is, as it were, a mutilated male" and was later expounded on by Freud in his belief that women where abject because they were essentially a castrated male (Doyle 138). This way of thinking placed women in a category of disability in much the same way that children who exhibited some forms of abnormality were considered monsters. Similarly, those with behavioral deviations from the norm where ascribed the moniker of feebleminded. These individuals were those who presented in various ways the transgressive qualities medical professionals hoped to correct, but a large majority fell in the category of one suffering from hysteria.

While men could and often were diagnosed with hysteria as noted by the European theorist of hysteria, Jean-Martin Charcort, those who were diagnosed were almost entirely female. Hysteria, while operating with a different definition and in a different context within today's societies, was considered "the classic female malady", was a psychological disorder regarded as a disease specific to women that displayed a variety of symptoms and presented at liminal moments for women such as "pregnancy, after parturition, during lactation; at that age when the catamenia (menses) first appear and when they disappear (Showalter 56). Contrarily, male hysteria while not as prevalent during the Victorian era was often referred to as shell shock and served to alienate men who displayed feminine behavior, and were celibate, "to be reduced to a feminine state of powerlessness, frustration, and dependency led to a deprivation of speech" (Showalter 175).

Similarly, in *Carmilla*, the most pervasive "disabling" quality of any of the characters lies in the femininity of the titular character and her quasi-lover Laura. In simply being a woman and having a uterus, although women without uteruses are still subject to these treatments, Carmilla and Laura are both regarded as Other, "The medical establishment still regards female bodies as a freakish deviation from the norm" (Doyle xiii). While deviant sexuality also plays a part in understanding the transgressive nature of these characters, the most telling of characteristics outside of the literal illness that befalls Carmilla's female victims, are her own displays of infirmity, "people say I am languid; I am incapable of exertion; I can scarcely walk as far as a child of three years old; and every now and then the little strength I have falters" (Le Fanu 41). Carmilla is both beast and woman, mother and not, terrifying and

comforting, a liminal being, best summarized in an introduction to Le Fanu's text titled "Meet *Carmilla"* written by Kathleen Costello-Sullivan, "the homoerotic overtones of the... Attack on Laura's breast eclipse the initial mother/daughter dynamic" xxi). Likewise, Laura is pure and impure, child and woman.

In *Dracula*, the most explicitly disabled character within the text is R.M. Renfield who is classified by Dr. Seward as a Zoophagous, "a life-eating maniac" who desires "to absorb as many lives as he can" by consuming a being who has in turn consumed another (71). He attracts flies to which he feeds to spiders, and he feeds those spiders to birds that he then consumes. His claim that these animals and their "strong life" sustain him, in multiple ways is a reflection of The Count. Like Renfield, Dracula also consumes life, but the Count's disability lies in more than just the similar diet he shares with Renfield. Rather, Dracula's clearest connection to disability can be attributed to what Van Helsing continuously refers to as a child-brain, "I have hope that our man brains that have been of man so long and that have not lost the grace of God, will come higher than his child-brain that lie in his tomb for centuries, that grow not yet to our stature, and that do only work selfish and therefore small… this criminal has not full man-brain. he is clever and cunning and resourceful; But he be not of man-stature as to brain. He be of child brain in much... The Count's child-thought see nothing; therefore he speak so free… doubtless, he had made preparation for escaping from us. But his child-mind only saw so far... Then his selfish child brain will whisper him to sleep" (294 - 297).

A prevalent societal notion in the west that people with disabilities face, is the belief that their disability is somehow akin to a lack of sexuality due to their non-

normative attributes and in some cases bodies[3]. This thinking can, and often does extend into the realm of cognitive disabilities such as those who were categorized as feebleminded. The dated definition of feebleminded is "a person having less than average intelligence" or "impaired in intellectual ability: affected with intellectual disability". While this term is used differently in modern settings and no longer used as a pejorative adjective to describe a person with a disability, it still means that the person in question lacks the ability to make intelligent decisions. The feebleminded were childlike in many ways, namely in that they were unable to make sound and logical decisions for themselves. It was believed that their state of mind inhibited them from rational thought. What is interesting about this classificatory categorization of Dracula by Van Helsing is the presumption that The Count lacks intelligence and a sound mind. Dracula tells Jonathan when they first meet that his grasp of the English language is not the best, and yet, he his understanding of the English language surpasses that of Dr. Abraham Van Helsing who is not seen as one with a child brain even with his limited grasp on the language.

V. Liminality as the "Harbingers of Category Crisis" and The Abject (Dracula)

> "We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it - on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger"

[3] For more information on disability and sexuality see "Disabled People Are Sexual Citizens Too" by Sonali Shah https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2017.00045

-Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*

The most distinctive quality of the monster is its evasion of categorical distinctions and its refusal of conformity. This evasion happens while it operates in spaces or positions of liminality, which as Doyle states, is where magic accumulates and power generates (9). The vampire as a monster represents this liminality in the clearest way, "Beginning with the fundamental distinction between life and death, vampires do not respect borders. They pass between boundaries of age sex ethnicity religion and politics in a way that is by turns fearsome and fascinating" (Butler 25-6). A disabled body likewise operates in this liminal space. The disabled body for many years was and, in some cases, still is viewed as human and inhuman.

Dracula, one of the most notable vampires in literature is, a liminal figure in not just his moments of power which occur during the quintessential moments of liminality – noon, midnight, sunrise, and sunset but in his very being. As a vampire, he is in essence, undead – neither dead or alive, nor is he a human or a beast; he is at once ancient and young. Dracula is an aristocrat and a savage; he presents as human but transforms into a beast in the peak moments of in-betweenness, which Van Helsing explains to the party of heroes when discussing the Count and his abilities, "he can only change himself at noon or at exact sunrise or sunset" (Stoker 211). Moreover, Count Dracula is a cultural other, the eastern "savage", the religious blasphemer, and the sexual deviant. He serves as an aspect of humanity that the western "civilized" band of heroes is unwilling to accept within their cultural group. Edward Said explains this unique positionality in the following quote, "Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional*

superiority, which puts the westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand", which can be attributed to the relationship between Dracula and the party of heroes who seek to destroy him and his progeny (Said 7).

Like many vampires, the Count's sexuality is brought into question. Not only does Dracula feast and prey on women, but he represents a form of deviant sexuality, he tells the men hunting him, "time is on my side. Your girls that you all love are mine already; And through them you and others shall yet be mine - my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed" (Stoker 267). He claims Jonathan Harker as his own while simultaneously seducing women and turning them in hypersexualized versions of themselves. Rina Arya, author of *Abjection and Representation,* tells readers: "A common entity that is widely discussed in horror is the monster that is archetypally abject and occupies interstitial states between different categories, thereby transgressing the idea of a discrete boundary" (Arya 15). The vampire occupies a perpetual state of in betweenness described by Cohen in the following quote: "the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions" (6). Dracula, like his nosferatu brethren, is always in constant flux and never occupying one state.

Dracula, in his own way embodies these many qualities much like Carmilla did before him. Carmilla takes the guise of a "sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat" when it benefits her (Le Fanu 46). Similarly, Dracula at various times, takes on the form of creatures in order to suit his needs, crawling like a lizard down the wall, or fluttering outside Lucy's window as a bat, "[They are] the other of humanity

unrecognizable as human, a beast with a purely animal physiognomy" (Bennett and Royle 281). But, even in his human form, he never quite fully presents as human in appearance, with "protuberant teeth", hairy palms and "extremely pointed" ears (Stoker 24). His human façade is the embodiment of the unique state of in-betweenness that he occupies.

An interesting byproduct of this liminality also lies within the way the monster operates and affects those around them. As established earlier, Renfield who is described as a life consuming maniac zoophagous, mirrors his 'master' Dracula in many ways. His most prominent moments of sheer insanity and violence take place in the quintessential time of in betweenness: sunset, midnight, and noon: "just before the stroke of noon he began to grow restless" when "his paroxysms came on at high noon and sunset" (Stoker 108, 110). In contrast to his insanity, the level-headed Mina regains her faculties at these times and is described as "wakeful and alert" and more like herself (289). The text is rife with liminality, both of the literal body, classification, as well as the metaphorical states of the characters.

Lucy too operates in these spaces of duality even before her change. Socially, she is placed in this liminal space as Arthur Holmwood's bride to be, she is neither married nor is she single. But her most telling quality of liminality lies in her chronic sleep walking, a form of liminal consciousness. As Sady Doyle writes, "In folk belief, magic is often said to accumulate around liminal moments - points of transition, places where something is neither A nor B but both at once" (Doyle 9). As noted above, Mina and Renfield have specific personality shifts during these points of transition while Lucy embodies the transition. She is neither fully asleep or awake in these moments, in the

same way she is neither consider a woman nor beast when she has finally transformed into one of Dracula's vampires. She attracts the count to her in the mimicry of his own perpetual state of in-betweenness. His appearance refuses categorization while she as a woman refuses this distinction which is typified in her states of liminal consciousness. Her refusal to meet categorical distinctions and societal norms beckon to him; it is that state and "not the dark that allowed them to manifest" (Doyle 10). To further expand on this, "within patriarchal ideology, monstrosity has been regarded as quintessential to the construction of femininity… the female body [has] also been associated with excess. Conversely, at a later period, women were perceived as an embodiment of lack", where women are alternatively viewed as too much – emotionally– and not enough in that she is not viewed as a whole being, rather she is the epithet of "lack", she is "in the words of Luce Irigaray's book title" *The Sex Which is Not One* (Mulvey-Roberts 106).

The two most notable women of the *Dracula* text, Mina and Lucy, serve alternatively as a traditional Victorian depiction of the "Angel of the House" – described as pure and virtuous, the non-sexualized female [4] – and the whore binary, which conveys the "dichotomous categories of Pure and Impure, Prohibition and Sin, Morality and Immorality" discussed by Julia Kristeva in reference to the abject and abjection (Kristeva 16). In the text, both women fall victim to Dracula. Yet their vampirization, or lack thereof for Mina, is depicted differently. Lucy ultimately dies and is changed; she becomes fully free to express her transgressive qualities that, in the first half of the novel, were represented in subtle and muted ways. As a vampire, she presents a hypersexual version of herself, described by Dr. Seward as, "sweetness

[4] Term coined by Coventry Patmore in 1854 poem of the same name

turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness" who moves with "languorous, voluptuous grace" (Stoker 188). She no longer fears expressing her most inner desires, telling Arthur, "my arms are hungry for you" (Stoker 187-8). However, this change is not a new version of herself as Stoker – through Seward – would have readers believe. As stated before, she can now be described as a freer version of herself, fully realized in all her deviant transgressions. While initially described as sweet and likeable – three men are vying for her attention and hand in marriage after all, four if you count the Count – she represents repressed transgression in a society that is unwilling to accept her in neither life of death. Her freely expressed sexuality and gender performance post death are behaviors she subtly displayed in her interactions with others. Early in the text, Lucy appears despondent with her having to choose one of the three men: "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" which when read with her previous statement about feeling "a sort of exultation" at receiving multiple proposals in one day, suggests that although she proclaims to love only Arthur, the attention she receives from the men is thrilling and not wholly unwanted (Stoker 60, 59).

Moreover, while female friendships were expected and even encouraged, occasionally those friendships breached into the sphere of the unacceptable. Lucy's relationship with Mina is a prime example of this breach, typified in her letter to Mina where she states, "I wish I were with you, dear, sitting by the fire undressing, as we used to sit, and I would try to tell you what I feel" (Stoker 57). In their analysis of Mina and Lucy's friendship, Charles Prescott and Grace Giorgio discuss its friendship in relation to Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversions* and what he termed the 'rave', which is

used to describe a “romantic friendship” between two individuals (495). This relationship, much like the one between the Count and Jonathan Harker, “How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me!”, would represent a type of sexual deviance that was considered unacceptable in Victorian societies as demonstrated with the case of Oscar Wilde as mentioned earlier in this paper (Stoker 43).

In a stark contrast to Lucy and her transgressive behavior, both before and after her midnight rendezvous with Dracula, Mina is a fixed figure in the novel, unchanging in her position within the group of heroes, as well as unchanging in her beliefs and temperament, even as she physically begins to manifest the changes her friend Lucy underwent before she became a monster the men needed to exterminate. While she is arguably a subtler version of the “New Woman” that was gaining traction in this era, she seems to view herself as far removed from them because all of her advances and knowledge are an extension of her wifely duties, “I want to keep up with Jonathan’s studies, and I’ve been practising shorthand very assiduously. When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan” she tells Lucy in her opening letter (Stoker 55). These sentiments are also established and reflected in her memorizing of trains throughout the novel as a way of helping her male companions, specifically her husband: “I am the train fiend… I always used to make up the timetables, so as to be helpful to my husband” (293).

While she visibly begins to change after imbibing Dracula’s blood, her mind and actions remain the same. This is likely due to specific attributes she possesses in which Van Helsing uses to describe her as “that wonderful Madam Mina! She has a man’s brain

– a brain that a man should have were he much gifted – and woman's heart" (Stoker 207). While some might argue that this is transgressive to Victorian ideals because she is occupying a space that is meant for a man, this is considerably different because it is not done in an act of self-interest but rather, all that she does is to feed into the maternal qualities expected of women. This contrast with the qualities possessed by Lucy who never fully ascribed to Victorian feminine ideals. Lucy after presumably consuming the Count's blood is no longer constrained to attempts at conformity. Instead, she is preoccupied with feasting on children rather than caring for or feeding them – as was expected within the sphere of maternity, which was a prescriptive ideal of femininity held at the time. Her new vampire identity that shuns female maternity explicates the lack of progeny created by Lucy or Dracula's three brides. While these female vampires are assumed to lack the power to create their own offspring, there is no direct mention within the narrative of their inability to create their own fledglings (Muskovits par 6).

Lucy operates in an interesting dual sphere of victim and villain. She deviates from the gender norms set in place but equally dwells in them, this refusal of categorization is also a symptom of vampirism, the dead and the not dead.

> The female vampire is abject because she disrupts identity and order; driven by her lust for blood, she does not respect the dictates of the law which set down the rules of proper sexual conduct… [she] also represents abjection because she crosses boundary between the living and the dead, the human and animal
>
> (Creed 61)

I posit that these various distinctions in themselves serve as an argument for her liminality. However, because of this duality and deviation, a violent death is the only way to erase this transgressive behavior she exhibits. The staking of Lucy, riddled with dual meaning itself, is a fetishized and violent destruction that serves to restore patriarchal

order and balance; “penetration” like that of the stake into Lucy’s chest, “is a male victory. It is something done to girls against their will and at their expense” (Doyle 47). But most importantly, in order for the men to set things to rights within the social sphere by placing Lucy into an acceptable female category, they must violently destroy her and all that she represents through a symbolic rape: “Reentry into the myth of woman ideal is only possible through her death. Death is the only way to ensure her purity and to deny her multiplicity once and for all” this, overpowers Dracula’s claim to her and reestablishes English ‘purity’ and morality (Kelly and Von Mücke 246).

Furthermore, her death is not the end, for as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes, “the monster itself turns immaterial and vanishes, to reappear someplace else” (Cohen 4). Cohen’s point emphasizes how even seeming victories over monsters do not fully succeed. In much the same way Laura and to some extent Carmilla are reimagined in the transgressive Lucy, the vampire always returns as new deviant being that must be cast out from its society. This is expounded by Cohen who explores the dynamic of a monster’s escape and rebirth using the vampire as an example of this theory. “Monsters must be examined within the intricate matrix of relations (social, cultural, and literary-historical) that generate them… vampiric figures are found almost worldwide, … each reappearance and its analysis is still bound in a double act of construction and reconstruction” (Cohen 5-6). What this tells us, is that the monster, as it is a construction of a society, a representation of deviance must always be in a constant state of flux, “the body that scares and appalls changes over time, as do the individual characteristics that add up to monstrosity” (Halberstam 8). Its destruction in one story, does not mean ultimate destruction for it is inevitable reborn in a different time and within a different cultural

group. Because the vampire was merely a cultural figure meant to expunge the deviant in much the same way the witch was established to offset female rebellion. The monster then serves as the proverbial "Do not do this" or risk death or contamination by the monster which would result in death by the hands of your neighbors who feared you now that you and the monster had become one.

VI. "Policing the Borders" (Queen of the Damned)

> "Society's impulse is to exclude the parts and groups that are undesirable and that pose a threat to order"
>
> -Rina Arya, *Abjection and Representation*

Aberrant behavior must be punished, eliminated, and cast out of a society by any means. This is often represented in literature through the destruction of the monstrous and villainous other. Religious, racial, and bodily alterity are the most pervasive forms of difference, and some individuals represent all these qualities twofold. In *Queen of the Damned* written by Anne Rice, the titular character represents a different form of alterity then the female vampires of old. Like Dracula and Carmilla, Akasha never has a chance to speak outside of anyone else's narrative, so we must again question the validity of the text and narrator, "The control of the narrative by these characters suggests that the textual body… must be protected from any corrupting or foreign influence" (Halberstam 90). While the narrative echoes the likes of *Dracula* in that it is told through various character perspectives much like epistolary novels, it is done telepathically, compiled and told by one specific white male. The most notable difference of this novel's narrative lies within Rice's unique use of the us versus them binary that each of these monster tales

dwell in. While the "good" and acceptable us, the protagonists, still represent the dominant ruling class, the white male majority, she turns this binary on its head by making them "monsters" as well. Lestat and his peers are all vampires, however, unlike Akasha, they do not represent villainy in this text for they are not the ethnic and absent, unloving mother. They do not seek to destroy the world or mold it as she does.

Instead of a tale of humans versus vampire(s), this novel is told by vampires – via Lestat who offers readers a "reconstruction" of the events within the novel through his use of "infallible telepathic power" – about a specific vampire thus allowing this notoriously silent creature a chance to tell their side of the story (Rice 6). However, in eliminating the silence of characters that historically represented marginal groups, a new type of silencing occurs. This is done through the omission of Akasha's voice. Rice and the mostly male vampire-narrators she creates rob her of the ability to share her own point of view which I submit, is because she, and it threaten the narrative authority of the text.

The differences of these various vampires in Rice's novel are more minute than what is normally explored in the human versus beast trope. They are mostly all "monsters" in that they are vampires, and many are foreign. But the question I posit through my analysis of her silence is, what makes Akasha more monstrous than them? While she is still marked as Other because of her status as a woman, "Akasha [is] far more alien than [her] male counterparts, maintaining rather than undermining the identification of woman as Other", her most troublesome quality, her alterity, lies in the liminality presented within depictions of her racial ambiguity (King 79).

While Rice never makes explicit mention of Akasha's appearance prior to her transformation outside of the vague mentions of the Queen's youthful and flawless beauty, she hails from the land of Kemet. As a vampire, the Egyptian queen is described as "radiant" with "lovely angles" and "high cheekbones" but above all she is always described as pale, with "glistening white flesh" (Rice 249, 254, 289). This is not entirely indicative of her racial status as all of the older vampires are described in much the same way, "bleached by the centuries," suggesting through mentions of age and partial immunity to sunlight that this particular breed of vampire is not easily defined by racial feature, namely in that their lack of contact with the sun whitens their skin (Rice 278).

Mention of her racialized appearance pre-transformation can only be found through the description given of another character, Khayman, who is said to resemble her in many ways due to his heritage, as he too is from Kemet. While as a vampire he is described as pale, within the text there are only two instances where his racialized and ethnic appearance pre-transformation is mentioned, "he saw Maharet's skin through the mesh of his own dark fingers" and "he has the same beautiful face and form which he has now only then he was dark-skinned" (207, 334). It is quite telling that alternative racial features within the text are hard to find. However, by not addressing this racial ambiguity within the text, we would be robbing Akasha's character of more than just her voice, but of her identity.

While Akasha shares the hypersexual transgressive qualities of the female vampires before her, there is much to be said about the lack of racial inclusivity of the text, as no vampire is described as naturally bronze, tan, or black. Rather, each vampire within this narrative is pale, and in some instances, as with herself and Khayman, a

whitewashed depiction of their ethnic origins. The ability to appear bronzed, was a unique quality, one that is indicative of the vampire's age, as only the older and stronger ones could withstand the sun's rays for short periods of time, and yet, even as the oldest of her kind, the first vampire, she is described with pale skin that reflected the light of the moon.

The tale of Akasha, as it is told through the narratives collected telepathically by Lestat is one that is best summed up by Cohen as "a double narrative, two living stories: one that describes how the monster came to be and another, its testimony, detailing what cultural use the monster serves" (13). Her silence inadvertently addresses and exposes the racial problems prevalent at the time of publication. Outside of her literal origin story within the novel, there is nothing to distinguish her as anything but "pale". Additionally, the text also explores alterity in her treatment of the red-haired twins, Maharet and Mekare, foreigners from another land - flesh eaters, and witches. But even in their very distinct place within the text as Other, these women are never described as monstrous in the way Akasha, the neglectful mother and racial other is. The latter twin Mekare is described as animalistic in her final battle with Akasha but in all other instances there are no such descriptions, and this animalistic quality seems to be a universal one for vampires within this text during various states of agitation, hunger, and violence.

Aleterization, the process of placing one in a category of difference and otherness, is explored within the unusual silence of one who is described as ancient and strong, "the Mother" of all vampires. As discussed above, she only speaks through the memories of someone else, never as her own being. I submit that her silence is a byproduct of her villainy which is intricately tied to her alterity. The continuous references to her

homeland of Kemet within the text and the moniker of "Egyptian Queen" used by various other characters suggest that her racial and ethnic alterity play a large part in her status as a monster: "contemporary critical discourse of racial marking often inscribes a slippage between literal marks - such as scars, birthmarks, and brand - and figurative conceptions of 'marked bodies' as signifiers of cultural otherness" (Samuels 86).

As a character with a specific type of Otherness she cannot be trusted to speak the way the others are. This Otherness, namely her intersectional positionality as a woman and racially different is essentially why she is a threat. Khayman who is also racially different than the other narrators, is afforded a chance to speak because he is male. His new status as a pale vampire, bleached by age, also allows others to forget his roots in Egypt. He is now as white as his vampire brethren and progeny, who are considered "acceptable" and are also allowed a voice in this narrative. While it is true that other women get to speak in this narrative, like Mina, they are examples of quintessential whiteness and femininity. Maharet after all is a loving and doting mother prior to her transformation and continues to watch over her descendants after her change, whereas Akasha's first act upon waking from her extended sleep is to kill all her children. She is not a loving mother. She is not white, contrary to her new appearance; and she is a woman.

While some might argue that Akasha's silence is because of her death within the novel, I would argue that this is far from the truth, as the character of Baby Jenks dies within her own telepathic narrative. She is not a racial other, like Maharet she is white. True, she exhibits other transgressive qualities, but so do the other vampires as

this is customary to their race. Her narrative therefor is acceptable, it is allowed to be shared because she does not inhabit the multiple areas of distinction that Akasha does.

Akasha is racially different, a murderous mother, and a powerful sexual woman who wishes to destroy men and give the power to women- she cannot speak, or she would upset the balance: “black women are silenced both as black and as female” (Bennett and Royle 285). Her presence within the text alone, disrupts the status quo and so to rectify this, like the women/vampires before her, she must be brutally destroyed in similar fashion to Lucy. Because Akasha, the monster here embodies sexual deviance, bodily, racial, and cultural differences as well as religious transgressions.

Like the vampires before her, Akasha, the eponymous Queen of the Damned, also operates in this state of in-betweenness. Prior to her awakening in *Queen of the Damned,* she sits upon a throne, cognizant of those around her and the happenings of the world but she is not active or “aware” in the same way others are. She is able to hear those around her, “I have listened to the prayers of the world” she tells the remaining vampires, but she does not interact with them, “You have meditated in silence for centuries” Maharet rebukes (Rice 438, 443). Furthermore, Akasha is also unable to meet a category distinction in her state as vampire and as a racially ambiguous being that is never fully white or black. The text places her somewhere in-between the two racial categories – an ethnic other, “I saw the Mother and Father, darkened as I had been darkened, yet beautiful and lifeless as they'd been a thousand years before.” a pale immaculate beauty “her skin was white and hard and opaque as it had always been”, a vampiric mother who turns away from feminine ideals of motherhood and murders her own children – by

simultaneously addressing her heritage but whitewashing her appearance once her transformation is complete (Rice 418, 30). This distinction is explained further by Butler: "Beginning with the fundamental distinction between life and death, vampires do not respect borders. They pass between boundaries of age, sex, ethnicity, religion and politics in a way that is by turns fearsome and fascinating," she refuses conformity and distinguished borders/categories through her gender, sexuality, race, religious beliefs, and her status as vampire (Butler 26).

The forms of disability that can be attributed to Akasha, are not explicitly stated. Her sanity is never brought into question, her body outside of her gender and racial ambiguity is not clearly defined as different from the others, and yet, she is silenced like the villainous vampires before her. This silencing technique is most effective when othering her, because it avails her white normative counterparts and allows them the opportunity to depict her as monstrous.

VII. Transgression, Fear, and Desire (Carmilla)

> "In social and cultural orders, the boundary separates what is permissible from what is forbidden (the taboo)."
>
> -Rina Arya, *Abjection and Representation*

Within most cultures, there is a set of standards the inhabitants must meet in order to fully integrate themselves. If they deviate from these societal expectations, they are often cast out or villainized. This is a deeply ingrained form of othering that many minority groups, including the disabled must face on a day-to-day basis. Like most other expectations, this form of criticism and othering is found within literature where

the body is used as “the best vehicle for radical social transgression,” namely, as a means of addressing aberrant behavior and health (Kelly and Von Mücke 2). Dracula, his predecessor Carmilla, and to an extent the vampires that have followed are all transgressive beings in some way or another. They serve as a way for cultural groups to address behaviors and fears that is unacceptable in their respective society.

When placed within a narrative sphere, readers can explore the transgressive qualities that they themselves must never exhibit or indulge in while in a real world setting. Specifically, during the Victorian era, ideology surrounding the concepts and practices of femininity and domesticity were at an all-time high, best explained with the doctrine of separate spheres, a common law which states that women as wives should remain in positions of domesticity – a woman’s home and family life. Women were expected to marry and procreate with their spouse. While the ideal of masculinity was virile and displays of heteronormative sexuality were essential parts of the male identity, any overt displays of female sexuality led to the ostracization of women, marking these deviant hypersexual women transgressive outsiders. In the context of literature, people, namely women, were allowed to partake in this aberrant behavior imaginatively through the text they were reading, without transgressing their ascribed role. Consider then the vampire, as hypersexual beings who fall outside the realm of acceptable displays of sexuality, they are free to traverse a space that everyday people cannot. While their death is inevitable because of their status as an Other, the threat they pose to a dominant ruling group through the spread of illness, contagion, and disease, they exhibit a freedom unmatched by any other.

Within Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 tale *Carmilla* this is especially true of the titular character and her preferred prey, women, and *how* she feeds on these women through the use of two cat like fangs that pierce the female breast. Not only is her method of imbibing blood sexual in nature, but the novel also depicts the transgressive relationship between the eponymous Carmilla and the author of the journal in which it is written, Laura. Here, transgression is explored through the sexuality and of the two women Laura and the mysterious visitor Carmilla – the Countess Mircalla Karnstein in disguise. This is an especially potent tale of female sexuality, specifically one that transgresses Victorian ideals of femininity and propriety. The relationship within the narrative is one that is considerably troubling to the society in which it is written due to the not-so-subtle lesbian overtones displayed by the two women through the depiction of their unusual connection.

Ultimately, as in most other monster stories, this tale becomes a battle of "us" versus "them", best described by Jack/Judith Halberstam in *Skin Shows*: "in the Gothic, crime is embodied within a specifically deviant form – the monster – that announces itself (de- monstrates) as the place of corruption" (Halberstam 2). The "us" in this instance being the dominant and proper society and the "them" being the foreign and sexual, Carmilla, who preys on the young maidens of the small Styrian town. Her death, like Dracula's and Akasha's is the only way to save the women and so in a flurry of writing, all social upheavals are put to rights when the men in the text slay the vampire and free her female prey from this "contagious" form of sexuality.

Through Laura's connection to Carmilla, readers are privy to the many ways this relationship refuses to conform to feminine ideals. The women of this novel act

outside of male authority, expressing themselves passionately and to one another in a way that far exceeds the acceptable parameters of female friendship within this era. The intimacy of this narrative not only lies in their relationship but in how the narrative unfolds and to whom the sole narrator Laura addresses her journal entries to, "singular in the opinion of a town lady like you," the women she anticipates will read her account (Le Fanu 30). Within this novel and the many literary incarnations of the vampire, the depictions of these creatures are often considered charismatic and attractive or appealing in some way, even as they inspire fear and in some instances revulsion, "his face was not a good face, it was hard, and cruel, and sensual" Mina observes of Dracula, while Marius notes in *Queen of the Damned* that "They were all magnificent in their own way… Was nobody ugly ever given immortality? Or did the dark magic simply make beauty" (Stoker 155, Rice 277).

This recurrent theme of the ethereal beauty and the charismatic draw of vampires appears to be ubiquitous and is also a notable feature of the descriptions Laura gives of Carmilla in Le Fanu's novella. These monsters appeal and intrigue the characters of their novels and often as a byproduct of this uncanny attraction felt by the characters, they do the same to the readers in a way that is very telling. These juxtaposed feelings they instill in people is best described by monster theorist, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen:

> We distrust and loathe the monster at the same time we envy its freedom, and perhaps its sublime despair. Through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space… The monster awakens one to the pleasures of the body, to the simple and fleeting joys of being frightening - to the experience of mortality and corporality.
> (Cohen 17)

Through monsters, their actions, and even their death the reader can explore all the things they cannot do within their own social sphere for fear of ostracization. But the most important aspect of these pseudo lives readers indulge in, is that it always ends. It is never a permanent foray into the unknown. These cautionary tales offer readers a revolving door of monsters that represent the aberrant – bodies, behaviors, and sexuality, monsters that cause social upheavals. But these upheavals are always put to rights through the death and destruction of the monster. However, because the monster always escapes and returns in new iterations, the reader – most often a member of the society creating the monster, can always return to these desirous depictions of alterity.

VIII. Conclusion

Like his female predecessor, Dracula is a foreigner come to feast on the women of England. He is a hyper sexualized being who spreads disease and illness. What is interesting about his sexuality is that while males were usually free to express sexuality with little to no threat to their social status or repercussion, because of his status as Other, Dracula is not afforded the same leeway Englishmen are offered. In addition, he also infects their women with this aberrant sexuality, awakening in them what was meant to be suppressed within the domestic sphere. Through them, "your girls that you all love are mine already," he is able to infect Englishmen and spread his foreign disease, "through them you and others shall be mine – my creatures," which threatens their respective way of life (Stoker 267).

The women he infects, and subsequently changes are oversexed fiends, hypersexual beings that call to their male counterparts' baser instincts in multiple ways. They attract and repulse the men and those they come across in their monstrous

state, they “inspire fears and desires at the same time – fear of and desire for the other, fear of and desire for the possibly latent perversity lurking within the reader herself” (Halberstam 13). They are seducing vixens with “voluptuous wantonness” that must be put to rest because their ‘purity’ was no longer a facet which they could claim (Stoker 187). Through the extremely intimate nature of the embrace of the vampire, women were penetrated by a foreign male vis-à-vis the vampire bite. They have been corrupted by this intimate and sexual encounter because it has occurred with one who is not their spouse and for purposes other than maternal procreation.

No matter the monster or the narrative in which they are featured, one thing remains a constant, these creatures are a creation from within a society. A few forms this monster or creature takes are the witch, the werewolf, and the vampire. Their attributes reflect the most hated qualities inside the group that has created them. But mostly they are scapegoats for illness, sexual transgression, religious deviance, and bodily alterity. They are the silent, the unspoken and the cast aside, but they are not always the monsters they appear to be. Sometimes, they are the innocent foreigner who threatens normalcy, the woman who suffers from illness, the mother who does not embody the ideal form of maternity, the religious other, the disabled body that refuses to conform. Whatever the monster represents, they are a creation from within. Their actions may be horrifying, and this paper makes no attempt to justify them or dissuade you from that belief. Rather, its aim was to explore the literary connection between the monster and its creator and the implications surrounding some of those societal beliefs that would make a monster of the being and the body that was different.

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