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**THE TRAIL OF BLOOD:
QUEER HISTORY THROUGH VAMPIRE LITERATURE**

by

JONATHAN TYLER

A THESIS

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in
The Department of English
to
The School of Graduate Studies
of
The University of Alabama in Huntsville**

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Submitted by Jonathan Tyler in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English and accepted on behalf of the Faculty of the School of Graduate Studies by the thesis committee.

We, the undersigned members of the Graduate Faculty of The University of Alabama in Huntsville, certify that we have advised and/or supervised the candidate on the work described in this thesis. We further certify that we have reviewed the thesis manuscript and approve it in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English.

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ABSTRACT
The School of Graduate Studies
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The vampire archetype in literature and film has remained popular since its reconfiguration in the nineteenth century. This reconfiguration expresses society's anxiety concerning queer identity and sexuality. The vampire as monster brings disorder to heteronormative values and systems and so must be dispatched to restore order. This treatment shifts in the mid-twentieth century when Anne Rice writes her novel from the vampire's point of view. This shift offers space for the vampire to become a beacon of hope for queer people to envision being accepted as they are. Queer people and vampires have both been treated as the monstrous other and the history of the vampire in literature is metaphorically the history of queer people.

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INTRODUCTION

FROM REVENANT TO ARISTOCRAT

Few monsters have terrified the human race for as long as the vampire. Its origin can be traced back to the cradle of civilization and it can be found in every culture all over the world. Though the shape the European vampire takes remains in flux until roughly the Middle Ages, usually taking the form of evil spirits or the spirit's unburied dead, they all have one thing in common: the desire to consume human blood. Montague Summers traces the origin of the vampire back to ancient Sumer and the people's belief in the *Ekimmu*, where the vampire is described as a "spirit of an unburied corpse [that] could find no rest and remained prowling about the earth so long as its body was above ground," although a vampire could also be formed from the spirit of one who was buried but whose family did not come to offer the food and drink rites of the dead (219). In the concept's infancy, then, the vampire served as a warning to the culture to bury and show proper respect to their dead. Around the late thirteenth century, the Black Death made its way across Europe and reoccurred in random outbreaks through the late sixteenth century, and the vampire transformed again. It became a reanimated corpse that came stealthily into a village, usually at night, and broke into houses where, as Summers notes, it "proceeds to acts of violence and blood, and strikes terror into every heart," by which he means that sudden deaths and

outbreaks of plague were blamed on the vampire, making it a harbinger of plague (32). Only in the mid-nineteenth century did the vampire attain the form we know today.

Through the lens of vampire novels, one can read queer history. I follow Annamarie Jagose and Michel Foucault's use of the term queer throughout this project who see it in context of non-heteronormative sexualities rather than in the narrower context that popular discourse would assume. The term operates in nonsexual contexts when discussing non-gender conformity and trans-identities. Overall the term opens a safe space for queer individuals to express themselves openly without the pressures of a homophobic, transphobic, and gender binary society.

The Victorian era saw the vampire enter the realm of literature and change from evil spirit or reanimated corpse to the stylish aristocrat familiar to us today. From this point forward, the vampire becomes entangled with the queer. The vampire functions as an archetype onto which the dominant culture projects its anxieties, and in this new literary life it becomes the monster that Victorians project particularly their anxieties surrounding gender and sexual norms. John Polidori wrote the first vampire romance, basing his vampire on Lord Byron, himself a figure in queer history who is known for his bisexuality. In this new form, the vampire opens up a queer space in which the strict gender norms of the time become fluid and sexual desire, specifically same-sex sexual desire, may be expressed, even if only in coded language. In Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), the vampire is the object of desire that draws these feelings out of its victim. Joseph LeFanu's *Carmilla* (1872) is the first case of the vampire as the queer aggressor, and the first female vampire in literature. Both men allow the bonds of Victorian friendship to be transgressed for queer desire to occur, making the vampire a very intimate killer. Bram Stoker changes the vampire again in 1897 and gives the

world its most enduring figure of what a vampire is and does. Count Dracula is bent on conquest and does not make friends. While earlier vampires exhibited a subtle sexiness that Stoker tries to stay away from, something about the Count remains desirable and thus continues to open the queer space Polidori introduced from the beginning.

Jumping ahead to the United States in the mid-twentieth century reveals that anxieties about the queer transformed into homophobic terror. Queerness became conflated with Communism, and Joseph McCarthy used both to scare the American people. The vampires of this age mirror that society's homophobia. Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954) tells the story of that last man on earth. He is white and adheres to the strict hyper-masculine expectation of men during the fifties. Set against the vampires that stalk him, his behavior illustrates the "me against the world" mindset of the white American male of this decade, yet at the same time demonstrates the failure of such white American masculinity. Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* (1975) drums homophobia to a fevered pitch in his novel and fully defines the term "sex pervert" that was popularly used as a slur against gay men since the fifties. Set in the seventies, King demonstrates how the new masculinity, derided by the men of the fifties as too effeminate, is more sustainable than previous masculine practices had been.

These five novels reveal a common theme in regard to the vampire directly related to the queer. In all cases, the heteronormative hero(es) must attempt to kill the vampire who threatens him/her/them and in many cases, the protagonist(s) is successful. Society's troubled relationship with the queer is clearly expressed in the literature it produces. If the vampire escapes, it will live to menace another victim; or, worse, if the vampire wins then *everyone* will become a vampire. With the clinical term "homosexuality" being coined in the

nineteenth century, queerness becomes conflated with a disorder or disease that can be treated and cured, thus increasing society's imperative to contain queer people in the name of helping them. But just as with the vampire, there is always the desire to kill queer people lurking beneath society's thin veneer. Anne Rice, writing during the Cold War like Matheson and King, in 1976, tells a different story. She steps into the world of the vampire and lets him tell his side of the story. Though still filled with horror, Louis Pont du Lac's interview is one that contains hope, beauty, and even love. Both King and Rice write their novels after the events that happened at the Stonewall Inn, but only Rice begins to try and understand the vampire--and so also to try and understand the queer.

The vampire novels of the new millennium transform the vampire yet again. The fears that once surrounded the vampire are dispatched and the vampire becomes a beacon of hope. The queer space created by the vampire that was once thrust on its victims now becomes a space that people willingly enter. Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* (2005) creates a world and a vampire so inviting that she is sought out by the end of the novel for the new world she is creating. John Lindqvist's *Let Me In* (2004) lets some of the terror of the old vampire linger in his novel and makes both his protagonist and reader invite the queer vampire in, and both are rewarded with the escape that the vampire offers. The novels of this millennium offer queer people the hope that one day they will be accepted and loved just as the vampires in these novels are. To trace the shifting presentation of the vampire is to trace the shifting perceptions of queer itself--from unspeakable threat to contaminating disease to the fragile hope for acceptance, the newest iterations of the vampire embrace.

CHAPTER I

GIVING NEW LIFE TO THE UNDEAD: VICTORIAN VAMPIRES

The Victorian era in Britain is seen modern scholars as a time of double standards; men and women's public image did not match their deeds. This was a period of religious fervor and of crippling doubt; an era where chastity was extolled but prostitutes openly conducted business, a time where women were submissive to their husbands but men were threatened by the "new woman"; a time where the British empire presented itself as bringing Christianity and civilization to "savage lands" while actually exploiting the indigenous people's land and subjugating its population with little or no missionary work complete. This dichotomy contributed to giving Victorian Britain a new literary vampire.

The reinvention of the vampire in Victorian literature allows writers to more fully, yet subtly, incorporate sex into their writing since the vampire is the undead--a creature untouched by the morals of their restrictive society. John William Polidori published *The Vampyre* in 1819, leading the reinvention of the vampire, and became the father of the vampire romance genre. Until this point, the vampire was simply the monster of folklore as discussed in the introduction. The Victorians civilize the monster. No longer merely a semi-demonic revenant, the vampire becomes a member of the noble class dependent on his victims' willingness to come to him as much as he desires to go to them. The story's success

ensured his formula would be the one that all subsequent writers would emulate. Prior to the vampire, death scenes were the closest writers could come to writing about sex. As Regina Barreca puts it, “repressed sexuality and a fervid interest in mortality are not the exclusive property of Victorian literature. Yet, as a number of critics ... have indicated, the twinning of sex and death provide the novels and the poetry of the period with a sort of counter-balanced framework” (2). For this reason, the obsession with death stands in for an obsession with sex. The censors and the public’s views of what was acceptable and decent to discuss, much less publish, did not allow sex to appear in print (even though one could go to certain streets and talk to the prostitutes about it) during this time.

The Birth of a New Vampire

Nineteen years before Victoria ascended the English throne, John William Polidori lay the groundwork for the vampire as a liberator from heteronormative social, sexual, and gender norms and a creator of queer space. What I mean by this is when the vampire comes on the scene, the strict norms society placed on its members became fluid and it became possible for same-sex desire and bisexuality to be expressed. In the Victorian era this expression demanded coded language, but as time progressed the language became more frank. Polidori based his vampire, Lord Ruthven, on Lord Byron, recalling his experiences travelling with Byron as his physician. Both Byron and Ruthven can be read as sexual predators, but both of them are objects of desire their victims pursue. Byron, for example, had many female admirers write to him about the effect his poetry had on them. He would strike up a correspondence with them and seduce them into meeting him at a social event and then pursue a sexual rendezvous (Bainbridge 21-22). While Ruthven does not have a winning pen, he is a great conversationalist, and he follows the same pattern as Byron. At the end of

both Byron's and Ruthven's endeavors the woman is ruined and the man escapes. This dynamic made Byron a rake during his time, but it makes Ruthven a monster because some of the women he "ruins" suffer the metaphorical death sentence of public shaming while others are victims of his bloodlust and die satisfying his thirst. The new vampire in this first work is not the queer aggressor it becomes later. In its beginning the vampire is the object of queer desire; it is the catalyst that brings out queer desire and shatters gender norms. When the reader is first introduced to the novel's protagonist, Aubrey, he is in a role typically held by female characters. He is an orphan who comes from good parents, he is wealthy, and while his guardians have managed Aubrey and his sister's wealth, they have not seen that Aubrey has received the best education. Polidori compares Aubrey to milliners' apprentices for reading romances, a comparison that Simon Bainbridge suggests "makes them vulnerable to sexual predators and feminizes Aubrey, suggesting his own susceptibility" (27).

This feminization of the male character makes it appear that Aubrey identifies more with the women in the novel than with men. It suggests that the novel be read that Lord Ruthven is the object of Aubrey's desires, or as Eve Sedgwick puts it, "the ultimate function of women is to be conduits of homosocial desire between men" (99). This dynamic becomes particularly apparent in the scene where Aubrey first meets Ruthven. Aubrey is in the middle of a group of women who are vying for his attention, but when Ruthven enters the room Aubrey cannot take his eyes off of him: "[Aubrey] watched him; and the very impossibility of forming an idea of the character of a man entirely absorbed in himself ... he soon formed this object into the hero of romance, and determined to observe the offspring of his fancy, rather than the person before him ... He became acquainted with him, paid him attentions, and so far advanced upon his notice, that his presence was always recognized" (5). In

response, Ruthven pursues Aubrey through women as mentioned previously, but Aubrey identifies with women and according to Sedgwick cannot “desire women enough to desire men through them” (102).

By creating a character who most nearly resembles the Victorian concept of the hysterical woman, Polidori makes Aubrey into a figure who embodies the worst of Victorian stereotypes by the end of his novella. In a scene that resembles a Wild West shootout, Aubrey and Ruthven’s party crosses paths with bandits in the Greek mountains and Ruthven is fatally wounded. Before he dies, he extracts an oath from Aubrey that after Aubrey’s return home, for a year and a day, he will not mention Ruthven in any way. But upon reaching England, Aubrey discovers that his sister is engaged to Lord Ruthven, still apparently quite alive. Here too, Polidori casts Aubrey in a role that is typically held by a female in the Gothic novel. Aubrey’s oath and his desire to protect his sister struggle for dominance in his conscious. The menacing presence of Ruthven reminding Aubrey of his oath sends Aubrey down a path to mental illness that closely resembles what readers of the time would understand to be the hysterical woman. Joanna Levin describes the hysterical woman as “disorderly and passive ... she was and was not a mother; she was deceptive yet utterly somatized; and she both confounded patriarchal authority and provided occasion for its legitimation” (25). Aubrey does all this by turns. He allows his sister and guardians to take care of him as his health begins to fail, but he has outbursts where he defies them when he tries to save his sister. When these outbursts occur, Ruthven suddenly appears in order to whisper in Aubrey’s ear, “Remember your oath,” which usually causes Aubrey to faint—another condition often associated with the feminine (Polidori 29). Aubrey’s outbursts ultimately cause him to be locked in his room to protect himself and others. Aubrey’s love

and protectiveness of his sister may be meant to be read as brotherly affection, but since gender norms have become more fluid through the queer space the vampire creates, the reader sees Aubrey functioning almost as a mother figure. Because Aubrey is becoming a hysteric, the mother loses the child. In his last effort to save his sister, Aubrey is so weak from the physical manifestation of his mental illness that he is only able to escape his room when an old woman is placed as his guard. He almost makes it to his sister's rescue when Ruthven suddenly appears and repeats his warning regarding Aubrey's oath. This rebuff results in what can be read as either a brain aneurism or a stroke, a sign that Aubrey has lost complete control of his emotions, like the hysterical woman is said to do. Aubrey manages to hang on to life until midnight when he is free from his oath and tell his guardians his story. Of course by this time it is too late. The story concludes, "Lord Ruthven had disappeared, and Aubrey's sister had glutted the thirst of a VAMPYRE" (39).

Monsters of Deviancy

The queer space that the vampire creates turns all heteronormativity upside down and makes the vampire (queer individuals) the monster hetero-conformists fears the most. As the century progresses, the vampire would change from the catalyst that brings out queer desire in its victim to a queer aggressor who acts on its own queer desire. Where Lord Ruthven had merely brought Aubrey's same-sex desires to the surface and Aubrey pursued Ruthven, the vampires in Joseph Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla* (1872) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) bring these desires to the surface, prey upon them, and force both the characters and the reader to deal with the unleashed desires.

Carmilla, Lucy Westenra, and the brides of *Dracula* are threats to heteronormativity because in one body they simultaneously contain and refuse all hetero desires. The female

vampire encompasses “ideals of femininity, such as fragility, strength, beauty, and power,” and she “engag[es] in symbolic connections between blood and female sexuality” (Hobson 9). At the same time, she is hyper sexualized and has “bestial qualities by puncturing...with elongating fangs...” (Hammack 887). The female vampire is the ultimate predator and challenger of the patriarchal system because of her desirability, her threat to penetrate her male victims, and her threat to eat her children. But Carmilla works differently than the female vampires of *Dracula*. Carmilla does not desire men.

When the vampire is a lesbian, she becomes “the destroyer of other women and undermines heteronormative masculine power” (Hobson 11). Carmilla performs this function by corrupting the bonds of friendship she forms with the protagonist Laura. The corruption of this friendship is important because “romantic friendships between women—which may or may not have been sexual—were socially sanctioned” (Faderman 240), but if evidence of lesbianism should surface the women were punished because lesbian desires “illustrate the concerns ... about unproductive and degenerate sexuality” (Hobson 12). When Laura meets Carmilla, the two of them find they have much in common: both are lonely, both are missing a parent, both belong to wealthy families, both are the same age, and both dreamed about the other when she was six years old and in the dream the other was the age they are presently. Lesbian undertones color Laura’s dream and foreshadow what lies ahead. In Laura’s dream, Carmilla creeps into Laura’s room and bites her on the breast. Carmilla begins to flirt with Laura after they first meet, saying, “If you were less pretty I think I should be very much afraid of you” and Laura’s feels “drawn towards her...but there was also something of repulsion.” Despite the repulsion, Laura likes Carmilla and how she is “determined that we should be very near friends” (LeFanu 17-18).

The extremely close friendship that Laura and Carmilla have in the beginning is one that was desirable through much of the Victorian era for both men and women, but Carmilla transgresses the bonds of friendship when she begins to voice her desire for Laura. Carmilla drains Laura at night; during the day she holds Laura close, caresses her, kisses her, and looks at Laura with “burning eyes ... breathing so fast that [Carmilla’s] dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration...like the ardor of a lover” and crooning things like, “I live in your warm life, and you shall die—die, sweetly die—into mine” and “You are mine, you shall be mine, you and I are one forever” (LeFanu 20-21). Laura refuses Carmilla’s advances even as she is flattered by the attention. She tries to rationalize Carmilla’s advances and her own attraction to Carmilla, “What if a boyish lover had found his way into the house, and sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade, with the assistance of a clever old adventuress. But there were many things against this hypothesis, highly interesting as it was to my vanity” (LeFanu 21). By allowing herself this fantasy, Laura normalizes her attraction to Carmilla by imagining Carmilla as an amorous boy in drag, thus making her attraction to Carmilla approved by patriarchal standards and safely reconciling Laura back to patriarchal control.

Laura’s affection deepens for Carmilla to the point that Laura begins to resist parental and normative control like Carmilla has the whole time; which resistance is the threat lesbianism poses to heteronormativity. Carmilla has been exempted from patriarchal control since her initial appearance in the novella. After their coach crashes, Carmilla’s mother tells Laura’s father she is on urgent business and cannot be delayed. She asks Laura’s father to look after Carmilla while she is away, and extracts a promise from Laura’s father that Carmilla “will be silent as to who we are, whence we come, and whither we are traveling” (LeFanu 14). As Laura and Carmilla’s friendship deepens, Laura’s father and Carmilla start

to have petty arguments. At one point in the story, Carmilla disappears from the schloss and reappears after the household has thoroughly searched the premises for her. Laura's father questions Carmilla as to her whereabouts and Carmilla gives unsatisfactory answers. During this argument, Laura comes to Carmilla's defense and rebukes her father, offering the text's first example of why lesbianism is a threat to normative society.

This threat, particularly in the sort of lesbianism Carmilla explores, has long been recognized. Adrienne Rich writes in "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" about how historically women in every culture have "undertaken the task of independent, non-heterosexual, woman-connected existence" even though they were attacked and persecuted by hetero-conformists through means ranging from "mockery to deliberate gynocide" (635). She goes on to critique heteronormative society by pointing out the "male need to control women sexually" at its root comes from the possibility that "women could be indifferent to [men] altogether, that men could be allowed sexual and emotional—therefore economic—access to women *only* on women's terms, otherwise being left on the periphery of the matrix" (643). And in trying unify all women, not just lesbians, Rich concludes, "women may, indeed must, be one another's allies, mentors, and comforters in the female struggle for survival[;] there is quite extraneous delight in each other's company and attraction to each others' minds and character, which proceeds from recognition for each others' strengths" (658-59).

Carmilla poses the biggest threat to heteronormativity because of her desire for other women and her refusal of patriarchal power structure; therefore she suffers the most horrifying and total destruction of any vampire to this point in literary history. Carmilla's history and true identity is uncovered when Laura and Carmilla are separated on an outing to

the local ruins. Laura's party get to the ruins first and they discover General Spielsdorf, a friend of Laura's father, there looking for the grave of Millarca Karstein, the vampire who killed his niece. Once Laura and her family hear Spielsdorf's tale to its conclusion, Carmilla walks in. The General recognizes her as the same Millarca that killed his niece. He tries to kill Carmilla with an axe, but in a show of superhuman strength (one of the few constants of the vampire archetype) Carmilla catches the axe, shatters the handle, and flees the scene. Carmilla's grave is soon discovered. The next day Laura's father, the General, and two doctors open Carmilla's grave and officially examine her sleeping body and determine that she is a vampire. They proceed to drive a stake through Carmilla's heart, then decapitate her, then burn Carmilla's head and body on a pyre, and finally collect all the ashes from the funeral pyre and spread them over the local river to disperse them (LeFanu 69-70). This procedure ensures that there is no way Carmilla's remains can somehow merge back together and become reanimated. Count Dracula and Lucy Westenra, with all the heteronormative terror they unleashed, were not so thoroughly destroyed. Both Lucy Westenra and the Count are afforded the hope of Heaven and reconciliation with God, the supreme Patriarch, when they are killed in Stoker's novel; no such hope is given to Carmilla. But where Stoker restores "balance" to his novel with the male led heteronormative society decidedly the victors, LeFanu does not afford his readers the same ease. At the end of the novella, Laura can still hear "the light step of Carmilla" (72).

The Birth of an Icon

Where LeFanu freely transgresses the conventions of Victorian friendship, Stoker encodes his transgressions of the heteronormative boundaries. One reason for this more coded treatment is the change in attitudes in how homosexuality is viewed. Michel Foucault

points to Carl Westphal's article on "contrary sexual sensations" published in 1870 for coining and clinicalizing the term "homosexuality." Foucault writes, "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (43). Annamarie Jagose goes one step further, saying "same-sex sex acts were regarded as temptations to which anyone might succumb. Sinful and illegal, those forbidden acts were not understood to constitute a certain kind of individual. After 1870 same-sex sex acts began to be read as evidence of a particular type of person about whom explanatory narratives began to be formed" (11). Nina Auerbach finds a direct correlation in the change of attitudes towards homosexuality in the late nineteenth century to the shift Stoker takes in the vampire narrative: "Oscar Wilde in 1895, on trial, stripped of freedom and audacity, and the hygienically heterosexual Dracula in 1897, transformed a tradition of intimacy to one of conquest" (12). And Talia Schaffer documents Wilde's friendship with and influence on Stoker and discusses Stoker in terms of the closet. The two had been friends for twenty years when Wilde was arrested. According to Schaffer, "Wilde's trial set up a stark set of alternatives--safe concealment, or tempting revelation--yet forbade anyone to choose between the two... Thus the two extremes acquired value from their unattainability; the closet seemed like perfect sanctuary; coming out seemed like liberatory honesty" (381). The space at the "threshold of the closet," as Schaffer puts it, is where Stoker lingers in *Dracula* when writing about Jonathan Harker's desire to be bitten and the ensuing action for the rest of the novel.

On the surface, Dracula himself seems to be a heterosexual character, but in truth he has been hygenized away from homosexuality. He has his three brides at home in Transylvania and he transforms Lucy into a vampire when he arrives in Britain. But Dracula is still a male vampire with the potential to make a man his victim. His penetrative attacks implicitly feminize any victim, regardless of the victim's sex. Mahinur Uygur explains, "The vampire is the monstrous reflection of a homosexual/bisexual that is a threat to every single individual due to their potential to spread their deviation to other individuals of the society" (52). As I stated in my analysis of *Carmilla*, the female vampire is a threat because of her desirability and her threat to penetrate her male victims. This threat reappears in Stoker's novel, particularly at the beginning when Jonathan Harker encounters Dracula's brides. He describes their voluptuous beauty and then fixates on their lips: "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (Stoker 43). As the brides get closer, one of them bends close to Harker and teasingly runs her teeth along his throat. Harker writes, "I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with beating heart" (Stoker 44). Christopher Craft notes that the vampires in *Dracula* are female and were made by the Count; therefore they are extensions of Dracula. So when Harker is being seduced by the brides and one of them pauses with her fangs on his neck, it is a manifestation of Dracula's desire to penetrate a man, or as Craft says, the text "stop[s] short of the transgression which would unsex Harker and towards which this text constantly aspires and then retreats: the actual penetration of the male" (110). What Craft misses is that Jonathan Harker desires to be penetrated. But at this point Dracula himself interrupts, yelling at the brides, "How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I have forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me" followed by Harker swooning

(Stoker 44). Were this novel not hygienized away from same-sex desire, this could have been the beginning of a same-sex romance novel. As it is, Dracula's entrance stops the anticipated penetration of a man and Harker's swooning stops any more coded declarations of love from Dracula.

Dracula appears to be male on the surface. He spends the novel preying on women and turning them into vampires. The way Dracula pursues both Lucy and Mina clearly displays predatory behavior, a starkly male attribute. But a close reading shows that he is really gender fluid. In this line of thought, Dracula is more feminized than his potential male victims. This feminization is apparent in two instances. The first occurs when he attempts to turn Mina into a vampire. When Van Helsing and company learn that Mina is in danger, they burst into the room and find Dracula constraining her and "forcing her face down on his bosom." Stoker compares this moment to "a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink" (284). But the scene clearly looks like a perversion of a mother trying to suckle her child. And since Dracula is the only maker of vampires in the novel, he is a mother by default. In this vein of thought, the women that he turns into his brides are also his daughters, thus making Dracula's relationship to his brides incestuous and polygamous. The other way Dracula is feminized is in the ways he can be killed. A stake that can penetrate his heart will kill Dracula. The stake is an obvious phallic symbol, and it can kill all vampires, making vampires hyper-feminized. Cutting off the vampire's head is another killing method. The loss of the head is equivalent to full castration, or loss of all agency. This decapitation occurs in the case of Carmilla and in Van Helsing's dispatchment of Lucy and Dracula's brides. Decapitation is also how Jonathan Harker reclaims his manhood at the end of the novel when he beheads Dracula. Fred Botting writes, " Restoring the boundaries

between life and death, body and soul, earth and heaven, the ritualized killing of vampires reconstruct properly patriarchal order and fixes cultural and symbolic meanings” (98). After Dracula has been dispatched by the patriarchal posse, Stoker closes his novel with the Harkers at the center of their circle of friends with Mina holding a baby in her lap, thus fully restoring Jonathan’s manhood, securing his place within heteronormative society and making its control secure.

Lucy Westenra is arguably the most transgressive character in the novel. In her letter to Mina, Lucy writes of her three marriage proposals and asks Mina, “Why can’t they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble” (Stoker 64). These letters work to show the reader that “[u]ntil [Lucy] dies, and afterwards as a vampire, [she] is insatiable” (Tracy 43). If one thinks of marriage as an exchange of bodily fluids, which Stoker certainly seems to do when Van Helsing says, “Then this so sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me ... a bigamist” (180-181), then Lucy out-performs Dracula before her death in acquiring husbands. Van Helsing performs blood transfusions from her three suitors and himself, effectively marrying all of these men with Dracula as her fifth husband. As Tracy notes, “[Lucy] leaves each of them [the men] limp and exhausted, except for Dracula, who exhausts her” (42-43). Lucy’s successive transfusions also construct a picture of same-sex sex acts. Dracula originally drains Lucy of her own blood, but with each transfusion he is sucking the blood of Lucy’s suitors’. Here again body fluids are being exchanged and the connotations are the same. Tracy says of the transgression embodied in Lucy, “Lucy represents a threat that is at once heterosexual and doubly homoerotic ... For Lucy and her ilk reflect male anxieties about men as well as anxieties about women” (54). Of course

heteronormative society cannot tolerate this amount of transgression in a woman and Lucy is dispatched in a manner similar to Carmilla.

Lastly, there is Renfield, the only queer character in *Dracula* that comes close to openly expressing same-sex desire. This queer desire is not revealed until Renfield's death scene. Here the reader must pay close attention to Renfield's words to Dr. Seward and company after he has been brutally beaten by Dracula. He says, "He didn't even smell the same as he went by me," referring to Dracula (Stoker 282). Every other character in the novel has been repulsed by Dracula, especially his odor. For Renfield to notice a change in Dracula's odor requires Renfield to be attracted to Dracula. This attraction goes deeper than the "what can you do for me" situation that he describes leading up to Dracula's entry into the asylum. Dracula uses Renfield to gain access to the Harkers. The unprecedented violence Dracula does to Renfield can be seen as a release of sexual passion that cannot be expressed. But this passion is not for Renfield or Mina; Dracula beats Renfield as an outlet for the passion he has for Jonathan Harker. After Dracula is done pounding Renfield, he goes to Harker's bedroom. When the Van Helsing team enters the room they find Jonathan passed out on the bed, "face flushed and breathing heavily as though in a stupor," almost as though he were exhausted from sex (Stoker 283). Of course Stoker could not write that, so he writes the suckling scene with Mina instead. This moment can still be read as a sex scene between Jonathan Harker and Dracula. Dracula penetrates Harker the only way a writer in late Victorian-era Great Britain could do: Dracula penetrates his wife. The queer space created by a queer man letting in a vampire truly makes all the action immediately following the queerest in the novel.

These works set the tone for how the vampire would be handled going into the twentieth century. Polidori, as the father of the vampire romance genre, gives the reader the framework for how the vampire would be portrayed in the future: it would be aristocratic and sexually transgressive. LeFanu writes the most transgressive vampire with his *Carmilla*. She is seductive and coy and able to beat the men at their own game, for a time. Being a lesbian and having the ability to penetrate is something the heteronormative society will not tolerate. Only they have the right to penetrate and possess women, no one else. The culmination of Victorian vampires comes in the form of Count Dracula. He is the culmination of all patriarchal fears and anxieties. Stoker goes to great lengths to sanitize him, but Dracula's shift nature evades Stoker's careful sanitizing. But Dracula is solid enough that heteronormative society can see something of itself in him, if for nothing else than for his conquest of women. These qualities come together to make Dracula the new archetype of what a vampire is and how vampires work. Polidori's Ruthven is all but forgotten by modern audiences; *Carmilla's* steps can sometimes be heard creeping about, but ambitiously conquering Dracula has refused to die and is entrenched in our culture nearly one hundred and twenty years later in everything from breakfast cereal (Count Chocula) to movies still being made about him (*Dracula Untold*, 2015). Despite what these authors did to change the vampire, the vampire keeps going back to its folkloric roots. In all the novels, the language of disease is associated with the vampire. This connection goes back to the vampire being a harbinger of plague, if not the direct cause of plague. Authors writing in mid twentieth century America continue to play with this plague narrative in their novels. But the plague rapidly comes to be the spread of Communism intertwined with same-sex desire.

CHAPTER II

COMMIES AND PERVERTS AND VAMPIRES, OH MY!

The Cold War was in full swing by 1950, bringing with it anti-Communist and anti-queer sympathies. Senator Joseph McCarthy rose to fame in this era and became the face of the Red Scare when he began to accuse people in politics and the entertainment industry of being Communists or having Communist sympathies. But historians less frequently discuss that the Red Scare corresponded to a “Lavender Scare,” where gays and lesbians working for the government were exposed and fired. Martin Duberman’s book on gay and lesbian history *About Time: Exploring the Gay and Lesbian Past* reprints historical documents that chronicle the queer experience in America. From 1950, Duberman reprints the report from a Senate subcommittee titled “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government” to show how malevolent attitudes were to queer people. Duberman writes in his introduction to the report “there has never been in this country a systematic, explicit, state-sponsored program for mass repression and extermination of gay people. Yet the necessary prelude for such a policy—official denunciation and harassment—has long been present; homophobia, along with baseball and apple pie, are among the few constants in our history” (177-178). McCarthy always used his desire to protect America as the reason for his actions. It is clear from the title that the report defines queer individuals as “sex perverts.” The committee finds queer people unemployable, insisting that “[t]he lack of emotional stability which is found in

most sex perverts and the weakness of their moral fiber, makes them susceptible to the blandishments of the foreign espionage agent. It is the experience of intelligence experts that perverts are vulnerable to interrogation by a skilled questioner and they seldom refuse to talk about themselves.” The conclusion to the report states, “There is no place in the United States Government for persons who violate the laws or the accepted standards or morality, or who otherwise bring disrepute to the Federal service by infamous or scandalous personal conduct . . . This conclusion is based upon the fact that persons who indulge in such degraded activity are committing not only illegal and immoral acts, but they also constitute security risks in positions of public trust” (184-185). This anxiety concerning the queer’s, especially the queer man’s, ability to be blackmailed is a double-edged sword, as Sedgwick asserts: “Not only must homosexual men be unable to ascertain whether they are to be the objects of ‘random’ homophobic violence, but no man must be able to ascertain that he is not (that his bonds are not) homosexual” (88-89). In this way, it takes very little legal or physical exertion to control a small population (queer people) while also producing checks and balances among heteronormative men if their homosocial bonds are always suspect. Looking at the nineteen fifties this way, Communism is conflated with queerness and everyone is a suspect trying to clear themselves of the allegation. The Lavender Scare would influence the way society viewed gender roles for the rest of the Cold War Era. If possible, this time period enforced gender roles more strictly than Victorian Era Great Britain. Michael Snyder observes, “Another result of cold war ideology was an insistence on rigid gender roles for men: short hair, good posture, a firm handshake, and an intolerance of anything but strict heterosexuality. Promiscuity and pornography were also taboo...” (252). Duberman, writing in the Reagan era during the AIDS epidemic, agrees that the sentiment was still

strong nearly twenty years later: “The media have given considerable attention to that fount of homophobia, the Moral Majority, but have not sufficiently detailed and emphasized its bottom-line goals: to put the patriarchs firmly back in power, women back in the kitchen, children back in Bible class, blacks back in line—the unemployment line—and gays back into closets (airtight ones, to encourage asphyxiation)” (177).

Within this era, there were those who rebelled against the notion of what is “normal,” particularly in the 1960s. Some literary scholars, particularly Leslie Fielder, criticized the men of the sixties as effeminate: campy, “anti-academic,” “irrationalists, who...wish to prolong adolescence indefinitely” (as qtd. in Snyder 252). Of course, masculinity was changing in this era. Snyder notes that Fielder “[i]n lingering detail [] laments the young males’ tight pants emphasizing the crotch and rear, [] shaggy hair and sees them as symptomatic of the distressing rise of the camp style derived from gay culture” and sums up Fielder’s critique by saying, “to Fielder, it seems homosexuality, although a stubborn social fact, ideally ought to be just as Freud considered bisexuality: a stage that one passes through on the developmental path to mature heterosexuality” (252-254). In this historical artifact and cultural critique, it is plain that queerness was still feared. The language centered on queerness was hateful, legal, and clinical. It is also clear that no matter how much fear and hatred are used to stamp out the queer, there is always a subtle desire for it. The vampire literature from this era expresses horror of the queer and the simultaneous desire of the queer that society had no words for.

“I Won’t Have You Running around...with Some Sissy Boy”

Richard Matheson’s *I Am Legend* sets Robert Neville against a vampire-filled post-apocalyptic world to showcase the fifties era’s masculine ideal, but the novella ultimately

shows how the ideal masculinity is unsustainable. In the novella, a bacterial disease has swept across the world after nuclear fallout, killing millions and turning the survivors into creatures resembling vampires. Robert Neville is the only man left on Earth because somehow he is immune to the disease. He now spends his days alternating between repairing/vampire-proofing his house and vampire hunting, and his nights barricading himself in his house resisting the call of the vampire women who tempt him. The novella's focus on the female vampires as opposed to the male vampires (with the exception of Ben Cortman, Neville's neighbor and former friend) makes the novel read similar to *Carmilla* and *Dracula*. Neville says of the female vampires, "It was the women who made it so difficult, he thought, the women posing like lewd puppets in the night on the possibility that he'd see them and decide to come out" (7). The dangers of these vampires are the same as their predecessors in the previous novels. While it may seem odd that Neville never resorts to masturbation to get some sexual relief, in not doing so he lives up to the fifties masculine ideal because masturbation was considered to be sexual deviance. Neville's eschewing of these female vampires is a part of the larger context of the novel eschewing all things feminine. As Laurel Bollinger points out, "[Neville] refers to replacing his washing machine for instance..., but we never see him washing clothes. Indeed, the first time domestic tasks are mentioned, they are disparaged in explicitly gendered terms[]" (254). As the story progresses, Neville becomes an amateur scientist to try to figure out how the vampiric disease works and to try and cure it. It is no surprise to the reader at this point that his test subjects are the female vampires. Toward the end of the novel, Neville finally meets another person, a woman named Ruth whom he literally drags back to his house. He thinks to himself at one point, "All these years...dreaming about a companion. Now I meet one and the first

thing I do is distrust her, treat her crudely and impatiently” (115). Then later he observes Ruth: “His eyes ran over the robe, resting a moment on the slight prominence of her breasts, dropping then to the bronzed calves and ankles, up to the smooth kneecaps... The most unusual feature of the entire affair, he thought, was that he felt no physical desire for her” (124). Neville is also described as being bearded at this point and Ruth says he has “wild eyes” (131). Neville has reached a turning point in his masculinity. He is so manly now that he cannot desire women; women have become the other. Ironically, Ruth is the other because she is actually a vampire. The people who have been infected with the plague have evolved and now can be out during the day and Ruth has been sent by this new species to spy on Neville and see if he can be taken in and executed. Neville adheres to every tenant of fifties era masculinity and shows in the end it is unsustainable. His execution is the result of his killing countless vampires during the day. As we saw when examining *Dracula*, vampires can be read as the hyper-feminized other. The end of *I Am Legend* demonstrates that to the hyper-masculine patriarchal system of the nineteen fifties, everything that is not adherent to the system is other, and that this mindset is self-defeating.

I Am Legend is more sterile than *Dracula*, but it contains stronger same-sex desires than its predecessor. We can observe this desire by paying close attention to the relationship of Ben Cortman, a vampire, and Neville. Ben Cortman is the only other prominent male figure in the text, and the only member of the vampire gang paying nightly visits Robert Neville who has a voice. Cortman’s words are loaded with implications. “Come out, Neville” is Cortman’s mantra throughout the novel and the cry of the gay community the world over. Neville’s reaction at the beginning of the novel is also the reaction of heteronormative politics: “Someday I’ll get that bastard, he thought as took a big swallow of the bitter drink.

Someday I'll knock a stake right through his goddamn chest. I'll make one a foot long for him, a special one with ribbons on it, the bastard" (8). Even Neville's reaction to Cortman's queer invitation contains erotic connotations. As discussed in the previous chapter, the staking of the vampire is an erotic act. This stake is a phallic symbol, and Neville has a "foot long" one for Cortman. Neville intends the addition of ribbons, making this a gift, to be a cruel heterosexual pun. The pun backfires. The queer reading of this passage shows one man giving another man his phallus for penetrative sex. As the novel progresses, Neville is actively hunting Cortman. The activity is described as "a relaxing hobby" and "one of the few diversions left to him" (107). Neville's feelings toward Cortman have clearly changed since the opening of the novel. Whereas before he wanted to stake Cortman the minute he saw him, now Neville "wondered again what he'd do if he found Cortman." Matheson's narrator notes, "It no longer occurred to [Neville] that Cortman was out to kill him" (108). Neville has certainly come a long way since the novel began. Now it sounds as if Neville is cruising for Cortman. At this point Neville is staying in his neighborhood and knows that Cortman stays in the neighborhood as well because Cortman is always the first vampire to arrive at Neville's house since the vampire plague outbreak. Described as thus, it would seem the queer desire goes both ways.

Ben Cortman's death (second death?) is described in detail over two pages and reads like a lover having to watch the death of a beloved. Cortman climbs his house via the chimney while men are shooting at him. Neville is riveted by the action, incapable of moving. He presses his lips tightly, he cannot stand the thought of Cortman "being killed by these brutal strangers... With bleak, tortured eyes he watche[s] the spotlights cluster on Cortman's wriggling body." The action slows to crawl at this point and the reader is made to

feel Neville's agony as Ben Cortman takes his last stand against the horde. When the vampire men open fire, "Neville almost felt the bullets in his own flesh. His body jerked with convulsive shudders as he watched Cortman's body jerk under the impact of the bullets." Matheson increases the tenor of the tragic romance motif when the second round of gunfire is opened and Neville whispers Ben's name. Cortman crumples and falls off his roof and Neville hears Cortman's landing. Upon hearing the fall "Neville close[s] his eyes and his nails d[i]g furrows in the flesh of his palms" (148-149). Matheson tries to pass this moment off as the death of close friend. But Ben Cortman creates a queer space within the hyper-masculine world of *I Am Legend*. Going back to Polidori's *The Vampyre*, Ben Cortman is to Robert Neville as Lord Ruthven is to Aubrey. But where Ruthven creates a queer space for gender norms to be subverted and Aubrey becomes feminized in order to express his same-sex desires, Cortman pushes Neville to become so masculine he can no longer desire women, as proven by Neville's lack of desire for Ruth, and Neville does not realize that he desires men.

The manhood of the fifties collapses in *I Am Legend*, but the manhood of the seventies (still influenced by the rebellion of the sixties) is shown to be more sustainable in Stephen King's *Salem's Lot*. Ben Mears' performance of masculinity combines the ideal of the fifties with the rebellion of the sixties. In appearance, he is everything Snyder quotes Fielder criticizing. Mears has shaggy hair and a lanky build. He is writer and is often associated with "doe-eyed" "art farts" in the novel. Ben courts Susan Norton when he moves back to Jerusalem's ('Salem's) Lot after being away for many years. Ann, Susan's mother, does not like Ben because he does not seem manly enough. At one point she screams at Susan, "I won't have you running around like a common trollop with some sissy boy who's

got your head all filled up with moonlight” (296). Bill, Susan’s father and product of fifties masculinity, gives Ben what can only be described as a “man test” when they first meet. He notices how Ben is dressed and approves of Ben’s plain jeans and white shirt. Bill gives Ben a “hard and strong” handshake and is pleased that Ben’s “did not crimp and jellyfish” under the other man’s pressure. He invites Ben to the patio to have a beer and laughs delightedly when Ben says, “I’d love a beer...Two or three, even.” Ben continues to win favor after he belches while drinking the beer. Bill asks Ben about his writing career and gives polite short answers that finally wins Bill’s approval because they show Ben has “enough marbles to keep his dollars-and-cents business to himself” (110-111). And in what appears to be a move on King’s part to place Ben firmly in the heteronormative category, Ben has sex with Susan—a definite move away from the sterility of previous periods. But Ben does not initiate the sex. Susan asks Ben to make love to her and Ben complies. What *‘Salem’s Lot* implies is that masculinity should be tempered by aspects of the feminine in order to be sustainable. Ben is labeled an outsider and a “sissy” by the Lot’s townspeople, but he survives the novel and is able to save Mark Petrie, an adolescent in the same category as Ben. Ben and Mark work together in a father-son dynamic to kill Barlow, the master vampire of the novel. Just before Ben breaks down the door to Barlow’s lair, he holds his hands out to Mark and says, “I love you” and the two enter holding hands (622). In the Victorian novels when men showed emotion it could be admirable, but ultimately they were encouraged to hide their emotions. But within the queer space of *‘Salem’s Lot* (both the novel and the town) those who suppress their emotions eventually succumb to the vampire’s advances. *‘Salem’s Lot* suggests the ruggedness of masculinity must be tempered by the nurturing aspect of femininity in order for it to be sustainable.

While *'Salem's Lot* critiques masculinity, it is still immensely homophobic. The novel is preoccupied with the false equivalency of homosexuality and pedophilia. This becomes evident when Danny and Ralphie take a shortcut through the woods to visit Mark Petrie. On the way, Danny tries to scare his brother by telling him that a boy died years earlier by falling into quicksand in the woods. Then Danny remembers he heard some older men talking around one of the stores in the Lot about a boy who did disappear and was assumed "that a sex preevert had killed him. There were preeverts everywhere" (119). "Preevert" is, of course, a perversion of "pervert," which, as discussed earlier, is a popular term for a queer individual, usually a gay man. Until this point Danny has been trying to scare his little brother with ghost stories, but now he is scared himself:

There were no ghosts, but there were preeverts. They stopped in black cars and offered you candy or hung around on street corners or...they followed you into the woods....
And then...
Oh and then they...
"Run," he said harshly (121).

At this point the text itself is seized by homophobic panic. The children are paralyzed by fear. Danny blacks out and Ralphie disappears. The next scene opens with a dark figure in a cemetery that prays for favor from the "Lord of Flies" for whom he has brought "spoiled meat and reeking flesh" and who waits for a sign to begin working. A moment after this prayer the figure stoops down and "[stands] with the figure of a child in his arms. 'I bring you this.' The rest became unspeakable" (123-124). The one feeding Ralphie Glick to Barlow is Mr. Straker. He and Barlow, like Ben and Mark, are outsiders to town. They present themselves to the Lot as partners in an antiques business. But where Ben and Mark are cleared of the homosexual charges the town places on them, Straker's is confirmed

through his service to Barlow. Straker's sacrifice of Ralphie Glick confirms the town's fears surrounding "preeverts" and justifies the novel's eradication of all its vampires.

While the whole town of 'Salem's Lot is homophobic, the transformation of the townspeople has less to do with homophobia and more about a failed heteronormativity. King establishes this failure in scenes where his narrator takes the reader on a tour of the town and reveals its dark side. The reader learns that Ben and Susan's relationship is the only loving heterosexual relationship in the novel. Susan's parent's relationship is neither good nor bad, but it also lacks the same warm language that surround Ben and Susan. The other relationships in the Lot are shown to be flawed in some way. There is infidelity, domestic violence, drunkenness, and heterosexual pedophilia. The one gay person among the townspeople, George Middler, who owns the local hardware store, is referred to by the townspeople as "that prissy George Middler down at the hardware store" who has a "fruity voice" (73, 91). A scene where it is revealed that Middler secretly indulges in wearing ladies' underwear and masturbating foreshadows the coming transformation of all the townspeople into vampires. At the end of the novel, when the town has been turned and the last remaining humans are either getting ready to fight or flee, Parkins Gillespie, the town constable, chooses to flee. Ben attacks Parkins, who by virtue of his office is supposed to be masculine and ready to fight, for being craven and running. Parkins responds, "[The town] ain't alive ... That's why *he* came here. It's dead like him... They prob'ly like bein' vampires" (610-611). Parkins' observations turn out to be true. Those who are transformed first attack their family members, often family members of the same sex. The erotic act of biting and feeding the vampire performs makes this an incestuous same-sex sex act. Parkins comments on the dead and essentially evil nature of the town show that its homophobia has just been a scapegoat for

the sins and short fallings of an oppressive sexual and gender norms. In the end, Barlow, the evil and unnatural father of the town, is dispatched by the Ben Mears, the nurturing father, with a stake through the heart that literally completely undoes Barlow. Though phallic readings still apply to this death scene, it serves more to show the power of love hammering away at evil.

Revamping the Revamped Vampire

The novels discussed up to this point have dealt with strictures that heteronormative society places on society and how the vampire creates a space where those norms are transgressed. In most of these works the vampires have been dispatched and societal norms reaffirmed, with the exception of *I Am Legend* where the hyper-masculinity that society endorsed and would like to attain is shown to be unsustainable and collapses in on itself in the end. None of these novels have been told from a vampire's point of view. Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) changes this scenario and in doing so gives a sympathetic treatment to the vampire, which is really sympathy for queer individuals.

Rice sets up *Interview* to be a queer text from its beginning. After Louis Pointe du Lac's brother dies from an accidental fall down the stairs, Louis moves with his mother and sister from their plantation to the city of New Orleans. Louis begins to seek death by getting drunk and getting into fights. Louis feels responsible for his brother's death because they were fighting before his brother's fatal fall. One night he is attacked by a vampire and drained nearly to the point of death. He is found and led back to his house where he takes fever and is put on bed rest. One night the vampire who drained him reappears. The physical descriptions of Lestat is the first time a male vampire has been described in terms of beauty-- in fact, Lestat's description, given by the fevered Louis, mirrors Laura's description of

Carmilla. Lestat is “fair-skinned” with a “graceful, almost feline quality to his movements” and is also compared to an angel (13, 17). Lestat’s feminization continues when he turns Louis into a vampire. The vampire bite alone is not enough to turn one into a vampire. Louis has to drink Lestat’s blood. So to become a vampire one has to perform two same-sex sex acts. Louis tells the interviewer, “I drank, sucking the blood out of the holes, experiencing for the first time since infancy the special pleasure of sucking nourishment, the body focused with the mind upon one vital source” (20). These acts make Lestat Louis’ father and mother, and Lestat is both male and female, aggressor and nourisher. The transformation is complete by the end of the night. But Lestat did not prepare. Louis has no coffin in which to sleep and is forced to share one with Lestat. The act here continues the homoerotic tone, but it is more an act of necessity than desire.

The vampire feeding, though usually a sexual predatory act, is described so intensely in Rice’s novel that it sounds more like love. When Louis describes his first feeding to his interviewer, he asks him, “Do you understand me when I say I did not wish to run headlong into experience, that what I’d felt as a vampire was too powerful to be wasted?” To which the interviewer replies, “It sounds as if it was like being in love.” Louis replies, “That’s correct. It is like love” (32). Louis means making love as much as being in love. The scene where he first meets Armand makes this point crystal clear:

Never had I felt this, never had I experience it, this yielding of a conscious mortal. But before I could push him away for his own sake, I saw the bluish bruise on his tender neck. He was offering it to me. He was pressing the length of his body against me now, and I felt the hard strength of his sex beneath his clothes pressing against my leg. A wretched gasp escaped my lips, but he bent close, his lips on what must have been so cold, so lifeless for him; and I sank my teeth into his skin, my body rigid, that hard sex driving against me, and I lifted him in passion off the floor. Wave after wave of his beating heart passed into me as, weightless, I rocked with him, devouring him, his ecstasy, his conscious pleasure (227-228).

In the previous vampire texts discussed, authors were careful to have no male-on-male bite scenes. In *'Salem's Lot* Barlow bites both Dud Rogers and Corey Bryant, but it happens because Barlow has promised them heterosexual prowess in exchange for submitting to him. In *Carmilla*, *Dracula*, and *'Salem's Lot* the vampires represent queer characters and essentially are killed for being gay. *I Am Legend* attempts to be so sterilized there is no room for the queer within its pages while *The Vampire* attempts just to ignore the issue. This is the heteronormative society's attempt to judge the sex practices, and indeed the very love, of queer individuals. King sums up the homophobic rejection of queer love in a conversation between Ben, Mark, Jimmy Cody, the Lot's doctor, and Father Callahan. When discussing about not believing the folklore surrounding vampires in the coming battle, Father Callahan says not to believe anything that the group has not tested. Mark remarks that notion is an odd idea for a priest. Ben then asks, "And love," wondering if vampires are capable of love. "No," Jimmy answered. "I suspect that love is beyond them" (502). So Rice reclaiming the possibility of love between gay people is a monumental step away from the patriarchal rejection of it.

Finally, *Interview with the Vampire* makes being a vampire look attractive. Louis' story ends on a sad note and does not please his young interviewer. He refuses to accept the ending that Louis gives him. He finally demands of Louis, "Give it to me! ... Make me a vampire now" to which Louis so eloquently responds, "*What!*" [original italics]. This scene is a bit of a conundrum. On the one hand it is hopeful because it shows the queer individual being accepted through vampire synecdoche. It gives hope that the queer individual will be fully and freely accepted in society as a whole one day. Louis goes on to say, "This ... after all I've told you ... is what you ask for?" (337). He is understandably shocked. His tale has

been a hard one with many pitfalls. Just as the vampire struggled since its rebirth in the Victorian era to stand at the boundary of difference and reflect back to humanity their own monstrosity, just so does the queer individual cross the boundary and is shunned by society, like the vampire. Louis and the queer individual both understand what happens when one stands on the “wrong side” of the boundary of social norms. The progress made on the behalf of queer people can be removed overnight. Louis scares the young interviewer after he asks to be made a vampire, drains him of enough blood to render him unconscious, and leaves him. When the young man wakes up the next morning, he rewinds his tapes and writes down the description of Lestat’s house and clearly plans to go there to get Lestat to transform him. While this is a problematic reading, it serves to show the reader that the vampire is walking among the populace freely. He is out, and he is not going back in the coffin. LGBTQ+ people, too, are not going back “in the closet.”

Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* lays the groundwork for vampire novels and the vampire of the twenty-first century. Lestat, Louis, and Armand are all queer vampires whom Rice uses to liberate the archetype from its patriarchal stranglehold. Her novel became an international best seller when it was published in 1976. The 1994 movie of the same name and based on Rice’s novel only sold this new archetype more by grossing over \$200M in the box office. Rice made it possible that, in the new millennium, the vampire would change from being a monster on whom heteronormative society projected its fears, to a beacon of hope on whom queer people could place their hopes and dreams.

CHAPTER III

MOTHER KNOWS BEST; OR, TRANSITIONING OUT OF THE NORM

Anne Rice's reconfiguration of the vampire changes the way that the vampire can operate; instead of the monster that the dominant heteronormative society projects its fears and anxieties on, it can now be an object that queer individuals and their allies can project their hopes on. Bram Stoker brings order to the world of his novel by killing the Count and giving Mina and Jonathan a child at the end of his novel, thereby reasserting patriarchal power. Both Octavia Butler and John Lindqvist use their vampires to envision overthrowing heteronormative society. Both authors' vampires are explicitly queer: Butler's Shori is pansexual and Lindqvist's Eli is transgender. Both vampires appear to be children but are actually significantly older than their appearance. Both novels deal with questions of consent: Butler's vampires ask permission to bite their human of choice before they take the human's blood and Lindqvist's vampire *must* obtain permission to enter its prey's dwelling or die if it forces its way in. And both novels share an optimistic outlook for the vampire characters and queer individuals they are and represent.

The question of consent is the most important issue of *Fledgling* (2004), and it becomes problematic for the novel. *Fledgling* is one of few vampire novels where the vampire feels obligated to ask the human if it is acceptable to bite them. Butler problematizes

this consent because Shori, her vampire protagonist, does not ask permission to bite the first human she remembers coming in contact with. Leading up to this scene Shori has awoken in a cave, severely injured, and suffering from amnesia. She has been healing in the woods and finally emerges on a road where she is picked up by Wright Hamlin. Since the vampire bite is an erotic act and is synonymous with penetration, all vampire bites up to this point have connotations of rape, and since rape is a violent act it is an act of dominance. Man's worst fear has come to pass; a woman has raped and dominated a man. Once Wright has been bitten, he pulls Shori on top of him and, this time, she asks for consent when she says, "Let me bite you again." Wright responds, "If I do, what will you let me do" (12). Now the connection between the vampire bite and sex is made explicit. Shori can penetrate Wright *if* he can penetrate her in return. Butler has made it that the power in the relationship is shared, there is no dominant party in Ina sexual relationships. There is still just one problem; Shori looks as if she is about ten years old. She and Wright eventually do have sex when Shori tells him, "But I'm old enough to have sex with you if you want to" (21). The specter of pedophilia that became prominent in *'Salem's Lot*, but that can be traced back to *Dracula* when Lucy preys on children after she is turned into a vampire, is now creeping through Butler's novel. Since the vampire creates a queer space, the patriarchal fear that gay men are all pedophiles is present here. But so too is the fear that any man can be a pedophile. Butler resolves this issue when Shori and Wright finally track down Shori's father, Iosif, and he reveals her age to be fifty-three (64). With her age revealed, Shori's consent to have sex with Wright is validated and any lingering anxieties surrounding pedophilia are banished. Consent, however, is still a thorny issue for the novel. Shori learns from Iosif that their species are called Ina; they have developed alongside humans but the Ina are more

sophisticated than humans. Ina are like vampires in that they need human blood to live, cannot go out in the sunlight without suffering severe burns, and sleep so heavily during the day that they cannot be awakened. Most importantly she learns that Ina secrete venom from their fangs that contains enzymes humans become addicted to over time and cannot live without once they becomes addicted. Thus the reason for asking the humans to consent before biting them. Neither Wright nor Shori knew this dynamic before meeting Iosif. Wright consents to Shori biting him without full disclosure of the side effects and is already her symbiont. (In the Ina community, the relationship between Ina and human is symbiotic. The human provides the blood the Ina needs to live. The Ina consider it a moral obligation to ask the human if the Ina can bite them because of the addictive qualities of Ina venom. If the human consents, they receive many benefits because Ina venom strengthens the immune system, increases the red blood cell count, and significantly extends human life.) This comes up later in the novel when Shori has to take more symbionts in order for herself to feed and not hurt Wright.

Consent is just as central for the protagonists in John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Let Me In* (2004). As in *Fledgling*, it denotes acceptance of the vampire, but without the sexual connotations. Lindqvist uses the trope that harkens back to *Dracula* where the Count had to be invited in before he could prey on humans. Lindqvist reconstructs the danger Oskar puts himself in by allowing the vampire to come in, in that now to accept the vampire (the queer) is to accept a friend. In *Dracula*, Stoker does not write about what would happen to the Count were he to enter a human's dwelling uninvited. Lindqvist provides the answer that the vampire would die an extremely painful death. Oskar, the human boy, and Eli, the vampire, live in adjoining apartments, and when the two become friends they communicate at night

via Morse code. When Oskar asks Eli to come over while Oskar's mother is away, Oskar opens the front door but refuses to invite Eli in, curious to see the effect of uninvited entry:

[Eli's] eyes looked like they had sunk into their sockets, were filled with blood flowing out, running along the bridge of her nose over her lips into her mouth, where more blood was coming out, two streams running out of the corners of her mouth down over her throat, disappearing under the collar of her t-shirt where dark spots were starting to appear. She was bleeding out of all the pores in her body" (344).

Because Eli presents itself as a girl, the bleeding here seems to signify something like menstruation. Oskar's horror reflects societal rejection of the feminine on the grounds of disgust that a woman's body bleeds without being injured. It also reaffirms the vampire's association with blood. Once Eli has sufficiently bled from every orifice for Oskar, Oskar panics and screams that Eli is welcomed and the horrific bleeding stops. In both novels, desire for the vampire is paramount. For *Fledgling* it is so Shori can start building the family she will one day lead; for *Let Me In* it is so two lonely individuals can form a friendship. In both novels, consenting to the vampire is inviting in the queer.

Shori's struggle to make a family in the novel is representative of the queer person's struggle to find family in a society that largely does not accept them. Shori is not considered a real Ina by the Silk family because Shori's birth was made possible by Ina advanced genetic science. Shori has an Ina father and mother, but her DNA was also mixed with an African American human mother. The experiment was done to see if adding human DNA from a person with more melanin in their skin would let Ina walk in the sunlight and if not be awake during the day, or at least not be in a such a comatose state. But the Silk family disagreed with her mother's experiments and sent brainwashed men to destroy Shori and her family. Their argument for the killings is they were done to prevent Shori from reproducing because she is an aberration and her children will be too. This argument is similar to the one

used to keep queer couples from adopting children or using artificial insemination or a surrogate to have children of their own. The conservative opposition fears that a queer couple would raise children who would grow up to be gay or otherwise psychologically damaged. Yet scientific research suggests otherwise. According to Arlene Lev, not are gay couples capable of raising children who are heterosexual, “all extant research unequivocally shows that the children of LGBTQ parents are psychologically stable, establishing without a shadow of a doubt that LGBTQ parenting is ‘in the best interests of the children’” (emphasis Lev’s, 273). But parenting is not the only way for queer people to form families. In many instances, when gay individuals face the rejection of their biological family due to revealing their queerness, they must seek out other people who will accept them. These friendships often result in bonds so deep that these friendships take the place of the lost family. The Silk’s rejection of Shori as a member of the Ina species is similar to the rejection many queer individuals face from their biological families. And just as the queer person must pick the friends that will form a new family, Shori picks out the symbionts that will make up her family.

In *Fledgling*, the heteronormative patriarchal nuclear family is rejected in favor of a queer matriarchy. In human society the man is considered to have the physical advantage over the female; in Ina society the female has the physical advantage over the male and her venom is more toxic than a male Ina’s. For this reason Ina society is matriarchal and their deity is a goddess. But the female Ina do not reserve power for themselves as our human patriarchy does. Ina families separate themselves into compounds according to sex and power is shared among all Ina. Ina do mate among themselves and produce offspring. All offspring stays with their mother in their infancy, but at a certain age Ina boys leave their

mother and go to live at their father's compound. Each parent may visit each other and the child of the opposite sex at the other parent's compound at any time. In relationships between Ina, there is a sense of mutual attraction, respect for one another, and liking one another, but there is a lack of love. Romantic relationships are reserved for Ina and their symbionts. The Ina bite is also extremely erotic and exciting and often leads sexual intercourse. Ina and humans cannot produce offspring because they are different species. Ina, unlike humans, stopped practicing sexual norms long ago. An Ina will take a symbiont of either sex as long as the human consents to joining the Ina's family. In this way, both Shori and the queer individual make their own families. There are always more humans in an Ina compound than there are Ina because of the amount of blood Ina need to survive and not harm the human. This is important to the Ina because, as stated previously, the Ina/human relationship is the loving relationship. Despite having many symbionts, it is still heartbreaking for an Ina to lose one of its symbionts. And since there are more humans than Ina, humans are allowed to marry one another and start a family of their own if they wish. Humans do not see loving their Ina as being unfaithful to their spouse. The queer space that the Ina create consists of a world where as long as two or more adults consent to sexual intercourse, there is no problematic sex. But Butler allows a wrinkle in the fabric of her story that allows her to comment on the patriarchy's dealing with lesbians.

Though the Ina have virtually no problem when it comes to sex, Wright has a problem with Shori taking another man to be her symbiont. Up to this point in the novel Wright is the only male symbiont Shori has had; her three other symbionts are all female. When she decides to accept Joel Harrison as her symbiont Wright tells her, "I don't mind the women so much I guess. I kind of like the two downstairs. I was hoping you'd get all

women—except me. I think I could deal with that” (157). This attitude towards lesbianism suggests a voyeuristic fascination with the lesbian. Wright accepts Shori having sex with women *as long as she is available to him*. Wright saying he likes “the two downstairs” suggests the possibility of a threesome with Wright. This is all part of a male fantasy. The privileged white male (in this case) sees lesbianism as a form of sexual entertainment that he may participate in at any time. It is the man thinking “I have what they really want.” Butler is commenting on the opposite side of men’s attitude toward lesbians. In *Carmilla*, Carmilla is dispatched in the most ruthless fashion of any vampire I have discussed because she is the lesbian who not only rejects male control, but rejects men as sexual partners. Butler is indicating it is men’s attitude that as long as a woman is willing to satisfy a man’s sexual appetite she can have sex with other women. But Shori is pansexual. She is attracted to both men and women of all sizes, ages, colors, and races. A woman cannot have more than one man from the patriarchal point of view. This is evident because Wright has not argued with Shori over any of her female symbionts, nor degraded them in any way before he met them, nor asked anything of Shori about the female symbionts. When Wright learns that Joel’s father has asked Shori to take Joel as a symbiont Wright says, “So he’s pimping his own son” (156). He then asks Shori why she needs Joel when she has already told him, multiple times, that she must have more symbionts so she does not hurt her present ones. Wright’s temper tantrum soon runs out of steam. At the end of it, Shori is straddling Wright in his lap with their foreheads together, him telling her “I can’t share you” (157), and she telling him “You can ... You will. He’s part of the family that we must form. He’s one of us.” This moment again reflects the queer matriarchy overcoming the male dominated heteronormative society. Shori wins this argument because she has sympathy for Wright and takes his feelings, however

childish, into careful consideration and gently breaks the news to him. She lets Wright have his fit of anger and then gently but firmly tells him that Joel is “part of the family that we must form” (158).

In *Let Me In*, the vampire is transgender and by welcoming Eli, Oskar rejects gender norms. When Eli meets Oskar for the first time, Oskar assumes Eli is a girl because it is wearing a pink sweater and has long dark hair. Oskar falls in love with Eli as the novel progresses and eventually Oskar asks Eli to “go out” with him. Eli is suspicious of this term and makes Oskar explain what it means. Oskar assumes that Eli has a boyfriend at another school, and Eli tells him this is not the case and begins to explain:

“... but Oskar, I can’t. I’m not a girl.”
Oskar snorted. “What do you mean? You a guy?”
“No, no.”
“Then what are you?”
“Nothing.”
“What do you mean ‘nothing’?”
“I’m nothing. Not a child. Not old. Not a boy. Not a girl. Nothing.”

Despite learning that, prior to turning, Eli had been a boy named Elias, Oskar still calls Eli by feminine pronouns. When Eli emerges from the shower, it drops its towel to show Oskar its lack of genitalia. Oskar is clearly expecting a penis to be there because he says “But you don’t have a ... willie.” To which Eli responds “... I’ve had one” (347). Oskar is not repelled by the same sex/androgynous attraction or Eli’s vampirism; instead he asks more and more questions, which leads to Eli establishing a psychic link with Oscar through a kiss to share its story. For much of the novel, the reader does not know if Eli reciprocates Oskar’s feelings. At one point, Eli has to flee Oskar’s apartment to evade capture. Before leaving, Eli gives Oskar another telepathic kiss to reveal his feelings for Oskar: “For a few seconds Oskar saw through Eli’s eyes. And what he saw was ... himself. Only much better, more handsome,

stronger than what he thought of himself. Seen with love” (446). Oskar repeatedly lets in the queer and accepts Eli the way it is. As in *Fledgling*, consenting to the queer has its advantages.

The patriarchal system is broken in *Let Me In* and two events lead Oskar to choose a queer life at the end. Oskar’s divorced parents have failed in raising him, offering no correction for the adolescent transgressions he is caught in, and he is almost killed at school by bullies his teachers neglect to discipline. Eli is able to save Oskar when it gets the attention of another student and permission to come in; the novel closes with Oskar on a train with a heavy trunk (presumably containing Eli) looking very happy. In the end, Oskar rejects heteronormative society in favor of a relationship that is fulfilling and brings him joy. In the end, accepting queerness and its fluidity brings order to the worlds of *Fledgling* and *Let Me In*.

In these novels of the new millennium, it is clear that the vampire is no longer working as the monster heteronormative society has projected its fears on for so long. It has transformed into symbol of queer hope. Both *Fledgling* and *Let Me In* reject heteronormative control and offer alternatives. *Fledgling* sets up a matrilineal society where sex between consensual adults is not bound by mores. *Let Me In* offers an escape from the failed heteronormative system and an open invitation to leave the strictures of gender behind. Both novels set up versions of queer utopia. Butler sets up a queer matrilineal utopia. This utopia is not perfect, but it is able to overcome the problems it is faced with and return to an ideal state. Lindqvist does not offer a place for his queers to live at the close of *Let Me In*. What he does offer is freedom from failed heteronormativity and all the impossible expectations that comes with it. At the center of both of these ideas is the struggle queer individuals face of

being accepted in our patriarchal society. When the queer is rejected, he/she/it must make their own family. This can come in the form of close friendships with liberal minded people to replace the missing family or by entering into a gay marriage/partnership and building a queer family. *Fledgling* and *Let Me In* showcase the desire and ability of queer individuals to build familial bonds with people who have consented to let the queer come into their life.

CONCLUSION

A QUEER KIND OF HOPE

The history of the vampire in literature is the history of queer people. From the moment queerness was seen as an identity rather than an aberrant practice, it--like the vampire--has been both dreaded and feared. Both have been made into monsters by heteronormative society, both have been killed or driven out of society by heteronormative society, and both have had to conduct their activities under the cover of darkness. The gay rights movement that began during the civil rights movement brought queers front and center. The men and women who began this movement demanded to be treated as human beings and not as monsters to be hunted. Great strides have been taken since toward securing these rights. Steadily, queers have gotten homosexuality declassified as a mental disorder, they have gained rights to assemble in public, they have gained the right not be discriminated against because of their sexuality for employment, they have gained the rights to their children, and as of 2015 queer people gained the right to have their marriages recognized. But this queer new hope is a fragile thing. The rights many queer people and their allies have fought for are under fire today. Transpeople are discriminated against in many places. North Carolina still has a bathroom law on the books that states a person must use the bathroom of their birth sex, a bill that is supposedly written to protect women and little girls from sexual predators entering into their restroom. But violence perpetuated against transpeople

specifically has been on the rise since Donald Trump ascended to the presidency on January 20, 2017, proving that “protecting the ladies” is a farce and the law really makes it illegal to be trans in public. Once Attorney General Jeff Sessions was appointed to his position, he repealed the Obama era law that gave transchildren in public schools bathroom rights and the rights to a safe learning environment. Texas, Alabama, and Wisconsin have all signed laws of “religious liberty” giving faith-based adoption agencies the right to deny any couple whose beliefs or lifestyles contradict the beliefs of the agency the right to adopt a child. But when reported, it was the fact that this bill denied gay couples the right to adopt that the media covered and politicians used as fodder to pander to their right wing pundits for re-election campaigns. Rumors swirl in the gay community that Donald Trump is going to sign an executive order that will revoke gay marriage and grant businesses the legal right to discriminate if they claim faith-based objections to serving or employing gay people.

In all of these laws, I see the perception of the queer in flux. Society is more tolerant of the queer than it ever was previously, but it has never shaken the anxiety surrounding the queer. The religious reasoning surrounding the persecution of the queer has not changed. The queer is monstrous because many among the right interpret the Sodom and Gomorrah passage in the Bible as God punishing the cities solely for allowing same-sex practices. They thus justify policing, even killing, queer people in order to avoid God’s wrath. The same people ignore Ezekiel 16:48 where God through the prophet tells Israel what Sodom’s sins were: “pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughter, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (KJV). This “religious” group of people support the Muslim ban and passed the horrible AHCA, so it would seem their own sins more closely mirror those of Sodom.

Since the queer is in flux, it follows that the vampire is in flux, and attitudes toward the one tend to reflect societal attitudes toward the other. While there have been no major vampire texts since 2015, Holly Black's *The Coldest Girl in Coldtown* (2013) has a vampire that opens a queer space for a transperson to be openly transgender and in a relationship. But the novel's protagonist, while in love with the novel's vampire herself, is bitten by another vampire and violently rejects the fact she is turning into a vampire. Vampirism is a disease in the novel, and the vampire hero promises to help the heroine find a "cure." This dynamic is troubling because on the surface the novel is accepting, but at its core it is repulsed by and rejects the queer. Such a text reveals the mixed messages given to society about queer people: while there is the hope that queer people can live freely, society simultaneously implies that something is wrong with them that needs healing. But literature is a reflection of the time in which it is written, and Black perfectly captures the mood of Americans towards queerness in our present era. The queer person and the vampire have been seen as monsters, but are really misunderstood. Vampire literature clearly shows that society often would rather rid themselves of the queer by any means necessary rather than acknowledge the queer. Many societies have justified killing queer people on basis of religious beliefs while refusing the mercy and tolerance that Christianity and other religions preach, while also ignoring heteronormative sins in the process of cleansing the homosexual ones. But queer people have survived this persecution. They have hidden for many years and are now gaining ground in the fight for equal rights. Many people in society have changed their way of thinking about queer people and no longer see them as monsters. But there are still many people who hold to the old homophobic belief and put people of like minds in powerful positions. But the queer continues to survive. The vampire has been let into the pop culture mainstream where it is no

longer feared. In the same way queers will continue to fight hate and overcome homophobia/transphobia to gain the equality they deserve.

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