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Queer Creatures: Uncovering Discourses of the *Other* in Gothic Literature

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Introduction

Since its' conception in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Gothic literature has been subject of much debate and controversy – avid readers delighted, and indeed still do delight, in the thrill of dark passage ways and crumbling castles, forgotten dungeons, valiant heroes and virtuous heroines. On the other hand, the genre has had to endure much criticism, especially from those parties worried about the dangers of moral corruption engendered by the monsters prowling the pages of some of the most revered Gothic classics – themes of sex and sexuality, abuse, mental illness, isolation, trauma and above all of *otherness* that laid bare starkly the anxieties of the nineteenth century moral society, at the cusp of some of the great societal changes that would shape the twentieth century perception of gender norms, women's rights, the concept of sexuality and sexual identity and social constructs such as marriage and the nuclear family. Since its development throughout the nineteenth century, the genre has developed into an academic treasure-trove. It has become the thankful subject to literary and socio-psychological analysis seeking to draw back the curtain on the more obscured, the 'dark', aspects of nineteenth century society and the nineteenth century mind[1]. Countless papers and books have been written on the Gothic novel as not simply a source of entertainment for rainy days and Halloween nights but as a platform for critique; a mouthpiece of those that found themselves locked up in the gilded cage of the domestic sphere, or left to lurk in the darker echelons of the world, hiding from the law and the restrictions of an intensely moralistic society[2]. Under the guise of the grotesque and fantastical, writers fashioned themselves a space for critique, for the 'other' (the non-heteronormative, the non-male, the non-upper class; to summarize, the non-dominant) voice to be heard, not afforded in many other literary genres of the time. A prudent example would be the role of Gothic literature in feminist theory and critique which brought forth the term 'Women's Gothic', denoting a gothic literature written by, and

[1] Subjects of mental illness, poverty, discrimination and abuse, for example, are oft recurring themes in Gothic Literature.

[2] see Foucault's *History of Sexuality; An Introduction* on the wrought relationship between the moralistic society of the Victorians and their ideals, and concepts of sex and sexuality.

arguably for, women. However, literary research branched out further. This thesis moves beyond the Women's Gothic, and broadens the horizon to encompass a larger category of 'others': those existing at the fringe of society, outside the social norms and boundaries of the nineteenth century: 'queer' folk in the broadest sense. In the chapters to follow, this thesis delves into the analysis of Queer concepts portrayed in Nineteenth Century Gothic Literature, using some of the genre's most famous titles to illustrate how Gothic Literature translates 'queerness' or 'otherness' into monstrous forms, and utilises these monstrous forms to critically explore Nineteenth Century concepts of gender and sexuality and the trappings of a tightly regulated and compartmentalised society where gender, race, social status and economic standing all served to create closed-off sections within societies, almost like a caste-system that was well-nigh impossible to escape from – much like the padlocked dungeons and winding corridors of the Gothic castle.

The chapters to follow explore some of the most popular works of Gothic fiction to date – Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818, revised introduction published in 1831) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) – as literatures of *otherness*, that is to say as literatures of oppression and marginalisation of those that defied the strict compartmentalisation of society, or wished to escape it. The hypothesis posed in this thesis is that the monsters found within the pages of the aforementioned works are in effect corrupted representations of the dividing lines of nineteenth century society, the rules that dictated propriety and respectability. Furthermore, this 'Gothicisation' of nineteenth century society and social discourse of the time is read as an exploration of that what lies beneath the veneer of a strictly regulated moral society, done in the most literally monstrous sense.

The first chapter focuses on the mythological vampire and more specifically the vampiric women of *Dracula*, seeing the female vampire as a source of violent female sexuality that draws women away from their traditional roles of wife and mother. Lucy Westenra, in her vampirism, here becomes representative of the corrupting force of the New Women that 'smoked', had multiple

lovers without marrying, and lived a life wholly independent of the traditional patriarchal 'guidance' that a more 'proper' woman was expected to submit to. Mina Harker is briefly touched by this influence when she is bitten by the Count, but ultimately choses to maintain her traditional place and thus beats the 'corruption' of the rigorous emancipation the female vampire is here argued to represent. This aggressive femininity as embodied by the vampires in *Dracula*, moreover, is a strong emasculating force, as evidenced by Jonathan Harker's close call with the Counts' brides in the castle, as well as his relationship to the count, which is characterised by themes of entrapment as well as desire of the Count towards Jonathan. To put it more succinctly, in Dracula's capture Jonathan is forced into a feminine position; this, then, exemplifies the Count as a *queering* figure that transcends the traditionally held boundaries of the sexes – more than just a queer figure himself, in his desire towards Jonathan as well as his feminine traits, he has the ability to draw others outside the gender divide.

The second chapter expands upon the theme of feminisation and emasculation in the setting of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, insofar as the titular Frankenstein are, in a fashion, emasculated in the setting of the family home. In this particular analysis, however, it is very much this family home that forms a key subject. It has been said that *Frankenstein* is very much a novel about families, and more specifically the traditional, idealised bourgeois family. However, it is my argument that the Frankenstein family homestead, inasmuch as it aims to emanate the traditional family values of the nineteenth century, is a monstrous all-consuming construction. This ties in with Johanna M. Smith's assessment that *Frankenstein* is truly a 'women's novel' that explores 'women's issues', where the institution of marriage and the construct of the traditional family, within which woman is thrust into the role of mother and wife, and which subsequently repeats this pattern with any following generations of women borne out of it, is shown as an all-devouring cycle of debt and sacrifice, a prison to its' inhabitants. In this particular analysis, then, it is not so much Frankenstein's infamous creature that is revealed as the Gothic monster, but rather the social constructs to which the nineteenth century woman was subject, and which placed many in a position of vulnerability, at risk

of exploitation and violence. By extension, the creature comes to represent a monstrous masculinity that targets these vulnerable women. However, it could be said that the creature too is a victim of the exclusionary, self-perpetuating character of the family insofar as he is excluded, indeed violently, from the very same society that has birthed him into a solitary existence. Put otherwise, *Frankenstein* portrays the traditional family construct as a two-edged blade that cuts the 'inmates' harboured within.

The final chapter delves further into the subject of queer spaces, taking it from the socially constructed space of *family* as illustrated in *Frankenstein* to the literal space of home, with the concepts of interior and interiority as leading themes. In this chapter, analysis focusses on interpreting Oscar Wilde's text as a representation of the 'queer secret' – in other words, the secrecy of queer sexuality in the nineteenth-century queer society, where 'sodomy' (specifically *male* same-sex desire and sexual acts) was an offence punishable by law. It is my argument here, build upon the concept of 'interiority' as being representative of the subconscious, that the buildings in the novel (more specifically the dandy townhouse) encompass the queer subconscious and indeed homosexual anxiety (the fear of having one's sexuality discovered), with locked doors hiding from the public eye the scandal of homosexual desire. Furthermore, the occupant of this queer space – the dandy figure himself- is analysed as a representation of homosexual groups within the nineteenth century. As exemplified by Oscar Wilde himself, the Dandy character walked a narrow line indeed between social acceptability and excommunication, further driving the point of queer anxiety and the queer secret.

One recurring theme in all three analytic chapters to follow, furthermore, is that of the queering of space – space here referring both to the literal space of the gothic castle or mansion, as well as the figural space of family and the home. This queering of space is intrinsically connected to the Gothicisation of nineteenth-century society so characteristic of the genre, where traditional power structures and the family home, the cornerstone of bourgeois society, are unveiled as prisons of social convention and moralism. Perhaps more than the monsters in the famous novels mentioned

above, I would argue, it is the Gothicised *space* that is representative of and subject to the otherness so intrinsically connected to Gothic literature.

The strict compartmentalisation described above which lies at the basis of the Self split from the Other and the process of Othering as treated in this thesis can be more concisely summarised in the so-called separate spheres ideology (or doctrine), explained by Johanna M. Smith as '[T]he ideology that split off the (woman's) domestic sphere from the (man's) public world and strictly defined the "feminine" and "masculine" traits appropriate to each sphere' (270). This doctrine in particular forms the main backdrop to the analyses in the chapters to follow, in that it is on the basis of this doctrine that this thesis defines both the process of 'Othering' as placing one outside their allotted, 'natural' sphere afforded them, and the figure of the 'Other' as one that moves beyond and outside of the rules of the doctrine.

Before delving into the literary analysis in the following chapters, a concise overview of queer theory and concepts of "queerness" as used in queer theory is necessary before examining more closely the relationship between the nineteenth century Gothic literary genre and these aforementioned concepts of "queerness". The subsequent chapters, then, illustrate this relationship in more detail by analysing the queer concept in the setting of a representative collection of Gothic titles: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and, finally, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. These titles have been selected on the basis of their impact on and place within the Gothic genre, as well as their long-lasting impression upon the collective memory and (pop) culture and their potential for socio-critical reading.

To begin, first there should be some clarity regarding the term 'queer' as used and explored in Queer Theory, and as used in this thesis. The term 'queer' is a particularly controversial one that has an especially wrought history in terms of meaning and connotations. In its' earlier usage (in the eighteenth century) it often denoted what was deemed 'odd' or 'unusual' (extending to odd or unusual people) (see Martin (665) and Rasmussen) – considering this close connection to the

uncanny, the strange and the 'other' it might not come as much of a surprise that in time it came to encompass 'otherness'[3]. From hence it came to develop during the course of the twentieth century into a slur referring in particular to the LGBT community, a weight[4] that it continues to carry to this day. Interestingly the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century saw a movement of reclamation of the term from within the LGBT movement itself. This reclamation in itself has caused yet another shift in the meaning of and associations to the term 'queer', reworking it into a term of inclusivity and acceptance. Indeed, in more recent usage it has often been worn as an overarching badge by the various groups included in the LGBTQ movement, essentially encompassing those groups within society that are considered 'other' in terms of being non-heteronormative. Considering the transformation of the term in recent history, both in colloquial use and in academic lingo, Richard J. Martin perhaps best captured the essence of the 'new' queer by describing it thusly:

> […] "queer" signifies fluidity, transgression of boundaries, and reterritorialization of static and binary forms of identity, thus challenging normative classifications, ideologies and practises. (665)

Henceforth, the term 'queer' in this thesis will be used in the frame explained in the above quote, not limiting it to sexual orientation but exploring it as a broad concept of identity and moreover as a concept hinging on fluidity: mobility outside and between social boundaries and changeability of and within social constructs such as gender.

Queer Theory as an official academic discipline and theoretical framework is still relatively young, having only come into existence towards the end of the twentieth century as a product of the tumultuous socio-political environment and the resulting activity and protest of queer movements. The changing social environment and the development of the queer movement in society in the

[3] Queer meaning, broadly, non-normativity will be explored further towards the end of this chapter.
[4] The term 'queer' still carries a historic association with violence against and the intimidation and discrimination of this group, as it was used by perpetrators of anti-LGBTQ hostilities in the process of committing these crimes.

latter half of the twentieth century transformed academic theory and discourse, cultivating debate on sexualities and sexual identities, and gender and gender roles. Feminist- and queer movements and the sexual revolutions of the sixties and seventies made their way into classroom discussion and (literary) analysis, branching into a number of legitimate academic disciplines in time[5]. Queer Theory, then, could be considered something of an umbrella discipline, embracing the core concepts of and primary subjects of discussion within these several movements and academic branches and bringing them together in a critical framework that focusses on the changeability of concepts of gender and sexuality, and the roles attributed to both within society.

Having mapped out the framework of queer theory and discussed some of its history, now comes the time to place it in the historical context of the nineteenth century and nineteenth century (Gothic) literature. It should be noted here that social dialogue regarding sexuality and sexual identities in its' current form and scope is relatively recent; in his *The History of Sexuality; Volume 1: An Introduction* from 1978 Foucault opens with the note that following a relative openness on the subject of sexuality in social discourse in the seventeenth century, the nineteenth century saw a shift in social discourse regarding sexuality, where burgeoning moralism sought to silence the discourse out of an anxiety for the implications of the subject for morality (Foucault, pp. 3-5). To quote:

> Nothing that was not ordered in terms of generation or transfigured by it could expect sanction or protection. […] It would be driven out, denied, and reduced to silence. Not only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestation […]. Everyone knew, for example, that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it, why one closed one's eyes and stopped one's ears whenever they came to show evidence of the contrary, and why a general and studied silence was imposed. (4)

[5] As an example, several universities including the university of Leiden offer courses in Gender Studies, Feminist studies and overarching Queer Theory.

This attempt at silencing the discourse, however, proved wholly ineffective in day to day life, despite efforts of moral societies to clamp down on anything perceived as a threat to the moral wellbeing of society, as evidenced by the trials and legal measures described below. That having been said, nineteenth century British society was not ignorant of or blind to non-heteronormative sexualities - though their recognition was in a predominantly negative light, as evidenced by the so-called 'sodomy laws' that specifically targeted acts of (male – see point 4 in Thomas (153-154)) homosexuality and behaviours associated with these 'deviant' sexual acts, such as crossdressing (Thomas 153, (3)) (see specifically the cases of Boulton and Park[6] and The Cleveland St. Affair[7], as discussed by Thomas(142, 153 (2))). St. John-Stevas in his work on *Obscenity and the Law* provides an extensive analysis on the Nineteenth-Century English culture of morals and the socio-legal landscape of the time, which was highly restrictive and which, under the guidance of so-called 'Vice Societies' (34-38), bore down upon the literary landscape of the time in a quest to eradicate any and all 'immoral' or 'obscene' literature, under the banner of protecting such easily influenced groups as youth and women. Authors, publishers and vendors found guilty of spreading 'obscene' content through works of literature or poetry (and, indeed, any other type of suggestive wares such as snuff-boxes with 'pornographic' imagery (St. John-Stevas 37)) were brought before a court of law and could be fined, or face incarceration. In this the Vice Societies were supported by critics and 'reviews' (the influence of which is discussed in more detail by St. John-Stevas), which were swift and harsh in their judgements of both author and literary work. For this, despite their influence and their following, the Vice Societies and similar moralistic movements such as the evangelists[8] were met with a fair amount of criticism and ridicule in their time, not in the least from those at the receiving end of their efforts. That said, figures like the (now oft) esteemed Lord Byron and others were not immune to the influence of the Vice Societies on the courts of law, and an increasingly moralistic

[6] Two cross-dressers who were suspected of sodomy in relation to cross-dressing, but acquitted of the charges in 1871.
[7] Referring to a police raid on a homosexual brothel in London in 1889.
[8] who incidentally were also responsible for reviving the Vice Societies in the nineteenth century after they had previously died a quiet death in the annals of history

reading public, and as such saw themselves forced to tread carefully in their writing. Flowery, metaphorical language became more prevalent, and themes of 'courtly love' – decidedly anti-sexual and with great emphasis placed on virtue and good morals - made a comeback in romantic novels. It may appear counterintuitive that amongst this pushback on impropriety, Gothic Literature thrived. The nineteenth century saw the birth and development of the horror genre as we know it now under the guidance of such still-revered authors as Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker, and many depictions of the Victorian era are still heavily influenced by the genre. This can be explained in part by the role that Gothic literature is believed to have had in nineteenth century society: where, as explained above, many other literatures were much more heavily subject to the strappings of moralistic society, the subject matter of the gothic allowed much more space to explore the 'darker' sides of society at the time: crippling poverty, disease, discrimination, addiction[9], insufficient or completely lacking mental healthcare[10], and more. Gothic literature drew back the veil of propriety put in place by the Vice Societies and their followers, and in doing so laid bare the festering social and economic problems and shortcomings of the time. As such, Gothic as a genre had an important role as a vehicle for critical discourse. To summarize:

> […][Q]ueer Victorian Gothic can simultaneously explore, defend and, on occasion, these overarching authoritative institutions and systems of power as they were constantly being re-invented and re-inscribed with the goal of shaping the familial, medical and legal paradigms that still constrain us today. (Thomas 143)

What is more, Gothic literature opened the doors to discourse for more marginalized groups in society that often found themselves excluded from social discourse and consequently from what was deemed more 'subtstantial' or 'important' literature, which was often male-dominated; it is with reason that literary scholarship speaks of the 'Female Gothic', for example – a Gothic literature

[9] Opium and alcohol were well-known adversaries to nineteenth century society.
[10] 'Madness' is a subject that returns in many Gothic works; consider E.A. Poe's famous repertoire, for example.

written by (and in part for) women[11]. In other words, Gothic Literature could, and perhaps should, very much be considered a literature of marginalisation and of Others, and in this capacity formed part of a discourse on 'others' that came to exist amongst expansion politics, technological advancement and socio-political upheaval.

A key concept in queer theory – perhaps the one that forms the most solid bridge between queer theory and gothic literature – is that of the 'other' or 'otherness', and as an extension the process of 'othering'. This concept was mentioned briefly at the beginning of this chapter, as encompassing (broadly) that what is considered 'unusual' – deviating from what (or who) is considered the norm. Of course, this is a heavily simplified explanation of the concept, and it is deserving of a slightly more in-depth analysis. At its core, otherness appears to be a particularly mundane term, and from a certain angle it perhaps is; as L.M. Simão notes, its 'part and parcel of interpersonal relationships' (1279) – so long as there is an 'I', there will always be an 'Other'. Simple enough. However, in her Thesis on *Horrible Shadow: Otherness in Nineteenth-Century Gothic and Speculative Fiction* K.J. Harse presents a much more sinister version of Other through a much less innocent process of 'othering' than simply considering the other as literally any other person outside of the self: 'the other is measured, defined, fixed into place by the self, *the real human from which it springs is destroyed* [.]' (1; italics mine). Here, the process of 'othering' is one of dehumanisation. And it is *this* dehumanizing process of othering, of what could be considered 'monsterification' of others, that serves as a connection between queer theory and Gothic fiction and which will serve as the pivotal point of this thesis: the monsters of Gothic fiction are first and foremost a representation of otherness – being another nationality or foreign, another sexuality than heterosexual, another gender than a man – and in this they can be placed in the framework of queer theory which is essentially a theory of non-normative, marginalized others.

[11] For more information on the subject of the Female Gothic, I heavily recommend the works of Diana Wallace, *Female Gothic Histories: Gender, History and the Gothic*, and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan D. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic; The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*.

1. Penetrating Spheres; Queer Vampires in *Dracula* and *Carmilla*.

1.1 Introduction

In many modern adaptations of vampire lore, such as Anne Rice's *Interview With The Vampire* (1976) (with a 1994 cinematic adaptation of the same name), *Only Lovers Left Alive* (Jim Jarmusch, 2013) and even *Van Hellsing* (Stephen Sommers, 2004), vampires are portrayed as seductive creatures possessing a raw, excessive sexual power. This sexuality of the vampire often, especially in modern adaptations such as the aforementioned novel by Anne Rice, takes on a deviant or *queer* character. This correlation between vampirism and (queer) sexuality is by no means a modern invention, however, and it can be traced back to the very foundations of vampire literature as we know it today. This chapter looks more closely at the vampire figures in *Dracula* and its predecessor *Carmilla*, exploring them as queer sexual beings with the power to move freely between and outside of the two spheres as outlined by Johanna M. Smith, and above all their ability to corrupt these spheres. Central to this chapter as well is the sexual component of the vampiric being; their seductive powers as well as their powerful desire, be it for blood or their victim, and their ability to penetrate which is particularly noteworthy in the female vampire figure.

1.2. New Women of the Night; Vampiric Female Sexuality and Sensuality

1.2.1

Beginning with the female vampire figure, this analysis places such characters as *Dracula's* Lucy Westenra and Dracula's three brides, and *Carmilla's* titular vampire in the context of nineteenth-century feminine ideals and the surfacing of the so-called 'New Woman'. The idea of the 'New Woman' surfaced in the course of the nineteenth century, and was borne from a developing suffragette feminist movement – the 'New Woman' moved away from traditional gender roles and expectations of decorum and character, and strove for increased freedom and independence of women in society. Supporters of the New Woman's lifestyle proposed a so-called new 'doctrine of hygiene' that aimed to liberate women from their role as the 'weaker sex' by taking them out of their

corsets and inviting them to partake in exercise beyond 'socially acceptable' forms of 'feminine' exercise such as dancing or walking (Cunningham, qtd. in Senf, p. 35). Indeed, the New Woman fully intended to move from the limiting feminine sphere of home and hearth into what had previously been considered the masculine public sphere, crossing the threshold by ridding themselves of confining clothes and chaperones, and making the more active lifestyles 'of men' their own.

Of course, the concept of the New Woman was not limited to merely clothes and exercise; advocates of the New Woman further pushed for a social reform that intended an upheaval of the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers, the institution of marriage, and feminine ideals. The New Woman did not exist primarily to wed and become a mother- instead, New Women Writers argued in favour of a sexual liberation of women that would allow them more freedom and involvement in their sex lives, moving away from the ideal of the saintly, virtuous, virginal woman as well as the concept of sex as simply a matter of procreation (Senf, p. 35). It is this newfound female sexuality that perhaps met with the most staunch opposition from more conservative parties and critics; literary scholars such as Gilbert and Gubar have already discussed at length the role of the sexual and sensual woman in nineteenth century literature, and the role of nineteenth century literature in turn as a vehicle for the exploration of female sexuality. The focus in this thesis primarily lies on the critical exploration in Gothic literature of this sexually liberated New Woman and their impact on nineteenth century society, and how certain Gothic Writers chose to portray this New Woman – as a sexually aggressive, monstrous entity. Taking Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and its predecessor, Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, as examples it is my hypothesis that the female vampire figures present in both works represent an aggressive female sexuality and even an aggressive *queer* sexuality that formed a stark contrast to the nineteenth-century ideal of the wife and mother; in other words, in becoming vampires they become a monstrous representation of society's interpretation of and critique on the New Woman as 'unnatural' in their aggressive sexual desire and their distinct lack of maternal instinct. It should be noted here that *Dracula* makes several explicit mentions of the New Woman – while not necessarily aggressively opposed to the entirety of the New

Woman ideal and occasionally appearing somewhat ambivalent, as Senf argues, the novel does maintain a more traditional ideal of women as mothers and wives. This is perhaps best illustrated by the contrast between Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker, and their development throughout the novel. When first analysing Mina Harker as a character, the assessment that she functions as a counter *against* the new woman may seem counterintuitive – within the setting of the nineteenth century, she is an independent and self-sufficient woman that has her own mode of employ as a schoolmistress. Moreover, it is proven several times over in the second half of the novel as the battle against the Count begins in earnest that at the very least Mina Harker has a mind capable of keeping up with her male associates, and occasionally even exceeds them in tactical prowess. Indeed, her research proves vital in predicting the Count's movements and thus to his destruction. However, there are several notes and distinctions to be made. To begin, it should be noted that while Mina does form an important asset to the circle that faces down Count Dracula, she does not join them as an independent figure but primarily in her role as wife to Jonathan. Indeed, her role as wife forms the crux to a number of her efforts and decisions – when she learns shorthand it is first and foremost with the aim of being of use to her husband (*Dracula,* p. 79), and when she teaches herself to use a typewriter at the beginning of the novel it is primarily with the aim of aiding the men in her life. Carol A. Senf in her article "'Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman." further argues that Mina in her role as wife, and further in her role as a nurturing motherly figure functions as a type of foil to the sinful freedoms of her former friend, Lucy Westenra, and consequently as a foil to the 'New Woman' who aims to move beyond the parameters of mother- and wifehood. The freedom of Mina Harker is acceptable in the sense that it functions strictly within the parameters of what is socially acceptable, and she does not move far over or beyond the boundaries of the feminine sphere; again, any 'transgressions' she does make in terms of her work and her education are only an extension of her wifely and motherly duties. Mina Harker's place in the novel is perhaps best summarized when the character Jonathan writes:

> I am so glad that she consented to hold back and let us men do the work. Somehow, it was a dread to me that she was in this fearful business at all; but now that her work is done, and that it is due to her energy and brains and foresight that the whole story is put together in such a way that every point tells, she may well feel that her part is finished, and that she can henceforth leave the rest to us. (338)

Where Mina remains at a respectable distance of the 'New Woman', Lucy Westenra and the three vampire women in Dracula's castle more readily cross the boundary of the socially acceptable by penetrating the border between the male and female, the virtuous and the perverse, and as such come to embody the monstrous 'New Woman' that forms a threat to the order of society by breaking out of the strict corset of the nineteenth-century society of Morals. Beginning with the three women in the castle, who foreshadow Lucy Westenra's eventual transformation into a 'luscious' creature of the night, this is perhaps made most evident by their perversion of the mother ideal. Maternity, 'failed' motherhood and the perversion of the ideal of maternity are recurring themes in stories featuring female vampires. It features in Le Fanu's *Carmilla* where Carmilla is first introduced as a motherly figure in Laura's childhood memory, lulling the infant to sleep before attacking it, is presented again by Dracula's three brides, and in Lucy Westenra when she becomes the 'Bloomer Lady' after the completion of her transformation into a vampire[12]. What constitutes this vampiric motherhood as monstrous is it's reversal of the traditional role of women in home and family, of which Mina Harker in *Dracula* forms the living embodiment- turning again to her role in the plot and her motivations as discussed above, while Mina on a surface level appears to break out of the enforced passivity of the genteel woman by having secured her own mode of employ and involving herself in the activities of her husband, she only does so to in an effort to better support her husband and, as school mistress, 'her' children. Her role is to support and nurture, to 'give'. Dracula's brides and Lucy Westenra, in feeding primarily on young children, reverse this role by

[12] The vampiric mother figure is also found in later works, such as Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* and more recently 'Greedy Choke Puppy' by Nalo Hopkinson.

'taking' youth and vitality from those, according to the 'natural' order of society, dependent on them. In this they also break with the ideal of woman as inherently maternal, therefore placing them in the position of 'unnatural' – much like the New Woman whom, according to some New Woman writers, did not strive for matrimony and maternity as previous generations had. In this they could be deemed almost 'masculine' or 'male', or perhaps more fittingly as something 'Other', functioning outside the limitations and boundaries of the genders of male and female by taking themselves out of the 'natural' reproductive process. That is not to say that they are separate entirely from reproduction, and here again there is a 'perversion' of traditional gender roles and natural order: in becoming vampires, women gain the power to *penetrate*, and it is through this penetration that the vampire reproduces and sires more of its' kin. This is perhaps best reimagined by Haefele-Thomas, who suggests a reading of the vampire Carmilla's mouth as "representative of a distorted and conflated male and female genitalia" (106), with the act of beheading the female vampire in effect being a "double castration" (106).

The explicit sexual component of female vampirism is not limited to their ability to penetrate, however- with vampires being often represented as heavily eroticized and seductive creatures, the female vampire at her core is often representative of an aggressive female sexuality that is driven by intense, explicit desire and (sexual) hunger. When considering the female vampire in the setting of New Woman criticism, one should note the power to hypnotise and beguile men by way of 'voluptuous' bodies and voices into a state of passive weakness before devouring them, as exemplified in *Dracula* by the scene in chapter three, where Jonathan Harker first encounters the three female vampires and almost meets his demise there by the 'voluptuous' 'scarlet lips' of one of the women. The same seductive, almost hypnotic power is seen later by Lucy Westenra when she targets Arthur Wormwood and attempts twice to seduce him into her arms, once on her deathbed (chapter 12) and then again after her transformation has been completed (chapter 16). Lucy is especially interesting in this regard as her character arc has some foreshadowing early in the novel of her later corruption; as Senf argues, there is a previously existing 'other side' to Lucy Westenra that

marks her as an unconventional woman, and rather less innocent, perhaps, than initially suggested – this other side comes forth in her letters to Mina when she talks of her three suitors, of which she bemoans "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" although she immediately attempts to retract this statement as 'heresy' (62). Senf points out here that "her desire for three husbands suggests a degree of latent sensuality" and brings it back to the connection between the female vampire and thus the figure of Lucy Westenra, and the New Woman (42). In further support of Senf's argument, Lucy's lamentation vaguely echoes Mina's later supposition that "The New Woman won't condescend in the future to accept [proposals of marriage]; she will do the proposing herself" (91).

When Lucy speaks of 'letting a girl marry three men' there is certainly a suggestion in the wording there of a more active agency in the process of proposing and indeed of marriage for women than merely being on the receiving end of the proposal, and this is not even taking into account the prospect of one woman maintaining three husbands. Indeed, I would argue, Lucy's relationship to her fiancée and the other male parties in her life does not nearly mirror the singular devotion of Mina to her fiancée/ husband. While Mina does behave in an intimate manner with other men in the party it is almost solely in a motherly role, as a comforting and nurturing presence. Lucy's interactions with Dr. Seward and Quincey Morris, in contrast, is much more charged with eroticism and desire. This adulterous undercurrent in the relationship between Lucy and the three men that love her is perhaps best summarized in the giving of blood by all three men to Lucy, essentially making all three of them victims to her vampirism- what is more, this sustaining of Lucy on the blood of all three men could be read further as Lucy feeding on their love and desire for her.

1.2.2

Expanding on the subject of the female vampire and explicitly the subject of the female vampire as representative of an aggressive female sexuality, discussion here turns to the subject of queer sexuality. Insofar as vampires are creatures of sensuality, desire and sexuality, they are also

strongly representative of, and exude, queer sexuality and same-sex desire. As the female vampires in *Dracula* primarily exert their power on small children and men, this part of the analysis turns to Le Fanu's *Carmilla* as an illustration of lesbian vampirism. Indeed, in recent years *Carmilla* has come to be adopted and celebrated as a quintessential lesbian-queer literary work, and with it other examples of lesbian female vampires such as Florence Marryat's Harriet Brandt in *The Blood of The Vampire*. Le Fanu's short work was even included in *The Ladder*, the newsletter of an early, American lesbian underground group, and ranked nineteenth in a top twenty of 'readings of interest to lesbians' (106). While Haefele-Thomas does note that Le Fanu likely did not *intend* to write a queer work per se, and while some criticism has deemed the work homophobic rather than a shining example of queer-positive and inclusive literature, Haefele-Thomas mentions that the eager acceptance of Le Fanu's work into queer literature - even so far as it being included in a 1993 Anthology, *Daughters of Darkness*, that outside of Le Fanu included works *only* written by lesbian or queer-identifying women - 'points to a queer readership comfortable with reading between the lines and reading within the ambiguities to find something positive to take away' (p. 107). That said, the sexual ambiguity of the novel and Le Fanu's own struggle with the relationship between Laura and Carmilla does shine through at various intervals. Referring to a passage in the novel where Carmilla professes her desire and possessiveness to and over Laura, and which carries a high level of sexual tension and is likened to a scene of masturbation, Haefele-Thomas suggests that Laura's sudden questioning of Carmilla's gender in the face of the latter's expressions of (homoerotic) desire is above all indicative of Le Fanu's struggle to grasp a romantic attraction considered so far out of the norm, leading him to turn back and express it in more familiar heteronormative terms instead, almost as a panic reaction:

> If there is any sort of masquerade here, it is the vampire as a living being. The disguise here is not one of sex or gender, and the romance is definitely queer. Laura reiterates this when she tells Carmilla "I don't know myself when you look so and talk so" as though to know herself would be to understand her own queer desires – her desires that are strong enough for her

> to wonder, for that brief moment, if this is a male suitor dressed up as a woman, because for her that seems like the only socially acceptable answer to her own erotic longings and physical responses to Carmilla. (105)

This ambiguity of gender in relation to vampiric desire ties in party with the aforementioned ambiguity of Carmilla's mouth as a representation of her gender; in this, again, there is a movement into the space between the clear-cut boundaries of the masculine and feminine spheres in society. If indeed Carmilla's desire for Laura is borne out of her vampirism, and it is her desire that makes her ambiguous in the eyes of Laura, then here is again exemplified the inherent fluidity of the vampire being, and its' emasculating power over women - thus corrupting the 'natural' divide between male and female, feminine and masculine.

1.3. Twilight spaces: Reading the Vampire as Non-Binary Other

Having discussed at some length the female vampire figure, attention now turns to the all-father of vampire literature: Count Dracula. The second hypothesis of this chapter supplements that discussed above regarding the female vampire in that it again entails a movement between spheres, much like the one of the female vampire into the masculine sphere and the uncanny in-between area between the two carefully cordoned off spheres; again, corruption of natural order is a core aspect of this vampire figure. However, whereas much of the corruption in female vampire figures is turned inward- in a corruption of one's own femininity and virtue – it is my argument that Count Dracula and his vampirism form an outward corruptive force. Furthermore, where the female vampire is an even if corrupted and unconventional *female* entity moving into the masculine sphere, Dracula is a masculine corrupting force that subjugates the feminine sphere through his vampirism. In support of this hypothesis, one should pay careful attention to the relationship between Count Dracula and the various women in the novel. Of interest is first and foremost his choice of victims- where the female vampires in the novel appear to have a preference for children as their victim of choice, the Count has (young) women as his victims of choice and his primary source of sustenance: Lucy Westenra, the

three women in the castle (if we are to suppose that they have been sired by Dracula himself in the same manner as Lucy) and lastly Mina Harker. Again, the penetrative aspect of vampirism is of great importance – by penetrating young women, Dracula drains them of their life as well as their feminine virtue, turning them into sexually aggressive (New) women. It should be noted here that the account of Dracula's attack on Mina reads much like a sexual assault if we are, as above in relation to the female vampire, to read the vampiric mouth as a representation of genitalia, and the fangs in particular as representative of the male genitals:

> In the pause he spoke in a sort of keen, cutting whisper, pointing as he spoke to Jonathan: "Silence! If you make a sound I shall take him and dash his brains out before your very eyes." I was appalled and was too bewildered to do or say anything. With a mocking smile, he placed one hand upon my shoulder and, holding me tight, bared my throat with the other, saying as he did so: "First, a little refreshment to reward my exertions. You may well be quiet; it is not the first time, or the second, that your veins have appeased my thirst!" […] And oh, my God, my God, pity me! He placed his reeking lips upon my throat! […] How long this horrible thing lasted I know not; but it seemed that a long time must have passed before he took his foul, awful sneering mouth away. I saw it drip with the fresh blood! (392-393)

While this scene harbours perhaps the most explicit example of Dracula and his vampirism as being representative of an archaic, violent masculine power – part of an ancient power structure that feeds on its' people, and in this case on women in particular – it also underlines Dracula's position as occupying the uncanny space between masculine and feminine spheres, and his role as a corruptor of the divide between genders and natural order as perceived by nineteenth-century society. If the vampire's mouth is read as a monstrous combination of male and female genitalia, and as has been suggested before it gives the female vampire not just the role of mother but that of father, then it follows that in the case of Count Dracula – who could be considered, as alluded to at the beginning of this paragraph, the *father* of the vampire being – he is not merely the patriarch, but also the birth-

giving mother insofar as the process of creating vampires is one of penetration and 'giving birth' rolled into one. This is echoed by Dracula himself when he says to Mina that 'you, their best beloved one, are now to me flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin[.]' (p. 393). It is furthermore poignant that this exchange is followed by the Count feeding Mina from his breast:

> By [Mina Harker's] side stood a tall, thin man, clad in black. […] With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast, which was shown by his torn-open dress. (385-386)

While Dr. Seward likens the scene to 'a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink' (p. 386), I would rather argue that it has an uncanny and indeed disturbing resemblance to a mother feeding her baby, much in the same vein as the corrupted motherhood shown by the female vampire seemingly affectionately cradling a young child to her chest even as she feeds on it.

1.4. Dracula's Castle and the Feminizing Queer Space

Finally, there is one last matter of discussion to be treated in this chapter, partly extending from the above analysis of Dracula as being representative of a queer masculinity or a queer Other occupying the space between masculine and feminine. It was noted above that the count primarily victimizes women, and while it is true that in the novel he is only shown to feed on (young) women and turn these women into the aggressively sexual female figures discussed at length at the beginning of this chapter, there is a noteworthy exemption to the rule: Jonathan Harker.

While the relationship between the count and his female victims is largely that of predator and prey, and in turning them into vampires that of parent and child, his relationship with Jonathan sets itself apart in that it is built upon *desire* rather than the base hunger that drives the count's pursuit of women. Indeed, barring one scene in chapter two where the count is temporarily overcome by animalistic hunger when Jonathan cuts himself while shaving, the count does not

express a direct desire to *feed* on Jonathan, in contrast to the three women in Dracula's Castle who suffer a firm rebuke from the Count when they approach his 'guest':

> As my eyes opened involuntarily I saw his strong hand grasp the slender neck of the fair woman and with giant's power draw it back, the blue eyes transformed with fury, the white teeth champing with rage, and the fair cheeks blazing red with passion. But the count! Never did I imagine such wrath and fury, even in the demons of the pit. […] With a fierce sweep of his arm, he hurled the woman from him, and the motioned to the others, as though he were beating them back […]. In a voice which […] seemed to cut through the air and then ring round the room, he exclaimed: 'How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him, or you'll have to deal with me. ' (58)

While the count's exclamation is already of interest in terms of the possessiveness he shows over Jonathan, in the face of his brides, it is the exchange that follows that is perhaps even more intriguing. More specifically, when the woman the count has wrenched away from Jonathan exclaims 'You yourself never loved; you never love!' (58) the introduction of *love* on the scene gives it a much more profound charge than merely a group of predators fighting over one prey, especially when this is followed by 'Then the count turned, after looking at my face attentively, and said in a soft whisper: 'Yes, I too can love; you yourselves can tell it from the past. […]' (58). Even when this is then closely followed by the count's promise that 'when I am done with him, you shall kiss him at your will' (58-59), the question remains as to whom this 'love' pertains to. Considering the Count's focus on Jonathan even as he refers back to his past romantic feelings for his 'brides', there is a suggested likening between his feelings for Jonathan now and those felt previously for his consorts.

Julie Smith further posits in her article on 'Masculine Spatial Embodiment in *Dracula*' that Castle Dracula in its' role as a dungeon serves to thrust Jonathan Harker into the role of the traditional Gothic heroine – who is often portrayed as a *feminine ideal* – with Count Dracula serving

as the traditional sexually threatening patriarchal force. Of importance here is the traditional role of the Gothic building within the genre as being a prison to femininity, a hostile corruption of the normally comforting and homely domestic sphere. This is especially potent with regards to Dracula's castle, which is described as a 'monstrous, feminizing space' (Smith 132) which harbours monstrous women and is headed by the uncanny figure of the Count, whom together separate Jonathan from his masculine place in society, thus rendering the castle a spatial embodiment of the 'uncanny valley' occupied by the vampire figure.

It should be noted that Jonathan is not simply thrust into the position traditionally occupied by the Gothic heroine as a man into a woman's world while maintaining his masculinity within himself; in his imprisonment he abandons his masculinity and becomes feminized, or as Smith posits 'As Harker enters the symbolically feminized space of the castle, he is effectively castrated – rendering him impotent and metaphorically gendering him as feminine.' (134). Smith draws up as examples of this feminization Jonathan's increasing emotionality, drawing a connection between his erratic behaviour and melancholy and the figure of the emotionally high-strung woman (contrasted by the rational masculinity of figures such as Dr. Seward), as well as his sexual feminization. In this the female vampires discussed earlier are central figures, in that as they become emasculated in their vampirism, their power to penetrate serves to feminize the subject of their desire.

Per illustration, Smith draws upon the scene of Jonathan's meeting the three women occupying Dracula's Castle and his subsequent near-devouring of him, pointing to Jonathan's behaviour as he is faced with the aggressive sexuality of the female vampires:

> When faced with the 'voluptuous lips' (p. 37) of the female vampires, Harker, in a display of sexual passivity habitually reserved for women, merely 'lay quiet, looking out from under [his] lashes in an agony of delightful anticipation' (p. 38). His mention of 'agony' suggests the ostensible feminine aversion to phallic penetration, ironically offset by the erotic expectation. (Smith 133)

In other words, where the women in the novel become 'emasculated' in a sense by vampirism, Jonathan becomes feminized by it and as such becomes a subject of *desire* to the sexual vampire figure, desirous of penetration.

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter has focussed on the vampire figure in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and, to a lesser extent, Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, as a queer being, exploring it as representative of a newly emerging sexuality, specifically a newly emerging understanding and figuration of *female* sexuality, ushered in by the New Women Writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the analysis above, the vampire is analysed as a fluid figure, moving freely between the gender spheres as outlined by Johanna M. Smith's Separate Spheres Theory – as such, they become queer figures functioning outside the carefully compartmentalised nineteenth century society, monstrous in their ability to penetrate the barriers of 'moral' society and their ability to upturn the social structures that governed nineteenth century daily life, such as family and marriage, and going as deep as the structures of gender roles and expectations. In this, the role of architectural structure in the novel is also discussed briefly, particularly with regards to Dracula's castle as being not just a representation of the Gothic staple of the dungeon or castle, the traditionally *oppressive* space, but as a *feminizing* space in which Jonathan Harker, subject to the desire of the genderqueer vampire figure, and more specifically of the emasculated female vampire figure, is drawn from the masculine sphere of his life in England, into the feminine sphere of (sexual) subjection – literally putting him at risk of penetration. To summarize, central to this chapter is the transformative quality of the vampire; both regarding their transformation of *self*, meaning also their ability to move freely between spheres, and their ability to transform through penetration – to *corrupt* – society around them. Having outlined this transformative quality of vampires, particularly with regards to gender, gender roles, and sex and sexuality, it might not come as much of a surprise that in pop culture, the vampire has come to be embraced as a creature representing seduction, sensuality and sexuality, and moreover that figures

like *Carmilla* have come to be eagerly accumulated into LGBTQ culture as quintessential queer figures, demonized as representatives of a transformation of society, ushered in by the twentieth century, that would mark the end of the traditional patriarchal power structures that had governed Western Society.

2. Family Secrets: *Frankenstein* and the Queer Gothic Family

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and more importantly the titular character's prodigal creation, have become veritable staples of the Gothic genre, and indeed the horror genre as a whole. In recent years the book has continued to inspire a plethora of remakes and re-imaginings, as seen in Paul McGuigan's 2014 movie *Victor Frankenstein* and Benjamin Ross and Barry Langford's 2015 *The Frankenstein Chronicles* Netflix series. It is poignant, however, that many of the book's retellings deviate from the original in their exclusion of the original's focus on the family home and family home. Victor has come to be remembered in the public consciousness as the original 'mad scientist', an isolated figure delighting in his 'unhallowed arts', removing much of the original's domestic and feminine subject matter.

This chapter returns to these subjects, domesticity and femininity, in Mary Shelley's novel, building on Johanna M. Smith's reading of *Frankenstein* as 'a woman's text concerned with women's issues' and placing this reading in the context of Queer Theory. Key themes in this analysis are the domestic constructs of family and marriage and how these constructs are rebuild by Mary Shelley's imagination into twisted caricature's of the Nineteenth Century ideal of the family home and family. Within this analysis, then, the role of the novel's women and their place within the social constructs as mothers and wives, as portrayed in the novel forms a crucial subject. The pivotal argument here is that Victor Frankenstein and his creature are both ultimately the product of a toxic, monstrous family construct- the traditional bourgeois family ideal translated into a Gothic form that imprisons and devours its' inmates. Debt and sacrifice are oft-recurring themes. Characteristic as well of this monstrous, Gothic family construct is the way it bleeds outside of the constraints of the domestic sphere to affect the novel's male characters; it is a feminizing space as much as it is a toxic one, as becomes evident from the role of the various patriarchal figures within the novel.

2.1. Gothic Domesticity, Femininity and The Gilded Cage of Family in *Frankenstein*.

To begin, it should be noted that the domestic ideal of family and family structure forms an integral part of the *Frankenstein* novel. Indeed, the 1818 preface to the novel, written by Percy Shelley, introduces the novel as an exhibition of "the amiableness of domestic affection" (qtd. in Rigby, p. 20) and certainly the Frankenstein family is presented as idyllic; a hub of parental affection where the children are 'lead by a silken cord' (Shelley 40). The Frankenstein Patriarch, Alphonse, is described as a benevolent and involved father figure, and his wife Caroline with her 'gentle smiles' forms a shining example of the domestic ideal of doting wife and mother, a 'shrine dedicated lamp in [their] peaceful home', and under their careful guidance young Victor, Elizabeth and Clerval want for nothing in their youthful explorations and endeavours. The concept of the Frankenstein homestead as a safe haven of domesticity is repeated and emphasized at various intervals throughout the novel. That said, it has been noted in various readings and criticisms that the family unit in *Frankenstein*, idyllic as it might appear on a surface level, is subject to a, I would argue, decidedly gothic subtext. Underneath the varnish of loving tutelage and careful guidance, so argue academics such as Johanna M. Smith[13] and Mair Rigby[14], hides a construct that is toxic to its' inhabitants[15] and indeed in this novel proves fatal to some – more specifically in *Frankenstein* to the female characters that make up its' core, the 'shrine lamp[s]' of home and family. It should be noted here that the role of women in the *Frankenstein* novel is an oft-debated one; with the author herself having become a central figure in what has come to be called the 'Female Gothic'; a troubled figure ever lingering between tradition on one hand – Mary Shelley was strongly dependant on her husband in her roles as wife and author – and her singular position as a published female author, heavily burdened by the troubled legacy of her parents and especially that of her mother. Indeed, Mary Shelley's stance regarding her own sex could be considered split, regarding her relation to the women in her life and her own stance on the role of woman in society, the home and family; as well as her perception of the men that guided her

[13] ' "Cooped Up": Feminine Domesticity in *Frankenstein*
[14] 'Monstrous Desire: Frankenstein and the Queer Gothic'
[15] or *inmates* as they are ominously and notably referred to in *Frankenstein* (41)- a fact that is also noted by Rigby (26)

every move and yet were capable of using their power to subject her in her role as wife. It comes as little of a surprise, then, that this ambiguity bleeds into the academic treatment of her magnum opus; her monstrous prodigy that has cemented her place in the annals of Gothic literature even now.

What renders the female characters in the *Frankenstein* novel so notable, then, is not so much their presence in the novel as their absence. *Frankenstein* has been described before as a novel of 'absent mothers' (qtd. in Rigby, p. 28), and certainly there are many: Mme De Lacey and Caroline Frankenstein both perish, and Justine's mother is uninvolved to such an extent that she cannot be considered a traditionally maternal figure, also in that she is described as an abusive parent, forming a stark contrast to Caroline's tender parenting. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the remaining women in the novel – those that meet their fate at the hands of the Creature, a fact that will be discussed at more length later in this chapter, as well as Walton's sister - are for all intents and purposes rendered mute in that they do not have their own voice and instead are forced to 'speak' through the male narrators. Indeed, the entirety of the plot is relayed through male characters (Robert Walton), by male characters (Victor Frankenstein and his Creature). The implications thereof are manifold, and the resulting effect is that these female characters become abstract, 'distant' characters- in other words, Others. That is not to say the role of woman within the novel is negligible; on the contrary, feminist critique has made the novel's female characters, their presence as well as their absence and silence, a thankful subject for analysis and debate.

Here, then, I would like to briefly turn back to the toxic domesticity described above, and the assessment that it is a domesticity that kills – and primarily kills women. Part of what makes this domesticity so toxic is the setup of the family structure that it encompasses. I mentioned before that the family structure in *Frankenstein* is decidedly Gothic, and this is especially evident in the place of women within the family unit and the domestic sphere. Smith, in exploring the separate spheres theory in the setting of *Frankenstein*, mentions that the domestic sphere comes to function almost as

a prison- a theme that has also been touched upon in the previous chapter of this thesis, where it was argued that Dracula's castle and the asylum both serve as domestic dungeons, keeping their occupants behind lock and key. For nineteenth-century women especially, delegated as they often were to home and hearth in their appointed roles of mothers and wives, this could have resonated painfully well. That said, while the Frankenstein *home* could be said to function in more or less the same capacity as Dracula's castle in the sense that it closes off the inhabitants from the outside world, I would argue that it is not so much the actual *architectural structure* of the home – in contrast to the aforementioned literal castle in *Dracula*– as it is the family structure that resides within it that serves as the 'Gothic Castle' or prison.

2.2. Absent Mothers and Silent Wives: The Female Voice and Lack Thereof in *Frankenstein*.

Focussing for now on the female characters in the novel, I would like to touch briefly upon the interchangeability of women within their traditional roles as presented by *Frankenstein,* and Johanna M Smith's exploration of the *entrapment* of women in a continuous cycle of indebtment that forms an integral part of the Frankenstein family structure. To quote: 'Among the Frankensteins, a gift requires gratitude and so produces a sense of obligation that can be discharged only by endless repetition of this pattern' (J.M. Smith 279).

The 'gifts' bestowed by the Frankensteins, then, are often built upon one's inclusion within the exclusive Frankenstein family. Smith notes the mutual obligation between the Frankenstein parents and their children when she notes that Victor's parents had 'a deep consciousness of what they *owed* towards the being to which they had *given* life' (40), for example, noting that their debt is to the 'heaven' that bestowed them their child, and in return Victor owes his parents his gratitude and loyalty for the gift of life and their parental love and care.

This is taken one step further in the case of Elizabeth, however, who is adopted into the Frankenstein family by Caroline – ironically during Caroline's own acting out her debt to the

Frankenstein family for being adopted into its' folds by Alphonse Frankenstein years earlier: 'to my mother, [visiting the poor] was more than a *duty*; it was a *necessity*, a passion, - remembering what she had suffered, and how she had been relieved, - for her to act *in her turn* the guardian angel to the afflicted' (40, italics mine). In her turn, then, Elizabeth pays for her 'membership' to the Frankensteins by becoming Victor's playmate and later his wife.

Interestingly, there comes to exist a 'double debt' between Elizabeth and Caroline when the latter, in fulfilling her parental duties to her children by tending to a sick Elizabeth, pays with her life by the same fever that she healed her adopted daughter from, in turn indebting Elizabeth to the Frankenstein family; a debt that is paid by her in turn taking over Caroline's place and her duties and matriarch. This example, the debt cycle between Elizabeth and Caroline, lays bare two further facets of the toxic family structure in *Frankenstein* that prove integral to the critical understanding of the novel's women: first, it brings starkly to light the machinations of the family that make women interchangeable clones, with my argument, built upon Smith's theory ,being that by entering the debt cycle that is the Frankenstein family women become one and the same figure embodying the mother and wife (281). Secondly, it prefaces how this cycle of women's debt in the Frankenstein family and their subsequent cycle of 'oppressive femininity' (275) - continuously repeating Caroline's character - they enter a construction that can and will kill them.

To illustrate the first point, having shed some light on the example of Elizabeth, I would further like to draw attention to the character Justine. Immediately there is a clear parallel between her and Elizabeth, and further between her and Caroline, with the primary difference being that in her case, interestingly, her mother is still alive, and rather than the death of a father it is an abusive, 'bad' mother that sends her into the arms of the Frankenstein family. Here, under the careful doting tutelage of the Frankenstein matriarch, Justine transforms into a proper 'Frankenstein Woman', following the example of Caroline:

> [Caroline] conceived a great attachment for [Justine], by which she was induced to give her an education superior to that which she had at first intended. *This benefit was fully repaid*; Justine was the *most grateful little creature in the world*; I do not mean that she made any professions; I never heard one pass her lips; but you could see by her eyes that she almost adored her protectress. […] [S]he paid the greatest attention to every gesture of my aunt. She thought her the model of all excellence, and endeavoured to imitate her phraseology and manners, so that even now she often reminds me of her. (Shelley 63-64; italics mine)

Here again we see the failure of a parent (although, as stated, an abusive widowed mother rather than the death of a widowed father), the invitation into the folds of the Frankenstein family, the creation of a cycle of debt and gratitude, and the effective assimilation of Justine into an overarching matriarchal figure, first represented by Caroline and then her 'daughters' whom take up the mantle after her demise.

In effect, there is a continuous repetition of the same woman throughout the novel, a cycle of rebirth through various female characters that ends in their death at the hand of a monstrous, deformed masculinity (the creature). This is underscored by the fact that both Justine and Elizabeth are presented as continuations of Victor's mother after her death. Justine is said to be so like her mistress that she essentially becomes the living memory of Caroline, and Elizabeth becomes her literal substitute in the Frankenstein family after her passing, a substitution of which the implications are eerily echoed when Victor recounts of his moments of madness following the creation of his creature that

> I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features began to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms[.] (Shelley 58)

This, then, takes us to the second point of my hypothesis: that it is precisely this devouring domestic femininity that ultimately leads to the death of the women ensnared in the Frankenstein family dynamic.

It was mentioned above that Caroline died in acting out her debt as a mother by tending to the bedridden Elizabeth, and that it was Caroline's death that in turn indebted Elizabeth to the Frankenstein family, leading to her stepping into the space left behind by Caroline. In similar fashion, it is Justine's acting out her debt to the Frankensteins that leaves her open to the Creature's machinations, thus leading (indirectly) to her demise. Interestingly, here it is her role as a *woman* especially that proves to be her downfall, rather than her relation to Victor specifically; it is arguably her femininity that sparks a jealous rage within the Creature, who sees her primarily as an extension of the female sex that he feels he is denied access to:

> Here, I thought, is one of those whose joy-imparting smiles are bestowed on all but me. And then I bent over her, and whispered, 'Awake, fairest, thy lover is near […]!' The sleeper stirred; a thrill of terror ran through me. Should she indeed awake, and see me, and curse me, and denounce the murderer! […] The thought was madness; it stirred the fiend within me – not I, but she shall suffer: the murder I have committed because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone. *The crime had its source in her: be hers the punishment*! (Shelley 123-124; italics mine)

Smith further notes in relation to this passage that Justine's murder is readable as a *punishment* – Justine, in her role as representative of her sex, is targeted because of her desirability: 'While Justine suffers here from being Caroline's stand-in, more generally her crime is being seductive; according to this masculine logic, women are "to blame for having been desired" (Jacobus, qtd in Smith 282).

Temporarily diverting from the topic at hand, it should be noted here that this statement carries a certain undertone of *rape* – much like a rapist placing the blame on his victim for, as Jacobus states, being desirable or 'having been desired', for wearing 'inviting' clothes or behaving in a certain

manner towards the opposite sex, according to the Creature Justine must be punished for possessing those qualities that the Creature desires, and of which he deems himself 'forever robbed'. This language of robbery, then, is in itself interesting in the sense that it suggests that indeed, Justine's affections are not her own to give and that to a certain extent she therefore does not govern herself – rather, in creating his Creature in the manner that he has, Victor could be considered the one responsible for 'robbing' him of feminine affection, which is repeated later when Victor destroys the female Creature, the Creature's desired mate made in his own image and who, above all, is *expected* in her preordained role, her raison d'être, to bestow upon her mate, the Adam to her Eve, her 'joy-imparting smiles' (130). It is a repetition of the muting of women and their agency that is present throughout the novel.

The aforementioned theme of rape, then, finds its' continuation in the death of Elizabeth; this particular has a distinct sexual undercurrent that already sprouts when the Creature threatens to Victor that 'I shall be with you on your wedding-night' (142), but reaches its' crescendo in the marital bedroom:

> She was there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging down, and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair. Everywhere I turn I see the same figure – her bloodless arms and relaxed form flung by the murderer on its bridal bier. (163)

Considering the fact that the wedding night is a concept heavily laden with sexual connotations, as traditionally being the first night of the marital couple sharing a bed as husband and wife, and the scene of the consummation of the marriage, this scene carries a certain intimacy with it; furthermore, if one is to read the monster as an extension of Victor, his monstrous half or a representation of his monstrous, jealous and aggressive masculinity, this scene could very well be read through a lens of marital rape and marital murder.

2.3. Self-Devouring and Self-Perpetuating Family Cycles in the *Frankenstein* Homestead

Having discussed at some length the family structure of the Frankensteins and its' ensnaring and transformative properties, the next theory of this chapter holds that the self-perpetuating cycles that make up the Frankenstein family dynamic create an undercurrent of *incest* within the family (see also Anca Vlasopolos, qtd. in Smith, p. 281). Beginning with the example of Caroline and Alphonse, it is my argument that there already exists an incestuous undercurrent in the foundation of the Frankenstein family. It is notable that Caroline comes to Alphonse not as an equal partner with the prospect of becoming a wife, but as a protégée, much like Elizabeth later. Caroline is left destitute and mourning at the death of her father Beaufort, an old friend of Alphonse; Alphonse sweeps in 'like a protective spirit to the poor girl' (39); this suggests that he comes not as a lover, but as a paternal figure. This is supported further by the fact that Alphonse is several years Caroline's senior, and that in his position as her benefactor he wields a certain degree of power over her; even as Mary Shelley rushes to assure her readers that 'this circumstance seemed to unite them only closer in bonds of devoted affection' and that this affection '[differs] wholly from the doating fondness of age' (39), the patriarchal undertones and insinuations are not lost as Caroline even in her role as wife and mother remains sheltered within the isolating greenhouse structure of the Frankenstein home under the careful guidance and protection of Alphonse. Paired with the continuous parallels drawn between Caroline and Elizabeth that presents them as near interchangeable characters, Caroline's relationship with the paternal figure of Alphonse leans heavily towards the taboo of father-daughter incest.

Perhaps the most stark example of the incestuous queer family bonds in the novel, however, is Elizabeth; when she is adopted into the Frankenstein family, her role within the family becomes a split one. While she is initially adopted as a family member, raised alongside Victor as his cousin, his 'more than sister' (41), an in itself telling phrase that is repeated when Victor speaks of her as Alphonse's 'more than daughter,' there is also a sense of ownership of Victor over Elizabeth. Indeed, she is presented to Victor as a 'pretty little present,' and Victor himself takes his ownership quite seriously:

> When [Caroline] […] presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift, I, with childish seriousness, interpreted her words literally, and looked upon Elizabeth as mine – mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on her, I received as made to a possession of my own.' (Shelley 41)

I would argue that here lies a repetition of the relationship between Alphonse and Caroline – Caroline is described as a delicate marvel, sheltered by Alphonse 'as a fair exotic is sheltered by the gardener'; similarly, Elizabeth is described as Victor's delicate marvel to 'protect, love and cherish', echoing the undertones present in his parents' relationship of parental guardianship and parental pride.

Even more emblematic and more overt is the continuous use of family titles throughout the novel: as mentioned above, Elizabeth is Victor's 'more than sister' and Alphonse's 'more than daughter.' In a letter to Victor, Elizabeth refers to Victor as her cousin at the beginning of her letter, and goes on to stress this familial connection again when she assures him that 'your *cousin and playmate* has too sincere a love for you not to be made miserable by this opposition' (158; italics mine). This is all the more striking as at this point, Elizabeth and Victor are already betrothed to be married, and the problematic duality of their relationship is remarked upon by Elizabeth herself when she wonders if '[A]s brother and sister often entertain a lively affection towards each other, without desiring a more intimate union, may not such also be our case?' (p.157), echoing the earlier anxiety of Alphonse in his confession that:

> I have always looked forward to your marriage with our dear Elizabeth as the tie of our domestic comfort, and the stay of my declining years. You were attached to each other from your earliest infancy; you studied together, and appeared, in dispositions and tastes, entirely suited to one another. But so blind is the experience of man, that what I conceived to be the best assistants to my plan, may have entirely destroyed it. You, perhaps, regard her as your sister, without any wish that she might become your wife. (129)

In the Frankenstein family, familial and 'more than' familial love are divided by merely a thin line indeed. Furthermore, I would argue that as *Frankenstein* is a novel hinged on toxic cycles and continuous repetition, so too this incestuous theme in the Frankenstein family is echoed and repeated, specifically in the relationship between Victor and his creature.

This is also where the cycle of indebtment as described by Smith comes into play again: the relationship between Victor and his Creature is very much a monstrous, Gothic copy of the parent-child relationship, and here too the expectation of mutual gratitude and debt that is present in the relationship between the Frankenstein parents and Victor is repeated. When Victor is creating his prodigy, he proudly boasts that

> A new species would bless me as its' creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would *owe* their being to me. No father could *claim the gratitude of his child* so completely as I should theirs. (Shelley 55; italics mine)

In saying this, however, he forgets his subsequent debt and his responsibility towards his creature, which is to care for him and show him the affection befitting a child; as soon as the creature opens his 'dull yellow eyes' (58), Victor draws back in horror and flees, abandoning the creature and as such failing in fulfilling his debt as a parent. It is the creature himself that serves as a stark, punishing reminder to Victor as to what the repercussions are for breaking the debt cycle, and of this he himself is well aware:

> [Y]ou, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. (Shelley 90)

The fact that the creature himself speaks in terms of 'owing'[16] and 'duty' proves that even if he is not directly involved in the Frankenstein family, he does form part of its' family structure in so far as it is built upon the debt cycle.

Turning attention to the Monsterette, then, her creation when put in the context of the debt cycle of the Frankenstein family becomes a way for Victor to atone and retroactively pay off his debt and fulfil his duty as a parent: 'His tale, and the feelings he now expressed, proved him to be a creature of fine sensations; and did I not, as his maker, owe him all the portion of happiness that it was in my power to bestow?' (Shelley 125) This is also where Victor and his creature perhaps most clearly come to mirror one another, and to an extent overlap. The creature's demand for a mate to keep him company, which he invokes as a right (124), and even more so Victor's ultimate acquiescence with his demand as described above, reads as a repeat of Victor's relationship with Elizabeth, the 'pretty little present' gifted to him by his parents as a playmate. So, too, the Monsterette is 'bestowed' upon the Creature by Victor (126) as a companion, much like a gift; and here too the matter of family relations serve to create an incestuous undercurrent. If one is to accept, based on the debt cycle existing between Victor and his Creature, this relationship to be of a parental nature, with the creature being Victor's prodigal son, then so the monsterette, borne from the same hands, is his daughter. This is further driven home by the fact that the Creature asks that she be made 'as hideous as [him]self' (125): a female twin. However, where the relationship between Victor and Elizabeth would be incestuous primarily in theory – in that they *do* originate from different parents - the creature and his mate would encroach much more literally into the incestuous sphere, a fact that is further underlined by Victor's anxiety of the possibility of their reproduction and the fruits thereof (140).

2.4. Monstrous Masculinities in *Frankenstein*

[16] 'I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me.' (Shelley 90)

Having discussed at some length the Frankenstein family dynamics and the toxic domestic culture of which it is a part and which forces its' inhabitants into an inescapable cycle of duty and gratitude, stifling especially it's female inhabitants, I would like to here take a moment to appreciate its' effects on the men in the family structure. Feminist readings often focus on the entrapment of women in the domestic sphere of the Gothic, but while Smith does read *Frankenstein* as 'a woman's text concerned with woman's issues', and while she does note that the burden of the Frankenstein family rests most heavily on its' women, its' effects on the men in the novel is not to be neglected. The domestic sphere as portrayed in *Frankenstein* is nothing short of a gilded cage, the 'inmates' of which are, much like young Victor, '[…] so guided by a silken cord, that all [seems] but one train of enjoyment to [them]' (40) even as they are, like the female characters analysed above, trapped in its folds and devoured. On the Frankenstein men it has a similar entrapping effect, where they become removed from their masculine 'nature', their place in the masculine sphere, by being continuously drawn back into the domestic sphere of the Frankenstein family home, and the aforementioned cycle of debt that it entails.

Smith herself notes that the domestic sphere of the Frankenstein family, while warm and inviting to those that are deemed worthy of inclusion, is not one that prepares its' men for the outside world; and this proves to be their downfall. Intriguing in this is also the role of feminized masculinity herein: Alphonse Frankenstein has been described by smith as a 'feminized' patriarch (p. 278) insofar as he puts down his public functions, which are in the separate spheres doctrine considered to be tied closely to masculinity, to instead tie himself to the domestic sphere of the home, thus placing himself in a traditionally feminine position. It is in this capacity, too, that Alphonse inadvertently helps lay the groundwork for Victor's descent into madness and his subsequent fall from grace; Victor himself points to his father's easy dismissal of his son's choice of subject in his studies as essentially being the 'beginning of the end', so to speak:

> […] I chanced to find the works of Cornelius Agrippa. I opened it with apathy; the theory which he attempts to demonstrate, and the wonderful facts which he relates, soon changed this feeling into enthusiasm. A new light seemed to dawn upon my mind; and, bounding with joy, I communicated my discovery to my father. My father looked carelessly at the titlepage of my book, and said, "Ah! Cornelius Agrippa! My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash." If, instead of this remark, my father had taken the pains to explain to me, that the principles of Agrippa had been entirely exploded, and that a modern system of science had been introduced […] I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside, and have contented my imagination […] by returning with greater ardour to my former studies. It is even possible, that the train of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin. (Shelley 44)

Whether or not Victor is correct in his assertion that with a different reaction on his father's part he would have 'contented' himself by 'returning with greater ardour to [his] former studies' and would thus 'never have received the fatal impulse that led to [his] ruin' will forever remain a matter for debate; however, it is certainly clear that it was the beginning of a chain reaction that would ultimately culminate into Victor's creation of his Creature. Certainly, Alphonse's reaction is an extension of his failure as a *father* in retreating into domestic sphere, thus feminizing himself, leaving Victor to navigate the masculine sphere of science on his own: 'My father was not scientific, and I was left to struggle with a child's blindness, added to a student's thirst for knowledge. ' (p. 45). Smith notes that this 'unscientific-ness' of Alphonse was a later alteration by Mary Shelly (Smith, p. 278). The original rough draft, in fact, very much did have Alphonse as a man of science who conducted his own experimentation, and furthermore had the decision to send Victor to Ingolstadt, which would become the scene of the creature's 'birth' and therefore the beginning of Victor's ruin, be Alphonse's rather than that of both parents. Smith argues here that ' [a]ll these changes suggest that the author intended to reduce Alphonse's culpability for Victor's science' (278), but does note that this attempt

is not entirely successful; rather, it creates a different *kind* of culpability derived from Alphonse's role as a feminized patriarch enforcing a 'destructive domesticity'.

While Alphonse's reaction to Victor's earliest voyage into science can certainly be considered a deciding moment within the novel, this might appear somewhat counter-intuitive in that Victor's parents (and in the earlier draft his father specifically) are the ones that send him out of the destructive domestic sphere, and into the world:

> When I attained the age of seventeen, my parents resolved that I should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt. I had hitherto attended the schools of Geneva; but my father thought it necessary, for the completion of my education, that I should be made acquainted with other customs than those of my native country. (46-47)

This stands in stark contrast to two other patriarchal figures in the novel who strive rather to completely deny their sons what could be considered their right of manhood to enter the public sphere - specifically Walton's father, and the father of Clerval. Walton's example in particular is of note in that it closely mirrors Victor's struggle in his earliest studies, lacking as he was his father's guiding hand:

> My education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading. These volumes were my study day and night, and my familiarity with them increased that regret which I had felt, as a child, on learning that my father's dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life. (Shelley p. 27)

It is Clerval's father, perhaps, who ultimately drives the last nail into Victor's coffin before he sets off to Ingolstadt by refusing to let his son accompany Victor into student life, seeing 'idleness and ruin in the aspirations and ambitions of his son' (p. 48). Interestingly, unlike Alphonse, Clerval's father is not bound to the domestic sphere as a feminized patriarch: he is a trader by occupation, so very much part of a public sphere himself. As such, it could be argued that in this case it is rather a patriarchal power denying other, younger, men entry into manhood and maturity by refusing them

the chance to move beyond the domestic sphere of their home, and into the world. This, then, engenders a problematic relationship between the parents in *Frankenstein* and their prodigies insofar that they, the parents, are adored as the 'agents and creators of all the many delights which we enjoyed' (p. 43) on the one hand – but on the other, as Smith notes, there appears to be 'an iron hand in this velvet glove'.

This duality of the 'good' parent and their effect on the children ensnared in their family structure of debt and gratitude cycles is perhaps best portrayed by Victor, when he sets out to Ingolstadt, his first entry into the world beyond the Frankenstein homestead:

> I threw myself into the chaise that was to convey me away, and indulged in the most melancholy reflections. […] *My life had hitherto been remarkably secluded and domestic*; and this had given me invincible repugnance to new countenances. […] [B]ut as I proceeded, my spirits and hopes rose. I ardently desired the acquisition of knowledge. *I had often, when at home, thought it hard to remain during my youth cooped up in one place, and had longed to enter the world, and take my station among other human beings*. (Shelley 49; italics mine)

While Victor is largely made complacent by his secluded life in the warm embrace of the Frankenstein home, under the watchful eye and doting smiles of his parents, this passage describes the underlying stifling effect of this domesticity.

As mentioned above, the Frankenstein home is very much a gilded cage that, while beautiful, leaves its' 'inmates', those deemed worthy of entry into the exclusive circle of the Frankenstein family, forever trapped in an endless cycle of debt and gratitude that often ends in death, bringing forth in turn the next debt cycle, *at infinitum*. This passage in particular, then, brings to the fore the toxic effect it has on masculinity, in that it strips the men in the novel of their patriarchal power by chaining them to the domestic sphere. Simultaneously it could be considered a *feminizing* structure, much like Dracula's castle in the preceding chapter. The relationship between Victor and his Creature is the one perhaps most explicitly representative of this feminization: it was mentioned before that

Victor functions very much as both parents combined into one god-like entity, an all-powerful independent life giving power.

Furthermore, the creation process of the Creature itself is representative of a process of feminization of the most monstrous kind. It is notable that Victor's descriptions of his 'unhallowed labours' leading to the 'birth' of his monster read very much as an actual birthing process; Victor recounts how he 'deprive[s] [himself] of rest and health' (58) during the creation process, much like a female body straining under pregnancy – it is described as a process of 'infinite pains and care' (58). In this regard, considering the lengthy creation process, the strain on Victor's mental and physical health and finally Victor's horrified, despairing reaction at the completion of his work, when he lays eyes upon his monstrous prodigy, reads much like a traumatic birth or even a miscarriage. Considering Mary Shelley's own traumatic history of losing her mother during her own birth, and subsequently suffering the loss of several children in her lifetime, from the lens of Smith's assessment that *Frankenstein* is at its' core a women's novel, this comparison of the Monster's creation and the real-life risk and trauma of childbirth and child loss becomes especially poignant. In this, I argue, *Frankenstein* is as much a women's novel as it is a mother's novel - the duality that lies at the root of *Frankenstein*, between the desire to be able to give - or indeed re-give - a life lost, and the moral and religious strappings of the nineteenth century that would render such 'unnatural' feats strictly forbidden are bitterly reminiscent of the struggle faced by many women of the nineteenth century in fulfilling their roles as mothers at a time when healthcare - and women's healthcare in particular - was still in its' infancy.

2.5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to shed more light on the subject of familial bonds and the familial home, the very cornerstone of the nineteenth century ideal. Notably, as much as society as a whole was subject to strict rules and expectations, so was the family construct, which was build up out of a distinctive power structure with the man, the father, at its' head as its' public voice, while woman,

the mother, was to regulate the home sphere and assist her husband in her capacity as the wife. *Frankenstein* Gothicizes this structure by taking the ideal of home and family as a comforting, nurturing sphere and deforming it into a still-recognizable perversion of the idealized image. In this capacity, *Frankenstein* highlights its' capacity as a, to quote Smith, "women's novel, concerned with women's issues" in its' depiction of the idealised home and family as also being a social prison, an isolated sphere. What is more, in its' portrayal of wife- and motherhood the novel lays starkly bare the erasure of women and women's individuality within the strictly compartmentalised, moralistic society of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, it is in the same capacity of the novel as an exploration of femininity and feminine subjection that masculinity comes to play a central role; more specifically, the novel's monster and the men that gave birth to it are indicative of a monstrous masculine, indeed patriarchal, power that carries forth a monstrous masculine desire to destroy the realm of women, and the women that occupy it.

Ultimately, insofar as the Creature serves as the physical manifestation of 'other' it also functions to bring to light the monstrous otherness of the Frankenstein family and the Frankenstein family bonds. Victor's unhappy Creature contrasts sharply with the idealised De Lacey and Frankenstein families in its monstrous appearance and unpolished (because untaught) manner. However, it is in this contrast as well that the inward gothicisation of the Frankensteins especially becomes all the more vivid, 'silken cords' and gentle smiles belying underlying themes of incestuous desire and the martyring and erasure of the very women that form the beating heart of the family home as propagated by the nineteenth century bourgeois ideal.

3. Queer Spaces, Dandy Masculinity and Erotic Friendship in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray.*

Having discussed in the previous chapter the figurative queer 'space' of family in relation to *Frankenstein*, this chapter moves on to an exploration of physical queer space in the setting of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, led by themes of interior and, above all, interiority – the psychological translation of the physical. By extension, an important feature of this queer space and queer interiority is the person that occupies this space and thus fulfils an important role in making it a *queer* space. As this novel was published towards the end of the nineteenth century (the eighteen-nineties, to be precise) it allows for a more thorough exploration of some queer figures that would come to characterise the twentieth century, most specifically the Dandy. The Dandy is a figure that would form a masculine counterpart to the New Woman, which was alluded to in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and explored extensively in the analysis of the female vampire in the first chapter of this thesis. This new form of masculinity as embodied by the dandy figure bore a strong relation to a shift in nineteenth century thinking on aesthetics, which was perhaps most clearly represented in a changing mentality on *space*, and most specifically living space: what living space entailed, what its' function was, and perhaps most importantly what the role was of those things that could be found in one's living space. This new thinking on space forms a pivotal point in the analysis of Oscar Wilde's novel in this chapter, and it is with this thinking in mind that this chapter delves into the *meaning* of various spaces in the novel, and explores them as specifically *queer* and *other*, and thus in their own right 'monstrous.'

The most important example is the townhouse of the titular Dorian Gray and the rooms therein, and what these rooms hold, namely Dorian Gray's best-kept secrets. A third subject of discussion, then, is the queer relationships present in *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Modern adaptations of the novel have latched heavily onto the queer undercurrent of the novel, and as such it has come to be regarded largely as a queer sexual literature, where homosexuality especially is treated as a prevalent subject. While this might be partially explained by Oscar Wilde's place in

modern perception as a prevalent queer figure, which potentially leads readers to pre-emptively treat his works as queer literature, I would argue that there is certainly a heavily suggestive queer undercurrent present throughout the novel. This queer undercurrent hinges heavily on the concept of masculine desire, and more specifically masculine desire towards *men* – a concept that was to some extent explored in the previous analyses of *Dracula*, where this desire takes a monstrous form that strips man of his masculinity, and *Frankenstein*, where this desire forms a constant looming presence: the threat of the thin line between the socially acceptable masculine affection of the friend, and homosexual desire. In extension of this, and in relation to Dorian Gray's relationship with his portrait, another point of interest is the homosexual or queer secret – the hidden queer desire, here manifested in the portrait itself which, I argue, is an embodiment of guilt as a result of the crossing of the aforementioned thin line between what was deemed acceptable and what was denounced as being morally corrupt. In this regard, I argue, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* could be read as an exploration of the queer psyche and the queer conscience, and the struggle thereof with the nineteenth century moral society.

3.1. Monsters in The Attic: The Dandy Townhouse as Gothic Queer Space.

The previous chapters already delved into the Gothic home and house: in the analysis of *Dracula* it was the architectural structure of the castle and the asylum that came to represent the archetypical Gothic space or the Gothic dungeon, while *Frankenstein* revolves around a much less tangible Gothic structure, namely the Gothic structure of the family and home, rather than house. While *Dorian Gray* does not afford its' architectural spaces quite the same significance as, say, *Dracula*, I would argue that specifically Dorian Gray's house *does* have a role to fulfil as a Gothic space – more specifically, the *secretive* Gothic space, as opposed to the violent and imprisoning gothic space of Dracula's Castle or the smothering and devouring gothic space of the Frankenstein family home. Dorian Gray's house, rather, comes to represent his subconscious – a space where he hides his sins from the public eye, and a stylized front to his depravity. Klutz and Shaw, in *Anxious*

Domesticity in the Victorian Novel: Interiority and the Home, point out the importance of interiority in the Victorian approach to home and home decoration – interiority refers to the inner self, one's psychic life. Historically, interiority and the interior (of the home) have come to be closely connected insofar as in the nineteenth century, 'observers perceived domestic objects as exerting a moral influence over members of the house, and at the same time as embodiments of individual thoughts, desires, memories, and hopes' (Klutz and Shaw, p. 3). What's more, Klutz and Shaw point to the etymological connection between *interiority* and *interior*, referring to Diana Fuss when she points out that *interior* in relation to the home came into use after *interiority* 'acquired its present meaning of "inner character or nature" in 1803' (Klutz and Shaw 3).

Interestingly, this perceived close connection between the interiority of the individual and the interior bled into literatures of the time. Klutz and Shaw point to the use of the interior of the home and home decoration in novels such as those by Charles Dickens as a narrative point, used to allow the reading public a glimpse into the minds of their characters (3). After all, according to authors and writers of various interior design guides of the time, one's home was representative of one's character (7). Decoration, furniture, wallpaper and carpet were carefully picked to best present the occupant of a space to those invited inside. It is in this period as well that good taste came to be associated with good character. Indeed, some considered the development of good taste to be a matter of good morals, almost a *duty* to society and the family, as bad taste was believed to have a negative influence on the occupants of a home (Klutz and Shaw 8). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as the dandy style and the New Woman entered upon the scene, interiority and home decoration became more closely intertwined with aesthetism and the individual, rather than the traditional woman and the family. Oscar Wilde himself was at the forefront of this aesthetic movement, and as such his influence on aesthetic practises of the time was substantial. This also meant that his fall from grace in the public eye following convictions for his homosexuality had consequences for the public perception of aesthetism and the role of home and interior. Society saw the tendency towards consumerism that had been nurtured by the aesthetic movement as presented

by Wilde as a movement away from the domestic sphere as a place of and for family, the very cornerstone of society.

Considering Oscar Wilde's involvement in the aesthetic movement, it would certainly come as no surprise that concepts of interiority relating to the interior of the home would seep into his literary works; indeed, Klutz and Shaw delve into the very subject in their paper. However, where they read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as the tale of an attempted escape from interiority by the nineteenth century Dandy movement – which shied away from intense emotion and inner reflection – this chapter analyses rather how the novel portrays a *failed* attempt at escape and instead bares how Dorian Gray, even in his attempts at avoiding interiority through his portrait, is intrinsically connected to the space of his townhouse and his portrait hidden within it, thus rendering him an example of the very interiority that he denounces in his assumed role as a Dandy. It was mentioned above that in this analysis, Dorian Gray's townhouse is read as representative of his conscience, and becomes synonymous with his guilt. This argument is built particularly on the relationship Dorian Gray has with this particular space, and what it harbours for him: namely, his most damning secrets. In this regard, I would argue that the space of Dorian Gray's townhouse comes to function, in effect, as a type of queer closet where Dorian hides his interiority from the public eye.

Another notable queer space in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* aside of the townhouse mentioned above, although its' mention is only brief and its' role seemingly minor within the novel, is Dorian Gray's countryside residence. I mention it specifically because while his town house, as argued in this chapter, is representative of his subconscious and his guilt, and moreover representative of secrecy in the face of society, his country house – outside of the parameters of 'civilised society' - is suggested to be the scene of at least some of Gray's debauchery:

> [T]here are other stories – stories that you have been seen creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise into the foulest dens in London. Are they true? Can they be

> true? When I first heard them, I laughed. I hear them now, and they make me shudder. What about your country house and the life that is lead there? (145)

This particular passage outlines again the underlying importance of space in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: from the mysterious country house to the 'dreadful houses' and 'foulest dens' of London. Of further note is the duality of the buildings mentioned: the aforementioned 'dreadful' and 'foul' buildings carry the suggested horrors that they harbour on their sleeve, as it were – thus very much fitting within the theory of the time that one's environment reflects one's interiority. A 'foul' spirit engenders a 'foul' home, and vice versa. Dorian Gray's homes, like his bodily exterior, fall rather outside this expectation. The town- and country house both carry the outward refinery and inward opulence as befitting a fashionable, if not respectable, household of the time. Similarly, Dorian Gray is loved and respected largely because he *appears* respectable: beautiful and fashionable. And in the nineteenth century theory that home was as much representative of one's character, their interiority, as it influenced those who lived within it, Dorian's fashionable home with its' beautiful fixings would, much like himself, have worked disarmingly, belying the rotten core within.

Moving on to the portrait, then, I would argue that it becomes an example of interiority in its own right due to its relation to, and placement in, various spaces. Klutz and Shaw pointed out this relationship between the portrait and space in their work as well, and in their introductory chapter outline the importance of not just the interior as a whole as described above, but furthermore of particular decorations and their placement in a space. When the portrait first makes its' appearance, it is presented to us in the centre of a sunny, breezy studio, perfumed by the scent of roses and lavender. From there, it is moved into Dorian Gray's town house – a matter that is in this context of some note, in that it is preceded by Henry pushing Basil to send the portrait off to Grosvenor and Basil's subsequent refusal. Here there is already a precursor of interiority, in that Basil's argument against presenting the painting, his best work according to himself and Henry, to a larger public is that he has 'put too much of [him]self in it' (p. 4). Indeed, 'The reason I will not exhibit this picture is

that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul' (p.6); a rather ominous premonition, if anything, of Dorian Gray's own later relation to his portrait. Thus the portrait comes to hang in Dorian Gray's townhouse library instead. This placement of the portrait in the townhouse, then, is interesting especially in relation to the aforementioned theory of interiority. In placing it inside the private sphere of Dorian Gray's house, and more notably his townhouse rather than his countryhouse, the portrait and all of its' annotations become part of Dorian Gray's personal sphere, and his representation of self towards the world. The connection between the space of home, and the portrait becomes all the more vivid here: as the home is read as representative of one's character, so too the portrait functions as a representative of the interiority of Dorian Gray towards the outside world. The changing placement of the portrait *within* the interior, then, is also of note: from the library the attic, which was Dorian Gray's childhood nursery. This perhaps best illustrates the interiority hypothesis, drawing it into the uncanny sphere in that it also makes the home a secretive space where the image of character can be manipulated by hiding away one's darkest secrets, given a concrete form by the decorative object of the portrait, placed in its' darkest, most private recesses.

3.2. Queer Secrets and Queer Anxiety in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Having discussed the subject of interiority, and the subject of secrecy in interiority, I would here like to delve deeper into what this secrecy entails, precisely, within Oscar Wilde's novel and more specifically how this secrecy figures into an overarching theme of what I would argue is *queer anxiety*. In the previous chapter on the subject of *Frankenstein*, my analysis addressed the subject of male friendship in the novel. Of particular interest was the suggestion of a 'more than' regular friendship, in other words, the undercurrent of same-sex desire. As explained by Mair Rigby in their dissertation on 'Monstrous Desire', there exists a very thin line between the same-sex (male) friendship of the nineteenth century and the desire of male companionship encompassed within it, and homosexuality. For example, Captain Robert Walton's exclamation to his sister of his desire for a

friend poses the very real possibility of transforming into a queer 'more than' friendship, which lays bare the time's preoccupation with male homosexual desire and it's close relationship to socially acceptable male friendship. This chapter, then, revisits the concept of queer friendship, with the argument that the relationships between Dorian Gray and Basil Hallward and Dorian Gray and Henry Wotton respectively are highly charged with a certain eroticism deriving from the aforementioned thin line between friendly, and more-than desire. Indeed, desire and longing are heavily featured in both relationships, and perhaps most significantly in the case of Basil Hallward, who's declaration that

> From the moment I met you [Dorian Gray], your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power, by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream. I worshipped you. I grew jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you. (109)

This passage reads very much like a romantic declaration[17], especially when Basil then goes on to add that,

> Of course, I never let you know anything about this. It would have been impossible. You would not have understood it. I hardly understood it myself. (109)

In light of the above analysis of the queer subject in the novel, I would like to briefly return to the subject of space and interiority. What makes Dorian's home a *Queer* Gothic space rather than simply a *Gothic* space, I would argue, hinges on Basil – notably, it hinges on the figure of Basil and his

[17] Modern adaptations of the novel, such as the 2009 movie of the same title directed by Oliver Parker, make the homoerotic undercurrent of the relationship between Basil and Dorian much more explicit.

presence in the house, rather than just his death within the house. Certainly, the presence of Basil's body in a locked room in Dorian Gray's house marks him as a constant reminder of Dorian's guilt in murdering him. However, I would argue that in light of his rather ambiguous relationship to Dorian, his death and the presence of his body is also indicative of Dorian's anxiety over his own queer desires, and the possibility of not just scandal but repercussion. In other words, Basil becomes Dorian's secret of homosexuality, silenced and hidden within his guilty conscience: his house. It is notable that in the time frame that the novel was written and set, homosexuality or rather what was deemed 'sodomy' was punishable by law, a fact that Oscar Wilde was intimately familiar with. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was first published some years after Wilde had been convicted of 'acts of gross indecency.' While Oscar Wilde had long been recognised and celebrated as something of a flamboyant person, the 'uncovering' of his homosexuality to the public marked a change in public opinion that would leave him destitute and isolated.

3.3. Dandyism and Decadence in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: Introducing the New Man.

Having discussed at some length the figurations of queer space and queer sexuality and desire in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, then, there is one remaining subject to dissect. In the introduction there was mention of two queer figures that would lay the foundations of some of the social transformations that characterised the twentieth century: the New Woman, which is analysed in relation to *Dracula* and the figure of the female vampire, and the New Man, or Dandy. Arguably, both of these figures are symptomatic of the same movements within society; specifically, both are representations of a new individuality and self-consciousness that developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and which formed the basis for sexual revolutions and the development of thinking about sexual identity and orientation. Indeed, the dandy is often portrayed as a decidedly queer figure. This is in part, perhaps, due to Oscar Wilde's involvement in the aesthetic movement of the time, which formed the foundation upon which the dandy lifestyle was built. Indeed, aesthetism and individualism form important cornerstones of dandyism. To quote Klotz:

> The dandy reflects the individualist ideal taken to its' endpoint. Dandyism is predicated on a worship of the self and enthrallment by momentary pleasure that is antithetical to sentimental bonds with other persons [.] (159)

And it is this extreme individualism, this 'antithe[sis] to sentimental bonds with other persons', sentimental bonds which had previously been vital in social thinking about home and family, that made the dandy an at best ambiguous, at worst disdained, figure, in that he was a '[threat] to the moral, religious underpinnings of domestic ideology' (Klotz 28-29).

So, too, we see Dorian Gray – together with Henry Wotton perhaps the ultimate dandy figure – wreak moral havoc on those who keep his company; in his quest for 'momentary pleasure' he leaves behind him a trail of destitute people. We are told that one Lady Gwendolyn is ruined to the extent that "even her children are not allowed to live with her" (145). Alan Campbell, chemist *extraordinaire* and aspiring member of parliament, is so revolted by Dorian Gray and his own ensnarement in the latter's machinations that he commits suicide. Adrian Singleton is shown to us as a wrecked shadow of a man, occupying the back rooms of opium dens and fleeing debt collectors. Dorian Gray becomes an absolute embodiment of society's fear of the dandy figure, and in this capacity could be said to figure as a warning in the face of the burgeoning consumerist and aesthetically orientated society, and the excesses it engenders.

This moralistic fear of the dandy figure is of interest furthermore in that it harbours a continuous subtext of sexuality, desire and sensuality, which I identified in Dorian Gray's relationships with Basil and Henry. Further, I argue that this sexuality and desire and the effects thereof fit into a larger theme within Gothic Literature, namely that of monstrous desire: a desire that devours and erases its' subjects. This has been illustrated before in the vampire figures discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, and returns in the all-devouring machinations of the family structure in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, especially in the Creature's hunger for companionship. Similarly, Dorian Gray's desire is of a monstrous, all-devouring kind that kills its'

subjects. This is best illustrated, perhaps, by Dorian Gray's relationship with Sibyl Vane. Notably, Dorian's desire for Sibyl is not borne out of romantic interest - rather, it is his interest in her artistic talents as an actress, her ability to transform herself easily to the eyes of the audience from one evening to the next, that captivates him. In this, she is little more than an extension of his dandy persona invested in outward appearance and represented as the artificial nature of dandyism. Notably, the relationship perishes the moment Sibyl Vane breaks out of her appointed role and allows herself to become an emotional, more human, figure. In essence, the scorn of Dorian Gray and her death as a result of his rejection is her punishment for venturing out of the role of a malleable, faceless figure that encompasses little more than her femininity.

It is here, then, that we encounter most starkly another Gothic theme, namely that of female erasure: arguably, Sybil Vane is first erased as a person through her acting, and it is when she attempts to re-establish herself that she becomes erased again, fully, by killing herself. It should be noted here that she is not the only one; there is, of course, Dorian Gray's own mother who died in Dorian's infancy, the victim of her own father's patriarchal dominance over her, as well as the many women that are drawn into the maelstrom of Dorian Gray's opulent persona, cast out by society on the other end of their trysts with Dorian, such as the aforementioned lady Gwendolyn. However, there is one other female character that is of especial interest here. Whereas the Frankenstein chapter examined the repeating feminine figure generated by the toxic family structure of the Frankenstein family structure encompassing Caroline, Elizabeth, Justine and the Monsterette, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the repetitive chain is formed by Dorian Gray's mother, Sybil Vane and a third, nameless woman who sets in motion the end of Dorian Gray. Much like Sibyl Vane is the first victim to Dorian Gray's desire, and as such sets in motion Dorian's destructive reign over the people around him. In light of this reading, then, it is especially poignant that this nameless woman reads much like a spectre in her appearance:

> [A] black shadow that had been creeping along the dripping wall moved out into the light and came close to [James] with stealthy footsteps. He felt a hand laid on his arm and looked round with a start. It was one of the women who had been drinking at the bar. […] "I swear it" came in a hoarse echo from her flat mouth. […] He broke from her with an oath and rushed to the corner of the street, but Dorian Gray had disappeared. When he looked back, the woman had vanished also. (183-184)

Indeed, the woman reads much like a returning, spectral Sibyl – the memory of Dorian's sins towards womanhood culminated into one. This fact is further underlined by her reaction to Dorian, and specifically the alias she mockingly uses:

> Dorian walked to the door with a look of pain on his face. As he drew the curtain aside, a hideous laugh broke from the painted lips of the woman who had taken his money. "There goes the devil's bargain!" she hiccoughed, in a hoarse voice.
>
> "Curse you!" he answered, "don't call me that."
>
> She snapped her fingers. "Prince charming is what you like to be called, ain't it?" she yelled after him. (180-181)

Certainly, the woman's words are an uncanny echo of Sibyl, who referred to Dorian as her 'Prince charming' at the beginning of their ill-fated romance. From the lips of the woman, however, the moniker comes across decidedly more disillusioned, even cynical, than Sibyl's idealistic romanticism. What's more, there is an uncanny linearity in the time of Sibyl's reported death eighteen years prior to the scene, and the woman's social 'death': "it's nigh on eighteen years since Prince Charming made me what I am." (p. 183). In other words, much like Frankenstein's Creature murders the women that stand in the way of the fulfilment of his desire, and much like the women tainted by the desire of Count Dracula have to meet their demise, the women in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* could be considered 'dead,' their literal and figurative death caused by a patriarchal monster.

3.4. Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter delved into *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, reading the novel within a queer theoretic framework and building upon the analyses of the previous two chapters on works from an earlier period to show the continuities and developments within the Queer Gothic tradition. Building on previous explorations of queer sexuality, gender and space, this chapter delved deeper into the same-sex desire that defines Oscar Wilde's famous novel, an aspect that has cemented it firmly in modern perception as a Queer text; explored the performativity of Dandyism and its' implications for nineteenth century masculinity, and sought to more extensively report on the queering of the Gothic domestic space in the novel. It is with regards to the latter point especially that I would argue that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* should be read as a queer *domestic* Gothic, in that it is heavily built on the concept of *interiority,* further expanding the term to encompass the whole of the home, the *house*, as being a queer space; and it is this interiority, too, I argue, that makes *The Picture of Dorian Gray* a text that from a queer theoretic framework can be read as a depiction of queer struggle: the secrecy of the queer closet, the fear of social consequence, queer shame, and the (violent) silencing of queer desire. What renders *The Picture of Dorian Gray* all the more remarkable as a queer Gothic work is Oscar Wilde's own familiarity with these subjects. While he has in recent years become a celebrated historical LGBTQ figure, his sexuality and sexual identity were subject to heavy controversy in his own lifetime and, like the titular Dorian Gray, would ultimately lead to his downfall.

Conclusion

This thesis aims to explore three queer aspects as portrayed in nineteenth century Gothic literature, namely space, sexuality and gender. The analysis in this thesis was based on three Gothic novels, spanning various points in the nineteenth century: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), with the primary theoretical frame of the analysis of this thesis being built on Johanna M. Smith's work on the Separate Spheres Theory, insofar as the concept of 'queer' and 'other' in this thesis are read as intrinsically connected to, defined by and the product of the strict separations within nineteenth century society between masculine and feminine, public and domestic spheres.

The monstrous other was shown to be a creature that moves between and outside of these clear definitions, thus destroying the regulatory boundaries and compartmentalisations upon which the moralistic society of the nineteenth century was built and threatening the intrinsic 'natural order' that formed the core of social structure. In other words, the monstrous Other in this thesis is considered monstrous in that it is a chaotic, non-binary and therefore threatening presence. Of these aforementioned Others there are several. My chapters on *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* especially demonstrate how these novels regard the female 'other' in terms of the domestic woman occupying the home and the heart of the family, as well as the New Woman, who moved outside of the pre-existing gender norms and expectations of society. This New Woman is especially prevalent in the figure of the female vampire, which embodied a more masculine, sexually aggressive femininity that moved away from the traditional feminine roles of mother and wife. On the other hand, the novels also regarded the masculine Others through figures like Count Dracula, who function as non-binary, transformative beings that move freely between the segregated spheres and in their turn corrupt these spheres; Victor Frankenstein, who transcends the natural boundaries of his sex by 'birthing' his Creature, a violent and destructive masculine being that in his turn both desires and devours woman; and Dorian Gray, the embodiment of late nineteenth-century aesthetism and dandy masculinity.

In the above analysis of the Gothic Monster, there are certain recurring characteristics that form a guiding thread throughout the three core chapters of this thesis. Each of these Gothic monsters is at least to some extent masculine in nature, insofar as they are male - as Dracula, Frankenstein's Creature, and Dorian Gray each are - and as such encompass a toxic masculinity often built upon traditional patriarchal structures, or in that they adopt masculine traits in a feminine body (as do the aforementioned female vampires). It was mentioned before that Johanna M. Smith noted of the *Frankenstein* novel that, while women do not play a dominant role within the novel, it is very much "a woman's text concerned with women's issues" (Smith, p. 284) and certainly, the Gothic genre lends itself particularly well as an exploration of the nineteenth century woman's Gothic experience as a subject of patriarchal suppression; a fact that makes the aforementioned predominantly male and masculine monsters all the more notable. Furthermore, there is a constant undercurrent of *desire* that marks each of the novels discussed in this thesis, and that drives the Gothic Villain. The desirous villain is a staple in the Gothic genre, together with the desired, hyper feminine heroine. What marks the monsters in this thesis as being especially 'other' and specifically queer, then, is the subtext of a masculine excessive desire, and specifically a desire towards the same sex. In *Dracula* it is the counts' desire for Jonathan Harker; in *Frankenstein* there is a thin line between masculine friendship and more-than-desire for male companionship that is present throughout the novel, an ever-looming presence of homoeroticism; and Dorian Gray thrives both on being desired by, and desiring other men.

Finally, each of the monsters in this thesis occupies a markedly Gothic, and specifically *queer* Gothic, space. In the cases of *Dracula* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* these are represented as physical spaces: Dracula's Gothic castle, which serves as a *feminizing* space, and Dorian Gray's townhouse, which arguably functions almost as a 'queer closet' in that in its' role as a space of interiority, it encompasses the most damning secrets and behaviours of Dorian Gray. *Frankenstein*, in contrast, does not treat the physical entity of the *home* so much as it does the construct of *family* encompassed within the walls of the family home; specifically, the Frankenstein family, while on a surface level a domestic model, proves itself to be an all-devouring unit contained within itself, a corruption of the nineteenth

century domestic ideal of the family, here built not so much on familial love as it is on a cycle of self-perpetuating debt. Furthermore, insofar as *Frankenstein* can be read as an example of the Female Gothic, it is exemplary of how the nineteenth century family unit can easily become a toxic space; a gilded cage in which the figure of wife and mother are interchangeable and subject to the violence and desire of patriarchal entities, and which perpetuates itself in an incestuous cycle. This particular Gothic space, then, can almost be read as its' own Gothic Monstrous Other.

To summarize, the aim of this thesis is to provide a reading of Nineteenth Century Gothic Literature as a literature of Queer Others. I have argued that the Gothic monsters that have become cemented as staples in modern day pop culture are representative of the uncertainties of a moralistic society that sought definition and clarity in the spatial structure and the compartmentalisation of society, in which everything and everyone has an appointed role and place. The monsters discussed here proved to be the very antithesis of the 'natural order' so intrinsic to nineteenth century society in that they embody a constant threat to the strictly defined norms and expectations of everyday life split into domestic and public spheres. It might not come as a surprise, then, that the Gothic Monster has in more recent years come to be embraced by the LGBTQ community, which has found a certain measure of representation in the queer otherness of such figures as the female vampire Carmilla, and the closeted queer-sexual Dorian Gray.

Future research on the subject of queer history and queer literature could continue to trace the connection between horror media and the development of LGBTQ awareness and culture through time, building on the examples given above as found in Gothic literature and further exploring themes of queer desire, -identity and -anxiety and the queering of space against the socio-political backdrop of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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