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Abstract (EN)

The transformation of gender is one of the fundamental topics of the late Victorian Gothic. While the earlier Gothic contended with representing a woman as either a victim or a monster, the appearance of the ambiguous New Woman, the journalistic phenomenon that became both the proto-feministic ideal and the conservative counter-ideal, prompted the creation of sympathetic monsters desiring independence. The Gothic alters the strategies of survival, punishing those who stray from social, political, and moral norms. In this way, the Gothic genre not only reacts to cultural ideals and counter-ideals, but it also arouses feelings and challenges readers' preconceptions. The thesis explores relations between figures of monstrous women and the gender ideal dominant at the fin-de-siècle. The female vampire is connected to the qualities commonly associated with the New Woman like promiscuity, hateful behaviour towards children, and yearning for freedom from the shackles of patriarchal society. Though these uncontrollable female fiends are then reduced to the ideal of a dead woman who no longer has any control over her narrative, they return as ghosts, further muddling the lines between traditional feminine and masculine qualities. A possessed woman may behave in a masculine way; a man tortured by a ghost may get lost in feminine hysteria. But survival in these conditions is impossible. The 19th century Gothic, hence, shows that it is no longer enough to slay the monster, but that the cultural conditions leading to anxiety over the shifting gender roles and to the birth of the monster must be addressed.

Keywords: ideals, New Woman, late Victorian Gothic, vampire, ghosts, survival

Abstrakt (CZ)

Proměny genderu jsou jedním ze základních témat pozdně Viktoriánského gotického románu. Dřívější gotické romány zobrazovaly ženu buďto jako oběť nebo monstrum, ale poté, co se objevil žurnalistický fenomén Nové ženy, který se stal proto-feministickým ideálem a konzervativní noční můrou, se osud monstrózních žen prahnoucích po nezávislosti stal zdrojem sympatií. Tím, že Gotický román mění pravidla přežití, trestá ty, kteří se zprotiví morálním, sociálním a politickým normám své doby. Nereaguje tak jenom na kulturní ideály a anti-ideály, ale vyvolává také ve čtenáři emocionální odezvu a poskytuje jim tak příležitost přehodnotit vlastní stanoviska. Magisterská práce se zabývá vztahem ženské monstrosity a genderových ideálů, které dominovaly genderové krizi odehrávající se na konci 19. století. Spojuje tedy upírství s vlastnostmi běžně připisovaným Novým ženám, jako je promiskuitní chování, nenávist k dětem, a touha osvobodit se z pout patriarchální společnosti. I když jsou tyto zrůdné ženy přeměněny v ideál mrtvé ženy, která ztrácí kontrolu nad svým příběhem, vrací se pak jako duchové. I nadále tak zaměňují typicky ženské a mužské rysy. Posednutá žena se tak chová jako muž a muž pod mučivým vlivem duchů propadá ženské hysterii. V těchto podmínkách je přežití nemožné. Gotický román 19. století poukazuje na skutečnost, že již nestačí monstrum zabít, ale že je třeba napravit podmínky, které vedly k jeho zrodu.

Klíčová slova: ideály, Nová žena, pozdně Viktoriánský gotický román, upír, duch, přežití

Table of Contents

1 Introduction: The Power of the Gothic

"One should not underrate the thrill of being scared or the glow of being comforted,"[1] Laurence Davies warns his reader. While nobody in their right mind would like to be chased by a bloodthirsty monster through the twists and turns of the medieval ruins, to feel the terror and hopelessness of coming face to face with the irrational far beyond comprehension; there is something to say about the popularity of the horror genre in both literature and film. It has been over a hundred years since the publication of stories such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), but these age-old monsters reappear in various cultural outlets even today. This suggests that the effects of these narratives of terror are far from exhausted. In *In Frankenstein's Shadow,* Chris Baldick argues that Mary Shelley's phenomenal work created a myth for a new age, "in which humanity seizes responsibility for re-creating the world, for violently reshaping its natural environment and its inherited social and political forms, for remaking itself."[2] The story resonates with contemporary fears and anxieties brought on by the modern world, rapidly changing and evolving, as humanity has re-created and reshaped its environment in the ways that would have been unimaginable centuries ago. The plight of Frankenstein and his cultural offspring is more understandable than ever.

Though, in England, the Gothic fiction has become popular literary genre towards the end of the 19th century, it has ever since its birth been a vehicle for difficult political and social issues such as racism, slavery, colonialism, religious turmoil resulting from instability of the religious institutions, sexually transmitted diseases and other geographic and cultural clashes. Julian Moynahan comments on this phenomenon by relating it to Anglo-Irish writing:

> A peculiar distinction of the Gothic literary style and a clue to its staying
> power, is its ability to convey, through oblique, symbolic, or allegorically

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[1] Linda Dryden, *The Modern Gothic and the Literary Double,* ed. Laurence Davies (Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), x.
[2] Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), 5.

encoded language, truths, feelings, and desires that the official culture and "mainstream" writing little notice and sometimes suppress. [3]

It is no coincidence that the most famous monsters that survived the test of time were written by an Irishman, a Scotsman, and a woman. Dracula, Jekyll/Hyde, and Frankenstein all became a part of general knowledge, an undeniable part of European culture that everyone knows, even if they have not read them. That, in itself, is a testament to their narrative power. What these works have in common is that they offer an interpretative freedom as they express their positions indirectly and, in doing so, even the most well-intended writers professing the mainstream Victorian ideology might end up showing the fates of those "powerless and unenfranchised" Moynaham argues the Gothic gives voice to.[4] Consequently, the Gothic is charged with disruptive energy that results from its attraction to the undead and supernatural. In her study on the development of the fantastical literature, Rosemary Jackson comments on the English Gothic as its precursor and argues that the absence and negation of the natural order of things allow the Gothic to subvert the bourgeois ideology even without meaning to:

> The tradition of Gothic fiction […] in many ways reinforces a bourgeois ideology. Many of its best known texts reveal a strong degree of social and class prejudice and it goes without saying, perhaps, that they are heavily misogynistic. Yet the drive of their narratives is towards a 'fantastic' realm, an imaginary area, preceding the 'sexed' identity of the subject and so introducing repressed female energies and absent unities. Especially in the vampire myth, the attempt to negate cultural order by reversing the Oedipal stage constitutes a violent countercultural thrust which then provokes further establishment of repression to defeat, or castrate, such a thrust. The centre of the fantastic text tries to break with repression, yet is inevitably constrained by its surrounding frame. Such contradictions emerge in graphic form in the many Gothic and fantastic episodes which break into nineteenth-century novels, erupting into the calm surface and bland face of their realism with disturbing reminders of things excluded and expelled.[5]

Though the Gothic was undeniably a powerful tool in the hands of those who used it to write about the issues of the era, for example the position of women and the treatment of minorities, it could also betray the hand of its maker as reinforcing the threatened borders often pointed

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[3] Julian Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995), 111.
[4] Moynaham, *Anglo-Irish,* 111.
[5] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 72.

the reader to the same question as those attacking them. The Gothic, despite it popularity, was hence a double-edged sword.

Any horror story lives and dies with its monster; it is, by far, its most important character. The function of the monster is, of course, to provide tension within the narrative and to raise the stakes for the characters, but, more importantly than that, they are often used to portray serious anxieties in a simplified, unoffensive manner. This juxtaposition has been at the heart of the Gothic since 1764, when the first English Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto,* was published. The genre was tied with an affective, sensationalist prose as well as the sublime, the aesthetic category that mixes beauty with terror.

The connection between art and powerful emotions was described already by the Ancient Greeks. Eva Schaper explains that "[t]he connection of art and the emotions, of art and enjoyment, first stated by Plato as a threatening and dangerous fact," was further developed by Aristotle in his pivotal concept of catharsis, explored both in *Poetics* and *Politics.* Catharsis is translated either as purgation or purification. The former draws attention to the medical metaphor, the latter to the spiritual. However, in her essay, Schaper argues catharsis is mainly an aesthetic process: an artwork arouses feelings in order to alleviate them. She claims "a special role for 'catharsis' as an aesthetic concept, [placing it] in the context of poetic art generally, and not just of tragedy."[6] The transformation of emotions is achieved by allowing the reader or the viewer of an art piece to understand the character and the decisions they have to make. By doing so, the artwork can make its consumer reconsider difficult issues, emphasise with other positions than their own and subvert the dominant culture, as many genres including the Gothic have done.

One way to arouse feelings within the reader – whether they are feelings of damnation or sympathy – is by altering the strategies of survival within the realms of the artificial world:

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[6] Eva Schaper, "Aristotle's Catharsis and Aesthetic Pleasure," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 18, no. 71 (April 1968), 132-143, https://doi.org/10.2307/2217511.

those who do not adhere to the moral, social, and political norms often meet an unfortunate end. In this way, literature may reinforce certain ideals. Hence, in the Victorian Gothic, a woman who does not embrace the idealized conception of womanhood struggles. As the Gothic had quickly grown popular with female readers and authors, portrayals of gender and gender transformation became some of its main themes. The ending of the story was often predictable; the good woman was rewarded, the bad woman died. However, even inside the dotted lines, the Gothic has been used to express a plethora of gender arguments.

Literature is riddled with examples of female monstrosity that may be tracked all the way to the Ancient Greek mythology. For example, Medusa, the beautiful Gorgon sister, attracted Poseidon's attention and paid dearly for it by becoming one of the first female monsters. "[T]he alignment of the female with the monstrous or animal body has helped demote the category of woman in social and political hierarchies," Marie Mulvey-Roberts asserts. She goes on to describe how "[w]ithin patriarchal ideology, monstrosity has been regarded as quintessential to the construction of femininity."[7] These cautionary tales were used as teaching tools of humility and obedience. Even in the Bible, the first woman, Eve, leads Adam into original sin – a deed that could have been altogether avoided if she had simply obeyed her betters. The tales of fallen women and monsters that must be slain by gallant heroes complement the depictions of the idealized women. This kind of literature relies on the reader's capacity to learn from the great heroes of literature and to mimic them.

The first Gothic novels did not posit the woman as a monster. Instead, she was the damsel in distress, the object of desire that both the hero and the villain coveted, a scared little bird flapping its wings helplessly against the bars of a golden cage left to the whims of the men around her. The Gothic heroine is an expression of anxiety. According to Marie Mulvey-Roberts, she is "female powerlessness [as] epitomised by ways in which the property and

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[7] Marie Mulvey-Roberts, "The Female Gothic Body" in *Women and the Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion,* ed. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016), 106.

inheritance rights of the Gothic heroine could be seized by control of her body, whether through marriage, domestic violence or imprisonment."[8]

Over a century later, the female monsters appear in the form of the vampire and the ghost. Though the late 19th century Gothic innovates these images, they are not necessarily new, as "[each of them] is a traditional figure of female deviance with its own history in folklore. The vampire, who sucked men's blood [...], and the witch, who visited men by night and rode them to exhaustion, were the products of elemental fears of women."[9] The old tropes are, however, reinvented. This time, the female monster is not there merely to be slain, but also to take power from men, making her threat more daunting than ever. While Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) does inevitably get defeated by men, she – as well as other females in other narratives inspired by this novella – creates chaos in the contemporary gender conventions. She behaves as a man, making them obey her, as if she were one. Following Le Fanu's example, more female fiends are given complex personalities, becoming ambiguous figures rather than personifications of pure gendered evil. This, of course, raises many questions: Who or what is the female fiend? What has she done to deserve her monstrous fate? Does she deserve the reader's sympathy and, if so, what is her story beyond being slain by the hero?

The best-known Gothic female monsters are vampires and ghosts. These undead figures embodied female and male anxieties during the gender crisis of 1880s and 1890s. The changes to the society as well as one's position in it caused the clear separation between the Victorian gender spheres to collapse, allowing for the appearance of the New Woman figure. She became both the monster and the martyr of the Late Victorian era. It is arguable whether a woman ful-filling all qualities connected with the phenomenon even existed, but the pictures of her were popularized by journalistic caricatures meant to mock the surge of newly

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[8] Marie Mulvey-Roberts, "The Female Gothic Body," 108.
[9] Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977)*,* 119.

employed professional women and her strong presence was described by the first-wave feminists. In *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel,* Gail Cunningham comments:

> Undoubtedly there were women whose mode of life could identify them as New, and the wide and often hysterical press coverage had created an impression oflarge-scale revolt. But for the vast majority, ideas greatly outstripped practice. The New Woman was held up as a symbolic figurehead for a type of social rebellion which many women might concede to be generally desirable but personally unattainable; yet since the New Woman rebelled essentially against personal circumstances, the most effective way of portraying her was not in journalistic summaries of her principles, but in novels. It was the novel which could investigate in detail the Introduction clash between radical principles and the actualities of contemporary life, which could portray most convincingly the stifling social conventions from which the New Woman was trying to break free, and which could present arguments for new standards of morality, new codes of behaviour, in the context of an easily recognisable social world.[10]

In this way, the New Woman sparked a passionate debate, a mosaic of opinions and arguments both for and against her, that were reflected in the late 19th century Gothic. She appears not only in the straightforward accounts of monstrous femininity that endangers both men and children, but also in novels that portray her in the sympathetic manner as someone who has much to give to the society but is not able to survive within the uncompromising rules of the artificial world. Her desire to live freely is what ultimately dooms her.

1.1 The Murderous Martyrs

It is the intent of this thesis to examine various portrayals of female monstrosity published during the gender crisis of the late Victorian era. The focus is placed on undead monsters, the vampire and the ghost. In these narratives, killing the female fiend reasserted male control over female body. She was, then, forced into the role of good Victorian woman that she was not able to fulfil while alive. To achieve this end, the Victorian Gothic changes the conditions of survival, but in the act of eliminating the female monster, it raises other issues. These female fiends were a double-edged sword. While the woman no longer had any control over

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[10] Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 17.

her narrative or how this narrative was perceived, she became a martyr of sorts, proving the necessity of reforming the world, in which she could not survive.

The portrayal of female monstrosity was often ambiguous, as their character was a mix of the desirable and undesirable qualities in the idealized woman. The monster caused worry over the future of humanity, as it denied the maternal instincts and portrayed the New Woman as a child-devouring, man-hating monster, but it also made her worthy of the reader's sympathy. This sense of duality within the monstrous woman is crucial for understanding the anxiety caused by the marriage, childcare, and women's rights reforms in the second half of the 19th century. Punishing these complicated women for the crimes of disobeying the male authority, promiscuity, and infecting the good Victorian women – *or,* in other words: independence, desire for connection, and forming homosocial relationships – reflected the extra-textual need for reforms as much as the fear of the New Woman. These texts, originally intended as cautionary tales, helped to achieve catharsis. They had a normalizing effect. Literary monsters pointed to the contemporary concerns and comparing them to real women would be obviously unfair, which allowed the first-wave feminists seem more reasonable. They were not the monsters of the Gothic. The thesis focuses on the cultural portrayal of these monsters and is therefore based in the cultural landscape rather than the socio-political one.

During the 19th century, these literary monsters underwent extensive development caused, firstly, by the terrors of French Revolution and, secondly, by scientific advancements of evolutionism and other hereditary theories. Though Dracula, Frankenstein and Jekyll/Hyde are excellent examples of the changing monstrosity, the female monster's development is even more prominent. The effect of the New Woman phenomenon on the Gothic narrative was the beginning of a century-long metamorphosis that transformed the female fiend into a heroine of the modern Gothic and fantasy landscape. In her essay, Gina Wisker observes the transformation of the female vampire from the 18th century until the 21st. Since 1980s and

1990s, emphasis has been placed on independence, sisterhood, as well as escaping the patriarchal shackles:

> [W]omen's vampire fictions from the late twentieth century onwards use the ever-morphing figure to ask similar questions about women and society, in different cultural contexts, but offer more questions and different answers. Radical lesbian vampires celebrate sexual energies, relationships, sisterhood; their embrace of the freedoms to upset fixed polarities, assumptions and behaviours offer a social and psychological critique more fundamental than the often quite formulaic endings of vampire girl meets (vampire) girl. Contemporary women vampires question mothering, dependency, role collusion even if they risk punishment for doing so.[11]

This transformation begins, however, in the 19th century, and so it is of importance because of the political context of the first-wave feminism, its clashes with the conservative thinkers, and its lasting impact on the European culture.

This thesis examines the 19th century gender ideals and counter-ideals against the backdrop of the politics of the late Victorian Gothic genre. The monstrous metamorphosis of the literary woman is caused by the culmination of the gender crisis, as is discussed in the second chapter. The third chapter, then, focuses on monstrosity, its development through the 19th century and the effect of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* the two most prominent monstrous figures of the century. This is followed by the fourth chapter that analyses the vampire figures from the year 1897, when both *Dracula* and Florence Marryat's *Blood of the Vampire* were published. These two novels were chosen to provide a balance in gender as well as of narrative techniques. While it would be arguable at best to claim that Stoker's popular novel was disruptive of the contemporary gender roles, it provides the reader with an overview of the possible cultural ideals available to women in the 19th century Gothic and develops Stoker's own idealized woman. Marryat's vampiric heroine, then, serves as an example of the proto-feministic vampire, nonetheless sharing her fate with Lucy Westenra. Both novels change the conditions of survival, but while Stoker does so to create a new

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[11] Gina Wisker, "Female Vampirism" in *Women and the Gothic*, ed. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016), 163.

feminine ideal, providing a compromise, Marryat challenges the contemporary conventions by creating an immensely sympathetic heroine who is unable to survive because of her vampire blood. The fifth chapter then shifts its focus to female ghost figures, analyzing, first, Vernon Lee's *Hauntings* with the focus on her concept of empathetic identification and spiritualism and, second, Henry James's *Turn of the Screw.* The two works are concerned with the transformative influence of the beings trapped in-between the present and the past, allowing them to step over other boundaries such as to muddle the gender roles of those possessed. By including both male and female writers, exploring their opinions and arguments, the thesis explores the 1890s debate on gender issues that continues to influence the contemporary writers even today.

2 Woman in the 19th Century

In any era, national cultural imaginations reflect contemporary moral norms and ideals. These images may be analysed with a focus on the aesthetic value of an art piece, be it literature, drama, or painting, but they represent real positions of groups, institutions and whole nations. The Medieval era expected the noble knights to uphold the chivalric code, the Renaissance had the universal man on the hunt for knowledge and then, in the Enlightenment, compassion and modern sensibilities became the mark of a gentleman. These images, of course, do not represent a real person, who would epitomise the virtues associated with the said ideal; they are simplifications of complex issues based on historical circumstances, developments of morality, the space for social movement in stratified societes, gender conventions, and philosophical works that influenced sensibilities of each era. Their purpose was not to reflect reality, but rather to provide men something to strive for, to help them become the higher man, the hero, who is brave, honourable, curious, and compassionate.

Next to the ideal man stood a female figure. She had a simpler role. She was not as strong nor as able as her male counterpart, for she was merely an object of affection, there to provide motivation. The man had to fight for her, provide his wit, succeed in an impossible task, and win her heart. While she was beautiful, pure, and obedient, she could also be cruel to those coveting her favour, for that is one thing of value she was allowed to have and, hence, she had to think wisely to whom she would give it.

To this, Christianity added the ideal of the motherly saint. The idealized woman should follow the path of Virgin Mary portrayed as Madonna. Understandably, the ideal of a virginal mother was one that could not be fulfilled outside of the artistic bounds. In her pivotal work, Kate Millet explains that "impossible virtues […] have ended by confining [the women] in a narrow and often remarkably conscribing sphere of behavior."[1] Some might argued that

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[1] Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics,* (Champaign: Illinois UP, 2000), 37.

Miller was overzealous in her focus on politics of power, rightly asserting that the impossible virtues in art do not have to transfer to the real world. The incessant repetition, however, makes these images powerful and impactful. The female ideal is imprinted into the national cultural imagination as a victim, a wife, or a mother. Those who fail to adhere to these highly idealized images were transformed to a monster, usually a witch, a whore, or a madwoman.

The so-called women's question attracted a lot of contemporary attention, but even later, in the 20th century, the three feminine tropes born during the 19th century that aroused a great interest in the literary scholarship. They were the Angel in the House, the Madwoman in the Attic, and the New Woman.[2] Though the cultural representation of women was enriched by these archetypes, the number of negative portrayals of unconventional womanhood grew. If women were not angels, they were monsters. The sheer amount of the contemporary moralistic writing on female fragility and delicacy shows this has always been a difficult subject, as there was a drive to keep discussing it.

In 1865, John Ruskin, famously formulated the idea of perceived gender dichotomy that was later used by proto-feministic thinkers as an argument for reformation of female education. According to "Sesame and Lilies," the work that deeply influenced the Victorian understanding of differences between genders, the man is supposed to be "active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest."[3] This follows the previous cultural images of the man as the knight, the intellectual, and the gentleman, drawing a clear line between the genders. A similar line of reasoning can be found two hundred years before Ruskin, in 1688, when George Saville explains: "[T]here is inequality in the sexes, and that for the better economy of the world the men, who are the

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[2] See: Virginia Woolf's "Professions for Women", Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic,* and Sally Ledger's *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siecle.*
[3] John Ruskin, "Sesames and Lilies" in *The Victorian Age: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, ed. Josephine M. Guy (London & New York: Routledge, 2001)*,* 506.

lawgivers, had the larger share of reason bestowed upon them."[4] This sort of binary opposition can be found throughout the western cultural history, in which the feminine is traditionally contrasted to the masculine, the active to passive, the dominant to the submissive, Mars to Venus. Commonly, the men would be described as the brain, while women would be the heart – associating one with intellect, the other with emotions.

Nonetheless, Ruskin's theory describes the female intellect as suited for "sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision."[5] Following the Victorian concept of separate spheres, the woman was entrusted with duties within the household: she was to organize it and govern her little kingdom inside the house, while the men represented the household from the outside. Hence, according to Ruskin, the woman was perceived as capable of reasoning and decision making, but she was viewed as an extension of the house, as much of her identity depended on it. It was, however, Ruskin who argued that to properly fulfil her duties, the woman needed proper tools. Hence, she needed to be educated.

Female education was reinvented during the 19th century. Before the 1850s, the education was restricted to the elementary schools or a care of a governess, who would have attended a specialized boarding school. The main reason for unequal education between genders was attributed to the purpose of education, as men were expected to become the breadwinners of the family, and women to take care of the household. There was a small space for the middle-class women to gain employment within the bounds of the traditional female professions, which would be a seamstress, a governess, or a companion. However, during the Victorian era, new openings appeared, and, with them, new institutions providing reasonable secondary education for girls such as North London Collegiate School that, by 1890s, taught languages, history, mathematics, and natural sciences along with the typically ladylike subjects.[6]

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[4] George Saville, *The Lady's New Year's Gift: or, Advice to a Daughter* (London: Randal Taylor, 1688), 26.
[5] Ruskin, "Sesame and Lilies," 506.
[6] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in the Victorian England* (London: Greenwood Press, 2009), 187.

In "Sesame and Lilies," Ruskin explains that a woman should be wise "not for self-development, but for self-renunciation […] not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service."[7] Service, duty, and respectability were important concepts throughout the Victorian culture, as they were viewed as the basis of the modern society – and what the modern society should become in the future the Victorians both dreaded and anticipated. These concepts were later used by proto-feministic thinkers to prove that a woman should receive better education as it allowed her to fulfil her duties to her family.

Nonetheless, even according to Ruskin, there were areas of knowledge that women should be protected from because of their fragility and delicacy, which is directly connected to their femininity and innate emotionality. For example, Ruskin thought theology was uniquely unsuitable for women to be educated in, as they would suffer needless emotional pain because of it. While these opinions are clearly problematic, those defending the ideal of the Angel in the House or the image of a fragile damsel in distress were not necessarily against reforming female education. They believed education was a way to prepare young women for their role as mothers and wives, which often obstructed even the best intentions. In "Sesame and Lilies," Ruskin, whose opinions and arguments were used in defense of many reforms, holds a similar position:

> I believe, then, with this exception, that a girl's education should be nearly, in its course and material of study, the same as a boy's; but quite differently directed. A woman, in any rank of life, ought to know whatever her husband is likely to know, but to know it in a different way. His command of it should be foundational and progressive, hers, general and accomplished for daily and helpful use. Not but that it would often be wiser in men to learn things in a womanly sort of way, for present use, and to seek for the discipline and training of their mental powers in such branches of study as will be afterwards fittest for social service; but, speaking broadly, a man ought to know any language or science he learns, thoroughly – while a woman ought to know the same language, or science, only so far as may

[7] Ruskin, "Sesame and Lilies," 506.

enable her to sympathise in her husband's pleasures, and in those of his best friends.[8]

The Angel in the House was defined by the house she lived in, effectively becoming an extension of this building and its owner, her husband. She was supposed to know enough to be a good wife and mother, but she did not need to understand thoroughly what she was talking about as long as she was pleasant and entertaining.

The world was changing, and so was the institution of marriage and family. They have, in fact, been transformed many times throughout European history from the feudal clans and dynasties through the companionate marriage, the development of romantic love and the Victorian ideal of separate spheres, leading to modern forms of nuclear family in the 20th and 21st centuries. Consequently, the gender norms evolve. The modern society, or at least what is considered the modern society today, began to develop within the social, technological, and legal advances of the Victorian era. Sally Mitchell has summarized the most important changes in the introduction to her study of the Victorian period:

> By the time Queen Victoria died in 1901, the modern world had taken shape. Most of England's people were town or city dwellers. The British Empire covered one-fourth of the globe, and London was the capital of that empire. London had subway trains and electric streetlights; telegraph messages sped around the world in minutes; luxurious steamships plied a busy transatlantic trade. Education was compulsory; public hanging of criminals had been abolished; a man's religion (or lack of it) no longer barred him from attending a university or serving in Parliament; and the legal and political status of women in all classes was significantly improved.[9]

While many of these changes are, from the modern perspective, undoubtable improvements, living in the era so infected with uncertainty was taxing. The large number of social, cultural, and philosophical shifts cut the ground from the general population's feet. The Victorian beliefs were constantly challenged and attacked. As Walter E. Houghton states, "[o]ne ha[d]

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[8] Ruskin, "Sesame and Lilies," 508.
[9] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in the Victorian England,* xiv.

an uneasy feeling, perhaps only half-conscious, that his beliefs were no longer secure."[10] Even though the Victorian era is associated with a great deal of pride and optimism, the constant changes took their toll on the general atmosphere.

Due to the volatility of the 19th century, Victorians found themselves, as Matthew Arnold strikingly put it, "between two worlds, one dead, / the other powerless to be born."[11] As the middle class grew in numbers, it became the driving force of economy. The nobility, once the backbone of England, felt the change harsher than anyone else. Even the royal family changed to reflect middle-class values because of media coverage. Consequently, the position of women became a source of safety to those in need of it. According to Houghton, "the angel in the house serves, or should serve, to preserve and quicken the moral idealism so badly needed in an age of selfish greed and fierce competition."[12] Hence, the Angel in the House was more than a human being, she was the symbol of the stable home. Her house became a haven, but this ideal was not a cheap one: the angel needed a place to take care of, but she was not allowed to work to support it herself.

As the Matrimonial Causes Act (1854) and the Married Women's Property Act (1870, 1882) made the divorce more accessible, gave women rights to protect their property and allowed them as to stay legal guardians of small children, it was clear that the position of women would indeed change. Many saw this as a blow to the system of the separate spheres. While husband and wife were a single entity in the eyes of the law, the woman could now sever herself from her husband. Because of this, they feared, the New Woman would become more prominent and popular, drawing in perfectly happy housewives with her devious promises of independence. Now that women were allowed access to professions that were previously closed to them, what would stop them from disregarding the duty to their families?

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[10] Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1985)*, 12.
[11] Matthew Arnold, "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," Poetry Foundation, accessed 27 May 2022, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43605/stanzas-from-the-grande-chartreuse.
[12] Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind,* 352.

The line between sexes became muddled, which naturally caused anxiety. Since the Angel could finally leave the house, many feared it meant the ideal died. As Virginia Woolf writes in 1931, "the angel was dead; what then remained?"[13]

2.1 The Angel

Virginia Woolf describes the Angel as the perfect figure, the personification of unselfishness, of every good quality a human being can possess:

> [The Angel in the House] was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. […] in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all—I need not say it— she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty—her blushes, her great grace.[14]

The Angel's virtue was left untouched despite the moral corruption and the modern greed. She was kind, graceful, and pure. She was the ideal woman of the higher society. When the higher society that could afford her lifestyle started dying out, she too was threatened.

The Angel in the House was a guardian of morality. This ideal placed unreasonable and unrealistic expectations on real women. According to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their seminal 1979 book *The Madwoman in the Attic,* the situation escalated to "alienation from ordinary fleshly life, [as] this nineteenth-century angel-woman becomes not just a memento of otherness but actually a *memento mori.*"[15] Confined within the walls of their houses, women dedicated their lives to unachievable perfection. In literature, the nature of the Victorian angel's selflessness can be compared to death. Without any personal agency, these women were supposed to act solely to benefit others. The development of their characters was frozen, allowing them to be associated with death and destruction. One must only remember Miss

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[13] Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women" in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), ed. David Bradshaw, Kindle.
[14] Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women."
[15] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, ed. Lisa Appignanesi (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2020), book one*,* Kindle.

Havisham's wedding dress as well as the broken clocks in her bedroom. Time stopped for her, when she failed to become the Angel in the House, the perfect mother and wife. Many female characters of the Victorian literature suffer a similar fate, as the attempts to break out of the expectations held by the patriarchal society must be punished in order to preserve status quo. In the context of the Gothic, this often means these culturally questionable women are killed, because dead women cannot change.

For centuries, woman's greatest virtue was her purity, and so the greatest threat present in any literary genre, including the Gothic, was losing it. The images of a beautiful maiden chased down the halls of a medieval castle are generated by this anxiety. Being taken by force caused the woman to "lose her virtue" even despite her lack of agency. This traditional threat is employed in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897): the count attempts to conquer both Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker. While he wants to make them his vampiric brides, the narrative no longer rests on the presumed virginal status, instead demonstrating the transformation of a 'good' little obedient wife into a predatory femme fatale by other means.

Should the Angel in the House lose her purity or fail to demonstrate her virtues within this narrative structure, she becomes monstrous. This was a great source of anxiety not only to men, but also the women, as Lisa Appignanesi explains in her introduction to Gilbar and Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic*:

> Idealized, woman is the Virgin Mary, the nineteenth-century angel of the house, keeper of morality, the unsullied, desexualized innocent of the law courts. If she topples off her pedestal, she is transformed into a monster, a killer of men, a less than human creature with a fishy tail. The tension such cultural polarities can set up in the individual is great. [16]

This cultural anxiety has penetrated women's writing until today, but it is nowhere so at home as in the female Gothic. Many female writers used the monster as a means of describing and analysing their own experiences and feelings in a way that would not be possible in any other

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[16] Lisa Appignanesi, "Introduction to the Veritas Paperback Edition" in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2020), Kindle.

genre, partially due to the contemporary preconceptions about the nature and quality of female writing, but it was also due to the unique qualities and history of the Gothic genre as a writing for women by women. Gilbert and Gubar's theory focuses on a connection between the writer and her madwoman, transforming the monstrous woman into "the *author's* double, an image for her own anxiety and rage."[17] In their work, they analyse works of Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emily Brontë as well as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* in which she represents herself as split "between the noble, censorious scientist and his enraged, childish monster."[18] In some respects, the influence of Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1967) makes this authorial approach to the literary analysis nowadays seems outdated, as he argued the focus should be laid on the work itself and its effects on the reader rather than the author's intent. Nonetheless, there is certainly something noteworthy in Gilbert and Gubar's argument as, at very least, it prompts the reader to approach the monster with sympathy.

2.2 All Else Confusion

The Angel in the House was a result of the separate spheres. Her domain was within the house that she was supposed to maintain and create in it a suitable environment for her family. As Lori Anne Loeb comments in her study of the Victorian consumerism and the feminine ideals,

> By 1850 the rising middle-class standard of living made it increasingly difficult to shield the domestic temple from the "commercial chariot" of market capitalism. New prosperity for the first time gave many "angels" money to spend on things that were not necessities. They turned for advice to an expansive range of domestic economy manuals. […] Proportionately more money was needed to rise in the social scale of domestic consumption. The drive for social esteem, according to Banks, was expressed through the display of "a paraphernalia of gentility"—servants, special clothing, more frequent washing, fine food, imported wine, tasteful decoration, and above all by the maintenance of feminine leisure.[19]

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[17] Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic,* 78.
[18] Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic,* 78.
[19] Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (New York & Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), 20.

Though the living expenses were growing, the Angel in the House was expected to host guests for dinner, entertain them and represent the household by spending resources she had at her disposal, be it a number of servants she organized or her magnificent new draping in the music room. However, as the economic situation was quickly changing, the Victorians more and more appreciated modesty, industriousness, and other virtues tied with the rise of the middle class that changed the perception of family, marriage, and gender roles.

Alfred Tennyson's poem, "The Princess" (1847), is one of the responses to the gender crisis. While the poem received criticism because of the ideas it gives voice to, especially about the gender polarities that cut the world in half for many centuries, it responds to the Victorian so-called "woman question" and reflects the changing norms:

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth;
> Man for the sword, and for the needle she;
> Man with the head, and woman with the heart;
> Man to command, and woman to obey;
> All else confusion.[20]

These famous lines are pronounced by an old king, an immediately unsympathetic character, safeguarding the old norms, in a clearly satirical manner. The poem explores the possibilities that arise from the new situation. By having the Prince cross-dress, the boundaries of the simplistic male and female polarities are crossed, or at very least tested.

It was the confusion mentioned in Tennyson's "Princess" rather than alienation from an ideal that unsettled the Victorian public in the fin-de-siècle gender crisis. The gender changes caused uncertainty to both sexes. While women were the obvious objects of the debate, men wondered about their position in this new world, too. In *Sexual Anarchy,* Elaine Showalter explains, "what was most alarming to the fin de siècle was that sexuality and sex roles might no longer be contained within the neat and permanent borderlines of gender categories. Men

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[20] Alfred Tennyson, *The Princess: A Medley* (USA: HardPress, 2017), 111, Kindle.

and women were not as clearly identified and separated as they had been."[21] The Victorian ideal of separate spheres meant that each gender was living in their sphere – that was placed either inside or outside of the household –, but this separation was caving in. New options were appearing, which caused various new ideals and counter-ideals to appear, reflecting the changing times.

These new images were unlike the Angel in the House. Instead of focusing on the idealized form of womanhood, they drew inspiration from the unholy trinity of the madwoman, the witch, and the monster: the three faces of the monstrous woman who had disobeyed the male authority. Each of them had been used to pertain the discrimination of women, but by the end of the 19th century these figures were transformed to ask questions about the position of women in the society rather than answer them single-mindedly. These monsters were no longer one-dimensional, no longer just night terrors to be slain, but now they were clashing with the world in the most tragic way.

Firstly, in literature, the madwoman is a woman who gives in to her irrational nature. She is a cultural culmination of belief that women were already emotional and irrational. However, many of those admitted to the mental asylums were not mentally ill. The diagnostic term "hysteria" could cover almost anything, ranging from conditions like psychosis or depression that were not well understood at the time. Already in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft, the heroine of her semi-autobiographical novella, *Maria* (1798), was placed in an asylum for leaving her husband. The juxtaposition of marriage and slavery was typical for Wollstonecraft. She believed that the denial of proper education meant weakening women both psychically and mentally, "for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty."[22] She argued that it was necessary to educate

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[21] Elaine Showalter, *The Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Harmondsworth: Viking Penguin, 1990), 9.
[22] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication for the Rights of Women,* Bartleby, accessed 24 May 2022, https://www.bartleby.com/144/103.html.

women in order to allow them to become independent from male rule and to assure their sanity. In the aforementioned novella, Maria laments that being born a woman meant to "to suffer, in endeavouring to repress my own emotions, I feel […] the evils they are subject to endure, degrade them so far below their oppressors, as almost to justify their tyranny; leading at the same time superficial reasoners to term that weakness the cause, which is only the consequence of short-sighted despotism."[23] The madwoman is, hence, a woman who failed to repress her emotions, the natural birthright of women who were traditionally portrayed as the heart of the marriage union.

Secondly, the witch is an educated woman who takes control of the irrational powers of the universe and forbidden knowledge. Instead of becoming a wife and taking care of children, she takes the devil for her spouse and, according to the folklore, gives birth to demons. In "Wicked Women," Anne William explains that "[t]he witchy women of Gothic fiction usually threaten not literal but more symbolic forms of castration: rebellion against their patriarchal roles as dutiful daughters, faithful wives and self-sacrificing mothers."[24] The witch not only takes control of her irrational inheritance, she finds power in it, no longer needing protection of men.

Thirdly, the monster is a woman who became her irrationality and had succumbed to the earthly desires. In the Victorian culture, she is the opposite of the Angel in the House, turning her back on her sacred duty to defend the morals of the society. Instead, she becomes a threat. Nina Auerbarch's "Rise of the Fallen Woman" focuses on the fate of these monstrous women, showing that, within the literary world, they existed to be punished:

> The fallen woman becomes the abased figurehead of a fallen culture; her imaginative resonance justifies the punishment to which she is subjected. But Victorian social reformers found her as painful a presence as do contemporary feminist critics. Then and now, she seems to enlightened minds a pitiable monster, created by the neurosis of a culture that feared

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[23] Mary Wollstonecraft, "Maria" in *Mary/Maria/Matilda,* ed. Janet Todd (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 133.
[24] Anne Williams, "Wicked Women" in *Women and the Gothic*, ed. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016), 91.

female sexuality and aggression and so enshrined a respectably sadistic cautionary tale punishing them.[25]

The woman as a monster was used as a sacrificial beast that would be defeated by the male authority. In the 19th century, this image is treated differently to reflect the anxious situation of the changing gender norms and expectations were addressed. The female monster was no longer just a monster, she became the symbol of her era.

2.3 The New Woman

While the Angel in the House is the prosperous ideal of the Victorian upper middle class, the New Woman becomes both the new ideal and the counter-ideal. To some, she was the madwoman, the witch, *and* the monster. The terrifying woman willing to cross boundaries of the separate spheres created chaos. However, the real women fighting to change the social and legal position of women in 19th century like Mona Caird, Lady Jeune, and Sarah Grand, did not call themselves New Woman. At the time, the connotations of the word were negative. The New Woman, both as a journalistic phenomenon and a literary character, could become the personification of all those qualities that caused anxiety tied to the gender transformations of 1880s and 1890s. However, as Talia Shaffer argues in her "'Nothing But Foolscap and Ink': Inventing the New Woman," such a woman was not real and nobody wanted her to be. She was used both as a tool of mockery and "a hotly contested item, […] in the process of rejecting, affirming, decrying, or defining the 'New Woman', writers were able to enunciate where they stood on various issues."[26] In this way, the New Woman was not just a cultural scarecrow but also a figure that penetrated the arguments of the first-wave feminist thinkers. She was able to seamlessly change from the children-devouring monsters to the independent,

[25] Nina Auerbach, "The Rise of the Fallen Woman," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 35, no. 1 (June 1980), 31, https://doi.org/10.2307/2933478.
[26] Talia Shaffer, "'Nothing But Foolscap and Ink': Inventing the New Woman", in *The New Women in Fiction and in Fact*: *Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms,* ed. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 49.

intelligent woman able to find employment in a filed that would have been previously closed to her, making her as admirable as she was terrifying.

"True womanliness is not in danger,"[27] Sarah Grand assures the Bawling Brotherhood in "The New Aspect of the New Question." She mentions the New Woman ideal only fleetingly, when she ironically describes the fear associated with the changes to the institution of marriage. By having the New Woman remain a fictional figure without clear lineaments, Shaffer argues, Grand and other feminist writers "were able to stretch, distort, and duplicate this figure for whatever rhetorical or psychological purpose they wanted." Shaffer goes on to explain that "Grand uses the New Woman's fictionality to exaggerate her into a vast figure looming over an international human-scale revolt."[28] In a truly Ruskinian argument, Ward argued that giving women better education and legal rights and protections would benefit the society as a whole, as it would aid her in fulfilling her sacred duty: educating children – even the male children. In the grand finale of her essay, she promises a brighter future for England if women can step out of the Aristotelian cave and finally see the light:

> Mirrors may be either a distorting or a flattering medium, but women do not care to see life any longer in a glass darkly. Let there be light. We suffer in the first shock of it. We shriek in horror at what we discover when it is turned on that which was hidden away in dark corners; but the first principle of good housekeeping is to have no dark corners, and as we recover ourselves we go to work with a will to sweep them out. It is for us to set the human household in order, to see to it that all is clean and sweet and comfortable for the men who are fit to help us to make home in it. We are bound to raise the dust while we are at work, but only those who are in it will suffer any inconvenience from it, and the self-sufficing and self-supporting are not afraid. For the rest it will be all benefits.[29]

In this conclusion, Grand uses language typically associated with the Gothic fiction. The dark corners, shrieking in horror, even the biblical allusion of "in a glass darkly" can be pointed to

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[27] Sarah Grand, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," *The North American Review* 158, no. 448 (March 1894), 274, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25103291.
[28] Shaffer, "'Nothing But Foolscap and Ink': Inventing the New Woman", 47.
[29] Grand, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," 276.

Sheridan Le Fanu's collection of short stories that deals with the questions of gender and bounds of femininity in the Gothic narrative.

Since the portrayal of the New Woman was often fluid, her cultural life was full of transformations. She could be made into both a monster and a saviour, allowing her to be both an ideal and a counter-ideal depending on the writer's political position and their intentions. In the Gothic, she appears as a monster devouring children, killing men, reflecting the current gender debate leaning against changes in the conception of femininity. Hence, the Gothic gave the writers safe playground to evolve and create new gender ideals and counter-ideals. The fictional figure of the New Woman created common ground for the feminist thinkers like Sarah Grand and Ouida as well as conservative thinkers opposing them. By allowing the New Woman to become an extreme, the feminist thinkers could take more conservative positions in comparison, using the Ruskinian and other domestic-themed arguments that made them look less threatening – and, possibly, quite reasonable.

3 The Development of Monstrosity: Frankenstein's Children

The most famous monsters of the 19th century are Frankenstein's monster and count Dracula. One is "the disfigured wretch," the other: "the ruthless proprietor." [1] They personify the fears of the changing society, influenced by the bloody horrors of the French Revolution and by the increasingly modern world of the deteriorating values, which resonates within the audience even today. While names and circumstances might change in further adaptations, they remain recognizable within multiple cultural outlets. This is why Chris Baldick lends them the proportion of a myth, following Levi-Strauss's structuralist approach that views the myth not as a single reiteration but a multiplicity of stories influencing each other. Nowadays, there are many movie and TV adaptions of the classic horror figures like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), proving that these works have had a lasting impact on the modern Western culture, and they might indeed be compared to a modern myth.

The reason why *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* are so effective is their treatment of monsters, as these terrifying figures are both the origin and the end of any artwork aiming to terrify. While they are useful devices to move the story forward, Shelley's innovation was to focus more deeply on the monster's feelings and motivations. It is possible to empathise with Frankenstein's monster, even as he commits heinous crimes; he is no longer merely the embodiment of inhuman evil. The original purpose of the monster may be evinced by the etymology of the word. *Monstrare* means to show in Latin. Monsters "reveal visibly the results of vice, folly, and unreason, as a warning (Latin, *monere:* to warn) to erring humanity,"[2] Chris Baldick states. When used well, they raise a mirror to the reader and force them to question the contemporary social, political, and moral issues. Through the monsters, the Gothic writer can create the effect of the uncanny, as Sigmund Freud dubs "that class of

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[1] Franco Morretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London & New York: Verso, 2005), 83.
[2] Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow,* 10.

the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once familiar."[3] This is why the monster threatens institutions central to human civilisation like marriage, family, and gender; it reacts to the anxieties present in the era that gave birth to it, and shows them in a way that is so familiar, it ends up being terrifying.

3.1 The Conventions of Monstrosity

The appearance of the monsters is a subject to change as well. While the Ancient Greek mythology introduced creatures such as centaurs, minotaur, chimeras, mermaids that were given animal body parts and other deformities to showcase their monstrosity and inhumanity, the Renaissance viewed the cultural monstrosity "less [as] a matter of physiological prodigies and freaks than a way of defining moral aberrations"[4] closely related to sins of lust, envy, wrath, or treachery. The 19th century saw a rise in popularity of pseudo sciences such as physiognomy, claiming that sins and virtues would become visible in one's face. This caused a widespread fascination with self-division and many writers found themselves pondering whether their monster should look as terrifying from the outside as it is inside. For example, in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), a Scottish novella about doubles, Hyde is described in the following manner "something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something detestable."[5] His evil nature is visible, but there are no words for it. Even when the novella reaches the point of revealing Hyde's face to Utterson, Stevenson refrains from describing it. As a tale about metamorphosis and the changing human nature, it is influenced by the scientific progressions of the Victorian era.

It would be hard to overstate the effects of Darwinism on the Western perception of humanity as it shattered the contemporary world view. Within the sphere of literature, it

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[3] Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" transl. Alix Strachey, MIT, accessed 20 January 2022, https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf.
[4] Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow,* 11.
[5] Robert Louis Stevenson, "Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Terror* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 10.

changed the face of evil. Stevenson's Hyde is described as animalistic, the tale about Dr Jekyll's miraculous potion is a tale about inner duality of a man as much as it is about devolution to the lesser creature, the animal hidden within. According to Kelly Hurley, the Gothic "mapped out alternate trajectories of evolution than the one set forth by Darwin, imagining monstrous modifications of known species, or the emergence of horrific new ones, in accordance with the logics of specific ecosystems."[6] The body of a monster was portrayed, as if it was perpetually changing or it was creating a new species. Another factor was the fascination with the inheritance of certain features, not only of biological traits but also personal and moral characteristics. The most terrifying feature of monsters was the capacity of creating a new monstrous race.

When Franco Morretti describes the difference between the ancient and the modern monster, he claims: "The modern monsters […] threaten to live forever, and to conquer the world."[7] Notably, Dracula and Frankenstein do not have the human limitations, threatening to live forever, unless they are killed. Moretti establishes the differences between the temporal states of monstrosity, stating that the modern monsters are "born […] *out of terror of a split society*, and out of desire to heal it. It is for just this reason that Dracula and Frankenstein, with rare exceptions, do not appear together. The threat would be too great: and this literature, having produced horror, must also erase it and restore peace."[8] While it is true that the death of these monsters restores peace, it is their intent, however twisted, to heal the fractured society: Dracula means to create a unified monster race, Frankenstein's monster wishes for a mate. Effectively, their shared goal is unity, but their means to reach this goal are different – and it is questionable what the world would look like, if they were to succeed. As Rosemary Jackson explains in her *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion,* these are the two types of

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[6] Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: The Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siécle.* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 10.
[7] Franco Morretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders*, 83
[8] Franco Morretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders,* 83.

myth that "push towards a state of undifferentiation of self from other. […] the Dracula myth is far less easy to 'contain', far more disturbing in its countercultural thrust. It is not confined to *one* individual [as is the Frankenstein myth]; it tries to replace cultural life with a total, absolute otherness, a completely alternative self-sustaining system."[9] To create the new system, Dracula must destroy the current one by attacking the human society at its very heart. If everyone becomes the other, the society is no longer split.

The threat of both narratives – Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stoker's *Dracula* – is a creation of the monster race that can either be facilitated through science or by a metamorphosis into a vampire. To defend against this kind of a threat the role of women is especially important, which is explained by Anne K. Mellor in her book on Mary Shelley: "only a culture that mothers all its members, a behaviour traditionally embodied in but not necessarily limited to the work of women, can prevent the making of monsters capable of destroying us all."[10] The mothers, then, are the last line of defence. Since Victorian society put a considerable emphasis on the concept of the separate spheres, it is the woman's work to safeguard the future generation. If the mothers themselves are transformed into a monster, or they are otherwise incapacitated in fulfilling their duty, the entire humanity is put at risk. This makes gender an important issue within the 19th century Gothic. It is, ultimately, the true terror that both Frankenstein's Monster and Dracula are capable of: the vilest act they can commit is killing a woman that either is, might be, or would be a mother.

The monster is most threatening when it is no longer bound by the basic literary contract. Be it a horror, a fairy tale, or a detective fiction, both the victim and the criminal are originals. "It is always the punishment of one who, wilfully or not, trespassed the boundaries of normality," Morretti argues. "To avoid death […] it is suggested to conform to a stereotype:

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[9] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 34-35.
[10] Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (Routledge, 2012), 2016.

in this way, one will never be a victim or a criminal."[11] While the bulk of Morretti's argument is focused on the detective fiction, it holds for the Gothic, as there are similarities between the genres. Usually, there is a detective – a figure reminiscent of Van Helsing – that hunts the monster and the monster behaves in a manner similar to the criminal. It commits the most heinous crimes, it kills the innocent, and must be punished for trespassing the set conventions. When Fred Botting defines the monster, he focuses on its ability to personify instabilities:

> Monsters are thus produced by and also reveal inherent instabilities: refusing to remain in a fixed space of exclusion or to be contained at the margins of any one position, they pose a permanently shifting challenge and produce the possibility of significant transformations. The excess that is constructed by various positions in order to define their limits also works upon and within them, inhabiting and undermining the fixity of their boundaries.

Unable to conform to an ideal, the monster becomes an individual or an original in the same way a criminal would, for their crime is very similar in nature. They refuse to be contained, they give face to something terrifying and unimaginable. While the detective fiction aims to justify the victim's fate, as Morretti argues, as they have strayed from the path of conformity, the Gothic might use the death of the innocent as its most powerful act. It is then the monster is most terrifying since it is no longer contained.

3.2 Women as Mothers and Others

The woman, unless she is a monster herself, can generally be argued to be an innocent. In the older narratives, the perfect heroine would be threatened by the monster and in need of a rescue from the dashing hero, who would later win her favour. In some cases, she would be the irreversible loss, as is the case of Mathilda in Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764). Shelley's *Frankenstein* follows a similar vein. Victor agrees to create a mate for the monster,

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[11] Franco Morretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders,* 137.

but he later changes his mind, supposing should the two of them be allowed to exist at once, it would be a mistake:

> As I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and, with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew.[12]

By doing so, by taking away the monster's hope for a brighter future, Victor Frankenstein succeeds, at last, at creating a monster. The act assures a mutual destruction, as the Monster takes his revenge and kills the doctor's female cousin and future bride. In both cases, the innocent is the victim, making their loss so much more dreadful.

The considerable emphasis on the monster's own story is what distinguishes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* from the earlier Gothic novels. While the monster has always been indispensable to the narrative, its history, and goals often remained a mystery. This is not the case of Shelley's monster, as he claims: "I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."[13] While the novel avoids the female part of sexual reproduction, the monster desires a mate of the opposite gender. She gives him hope he might one day be happy, and in consequence morally good as well. While the female monster might not be necessary to create life, she does have a role to play in the start of a new monstrous society, becoming an Eve to the monster's Adam, and her loss is devastating.

Stoker's *Dracula*, on the other hand, is an example of the traditional evil. Even as Jonathan Harker explores the Transylvanian castle and attempts to learn about Dracula as much as possible, the vampire remains a distant figure, one that cannot be fully understood. This

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[12] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Amazon Classics), 176, Kindle.
[13] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein,* 101.

approach to the monster has its benefits as well as drawbacks as it makes the threat less personal and, in some ways, less real. However, that is not the only monster in the novel. By dedicating a considerable part of it to Lucy's transformation from her human indecisiveness through her unnatural sickness to her undead death, the monster is both born and destroyed within the bounds of the narrative. This demonstrates not only Dracula's true powers and increases his threat, it lends Lucy Westenra, the terrifying yet recognizable female monster, a considerable weight in the tale.

The preoccupation with the female sexuality haunts the 19th century Gothic even in the works like Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stoker's *Dracula,* as they both attempt to avoid the female part of the sexual reproduction. It is no longer a union of an Us that gives birth to a living, breathing being, instead the Other is created unnaturally. Hence, it can be argued that *Frankenstein* expresses Shelley's fear of childbirth, as her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, died because of a post-part infection, and Shelley herself gave birth prematurely to her first-born daughter and lost three children. In contrast, *Dracula* clearly reaches conclusion by a natural birth of Jonathan and Mina Harker's son, who is named after those who were lost in the fight against the vampire. In this way, the natural order is finally restored.

4 The Vampire's True Desire

The portrayal of literary vampirism has changed significantly since the first folkloric images penetrated the European culture – and cultures beyond Europe, too. Nowadays, vampires are objects of popular literature, figures of empowerment and even centres of romantic triangles. It is easy to forget that these blood-thirsty monsters are, originally, inspired by folkloric tales of creatures like Baobhan Sith, the Scottish vampire who seduced and then killed her victims. These superstitions were used to stamp historical figures like Vlad the Impaler (1431-1476) and countess Elizabeth Bathory (1560-1614) who drew the attention of British authors to the regions of Austria and Romania. In the 19th century, the vampire myth is resurrected by the Romantic poets and the writers of the Gothic novels. Some might say that this development reaches an apex in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) because Stoker reemploys images and fragments from the earlier works concerned with the vampire figure.

The earlier incarnations of the vampire myth, in the context of British Isles, are John Keats's serpent-like "Lamia" (1820), whose lover mysteriously dies after her true form is revealed, making her a precursor to the metamorphosized woman who is dangerous to the virtuous men around her; James Malcolm Rymer and Thomas Peckett Prest's *Varney the Vampire*, a popular penny dreadful published weekly between the years 1845 and 1847, and, Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" (1872). By the time *Dracula* is published, there is a tradition of male vampire figures being portrayed as dangerous nobleman and the depiction of female vampires as enchantingly beautiful women who attempt to connect with their victims.

Unlike Dracula, Rymer and Prest's *Varney* is motivated by greed, not a dream of conquest nor a wish to create a new race of monsters, that is prompted by the Darwinist evolution theory. It is the female vampire, Flora, who is of particular interest when compared to Stoker's *Dracula.* When Flora is transformed, those around her are worried she might turn her predatory attention to her children, but, as Nina Auerbach, says, "this anti-Flora never

emerges." Later, Stoker will – fueled by the anxiety produced by the rise of the New Woman in the 1880s and 1890s as well as his own conservative gender views – reemploy these fears in his female vampires. Auerbach compares Dracula with his predecessors:

> Stoker will build his *Dracula* around this fear of a condition utterly alien to domesticated identity (especially female identity), exposing bourgeois virtue as sufficiently frail to turn into its own destroyer, but *Varney* refrains from violent contrasts: instead, the vampire and the socialized characters become increasingly difficult to distinguish. […] Varney can turn good citizens into vampires, not because civilization is fragile, but because [the predatory society] has always licensed vampirism.[1]

In other words, Varney is used as a critique of the high society, not as a religious and sexual anxiety associated with the end and fall of the Victorian era. It is his greed that allows him to infiltrate the high society. His victim, Flora, is not a means of conquest but a monetary source, unlike Lucy Westenra whose very name indicated Dracula's ambitions.

The female vampire – as portrayed in Keats's "Lamia" and Le Fanu's "Carmilla" – desires a connection with her victim. While she is reminiscent of a witch, a woman who has accepted her irrational powers and, hence, threatens the natural order, she is like other women in the Gothic, Auerbach emphasizes, and she exists to "be married or depleted or rescued. They are as consummately made as Frankenstein's creature, their condition a barometer of the vampire's power. When a woman becomes a vampire herself, she has no more agency than she did when she was human."[2] However, Carmilla is the exception to the rule that even Auerbach allows. Carmilla is a character with ambiguous features that allow her to gain agency equal and even superior to the men within the narrative, she owes loyalty to no master and only desires Laura, who is in many ways like her.

In "Carmilla," the central theme is an examination of a homoromantic relationship between the two young women. Close female friendships are given a special focus in the vampire fiction, as they are a way for vampirism to spread, and even Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra

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[1] Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (USA: Chicago UP, 1995), 29.
[2] Auerbach, *Our Vampires, 39.*

share a special bond. In Le Fanu's novella, the gender lines are blurred because of the androgenous nature of Carmilla, the female vampires are taking on qualities traditionally thought of as masculine: they are portrayed as dominant in conversation, easily persuading men to do their bidding, they are strong, active, and comfortable with their sexuality. "Carmilla is one of the few self-accepting homosexuals in Victorian or any literature," Auerbach claims. "One might say her vampirism immunizes her from human erotic norms."[3] It is not only her relationship with Laura that sets her apart from other female vampires of her era: Carmilla and the vampire pretending to be her mother act as a matriarchal unit in overwhelmingly patriarchal society. Laura's English father and his friend, General Spielsdorf, stand for this male society that eventually hunts Carmilla down. It is this separation from the polite society that makes Carmilla and her mother just as deadly to the Victorian gender conventions as Stoker's vampires preying on children, Elizabeth Signorroti explains:

> [E]xcluding men from female friendships or from access to women poses more of a threat to male kinship systems than to female. Thus, female homosocial bonds potentially carry tremendous power to subvert or demolish existing patriarchal kinship structures, which is precisely what happens in "Carmilla."[4]

The eroticization of the female friendship between Carmilla and the narrator, Laura, portrays the vampire's feeding ritual, lesbian wooing as well as a corruption of a young, impressionable Victorian lady far away from the safe English harbour.

Throughout the courtship, there are moments when Carmilla seems to behave hatefully and even dangerously towards Laura, which is one of the ambiguous moments in the novella, since in those times she desires nothing more than a connection:

> Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration.

[3] Auerbach, *Our Vampires,* 41.
[4] Elizabeth Signorotti, "Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in 'Carmilla' and 'Dracula,'" *Criticism 38,* no. 4 (Fall 1996), 609, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23118160.

> It was like the ardor of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet over-powering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, "You are mine, you *shall* be mine, you and I are one for ever.[5]

Here, Carmilla's masculine qualities come to life. She no longer acts with gentleness and vulnerability traditionally associated with the female behaviour in the 19th century. Instead, she desires to possess her friend – to own Laura as her husband might. She seduces her. Carmilla's dominance in this exchange embarrasses the narrator, but, at the same time, Laura is overpowered and makes no attempt to escape. She accepts Carmilla's advances, as she desires her too: as a symbol of female independence, power, and as a possible lover.

The portrayal of gender in "Carmilla" as well as other instances of female vampirism is not straightforward. As Gina Wisker states, "[Carmilla] possesses both those features typically figured as feminine for a Victorian audience: beauty, weakness, and a general languor, as well as those typically figured as masculine."[6] A typically masculine quality associated with the female vampirism is supernatural strength. The female monster able to overpower a man – though, typically, not a group of men. However, the true complexity of Le Fanu's "Carmilla" lies in the fact that she is clearly not just a predator, but also a victim of the very same crimes she seeks to commit on Laura:

> "I remember everything about it—with an effort. I see it all, as divers see what is going on above them, through a medium, dense, rippling, but transparent. There occurred that night what has confused the picture, and made its colours faint. I was all but assassinated in my bed, wounded here," she touched her breast, "and never was the same since."
> "Were you near dying?"
> "Yes, very – a cruel love – strange love, that would have taken my life. Love will have its sacrifices. No sacrifice without blood. Let us go to sleep now; I feel so lazy. How can I get up just now and lock my door?"[7]

As this is a novella, there is not much space that can be dedicated to Carmilla's past; these hints are, nonetheless, important. Carmilla was seduced. She loved, and perhaps more significantly she *was loved* by a vampire. Her description never reveals the gender of her

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[5] J. Sheridan Le Fanu, "Carmilla" in *In a Glass Darkly* (Dodo Press), 289.
[6] Gina Wisker, "Female Vampirism," 153.
[7] Le Fanu, "Carmilla," 304.

lover. Either Carmilla follows in the footsteps of another, or she has turned away from male lovers altogether due to her "psychological trauma."[8] The physical wounds, reminiscent of the ones Laura herself received during the dream episode, are now gone, and yet Carmilla still carries the emotional pain with her – a quality that can be ascribed to the female hysterics of the era and their capacity to control the irrational powers of the universe, or the very proof of the vampiric influence on young women. Even as an independent monster, she reproduces the conditions that led to her transformation.

Whether or not Carmilla's vampire lover was female, she "never was the same since."[9] She changes in the way that is not fully contained by a dualism of vampire and human. As they are related through the Karnstein blood, it is easy to image that Carmilla had been similar to Laura: vulnerable, feminine, perhaps even displaced from her home, eager for a female companionship that she finally finds in Laura, many years later. According to Auerbach, this is the main feature of the vampire before the close of the century: the desire for connection and even a familiarity. Above all, Carmilla "aspired to see herself in a friend"[10] and that is the root of her affections for Laura.

4.1 The Inversion of Gender Conventions in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published in 1897, is often described as the culmination of the vampiric trope that would influence the portrayal both film and literature of the 20th century. Due to its simple language and openness to interpretation, the novel has fascinated creators until today, as it can be related to a number of contemporary issues – be it sexuality, reverse colonialism, or a spread of disease – as well as it serves as the inspiration for the male vampire figure. Though in some ways similar to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* Stoker's *Dracula* is less focused on the creation of the new monstrous race than on the corruptive

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[8] Gina Wisker, "Female Vampirism," 213.
[9] Le Fanu, "Carmilla," 289.
[10] Auerbach, *Our Vampires,* 64.

influence of the vampire. Here, the female vampire undergoes the transformation from Carmilla's desire for connection to the bloodthirsty monster that preys on children. It is not a challenge to the contemporary gender norms but rather an attempt to reinforce them. As Signorotti explains, "Dracula seeks to repossess the female body for the purposes of male pleasure and exchange, and to correct the reckless unleashing of female desire in Le Fanu's 'Carmilla.'"[11] In the novel, the genders are mixed. Not even Dracula can be said to be fully masculine, for just as his vampire brides share qualities traditionally thought of masculine, he is tied with the feminine images. It is necessary, then, to show the dangers of such ambiguities and then to reestablish the boundaries between genders. The vampire causes chaos. It is only thanks to the Harker marriage and the birth of their son that the natural order can be restored. Since Stoker's main objective is to create a monster to be slain rather than understood, Auerbach calls Stoker's *Dracula* a "destroyer of [the tradition]"[12] that the earlier literary vampires – and especially the lonely Carmilla – partook in.

The introduction of the female vampirism in Stoker's *Dracula* is Jonathan Harker's meeting with the monstrous trinity in the Transylvanian castle. Their corruptive influence and the gender instability they represent both attracts and terrifies. As Gina Wisker explains, the female vampires represent "an embodied oxymoron, a thrilling contradiction, fundamentally problematising received notions of women's passivity, nurturing and social conformity."[13] Even when Harker remembers his beloved and attempts to think of his duty to Mina, he cannot resist the vampiric sister-brides. Their call is simply too powerful:

> All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips.[14]

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[11] Signorotti, "Repossessing the Body," 607.
[12] Auerbach, *Our Vampires,* 64.
[13] Gina Wisker, "Female Vampirism," 150.
[14] Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 33.

This sets a dangerous precedent for the rest of the novel. Even the most moral characters may and frequently will fall to vampire's influence, since contemporary virtue is not strong enough to withstand a direct attack. While the novel defines Jonathan Harker mainly by his growing awareness of the supernatural and the weakness resulting from his stay in Dracula's castle that leads him to wish to forget it all, in the beginning of the novel, he is favourably described as "a young man, full of energy and talent in his own way, and of a very faithful disposition."[15] Faithfulness is his chief characteristic. On his travels, he writes a journal in the hopes of sharing his thoughts and impressions with his betrothed. Even when he fears he will not see her ever again, he continues to write. Their connection is undeniable, even before Mina Murray Harker appears on the stage and proves to be worthy of his loyalty. His failure to resist the female vampire, hence, is not a testament to his weakness but rather a proof of how strong and dangerous these monsters are.

The fairest of the sisters, the one with "wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like sapphires,"[16] attempts to feed on Harker. This shows physiognomic rules do not apply in the world of *Dracula* and nobody, not even the angelic-looking woman, is safe. In the reversed heterosexual image, the vampire overpowers Jonathan Harker, penetrating the skin of his neck with her teeth. In his article, Christopher Craft explores the reversion of gender in the novel and argues that this scene "anxiously inverts [the] conventional pattern, as virile Jonathan Harker enjoys a 'feminine' passivity and awaits a delicious penetration from a woman whose demonism is figured as the power to penetrate."[17] Just as Laura was unable to resist Carmilla's "hateful and yet over-powering" behaviour, Harker falls prey to the female vampire. He becomes a damsel in distress that must be rescued by a strong male figure and carried to the safety of his own bed.

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[15] Stoker, *Dracula,* 16.
[16] Stoker, *Dracula,* 33.
[17] Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me with those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula," *Representations,* n.8 (Autumn 1984), 109, https://doi.org/10.2307/2928560.

When Dracula declares: "This man belongs to me,"[18] and looks at him, a moment later, while attentively talking about love, he expresses a desire that might be compared to Carmilla's. Though there are implications that might themselves lend to a homoerotic reading, the novel does not further explore this. Instead of courtship, Dracula reacts to Jonathan Harker's feminine position and sidesteps his own role as the villain to further blur the lines by playing the hero. In this act, he destroys the gender expectations the reader might have of the narrator and creates an utter chaos within the Gothic conventions. As Joseph Valente points out, because of his complex Anglo-Irish lineage, Stoker "lifts the duality endemic to the Gothic form from the level of the motif or symbolic element, where binary oppositions take hold, to the level of the narrative and symbolic logic itself, with the effect of troubling such binaries and ideological attitudes they underwrite."[19] The dualities between Dracula and virtuous protagonist undermine the Victorian positions. More importantly, both Harker and Dracula represent the shifting of sexual identity of the novel. The threat of the Stoker's novel is not necessarily homosexuality but rather the instability of gender norms.

The final – and perhaps the most terrifying – image introducing the female vampirism in all its monstrosity is the "half-smothered child"[20] that the vampiric sister-brides devour. In this act, they fully renounce their feminine virtues and prepare ground for Lucy Westenra's preying on children in London streets. It also fleshes out the relationship between Dracula and his daughters. Though these women were doubtlessly once his lovers, they had been transformed into the unwilling daughters that must obey their father, as they rely on him for sustenance. In his essay, John Allen Stevenson explores the relationship and arrives to the following conclusion:

> Dracula's relation to his women changes in this way because of another economy in vampire sexuality. Not only do vampires combine feeding with

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[18] Stoker, *Dracula,* 33.

[19] Joseph Valente, "Bram Stoker and the Metrocolonial Gothic," *Modern Fiction Studies* 46, No.3 (Fall 2000), 634, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26286068.

[20] Stoker, *Dracula,* 34.

> reproduction, they collapse the distinction between sexual partners and offspring. 'Wives,' that is, become daughters in an extraordinarily condensed procedure in which penetration, intercourse, conception, gestation, and parturition represent, not discrete stages, but one undifferentiated action. Dracula recreates in his own image the being that he is simultaneously ravishing. But the transformation, once complete, is irreversible – Dracula makes it clear that once Mina becomes his daughter, his 'companion and helper,' she can never again be his 'wine-press.'[21]

This once again shows that Dracula does not desire a romantic connection. Instead, he focuses on his conquest and the reproduction of the vampire race that goes hand in hand with it. He might use pseudo-romantic imagery, but it is not his goal. Though he removes women from the polite patriarchal society, he does it to become their new master and father who uses them for his own goals. Trapped in the medieval castle, the fate of his daughter-brides is truly ironic.

Before Dracula lays his hands on Lucy Westenra, she trespasses the Victorian manners and seals her fate. As Moretti argues that, in the detective fiction, it is victim's individuality that warrants their death, the same happens in Stoker's *Dracula*. Lucy's wish to accept and marry three men vying for her love justifies her becoming a monster: "[W]hy are men so noble when we women are so little worthy of them? […] Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it."[22] Though this idea might be called blasphemous, it is simply a cry of a girl who cannot decide between her wonderful suitors. She wishes no harm, but her wish is far from harmless, since it unconsciously gestures towards Dracula's gender chaos. Carol A. Senf connects this wistful sigh with the phenomenon of the New Woman who herself was a personification of confused boundaries: it "suggests a degree of latent sensuality which connects her to the New Woman of the period. It also implies that Lucy is unhappy with her social role, that she is torn

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[21] John Allen Stevenson, "A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of Dracula," *PMLA*, vol. 108, no. 2 (March 1988), 142-3, https://doi.org/10.2307/462430.
[22] Stoker, *Dracula,* 50-51.

between the need to conform and the desire to rebel."[23] Lucy, however, remains loveable even as a monster. For most of the narrative, she is portrayed as a damsel in distress that must be rescued by the Crew of Light, once again mixing the expected Gothic roles.

Just like Dracula and the three vampiric sister-brides, Lucy contains dualities within herself. By day, she is the demure little girl whom everyone loves and wishes to protect. By night, she becomes "restless and impatient to get out. It is this restlessness which ultimately leads her to Dracula and to emancipation from her society's restraints."[24] Though the scene in Dracula's castle is proof that even a female vampire remains a subordinate in the patriarchal society, it is this suppressed wish for freedom that leads Lucy Westenra astray. Because of her subconscious desire to escape the Victorian society, she sleepwalks right into Dracula's arms. This introduces a terrifying prospect, as even this loveable and admirable woman, worthy of male attention, cannot resist the sway of vampirism, as she is after all only a woman in need of protection. As a victim in the Gothic, she cannot protect herself, but as a monster she may rise above these limitations.

Metamorphosed into a monster, Lucy Westenra becomes the same twisted sexualized fiend as her vampiric sisters in the Transylvanian castle. In description, it is revealed her purity and virtues are already lost through colour symbolism:

> The figure stopped, and at the moment a ray of moonlight fell between the masses of driving clouds and showed in a startling prominence a dark-haired woman, dressed in the cerements of the grave. We could not see the face, for it was bent down over what we saw to be a fair-haired child. […] Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness.[25]

The contrast between the two figures in this description – the fair child and the dark woman, the victim and the monster, the purity and cruelty juxtaposed – reveals everything left to know about Lucy Westenra, a polygamous predator who is beyond being saved. There is only one

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[23] Carol A. Senf, "'Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman," *Victorian Studies*, vol 26, no. 1 (Autumn, 1982), 42, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3827492.

[24] Senf, "'Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman," 42.

[25] Stoker, *Dracula,* 175.

thing left to do: she must be killed. As Bram Dijskra concludes, "by means of a little show of monogamous masculine force, Lucy, the polyandrous virago, has been transformed into that ideal creature of feminine virtue of the mid-nineteenth century: the dead woman."[26] Once dead, Lucy Westenra reverts to the innocent girl and her beloved, Arthur Holmwood, can finally kiss her goodbye. Death is used to restore the natural order and to put the female fiend back to her place. From this point, she no longer threatens the set gender conventions, as she has been forced back into her idealized and she may never change again. This is why the image of the dead woman is so powerful: her perfection may never be changed.

Though Lucy Westenra's transformation has many negative effects, she is also the reason the men around her unite to fight Dracula. In the attempt to save her life, they all give blood transfusion, creating a curious connection between them. Van Helsing later comments on this event by reviving her wish to become a wife of more than one husband:

> 'Just so. Said he not that the transfusion of his blood to her veins had made her truly his bride?'
> 'Yes, and it was a sweet and comforting idea to him.'
> 'Quite so. But there was a difficulty, friend John. If so that, then what about the others? Ho, ho! Then this so sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me, with my poor wife dead to me, but alive by Church's law, though no wits, all gone – even I, who am faithful husband to this now-no-wife, an bigamist.'[27]

This blood bond spanning through different social circles makes Dracula's conquest successful. Lucy is the perfect victim, as she is tied to several distinguished men strategically placed through the society. Their geographic origin and the social position shows just how efficient Lucy Westenra was in her monstrous seduction. Through her fiancé, Arthur Holmwood, she attacks the aristocracy, through Dr John Steward she threatens the growing middle class, and through Quincy Morris, her last suitor, she crosses the ocean and spreads the threat of the New Woman to America. By the blood of Van Helsing, she infects Europe as

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[26] Bram Dijskra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-De-Siecle Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986), 346.
[27] Stoker, *Dracula,* 146.

well. Last but not least, the women around her – sisters, as one might say – are in danger by association with her. After all, Mina Harker, her closest friend, is Dracula's next victim. Through the homosocial relationships, the threat of the vampirism and the New Woman becomes omnipresent, passing from woman to woman, tainting even the best of them.

In comparison to Lucy Westenra and the vampiric sisters in Dracula's castle, Mina Harker acts as the idealized Victorian middle-class woman. In her letters, she mentions the New Woman, showing the awareness of the phenomenon in a slightly prejudiced manner. Her main desire, from the beginning to the end of the novel, is to take care of her husband, which is why she chooses to use her intellect to his advantage. As Carol A. Stenf rightly points out, Mina Harker "combines the independence and intelligence often associated with the New Woman with traditional femininity."[28] She does not disregard progress and the much-needed development of the women's rights, but she does nonetheless seem to offer a middle road by accepting her position as a subordinate in the patriarchal society, while remaining economically capable. Her occupation as a schoolmistress and a typewriter is both conventional and unthreatening; it highlights her strengths and priorities. In one, she is a teacher and a caretaker of children. She chooses the other to support her husband's business endeavours. Indeed, she gains approval and respect from men around her thanks to her loyalty, bravery, and intellect – all traditionally male qualities – that Van Helsing praises as her having "man's brain – a brain that a man should have were he much gifted – and woman's heart."[29] Though Mina Harker is described as the perfect woman, this perfection comes at a cost, for it is also her biggest weakness. The combination of the male brain and the female heart makes her just as chaotic as Dracula. They are opposite extremes on the same scale: the same clash of expectations that makes her so admirable allows Dracula to create chaos.

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[28] Stenf, "'Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman," 45.
[29] Stoker, "Dracula," 195.

Despite her willingness to help with the investigation, Van Helsing later decides to separate her from the group, claiming the hunt has become too dangerous for a fragile female. She defers to his judgement, proving her total obedience to the patriarchal system as well as her potential to threaten it. As Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio suggest, the main analogy between Mina Harker and the monster is in the manner of representation, as Dracula is the perfect evil, and she is the perfect good. Both are impossible ideals and simplifications. Hence, she, too, "inhabit[s] and undermin[es] the fixity of [the] boundaries"[30] of the ideal she represents. The turning point occurs when she is cut from the investigation that allowed her to take an active part in avenging her friend and fighting the lesser impulses of her being, as Prescott and Giorgio explain:

> Mina's ultimate moment of New Woman frustration comes on the heels of her most substantial contribution to tracking the vampire. As she types, collates, and distributes the journals, letters, and other bits of writing that make up the text of Dracula, she becomes the lady journalist she has longed to be all along. Her abilities as a lady journalist, and the foresight of typing up Harker's journal, lead to Van Helsing's praise of her man's brain and woman's heart. Yet the New Woman propensities she reveals here lead Van Helsing to cut her out of the loop of knowledge and vampire hunting. […] Acting under the aegis of paternalistic concern, Van Helsing and the other men reduce the proper New Woman to the level of inspiration, future mother, and helpless child - they have effectively reduced her to a cow-woman in waiting [drawing an allusion to Grand's comparison of women to domestic cattle], the perfect mother of the children that are to be.[31]

Her professional ambitions might be nonthreatening when looked at from the distance, but Mina Harker is just as capable as any man in the narrative, or even more so. It is her typewriting that allows the hunt to continue she becomes a catalyst of the story as she is the one meticulously organizing it. When she is moved aside, her male brain is separated from her female heart, as she is forced into the traditional female role in the Gothic novel and into an unwilling passivity. Alone, she is vulnerable, and so she becomes a victim.

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[30] Botting, "Reflections on Excess," 27

[31] Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio, "Vampiric Affinities: Mina Harker and the Paradox of Femininity in Bram Stoker's 'Dracula'", *Victorian Literature and Culture* vol. 33, no. 2 (2005): 502-503, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25058725.

Dracula first comes to feed on Mina Harker, taking advantage of her protectors' attention being turned elsewhere. This leads to a dual image of feeding, as he first penetrates her neck with his teeth and later, when he intends to turn into his daughter and helper, he cuts a wound on his own chest, feeding her as a mother might her baby. This creates yet another trespass on the conventions, showing the dangers of crossing the boundary between the separate spheres. Dracula is not only a male monster with the penetrative power, but he is also an androgenous being able to create offspring and to feed them in a rather maternal manner. As Christopher Craft explains, this scene is the final expression of "gender dissolution"[32] that haunts the entire novel. The masculine and the feminine depictions of vampirism are combined here because Mina takes an active part in her seduction, unable to deny the vampire's wishes, and Dracula moves between both genders.

Nonetheless, even when Mina Harker fails to resist her vampiric master, she does not become a monster nor a fallen woman. She may be redeemed as she only succumbs to the vampire's influence to protect her husband. The vampire's death seems to clear all dangers in one sweeping act, as the novel does not return to the fate of his vampiric daughters-brides, perhaps taking it for granted that they would starve without him or maybe they are saved in the way as Mina. After Dracula is killed, Morris says with his dying breath: "See! the snow is not more stainless than her forehead! The curse has passed away!"[33] Though saved from the curse, she is not entirely redeemed as the gender roles must now be completely reinforced, and so the last scene describes Mina in her marital and maternal bliss from Jonathan Harker's perspective. She is no longer allowed the narrative power to conclude her own story. Once toppled from her pedestal, her angelic perfection may only be perceived through the male gaze:

> Unless Mina can pass as Van Helsing's "star and hope," unless she can be a
> self-reflective version of Linton's "cow-woman" and play that role perfectly,

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[32] Craft, "Kiss Me with those Red Lips," 126.
[33] Stoker, *Dracula,* 314.

> she can be read as monster and justifiably exterminated. Thus we get no final comment from Mina on her married life […] Indeed, Mina isn't even the one holding her child as her maternal bliss is described - Van Helsing is the one who has "our boy on his knees" (374; ch. 27). We must rely on Harker for the image of wedded and maternal bliss, but Mina's journal has amply exposed the danger of taking Harker at his word.[34]

In this way, Mina Harker's fate is similar to Lucy Westenra's. Both are forcibly returned to the roles of perfect Victorian women, fulfilling their duties and expectations. Both are silenced. The gender chaos caused by Dracula's morphing nature has now been eradicated and all is as it should be. The birth of her son is not only an antidote to the unnatural birth of vampires, but it is also life defeating death and order returning to the lives of all who fought against the vampire and survived. The only surviving woman is a wife and a mother, making her completely safe, and the men are strong and victorious, able to protect her.

4.2 "Unfit To Live": Harriet in Florence Marryat's *Blood of the Vampire*

The other vampire novel published in 1897 is Florence Marryat's *Blood of the Vampire.* Unlike Stoker's *Dracula,* it did not influence the Gothic culture as deeply, but it nonetheless shows the same literary, scientific, and moral influence depicted in a different manner. Instead of reinforcing old tropes and the contemporary heterosexual norms, Marryat focuses on Harriet Brandt's unfitness to live. The blood of vampire she inherited from her grandmother makes impossible for her to achieve the one thing she truly desires, the same thing Carmilla desired, connection with another being. Elaine Showalter counts Marryat amongst female writers such as Mary Braddon and Rhoda Broughton who used the sensation literature of the late 19th century to "[explore] genuinely radical female protest against marriage and women's economic oppression, although still in the framework of feminine conventions that demanded the erring heroine's destruction."[35] The novel is a critique of the contemporary image of the

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[34] Prescott and Giorgio, "Vampiric Affinities," 509.
[35] Showalter, *The Literature of Their Own,* 28-29.

New Woman, colonialism and the hereditary beliefs caused by Darwinism, as Marryat paints a deeply sympathetic image of her toothless vampire.

To compare Harriet Brandt with Stoker's vampiric sister-brides reveals many similarities, though they are only similarities on surface. They are both monsters, they both devour children; and they both attract attention, as if they were hypnotizing their victims. If one were to lay facts about Harriet Brandt this way, they would understand Miss Leyton's reservations about the beautiful girl who is described as strikingly innocent, "as though she also had been a child. Everything she saw seemed to astonish and delight her."[36] The comparison to a child, her passionate nature as well as the talent for music all show her a full of potential. This is Harriet Brandt's most significant feature; unlike Stoker's terrifying vampire, she seems to have a promising future that might even overshadow the other ladies representing the British society and the ideal of the English lady.

It might be more prudent to compare her with Lucy Westenra's desire for perfect love, unwilling to hurt any of the three gentlemen courting her, or Carmilla, whose desire for Laura is similar to what Harriet wants. "I have been so lonely and friendless all my life," she laments in Anthony Pennel's arms towards the end of the novel, "and I have longed for love and sympathy, and now that they have come to me, it is hard, O! *so* hard, to have to give them up."[37]The novel describes the story of what leads her to commit suicide. She repeatedly fails to create a lasting connection. At first, she tries to befriend the ladies at the hotel, which, according to Marie Parrino, "is supposed to be by definition a place where guests—strangers of any kind—are all equally welcomed and welcoming, [but] the strangers at the Belgian resort are not all equal: some are stranger than others."[38] Harriet's strange habits, origin, and darker appearance make her stand out. Her unladylike hunger, with which "she kept her eyes

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[36] Florence Marryat, *The Blood of the Vampire* (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2009), 15.
[37] Marryat, *The Blood of the Vampire*, 215.
[38] Maria Parrino, "Crossing Borders: Hospitality in Bram Stoker's Dracula and Florence Marryat's The Blood of the Vampire" in *Hospitality, Rape and Consent in Vampire Popular Culture: Letting the Wrong One In,* ed. David Baker and Stephanie Gree*n* (London: Palgrave Gothic, 2017), 28.

fixed upon her food, as if she feared someone might deprive her of it,"[39] clashes with the Victorian manners, the expectations of moderation and etiquette rules of fine dining. Her school-girl way of clinging to others, her passionate, yet artless way, of self-expression all make her a stranger in the predominantly British high-class group of travelers. She is different. In her *Gender, the New Woman, and the Monster,* Elizabeth D. Malacuso argues:

> [T]the racist, sexist, and xenophobic ideologies that Doctor Phillips and Elinor Leyton espouse (respectively) prevent Harriet from acquiring those attachments and contribute to her monstrosity, social disciplining, marginalization, and her suicide. […] Harriet's humanity upends her monstrosity and makes monster out of the British compatriots who willingly castigate her and send her to her death.[40]

Though she makes her best attempt to find her place within the society at the hotel, despite all her talents and virtues, she is reduced to an unrefined Creole. At this point of the novel, she is not shunned because of her vampiric blood but because of her origin and the lack of proper education. Her fate is signalled in a manner similar to Lucy Westenra, as Harriet Brandt makes the error of admitting her to her independent, adventurer-like ambitions:

> "And what will you do when your friend leaves you?" asked Mrs Pullen.
> "O! I don't know! Travel about, I suppose! I shall go wherever it may please me!"[41]

It is not just that she travels alone, just with a female companion, without the expected male protection, she expects to be able to travel on her own afterwards. She is independent, which "indicates a blasphemous imitation of masculinity"[42] and is reminiscent of the New Woman. She adopts traditionally male qualities in the same way as the titular character of Le Fanu's "Carmilla," but, here, it is not a reason for admiration but rather marginalization.

Through Harriet Brandt's association with Margaret and her daughter, her first victims, the vampire blood flowing in her veins is revealed. When Margaret complains of weakness, Elinor Leyton quickly connects it with Harriet's clinginess and tries to dissuade her friend

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[39] Marryat, *The Blood of the Vampire*, 5.
[40] E. D. Macaluso, *Gender, the New Woman and the Monster* (USA: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), 72.
[41] Marryat, *The Blood of the Vampire*, 13.
[42] Macaluso, *Gender*, 74.

from spending more time with her. Here, Leyton acts a similar role as Mina Harker does to Lucy. They both attempt to protect their younger-seeming friend, but they ultimately fail to do so. Since Margaret is married and, hence, protected, it is her daughter Ethel who pays the price. Unlike the blood-thirsty vampires, dominating the Gothic culture since Dracula, Harriet drains the life energy of those she loves, and she does so unknowingly. This makes her unable to get the companionship she desires, as every time she gets close to someone, she hurts them. Her vampiric traits start becoming more prominent. Her insatiable hunger is noticeable within the first few pages of the novel, but it is only when Harriet talks of her mother that Margaret seems to truly notice her eyes for the first time:

> They were beautiful in shape and colour, but they did not look like the eyes of a young girl. They were deeply, impenetrably black – with large pellucid pupils, but there was no sparkle nor brightness in them, though they were underlaid by smoldering fires which might burst forth at any moment, and which seemed to stir and kindle and then go out again, when she spoke of anything that interested her.[43]

The first sign of monstrosity within this innocent girl are her eyes' dark fire. Her overbearing affection is too much to handle. Although she loves Margaret's daughter, she ends up accidentally killing her with love. This is the turning point for Harriet as it is the testament of her failure to make achieve homosocial bond with Margaret, and her failure to become a part of the polite British society.

Though Harriet Brandt's vampirism does not aid her desire to fit in with the British crowd, her failure to do so is connected with Elinor Leyton's unwillingness to give her a chance and Doctor Phillips' insistence on hereditary evil. He appears as the male professional authority. Unlike Van Helsing, he is not a vampire hunter, merely a doctor, though the opinions he gives voice to lead to Harriet Brandt's doom. The discussion of vampirism in the novel is focused on its inevitability: Harriet must be evil, because her parents were evil, creating a vicious cycle. As those around her become convinced of her evil nature, they shun her. Macaluso

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[43] Marryat, *The Blood of the Vampire*, 35.

explains that "this continued social slighting and social disciplining of Harriet has real effects for Harriet as she becomes increasingly vulnerable as the novel progresses. This social vulnerability will eventually have such an effect on her that she commits suicide."[44] It is when Harriet accepts the inevitability, when her husband dies because of her unwilling vampirism, that she loses all hope.

When Harriet Brandt comes to realize her curse, she ironically proves that she is good. Instead of selfishly clinging to her beloved, she is willing to let him go, to give up the one thing she truly desired. Though she does not wish to be the cause of his death, Antony Pennel refuses to believe that she might kill him and even when he must have felt the symptoms creeping in, he does not leave her and instead makes sure she is taken care of after his death. In the end, she gets what she wanted but her curse is inevitable. When Pennel dies, she commits suicide, finally accepting Doctor Phillips's prognosis she will never be able to create a lasting connection with another human. She leaves only a letter explaining her thoughts: "Do not think more unkindly of me than you can help. My parents have made me unfit to live. Let me go to a world where the curse of heredity which they laid upon me may be mercifully wiped out."[45] In this final act, Harriet Brandt surrenders herself to Doctor Phillips's authority and conforms to the society that thinks her unfit to live. As a widow, she was given a unique opportunity to live independently. She inherited enough money, and she could have finally taken advantage of her ability to play the piano, becoming the New Woman in the socially acceptable position of a widow. However, the thing she truly desired was the connection despite what people around her might have thought. When she realizes it is truly impossible to become a part of the society and to love those around her, she believes herself truly "unfit to live."

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[44] Macaluso, *Gender,* 83.
[45] Marryat, The Blood of the Vampire, 227.

4.3 The Vampiric Martyrs

In both Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Florence Marryat's *Blood of the Vampire,* the female vampire is associated with promiscuity, endangering children, independence from the proper male authority and mockery of the traditionally male qualities. While Lucy Westenra's heart must be pierced with a stake, reinforcing the lost ideal of the monogamous heterosexual bond and placing her back into the figure of the faithful fiancé, Harriet Brandt concedes to the judgement of Doctor Phillips and accepts the fate of being "unfit to live." They share a very similar fate. The male authority rebuffs the female monster that has behaved in an unacceptable manner and forces her into a state that can be easily controlled: a dead woman.

By creating a model of behaviour that must be avoided at all costs, the monster functions as a counter-ideal. This counter-ideal reveals the limits of social, ethical, and moral norms that allow them to be questioned and examined. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen explains, the monster not only shows us what is forbidden but why it is so:

> [T]he monster of prohibition polices the borders of the possible, interdicting through its grotesque body some behaviors and actions, envaluing others. [...] Every monster is in this way 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. The monster of prohibition exists to demarcate the bonds that hold together that system of relations we call culture, to call horrid attention to the borders that can not - must not - be crossed.[46]

Though the resolution and the tone of the two novels are different, they react on the same issues and, hence, they ask the same questions. *Dracula* reassures its readers by slaying the foreign threat capable of infecting women with vampirism and turning them against their husbands, but it is not enough to kill Dracula in a world that gave birth to him. The novel itself is open-ended. The vampiric sisters-brides are a loose end and Mina Harker, though supposedly cured from her curse, is not allowed to return to her pedestal as the perfect woman

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[46] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (London & Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1996): 13.

– and now a mother –, as if she performed anything less than perfection, the resolution of the vampiric threat would be empty-handed. In *The Blood of the Vampire,* Harriet Brandt's suicide poses a direct question, as it inevitably leads a hopeful, passionate, talented young woman to her tragic death. Both novels express anxiety over the shifting gender roles and both question what kind of the world would have a place for women like Harriet Brandt, Lucy Westenra, and Mina Harker.

5 Between Many Presents: The Ambiguous Spectrality

Although killing a female monster meant forcing her into a socially acceptable position, sometimes it was not enough. Sometimes, the monstrous women returned from their graves and tormented those alive. The women described in this chapter are either ghosts themselves, or they are possessed by one. In 19th century, spectrality was a special kind of monstrosity to receive attention from writers of all demographics. In Charles Dickens's *Christmas Carol* (1843), the ghosts are used to show Scrooge his moral failings. Hence, much of what has been said about monsters, creatures originally intended to personify a folly and to warn against its consequences, can be related to ghosts. Etymologically, the word *spectre* derives from the Latin *spectrum,* something to be seen or to see something. Especially in the earlier reiterations of the ghost story, the act of seeing is vital. Unlike vampires discussed in the previous chapter, ghosts were originally passive participants in the story – mouthpieces for the vital information and tools of fright.

In *Spectres of Marx* (1993), Jacques Derrida bases his concept of spectres on two attributes: firstly, the spectre is a figure in-between time and space, able to enter and re-enter this world, or one of its many presents that are now interconnected by a threat of spectrality; secondly, the spectre re-enters this world because of an "obligation to justice […] beyond law and beyond the norm:"

> […] this justice carries life beyond present life or its actual being-there, its empirical or ontological actuality: not toward death but toward a living-on [sur-vie], namely, a trace of which life and death would themselves be but traces and traces of traces, a survival whose possibility in advance comes to disjoin or dis-adjust the identity to itself of the living present as well as of any effectivity. There is then some spirit. Spirits. And one must reckon with them.[1]

The spectre, or the ghost, transgresses the boundary between the present and the past, effectively becoming an ambiguous creature that stands in-between both. However, its true

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[1] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*: *The state of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, transl. Peggy Kamuf (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), xx.

power relies on its ability to carry complex messages regarding the contemporary social and political situations. In this way, Derrida infuses the figure of ghost with power that "contains within it not just a personal message (about Hamlet's family) but also a political message (through images of statecraft and threatened political betrayal), and crucially [the ability] to see us unseen,"[2] as Andrew Smith explains. The ghost figure within the socioeconomic context allows for the commentary on both its past and the present.

In "Ghostly Hands and Ghostly Agency," Jennifer Bann connects the spiritualist movement with the changing figure of a ghost in literature. Before the birth of spiritualism, connected with Kate and Margaret Fox's alleged encounter with the dead in 1848 and their performances throughout America, the ghost was largely passive. Though Hamlet's ghost influenced his son and, by doing so, started series of events that bring death to the majority of the drama's ensemble, he could not actively participate. He appeared, revealed the truth, and he could do nothing else. In 1850s, this changes. The spiritualists believed that ghosts were not passive, physically limited, incorporeal entities, but rather empowered beings freed from the shackles of the living:

> [A]fter death, the self retained some form of spatial individuality in the form of the spirit, which in life existed as an intermediary between soul and body. Made up of an ethereal matter invisible to the living, the spirit assumed a form resembling the mortal body after death, and could also choose to clothe itself in any other form of physical matter if it wished (as, for example, in the accounts of spirits materializing at séances). The souls of both living and dead existed within the natural world, but the living were limited in perception and action to only a small part of it; with death, and with the loss of the mortal body, the soul experienced not further limitation but rather empowerment.[3]

This influenced everyday lives of those associated with spiritualism and also ghost stories that were published after 1848. The ghosts, empowered in their death, were no longer just tools to move the plot forward, instead becoming characters in their own right. "[T]hey were as varied

and as psychologically complex as they had been in life, their ability to act within a physical sphere evidence of both their individuality and their liberation from the restrictions of mortality,"[4] Benn argues. Instead of appearing just to be seen, they were given more significant roles and, now that they were able to hurt the living and avenge themselves, they became true threats reaching "beyond law and beyond the norm."[5]

Thanks to the ghost's empowerment and its ability to carry the sociopolitical messages, it became one of the central figures of the female Gothic. It offered a liminal position of both being and not being, as the position of women did not allow much freedom. To compare them to the ghosts trapped in-between the realities showed much of the contemporary anxieties. The sheer number of ghost stories published in the period between 1850 to 1930 is a testament to how powerful these stories were. They became carriers for serious concerns regarding sexuality, gender, and women's right, as Malisa Edmundson Makala observes:

> [W]omen authors of the nineteenth century recognized the social and political power behind the genre of the ghost story and used it to shed light on cultural problems and inequalities. Their supernatural writings frequently transgress the cultural boundaries of their day, just as the spectral forces in their writings transgresses the boundary between life and afterlife.[6]

It was especially the ability to stand in-between, both seen and unseen, that blurred not only "the boundaries between the spiritual and material," as Marlene Tromp argues, but also "social violations of all kinds,"[7] making it perfect for the contemporary feelings about the woman's position in the changing world of 1890s.

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[4] Jennifer Bann, "Ghostly Hands," 668.

[5] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, xx.

[6] Malisa Edmundson Makala, *Women's Ghost Literature in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cardiff: Wales UP, 2013), 8.

[7] Marlene Tromp, "Spirited Sexuality: Sex, Marriage, and Victorian Spiritualism," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 31, No. 1 (2003), 68, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25058614.

5.1 The Androgenous Spectres Vernon Lee's *Hauntings*

In the Victorian philosophy and literature, the concept of knowledge was based on seeing. In "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Matthew Arnold argued that the role of criticism should be to "see the object as in itself it really is,"[8] which gave the act of seeing the ability to discern truth about the artistic object. However, Aestheticism, a counter-establishment movement that subverted the traditional Victorian values, was rooted in the philosophy of Walter Pater. In *Studies in History of Renaissance,* Walter Pater includes a passage about observing a work of art, namely Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa.* He argues that the act of seeing reveals much about the spectator. As Ruth Robbins argues,

> The metaphor of seeing usually has the implications of perspective and distance that go with the ideal of objectivity. It implies also a concentration on the object itself, 'as in itself it really is'. Pater is bringing other kinds of knowledge to bear on his description, so that Pater's and Leonardo's Mona Lisas are not quite the same things. He sees more than is immediately there to be seen. His knowledge is contextual as well as textual, [...] seeing is not knowing; seeing is precisely what displaces knowledge.[9]

By looking carefully, the observer is able to see what was previously not there, which can lead to new truths about the observed object as much as it can cause misdirection. Seeing is not always a guarantee of knowledge, as happens to be the case in Vernon Lee's ghost fiction.

In *Hauntings* (1890), Vernon Lee's first and most popular collection of supernatural stories, she transforms Paterian sight by adding her own empathetic thinking that she will later develop in her own theories of aesthetic empathy. Already in the preface to the collection, she distances herself from the spiritualist understanding of ghosts "that can be caught in definite places and made to dictate judicial evidence."[10] Though her own interpretation of spectrality is more subtle, focusing instead on the mystery and unknowability of the ghost, there are

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[8] Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Public Library, accessed 25 May, http://public-library.uk/ebooks/24/100.pdf.

[9] Ruth Robbins, "Apparitions Can Be Deceptive: Vernon Lee's Androgynous Spectres" in *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century,* ed. Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), 185-6.

[10] Vernon Lee, "Preface" in *Hauntings* (Canada: Broadview Editions, 2006), 40.

some similarities between Lee's spectres and the contemporary view especially in their influence on the living. Her spectres are strong personalities empowered by death that can influence the living, change them and often lead them to their deaths too. They are "things of imagination, born there, bred there, sprung from the strange confused heaps, half-rubbish, half-treasure, which lie in our fancy, heaps of half-faded recollections, of fragmentary vivid impressions,"[11] both seen and unseen, made real only by those haunted.

The focus of Lee's ghost stories is not the act of seeing and being seen. Instead, she writes about the obsessive need to understand her illusive, impenetrable female figures from the past, who slowly exert their influence on the present. The male narrators of *Hauntings* give their first-person accounts of their ill-fated encounters with the supernatural through journal entries and letters, emphasizing their unreliability. Their fascination with these ghostly women is both what makes them to try to understand them and what ultimately dooms them as they fail to overcome their misplaced ideas about the ghost figures. "Since these fascinating figures are also long dead, the title refers both to the metaphorical haunting of one person obsessed with another and to the notion that power-ful personalities continue to exist and exert influence after death,"[12] Nicole Fluhr explains in essay, in which she follows the development of empathy as an aesthetic concept throughout Lee's career.

The protagonists of *Hauntings* are able to accept the spectres as the basis of their character. This dreadful identification with an Other can be attributed to Lee's lifelong fascination with interpersonal perceptions and the way they can be transferred into the language of fiction. In 1912, she becomes the first English writer to use the word *empathy,* having translated it from the German original. In a collection of essays dubbed *Beauty and Ugliness, and Other Studies in Psychological Aesthetics* (1912), she writes:

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[11] Lee, "Preface," 39.
[12] Fluhr, "Empathy and Identity in Vernon Lee's 'Hauntings,'" 288.

This word, made up of *fühlen*, to feel, and *ein (herein, hinein)*, in, into, conjugated (*sich einfühlen*) with the pronoun denoting the reflective mode – this word *Einfühlung* has existed in German aesthetics ever since Vischer and Lotze … Sich einfühlen, *to transport oneself into something in feeling* (the German reflective form as a sense of activity which to *feel* does not give … *sich einfühlen into something*, or *into someone,* has in ordinary German the meaning of *putting oneself in the place of someone, of imagining, of experiencing, the feelings of someone or something*: it is the beginning of sympathy, but in this primary stage the attention is directed entirely into the feeling which one attributes to the other, and not at all to the imitation of that recognised or supposed feeling which is the act of sympathising (German *mitfühlen*).[13]

The concept of empathy is, here, defined as an ability to feel in the place of another, to place oneself into a foreign situation and to feel as if they were a direct participant in it. Rather than feeling *for* a person, it is feeling *in their place*. It is as much an act of imagination as a deeper understanding of another's pain, but it is possible to insert too much of oneself, which is what happens to the narrators of *Hauntings.* The figures of the female specters allow Lee to explore the exertion of powerful influence, shifting the narrators' empathy to obsession with not only these impenetrable women but with history itself. Fluhr argues that "the price of the empathetic identification that allows one to understand history [expressed through spectres in *Hauntings*] is a loss of self that leads to death or compromised autonomy; understanding another means losing oneself."[14] In this way, she can connect Lee's fascination with history and powerful figures reached beyond their time, and her life-long journey of understanding and writing about the aesthetic empathy.

A good example of Lee's tales concerned with an attempt to empathetically understand an Other is "Oke of Okehurst." The story follows an unnamed painter who is paid to spend time with and paint the married couple of William and Alice Oke. The painter is fascinated with Alice Oke, but he fails to unravel the supernatural events around him and, hence, never learns

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[13] Vernon Lee and Clementina Anstruther-Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness, and Other Studies in Psychological Aesthetics* (London: John Lane Company, 1912), 46, Internet Archive.

[14] Nicole Fluhr, "Empathy and Identity in Vernon Lee's 'Hauntings,'" Victorian Studies 48, No. 2 (Winter 2006), 288, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3830252.

whether she is truly haunted or by whom. Alice's relationship with the ghosts of the past, both the dead poet, Christopher Lovelock, and the previous Alice Oke who looked exactly like her, allows her to take the position of her dead double and to change her identity, as a medium might.

Though "Oke of Okehurst" is the only tale of *Hauntings* not to be set in Italy, it focuses on a kind of the exotic found within the "most perfect example of an old English manor-house."[15] The rich descriptions of the rooms in the manor allow Lee to converse with a vein of decadent and aesthetic writing, which follows Joris-Karl Huysmans's *À Rebours*, a French novel infused with descriptions of exotic surplus. When Alice Oke, the lady of the house, invites the unnamed painter protagonist inside her yellow room filled with Tuscan furniture and Bolognese paintings, making it seem "more of an Italian room than an English one,"[16] she reveals to him the hidden decadent heart of Okehurst. As Dennis Denisoff argues, this room is "a Decadence gendered feminine, with the same evanescent quality of the house permeating the character of Alice Oke herself."[17] It is in the yellow room that Alice Oke keeps Lovelock's letters and reveals to the painter the story of her murderous ancestress. The colour yellow was prominent in both works of Decadence and feminism, as it was tied with the publication of scandalous European books. This is why Oscar Wilde inserts a yellow book as a carrier of sinful thoughts into his aesthetic novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and, a year later, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "Yellow Wallpaper" uses the colour as a symbol of insanity and oppression. Even though Lee's magazine publication of "The Phantom Lover," the first version of "Oke of Okehurst," precedes both these works, it showcases the synthesis of the Aestheticism and early feminism that is vital in Vernon Lee's fiction.

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[15] Lee, "Oke of Okehurst," 111

[16] Lee, "Oke of Okehurst," 126.

[17] Denis Denisoff, *Sexual Visuality from Literature to Film, 1850-1950,* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 82.

Already before the invention of photography, the reading public was interested in the effect of capturing one's likeness, which is evidenced by the folkloric beliefs surrounding paintings. Lee – influenced by Pater's *History of the Renaissance* and the aesthetic writing – uses paintings as media strong enough to capture the powerful personalities of her ghosts. At the heart of the story, there are three paintings from the past: those of William and Alice's ancestors and the portrait of Christopher Lovelock hidden in the yellow room. According to Ruth Robbins, "[t]he portrait appears often, like the double and the mirror, in Victorian gothic, as the representation of self and other, of selfhood implicated in spectral otherness."[18] Lee liked to capture ghosts in their portraits, as she does in "Amour Dure" and "The Wicked Voice," but "Oke of Okehurst" employs this device on two levels: not only are there the old paintings that allow the transmission of the past to present, there is a painting being made during the story. After all, the narrator is there to paint the current generation of the Okes. He is the only one who survives the supernatural events and who might through his obsession with Alice Oke create yet another enchanted painting.

The Gothic tradition of the demon lover, who tempts the woman to leave her husband and children, is also important for the analysis of "Oke of Okehurst." In her study of demonic lovers and their return to the late 19th century literature, Melissa Edmundson Makal explains: "The demon lover tradition is frequently linked to a 'fatal sexuality' that is embodied by the revenant who attempts to claim a living lover."[19] Lee complicated this tradition, as Alice Oke willingly gives in to the ghost – or ghosts – in the short story. She references contemporary spiritualist practices and, by having Alice mimic her ancestress, she transforms the victim into a de facto medium. This gives her power. As Marlene Tromp explains in her analysis of the spiritualism and its influence on the changing gender position, the woman as a medium can change her identity, however she pleases:

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[18] Robbins, "Apparitions Can Be Deceptive," 164.
[19] Makala, *Women's Ghost Literature in Nineteenth-Century Britain,* 50.

These women could channel a spirit of any temperament or character, embody and, in some sense, become whomever they might choose. They controlled, at each seance, what and who they would be, and, furthermore, could claim heavenly authorization for those choices or any other choices they might make. […] The shifts this made possible in women's identity precipitated a shift in women's roles as well, including those in romantic relationships and marriage. [20]

Alice Oke gains a way of controlling her identity through the connection with her ancestress, the alleged murderess and the adulteress. In the early Gothic, she would have played the role of a victim, but now she has the option to play the role of the ghostly murderess.

Alice's fluid gender and character terrifies the men trying to understand her. At one point, the Okes expect a visit from distant relatives and Alice is "seized with a fit of housekeeping activity,"[21] as is expected from a high-born woman. When she is finally relieved from her duties as a hostess, she dons on "her mannish little coat and hat, driving a powerful young horse with the utmost skill, and chattering like a school-girl of sixteen."[22] In this scene, Alice changes to reflect Christopher Lovelock, showcasing her ability as a medium to "become whomever [she] might choose," as Marlene Tromp asserted. Though the narrator insists on describing her in a feminine manner, likening her to a "school-girl," he notes that she does not resemble the sickly, weak woman languishing in her yellow room he had come to know throughout his stay at Okehurst, she is also a commanding woman tormenting her husband with references to her ghostly lover. As Robbins explains,

Alice generates uncertainties. […] She is an androgynous figure. In the murder story, the original Alice was dressed as a bay; at a masquerade, the present Alice wear old Alice's male clothes and looks very much the part (165); in the present day, Alice wears a boy's cap, and drives herself in a coach like a daredevil, as well as having a physique which linguistic description and painterly skill 'cannot lay hold of': her tall slim body can easily be mistaken for a boy, which is presumably precisely the point of fascination to the painter. She cannot be fixed, even in gender terms, except fleetingly.[23]

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[20] Tromp, "Spirited Sexuality," 68.
[21] Lee, "Oke of Okehurst," 131.
[22] Lee, "Oke of Okehurst," 133.
[23] Robbins, "Apparitions Can Be Deceptive," 197.

Alice causes anxiety precisely because of her ability to change identity, to become the poet Lovelock or her wicked ancestress, meaning she changes not only in gender terms but also in character. Because she is a medium taking on different personas, she seems to constantly move in-between, never fully masculine nor fully feminine, as she is perceived by someone who simply thinks her a bored housewife simply teasing her husband for attention.

Though Alice refused to answer why her ancestress had killed Christopher Lovelock – hysterically crying: "Because she loved him more than the whole world!"[24] –, she changes her mind seemingly without an explanation. While she is dressed like a man and in command of the situation, driving a horse with an experienced hand, she is possessed by the idea how exciting it would be if she and her companion were ambushed. That is Lovelock speaking. During this ride Alice delivers the entire tale of Lovelock's death in a single breath, only then seeming to come back into herself: "Mrs. Oke paused, and turned her face towards me with an absent smile in her thin cheeks: her eyes no longer had that distant look; they were strangely eager and fixed. I did not know what to answer; this woman positively frightened me."[25] The distant look in her eyes, the different clothing and behaviour all point to a change in her – one that excites her, one that she chose.

The story of Lovelock's death creates more questions than it answers. It is revealed that Lovelock was ambushed and killed by Alice's ancestors, that he was betrayed by the woman he loved most, but other than the anxious scream about love it is never clear why Alice Oke chose to protect her husband instead of the man she claimed to love more than the whole world. It is possible she loved them both and she later grew to despise the man for whom she killed her husband, it is possible she chose the comfortable life with a rich noble husband over the life with a poor artist. Either way she faults him for the loss of her lover, which is why the

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[24] Lee, "Oke of Okehurst," 131.
[25] Lee, "Oke of Okehurst," 135

current Alice's behaviour gets worse, as she mocks and torments her husband with the idea that Lovelock is in Okehurst with them.

The story of "Oke of Okehurst" is driven by obsession as much as possession. Alice Oke is obsessed with her ancestress, her husband is obsessed with Lovelock, and the unnamed painter is obsessed with Alice Oke. The spectres are obsessed too: with each other and with revenge, which leads them to possess Alice Oke. It is their love – and the obsession – that changes her, that leads to the collapse of gender expectations and to the crossing of the boundary between the dead and the living:

> [love so enduring] can become a person's whole existence, his whole soul; and it can survive the death, not merely of the beloved, but also of the love. It is unextinguishable, and goes on in the spiritual world until it meet a reincarnation of the beloved; and when this happens, it jets out and draws to it all that may remain of that lover's soul, and takes shape and surrounds the beloved one once more.[26]

When she willingly accepts her ancestress's soul, she commits a far graver crime than loving another man, as Dennis Denisoff explains: "William kills his wife not for her interest in another man so much as for her undying devotion to another woman."[27] It is the independence and the ability to make her own choices she gains as a medium as well as love for her past self, bordering on the myth of Narcissus, that are her true crimes. The impossibility of ever understanding her drives William Oke to murder her. Throughout the tale, Alice is slowly transformed into the woman Christopher Lovelock once knew and loved. It is after the story of his death is revealed that she starts acting cruelly and vengefully towards her husband, who is a double of Nicholas Oke, the man the past Alice Oke faults for her beloved's death.

Only at the conclusion of the story, the painter can admit he was a witness to something possibly supernatural, as he mentions a dark lock of hair in a locket that was found on Alice

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[26] Lee, "Oke of Okehurst," 150.
[27] Denisoff, *Sexual Visuality,* 105.

Oke's body, revealing it was "not at all the colour of William Oke's. I am quite sure it was Lovelock's."[28] William Oke dies later from a self- inflicted injury, mad with guilt and grief, as he accidentally killed his own wife instead of her Christopher Lovelock, who escaped him. Though she is covered with her own blood and her lips and twisted in a yelp, "her wide-open eyes white eyes seemed to smile vaguely and distantly,"[29] as if she got what she wanted – revenge for the woman she once was.

In "Medea," Lee also employs the device of the empathetic identification and fatal sexuality. Unlike Alice Oke, who is haunted by both Lovelock and his lover at different points of time, allowing her to change identity at will, Medea is the spectre changing identities of others. The tradition of the demon lover is reversed here, as instead of the woman being the victim of such attention, she is the perpetrator. A mere look at her portrait allows her to influence men to do her bidding entire centuries after her death, which leads to the story of Spiridion Trepka. He is a historian searching for truth, but he surrenders his profession as well as his life. In the story, Lee uses a painting as a medium powerful enough to transfer Medea's influence on others beyond time and space:

> Yet she contrived to send a letter and her portrait to […] a youth, only
> nineteen years old, of noble Romagnole family, and who was betrothed to one
> of the most beautiful girls of Urbania. He immediately broke his engagement,
> and, shortly afterwards, attempted to shoot Duke Robert with a holster-pistol
> as he knelt at mass on the festival of Easter Day. [30]

After learning about her history, Trepka finds her remaining portraits to learn more about her, to find out what possessed men near her, and in doing so he falls into her trap.

Medea's influence is slow at first. Though Trepka realizes she takes advantage of "love that lasts, cruel love," and ponders on the fate of her gullible lovers, he starts sympathizing with her and imagining her not only as a living woman but an admirable one at that. He is

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[28] Lee, "Oke of Okehurst," 153.
[29] Lee, "Oke of Okehurst," 152.
[30] Lee, "Medea," 49.

unable to stop thinking about her, returning to her story over and over again, reaching the conclusion that he understands her better than her contemporaries:

> […] I catch myself thinking over the woman. Am I turning novelist instead of historian? And still it seems to me that I understand her so well; so much better than my facts warrant. First, we must put aside all pedantic modern ideas of right and wrong. Right and wrong in a century of violence and treachery does not exist, least of all for creature like Medea. Go preach right and wrong to a tigress, my dear sir! Yet is there in the world anything nobler than the huge creature, steel when she springs, velvet when she treads, as she stretches her supple body, or smooths her beautiful skin, and fasten her strong claws into her victim?
> Yes, I can understand Medea. Fancy a woman of superlative beauty, of the highest courage and calmness, a woman of many resources, of genius […][31]

From merely reconstructing history, he begins to reconstruct her character and identifies himself with her: he can, of course, understand her, but he forces his own feelings and thoughts onto the figure of Medea. This blinds him – not to the danger he is in, but to the possibility of saving himself, as he thinks he has no choice but to obey her call.

Medea changes him. As Smith asserts, "Art for Lee, in the instance of Medea's portrait, represents a history which Trepka responds to in a spirit of Paterian impressionism that brings history back to life through his empathetic engagement with Medea."[32] By successfully making him another of her victims, she proves that the past can affect the present, making it no longer clearly separated from the earlier centuries. When Trepka destroys the statue of Robert of Montermurlo despite being warned by the spirits of her dead lovers, he tears apart the veil of time. It is the past that kills him, as the living cannot trespass the world in-between. After enacting Medea's revenge, Trepka dies, for the love that lasts is a cruel one.

Like Alice, Trepka is pulled into the past. Hence, he is transformed into a creature living not only in-between the present and the past, but also between the sexes. Through language strategically employed in describing Medea as a phallic mother and Trepka's slow

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[31] Lee, "Medea," 56.
[32] Smith, *The Ghost Story,* 79.

"intellectual castration," making him no longer able to fulfil his role as a historian. The gender roles of Medea and her victim are inverted. As Pulham asserts:

> With each meeting Trepka becomes progressively unhinged, showing evidence of hysteria by which he is necessarily feminized. Spiridion Trepka, then, is arguably a 'castrated' male, a 'castrato'. […] the twinning of characters seems to reveal a negotiation of identity that extends beyond the tale itself: the fluid sexuality made possible by the process of doubling allows an expression of same-sex desire via a model of erotic exchange that is superficially heterosexual. As 'castrated male' and 'phallic woman', Trepka and Medea display an androgyny that is in keeping with the latently homoerotic dyadic and triadic relationships encountered elsewhere in Vernon Lee's fiction.[33]

The influence of the misunderstood spectre in Lee's fiction is dual: it pulls the haunted person from their present to the spectre's past, effectively bringing the past to the present and reviving a past wound to enact revenge, while shifting the gender expectations. Alice Oke became manly under the influence of her lover, Christopher Lovelock, and domineering under the influence of her ancestress, the fallen woman and murderess. Under the influence of Medea, Spiridion Trepka becomes hysterical and, hence, almost feminine, as he throws away the logic of his profession and becomes part of the past he was to study. He is unable to deny Medea's wishes, and that ultimately leads him to his death by an unknown hand.

5.2 The Corruptive Influence in Henry James's *Turn of the Screw*

Henry James spent his entire adult life moving between various European metropolises. Though he was born in New York, he wrote in the vein of Gothic writing placed in England. In 1916, he became a British citizen, sealing his life-long fascination with the European cultural tradition and showing his support to Britain during the First World War despite America's isolationist politics. As expatriate writers, he and Vernon Lee[34] had a special kindling for lives in-between. It is no wonder they used spectrality as a tool for writing about

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[33] Patricia Pulham, *Art and the Transitional Object in Vernon Lee's Supernatural Tales* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008)*,* 126, Kindle.

[34] Though she wrote in English and maintained a close working relationship with London-based writers, Vernon Lee was born in France and spent most of her life on the Continent, namely in Italy.

liminal positions of women in the late 19th century. As Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberly C. Reed assert,

> Spectrality, therefore, explored by James as a liminal state of existence, gradually became the fictional means of rendering the breakdown of all certainties and the impossibility of plain answers that rely on a binary logic […] it enabled him to experiment with the much celebrated subjectivity of vision and the style of indeterminacy. Spectrality offered James opportunities for experimenting with dialogical structures, allusions, resonances, and associations rather than closed forms and meanings.[35]

Spectrality, then, allowed James to break the binary opposition of not only the living and the dead but also the innocent and the corrupted, muddling the lines between these otherwise clear categories. He uses these dualities to undermine any certainties.

Ambiguity is the central theme to "Turn of the Screw,"(1898) James's famous ghost story. It follows the youngest daughter of a poor parson, described as "a fluttered, anxious girl,"[36] who has accepted a position of a governess in the Bly manor. She is there to stand in for the male authority of Flora and Miles's uncle after the death of their parents. Whether the events of the story are supernatural indeed, or the governess is mentally ill, is never resolved within the narrative, as James purposedly support both readings. To make all possibilities viable, the entire narrative has to be shrouded by mystery. However, the one thing that remains unchanged is the clash of influences on the children. Whether the competing influence is in the governess's head or not, she has to contend with it, but nonetheless she is as dangerous to the children as Quint.

The governess stands in the middle, a woman representing the patriarchal authority, neither family nor a servant, both meant to protect and without protection, which makes her uniquely vulnerable to the corruptive influence. As Beth Newman explains,

> Governesses occupied an ambiguous divide between middle-class women, whom they usually resembled in manners and origins, and working-class women who – like the governess but unlike the middle-class wife – had to

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[35] Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberly C. Reed, "I See Ghosts Everywhere" in *Henry James and the Supernatural* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 5-6.
[36] Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (London: Harper Press, 2011), 55.

support themselves by working outside the home. Worse still, in caring for children they did for pay what the middle-class wife and mother did for free, a fact that brought the governess perilously close to the figure of the prostitute. In the middle-class Victorian imagination, then, such women belonged to no clear category or social class; we might say that it was difficult to "fix" them, though one solution was to place them alongside the working-class woman, the "fallen woman," and the madwoman or lunatic is another of the "deviant" female figures against which the middle-class wife and mother was defined as the female norm.[37]

The governesses in the novella inhabit two different deviant positions, resulting in their displacement and transformation of a positive influence into a negative one. Miss Jessel, the previous governess at Bly, fell for the wrong man – one beneath her station – and paid for it with her life, as the Gothic tradition demands. Though it is never revealed how exactly she dies, Peter Quint made her a fallen woman, effectively sealing her fate.

The current governess is defined by her position to the point of not having a name, which she could use as a fixed boundary of her identity. She is defined by the wish to protect the children in her care at any cost. However, she is unstable. Being the only one who can see Peter Quint's ghost in a story so intently styled by ambiguity means she is either a madwoman or a medium, but both options emphasize her changeability. At the beginning of the novella, she is described as fearful and anxious, but just after a few chapters she pulls Mrs. Grose to her arms confidently. She constantly changes her positions between believing Miles and fearing Quint, behaving kindly to the children and demanding answers from them, thinking them innocent and then completely lost. Her anxious wish to protect them is ultimately that kills Miles, as an unstable woman is not a better influence than the rascal Quint.

Mixed identity and changing influence are central themes to the novella, as even in the short framing narrative about the Christmas tradition of exchanging ghost stories among friends, James avoids any indication of the narrator's gender. He purposely leaves it unclear, paving the way for his unnamed governess who is defined solely by her job at Bly. Newman

[37] Beth Newman, "Getting Fixed: Feminine Identity and Scopic Crisis in 'The Turn of the Screw,'" NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction 26, No. 1 (Autumn 1992), 51, https://doi.org/10.2307/1345604.

explores the issues of identity and the effect of the fixing gaze that feminizes the narrator regardless of their sex, since it places on the receptive side of the flirtation with Douglas. "What the flirtation in the frame of *The Turn of the Screw* suggests is that a man can indeed be the object of a libidinal and even mastering look—that the association of that position with the woman is conventional, but neither essential nor exclusive,"[38] Newman asserts. In this way, the novella introduces a transformative quality to identity of those looked at and fixed by an external influence.

Quint is able to change two respectable governesses to have them represent deviant positions of femininity. His influence is clearly corruptive. Mrs Grose asserts that she has "never seen one like him. He did what he wished." When asked what she means, she adds that he did what he wanted not only with Miss Jessel, but "[w]ith them all."[39] Not even the children are safe when he is around. In the absence of his master, Peter Quint exerts the power of the man in the house. He stands in for the patriarchal authority, having the free reign over his subjects. After he dies, he continues to influence them, as there is nobody to take his place. The governess invited to care for the children is female, hence she cannot truly replace a male authority. Because of this, the possessed Miles is left to Quint's whims, which leads to him being expelled from his school. His behaviour changes. At one point, he is an innocent little boy; at the other, his speech can be inverted to innuendos and mean twisted things. Quint's ability to corrupt even those most innocent is precisely what makes him a convincing threat. By attacking the children, he attacks the future of the entire society.

From the very beginning, the governess fears corruption. Even before she meets Miles, she ponders on what sort an influence he will on his sister, whom she adores unconditionally:

> "You meant that a boy who never is [bad]—?"
> "Is no boy for *me*!"

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[38] Newman, "Getting Fixed," 46.
[39] James, *The Turn of the Screw,* 55

> I held her tighter. "You like them with the spirit to be naughty?" Then, keeping pace with her answer, "So do I!" I eagerly brought out. "But not to the degree to contaminate—"
> "To contaminate?"—my big word left her at loss.
> I explained it. "To corrupt."
> She stared, takin my meaning in; but it produced in her an odd laugh. "Are you afraid he'll corrupt *you?*"[40]

At this point of the narrative, it can be safely presumed that the governess is more worried for the female child than herself. Nonetheless, this interjection – that perhaps she should be afraid of corruption by the hands of her master, if not the little boy possessed by the scoundrel Quint – sets the tone for the narrative in both the supernatural reading and the one about madness. Even literary scholars that are not concerned with the supernatural elements of the novella, such as Hellen Killoran, write about the corrupting male influence that is transferred through the women in the novella. She explains,

> The master negatively influences Mrs. Grose, then the governess, places them in charge of the children, fails to clarify their responsibilities so that a rivalry results, then completely neglects servants and children. This type of sexual influence combined with the neglect of guardianship makes possible an attraction and rivalry between the governess and Mrs. Grose.[41]

Since the women are effectively stranded in Bly without male protection, they have to tackle the corrupting influence of this place, whether it is haunted or not. In this regard, it does not matter whether the events are of supernatural cause or not, as the core of the story lies in the act of corruption itself – either it is propelled by the hand of the demonic lover, Peter Quint, or by the women's employer who expresses inappropriate interest in them. Though both the governess and Mrs Grose are supposed to extend the ideals of the Victorian patriarchal system to the children, they are lost and unable to do so.

Only when Mrs. Grose and the governess come to an agreement about Miles's innocence, they can resolve their rivalry. Out of pure joy, the women are drawn to each other:

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[40] James, *The Turn of the Screw,* 19.
[41] Helen Killoran, "The Governess, Mrs. Grose and 'The Poison of an Influence' in 'The Turn of the Screw'," *Modern Language Society* 23, No. 2 (Spring 1993): 15, https://doi.org/10.2307/3195031.

> She held me there a moment, then whisked up her apron again with her detached hand. "Would you mind, miss, if I used the freedom—"
> "To kiss me? No!" I took the good creature in my arms and, after we had embraced like sisters, felt still more fortified and indignant.[42]

In this moment, the women form an alliance against the corruptive influences in Bly, while believing the little boy in their care is sweet and innocent. Above all, they wish to protect him. However, it is not just a sisterly embrace, as the governess changes her gendered behaviour to allow this moment. Instead of behaving like a flustered girl she is described as in the framing narrative, she confidently takes "the good creature" in her arms in a same way a man might. Hence, the governess actively changes to fill the absence of a male authority, which is what brings out Peter Quint's ghost in the very same chapter. The display of homosocial attraction between the governess and Mrs Grose and the governess's ability to shift seamlessly between identities all point to the Victorian gender crisis that creates a vacuum of power. At the Bly manor, there is no man at charge and the women must attempt to fill these positions to protect the children. The social positions change, and the ghost is drawn to this instability.

The children are the focus of the story. Though the presence of the ghosts is subtle in order to make the reading ambiguous, they occasionally deviate from the professed little angels they are considered them to be, making the external force of influence visible. The key moment proving the undergoing corruption is the appearance of Miss Jessel's ghost at the bank of the river, when Flora plays with sticks:

> [Flora] had picked up a small flat piece of wood, which happened to have in it a little hole that had evidently suggested to her the idea of sticking in another fragment that might figure as a mast and make the thing a boat. This second morsel, as I watched her, she was very markedly and intently attempting to tighten in its place.[43]

When the sexually repressed governess sees this, she is positively terrified, as it leads her to the conclusion that the children know about the ghosts and that they know "all that we know –

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[42] James, *The Turn of the Screw,* 23.
[43] James, *The Turn of the Screw,* 50.

and heaven knows what else besides."[44] In her seminal article "Turning the Screw of Interpretation," Shoshana Felman comments on the gesture both is reminiscent of turning the screw and used as a proof of the ghosts' presence in the Bly manor: "The screw-or the mast is evidently, in this incident, at least to the governess's eyes, a phallic symbol, a metaphor connoting sexuality itself."[45] Ever since the beginning of the novella, the governess is afraid that the children will be corrupted, which is possible both by her employer's sexual influence on the women in Bly and by the undead couple who twist Flora and Miles's little hearts. Hence, the ghost of Miss Jessel, the fallen woman, the one who had an affair with Peter Quint, is the same as her lover, as they both corrupt the children and sexualize their depiction. Flora changes. After the event, she denies it and starts using foul language when talking about the governess, suddenly breaking the facade of the little angel. This shows that the monstrous Miss Jessel has transformed Flora, the prototype of the perfect lady, into a foul-speaking New Woman who denounced the patriarchal authority facilitated through the governess.

In order to save the children and also her job, the governess sends Mrs Grose and Flora away, hopefully saving her from Miss Jessel's grasp and allowing her to return to her earlier position as a lovely little girl. The narrator remains in Bly alone with Miles. She wants to convince him to stand on her side and to defeat Quint. During this time, it is finally revealed why was Miles expelled from school: he said things. Though it is not clear what exactly he said, it was enough to corrupt in the same way as Peter Quint, solidifying that the foreign influence is the main theme of the novella from the beginning to the end. It is the ghost who speaks through the boy:

> "Then you weren't asleep?"
> "Not much! I lie awake and think."
> I had put my candle, designedly, a short way off, and then, as he held out his
> friendly old hand to me, had sat down on the edge of the bed. "What it is,"
> I asked, "that you think of?"

[44] James, *The Turn of the Screw,* 51.
[45] Shoshana Felman, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation," *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977), 171. doi.org/10.2307/2930436.

> "What in the world, my dear, but *you*?"
> […]
> "Oh, *you* know what a boy wants!"
> I felt I didn't know so well as Miles, so I took temporary refuge. "You want to go to your uncle?"
> Again, at this, with his sweet ironic face, he made a movement on the pillow. "Ah, you can't get off with that!"
> I was silent a little, and it was I now, I think, who changed colour. "My dear, I don't want to get off!"[46]

The things Miles says are easily sexualized, making the Governess blush. Through the boy, Quint exerts his corruptive influence on others. However, he is not the only one. The governess, who was tempted by her employer like others before her, continues to shape the children too, even though she has been threatened with the position of the fallen woman herself and, in Bly, she becomes the madwoman, or a medium. The power of words is important to the novella, not only as its careful style keeps it perfectly ambiguous, but as much of it revolves around the governess's letters and their contents. By writing the letters and thinking about sending them, she shows she is surrendered to the power of her employer, who should indeed act and correct the situation, as that is his role as the master of the house. That does not happen.

When Miles steals the letters and burns them instead of reading them, he does two things: firstly, he denounces the ghost's hold over him, as it may be safely presumed that it was Quint who made him take the letter in the first place; but, secondly, he also refuses the authority of his uncle, to whom the letters should be sent. The Governess takes this as a sign that the boy has chosen to stand by her side. Hence, the pronouncing of Peter Quint's name frees Miles from his curse, but at the same it dooms him, as he accepts the authority of the mad governess instead of the rightful patriarch, his uncle. Though the ghost leaves him, Miles drops into the woman's arms and "his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped."[47] James's novella about influence of authority compares the madwoman who can see ghosts, the absent uncle and the

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[46] James, *The Turn of the Screw,* 107-109
[47] James, *The Turn of the Screw,* 152.

legal guardian of the children, and Peter Quint who, in his master's stead, shapes those in his sphere of influence. The governess is the only one who seems to care for the children and who does everything in her powers to save them from the fate of becoming a new woman and a scoundrel, but solely because of her liminal position in the society, it is the acceptance of her authority that kills the child in her care.

5.3 The Spectre's Transformative Powers

The influences of spectres in the work of both Vernon Lee and Henry James is felt so intensely it not only changes the character of those haunted, but it also kills them. Lee's *Hauntings* and James's *Turn of the Screw* are based on ambiguity that places the narrative into the unknowing suspense, in which the characters – or even the reader himself – cannot distinguish what is real. While Lee's narrators are the ones who fail to understand the illusive spectres, while attempting to feel into them, James's Governess is the only one who can see the ghosts and their influence, making the reader question her sanity. In both cases, the ghosts are able to change the living. Alice Oke is able to change her identity at will, Spiridion Trepka's gender slowly dissolves until he denounces the logical mind of a historian and allows himself to be killed by his beloved Medea; and the victim of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint are transformed from innocent children into the corruptive influencers able to sexualize those around them by the simplest means. These stories express the Victorian gender crisis, when the expectations associated with gender were changing and creating new roles. The ghosts as beings thriving in-between binary states deal with these complicated expressions of muddling the lines between genders and become the perfect vessels for further chaos that the Gothic genre so enjoys.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine portrayals of monstrous women in the late Victorian Gothic. These works, written during the gender crisis of 1880s and 1890s, change the survival conditions making it so only the idealized women survive and those who have acted against the social, political and moral norms are punished. In this way, the Gothic writers commented on the anxiety tied with the changing gender roles that transformed the positions of both men and women in the Victorian society. As a genre, the Gothic allowed them to write about these issues symbolically, as the female monsters might represent or react to real life expectations, but they are nonetheless fictional. Only by showing the limits of the female behaviour, much is revealed, as ideals and counter-ideals cannot be stretched out indefinitely. They have limits. If the angel is anything less than perfect, it is as damaging to the idealized gender norms as the monsters being not entirely evil. Mixing the expectations and traditions resulted in ambiguous female fiends that cannot be easily slain, as they represent bigger issues outside of literary realm.

The characteristics of female monsters usually combined qualities traditionally considered masculine and feminine, threatening the Victorian institution of separate spheres in the same way as the newly independent women able to find a job in previously inaccessible professions. The journalistic phenomenon of the New Woman was, in many ways, similar to these monsters, as she, too, was defined by traits that were thought to be unsuitable for a Victorian lady. Much of the mockery aimed at the New Woman – her promiscuous ways, men-hating, and devouring children – was made real in the Gothic.

The figures of Victorian vampires and ghosts are not straightforward. Their ambiguous depiction allowed the contemporary proto-feministic writing to use these murderous martyrs to further its argument that society must change, that it must allow women to leave the prophetic Aristotelian cave and give them space to grow. This is why the discussion of Bram

Stoker's *Dracula* and Florence Marryat's *Blood of the Vampire*, both published in 1897, focuses on the dangers of the female vampire as well as the consequences of their death. These murderous martyrs move from the traditional Gothic role of a victim to a monster and then back to the victim. When they are killed, they are returned to the position of an idealized woman. The male influence acts as a stabilizer for the unruly female energy, and so it is a distinguished man who must kill the monster.

According to the norms of the Gothic writing, the fate of the women is easily justifiable. Though Lucy Westenra seems an ideal woman to many, she becomes Dracula's victim after pronouncing her wish for polygamy. This has dual effect as it shows even a woman such like herself cannot protect herself and that the Gothic tradition does not allow her to fight against the vampiric influence. She is a damsel in distress, and, without a proper protection, she must fall. Hence, she becomes the epitome of the New Woman wishing to escape the shackles imposed on her by the Victorian patriarchal society. Mina Harker shares a similar fate. She is Van Helsing's perfect woman, described as having "man's brain," after she proves herself to be able to help with the investigation. After she is separated from others, she is unable to do anything else than play a victim. It is the wish to protect her from the influence that dooms above all else, as instead of playing an active role she grows internally unsatisfied. If the external conditions were to change, maybe both Mina and Lucy could have been saved.

In *The Blood of the Vampires*, Marryat attempts to paint a sympathetic portrait of Harriet Brandt who is responsible for similar crimes as Stoker's vampires. Despite her many virtues and talents, she is doomed from the very beginning, as she wishes to travel independently. The first impressions she gives off is, however, incorrect. Later in the novel, she admits she has never desired anything more than to form a lasting connection. She wants to belong. Because of her vampire blood and heritage, she is unable to become a part of the Victorian

society, despite having qualities that would have been considered admirable in anyone else. She could be the perfect lady, if she were given a change, but the evil coursing through her veins ultimately dooms her attempts to find a place for herself. When she becomes a widow, one that would have financial security, allowing her to finally gain a respectable position, she realizes she is truly unfit to live in these conditions. The thing she wanted is unachievable. Surrendering herself to the authority of Doctor Phillips, she commits suicide. Despite being doomed from the start, she was never given a chance to prove herself to the Victorian society. The tragedy of these female vampires lies in the literary conception that it is better to kill the independent woman than to let her roam fears, as she could infect other women and endanger the future by killing children.

The other section of this thesis has focused on the ghostly women and mediums able to change their identity seemingly at will. In Vernon Lee's *Hauntings* and Henry James's *Turn of the Screw*, the stabilizing male influence fails. Focused on her concept of the empathetic identification, Lee portrays men as unable to understand the supernatural women, making them effectively powerless in the narrative. In "Oke of Okehurst," the painter notices the changes in Alice Oke's behaviour but he is unable to connect them with the presence of two ghosts, the murderous ancestress and her poet lover. He does not understand how the woman he is so fascinated with can transform herself into the personas of a domineering woman or a masculine daredevil. In "Medea," the titular character is a ghost exerting gender-changing influence on the historian. Spiridion Trepka becomes feminized and, hence, falls prey to hysteria that makes it impossible for him to escape death. These stories show how the ghostly presence can change the presence, making it threatened not only by the changing gender positions but also by the sins of the past that must be punished.

While Lee focuses on the male gaze unable to fix women, James writes a novella about the corruptive influence of a misplaced authority. In *The Turn of the Screw*, the governess is

a woman placed in the liminal position in society making her uniquely vulnerable to Peter Quint's gaze that can transform a lady to a fallen woman or a madwoman. Miles, a male child representing the future of the British aristocracy, gets caught between two temporary authorities. One is exerted by a scoundrel, an obviously inadequate man to command those malleable, and the other is a self-righteous woman, possibly a madwoman or a medium, either way a woman who stands in-between in similar manner as Peter Quint's ghost does. By renouncing male authority, however immoral and misplaced, Miles is effectively signing his death sentence, as he cannot safely accept the authority of the mentally ill governess. Saving him from the future of becoming a reincarnation of Peter Quint kills him, revealing the impossibility of the situation.

The ambiguous portrayals of these female monsters show that by altering the conditions of survival, the Gothic is able to interact with Victorian feminine ideals and counter-ideals. These figures are often a combination of qualities traditionally ascribed to both genders, making them as close as possible to the dangerous New Woman. The women discussed in this thesis were usually admirable for the same qualities that ultimately doomed them. The monsters, hence, do not just police the borders of the idealized femininity, but they also reveal its limits. This sort of a cultural progress allowed for the development of new genres The doomed women of the late Victorian Gothic, inspired by the journalistic phenomenon of the New Woman, are precursors to the powerful heroines of fantasy, horror, and thriller genres of the following centuries. By destroying the binary logic of ideal and counter-ideals, the Gothic is able to create characters that are a mix of the expectations, showing that being different might not always be a bad thing.

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