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Veiled Victorian Vampires: What Literary Antagonists Reveal About
Societal Fears of 19th Century England

by
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Honors Thesis

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In my thesis paper I look at three primary texts, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to analyze their main antagonists through a vampiric lens. I explain how the characters of Bertha Mason, Miss Havisham, and Dorian Gray are all written with veiled vampiric traits that revolve around themes of sexuality, secrecy and seclusion, and unbridled physical and emotional violence. Although none of these texts is obviously a "vampire novel", the authors lean into vampire tropes including eerie physical description, doubled relationships, and other vampire lore that can be best seen when compared to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. These vampiric portrayals bring to light Victorian societal fears surrounding threats to the patriarchy. Immigration, homosexuality, and feminism became such a pertinent threat to white heteronormative masculinity that those with power turned to convenient monster rhetoric as a way to demonize their enemies. The Vampire represents these three threats in overlapping but not identical ways in Bertha Mason, Miss Havisham, and Dorian Gray.

Bertha Mason, an infamously mistreated character, is the first example of how Victorian literature demonized victims of the patriarchy in order to uphold those systems of power. Locked in the attic by her controlling husband, she is painted as some savage beast who roams the halls of Thornwood, never to know peace again. Her purpose in the story is to terrorize a poor, innocent Jane and to embody what the wrong path in life looks like if Jane should stumble in her piety (Gilbert & Gubar, 360). Bertha can be sympathetic in contemporary readings, but in the Victorian era that sympathy could only extend so far. Bertha's failures are framed as her own fault, seeing as Jane Eyre was able to avoid Bertha's fate. Therefore, the blame must lie within Bertha herself and less so on

forces out of her control like an abusive husband or mental illness. I consider Bertha to be one of the most sympathetic characters of the novel, and now reframe her as a victim of Victorian prejudice, not only against women, but also against 'the foreigner'. Using violent behavior and bouts of bloodlust in tandem with hyper sexualization, all of which tropes can be associated with vampirism, to compare her with good Jane, Charlotte Brontë demonizes Bertha Mason and simultaneously exposes the Victorian patriarchal society's fears regarding both feminism and immigration.

The second antagonist I focus on is Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham has the potential to be one of the most powerful and impressive female characters of her time, but when the Victorian social context surrounding feminism is put in perspective, it becomes clear that Dickens was far more interested in demonizing her than glorifying her. Hysteria and mania are embodied in a vampiric Miss Havisham so that she is framed as a failed matriarch, cold and callous. She fails to meet the maternal expectations of Victorian womanhood. Further, she fails in the independent and traditionally masculine role she was filling in holding such wealth and status passed to her from her father. Charles Dickens employs vampiric rhetoric to characterize the independent woman as a psychologically disturbed maternal figure who brought the downfall of a man's once great empire in a way that implicitly denounces feminist movements of the time.

Dorian Gray is the latest antagonist I evaluate, and perhaps the most overtly evil in form. As a vampiric character, he is unlike the two women I have evaluated before. His timelessness is rooted in agelessness, unlike Miss Havisham, and his wrong doings are of his own making, unlike poor Bertha. Dorian can be interpreted as a Draculaic vampire, as Bertha and Miss Havisham also are, but I argue that his character and story also

incorporates the tendencies of a Byronic vampire. He is a gentleman of mysterious, unknown origins. He is a well-traveled man who spent years in the mythicized East. And he has ‘special relationships’ with other men. Most importantly, like the Byronic hero, he “suffers from a secret sin, and the entire structure of alienations which he both exposes and represents is a function of that sin, which is never identified...” (Marshall, 36). This proposed sin is the hinge of it all, it is what makes Dorian’s vampirism a sign of moral deterioration. Dorian, outwardly, represents everything that Victorian society would have revered. He was young, attractive, rich, white, and cis. This is precisely why his character gets away with his evil when in the public eye. His outward identity ticked all of the boxes. However, when the novel explores his secret sin, his homosexuality, he is no longer a pillar of Victorian patriarchy. He is violent, he is mysterious, he is sexual. He is a vampire.

VAMPIRE LITERATURE

Vampire mythology has existed for centuries all over the world. It spans Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Americas, each region having its own twist or variation of the concept. In later centuries, namely the early 19th, we see a shift from the shadows of myth and rumor to the spotlight of literature and storytelling. While these vampire texts are not to be understood as direct inspiration for my antagonists, they represent a holistic summation of what tropes vampire literature of the time was composed of.

We first see this genre appear in England in the earlier years of the 1800s. Lord Byron wrote what is now “A Fragment” as his contribution to the infamous Shelley gothic writing contest. The very contest that produced *Frankenstein* is the one that can also be credited with inspiring the Vampire literary genre for centuries to come. Lord

Byron's character is a gentleman. He is wealthy, comes from unknown origins, but a man of manners and good taste. He loves to travel and makes great friends with a male companion he holds dear to his heart. He is less violent than Le Fanu's or Stoker's later renditions of the monster, but he is still on the fringes of society. It may be on account of his suggested homosexuality, or perhaps his foreigner status. Byron's vampire, Darvell, embodies the wealth and success of both Havisham and Dorian, although they exist at opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to acceptance by high society. Dorian also connects with the Byronic hero's secret sin.

Later in the century, Sheridan Le Fanu wrote *Carmilla*. Written in 1872 when women's rights were a contentious issue, *Carmilla*'s story represents a cunning and evil matriarchal system that intends to corrupt the pure of heart and seduce the main character, Laura, through promiscuity and manipulation. *Carmilla* draws on classic vampire tropes that my chosen female literary antagonists fall prey to, including sexual promiscuity and failed maternal instincts, and is in many ways a precursor for Stoker's *Dracula*.

Carmilla's promiscuity and sexuality establish a recurring scene in vampire literature: visiting the victim in the late hours of the night and standing at the side of the bed in a white dress. This violation of the intimacy and privacy of a bedroom at night has promiscuous implications, and the blood drinking that typically ensues only furthers this erotic tone (Auerbach, 50). Further, the relationship that develops throughout the book between *Carmilla* and Laura is intimate. In the middle of the night, the main character, Laura, is visited by *Carmilla* and describes how "It was like the ardor of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet overpowering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips traveled along my cheek in kisses" (Le Fanu, 48). It is intimate

and also between two women. This connection between them is far more than just predator and prey, it is emotional and sensual and entrenched in homosexual undertones, which is a common theme in vampire texts. In a moment of privacy between Laura and Carmilla, the vampire laments that “You must come with me, loving me, to death; or else hate me and still come with me, and hating me through death and after” (Le Fanu, 71). This intensity and toxicity will be seen sexually in *Jane Eyre*, the suggestions of homosexuality will be central to Dorian’s character, but mostly this sentiment will bleed into the other part of Carmilla’s vampirism that most applies to Miss Havisham: motherhood.

The perversion of motherhood is best seen through Carmilla’s relationship with her own matriarch. This older woman is hardly seen in the actual story of the novel, but her influence and instruction seem to loom over every page. She is described as “A lady, also masked, richly and gravely dressed, and with a stately air, like a person of rank,” (Le Fanu, 111) which is almost exactly how Miss Havisham was described. Her purpose there is also intrinsically linked to this younger woman, and she appears to have “accompanied her as a chaperone” (Le Fanu, 111). There is an innate power dynamic in this relationship. She is first seen by the reader after Carmilla’s supposed accident on the road. She is described as an “elderly woman” who did not “have eyes for anything but the slender girl who was being placed against the slope of the bank” (Le Fanu, 25). There is a warped sense of ownership from the older woman to her younger ward, one that makes the characters in the novel uneasy. This vampiric sense of control is a major theme throughout my chosen texts and reappears in each of the novels. However, this specific

violation of the mother daughter relationship will be best understood in *Great Expectations*.

The most famous of all vampire novels, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, is a culmination of many of the already mentioned themes, but its misogyny is more overt than the previous texts and solidifies the establishment of vampiric tropes in previous works as well. Its status as the latest novel, being published in 1897, makes it a good summation of the numerous vampire stories that came before it, but its popularity makes it the reason so many of these tropes are so well established (Auerbach, 27). *Dracula* is an ideal example of the doubling trope and classic vampire imagery.

Although Stoker was not the one to invent such ideas, the public's idea of how vampires cannot be seen in mirrors, they need to be staked in the heart, they sleep in coffins, and live in abandoned castles, stems largely from this novel. The idea of the abandoned castle can be seen in *Jane Eyre*'s Thornfield Hall as well as *Great Expectations*' Satis House. Themes of isolation and mystery surrounding *Dracula* can also be seen in each of the antagonists I discuss. Socially, however, *Dracula* says the most about the themes of feminism. In vampire lore tradition, it is common for vampires to have a doubled character. Someone who serves, more or less, as a 'what could have been'. In *Dracula*, Mina and Lucy are doubles. Lucy is the unfortunate victim of the Count, and the story suggests that Lucy succumbed, and Mina did not because Lucy was a 'worse' woman. She was far more promiscuous and far less intelligent. Mina, however, was devoted to one man, Jonathan, and a modern woman with respectable sensibilities. She worked, could use a typewriter, and valued science (Auerbach, 18). While the men all were sexually attracted to Lucy, they respected Mina.

Vampire lore is also historically unkind to mothers. Many of the aforementioned original myths surrounding vampires in eastern Europe, Asia, and even South America, all start from a woman losing her mind and feasting on children. It is a perversion of motherhood. This can be seen in classic vampire texts like *Dracula* through the fate of Lucy Westenra and her role as the lesser double to the perfect Mina Harker. After poor Lucy has been turned into a vampire, she is buried in a cemetery by those who do not know of her situation, and the gang of heroes set out to save her soul and send it to heaven. Unfortunately, when they arrive, Lucy is already roaming the nearby town where there was a spike in reports of how “children, indeed all who have been missed at night, have been slightly torn or wounded in the throat” (Stoker, 220). When Lucy is finally spotted with a child, in a bloodstained white gown no less, they watch as “with a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast” (Stoker, 261). Lucy, who was previously a sweet natured woman excited to have a family, has been transformed into this monstrous danger to children.

Beyond this scathing critique of non-maternal women, the novel is additionally riddled with themes of promiscuity and the depravity of such actions. Early in the novel when Jonathan is caught out of his room after sundown, he is visited by the brides of Dracula. They stand at the foot of the bed before joining him on it, and even though Jonathan knows it to be wrong, he finds himself unable to stop them. He laments that “I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips” (Stoker, 53). This desire he feels being described as both wicked and burning frames the sensation in two ways. One: we know it is wrong as wicked suggests some sort of devilry

or depravity. Two: as it was burning, it was uncontrolled and passionate. Even though Jonathan is entirely aware of its perceived wrongness, he cannot help himself. Just one page later he continues to suffer through this phase of tension when he explains that “there was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive,” (Stoker, 54) and he “closed [his] eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited– waited with beating heart” (Stoker, 54). This vilification of sexuality is a theme in vampirism and can be seen throughout the texts chosen.

BERTHA MASON

Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is primarily understood and read as a love story between the titular character and Edward Rochester. The story is Jane’s life, from her time as an abused orphan child to her finding freedom and agency in a world unkind to women, but her growth is intrinsically tied to her romantic relationship with Rochester. There are many reasons the two of them are star crossed lovers, from the status of her birth to the expectation that he marries a woman like Miss Blanche Ingram, but anyone who has read the novel in full knows that there is one reason that triumphs above all others as the reason they are not to be married: a seemingly insurmountable obstacle in the shape of a young woman named Bertha Mason.

Bertha’s very existence presents a problem, both legal and moral, which seems to be the one thing Jane cannot excuse. In fact, the revelation of Bertha’s situation in the attic is the catalyst for the breakdown of our heroine’s love story. In sympathizing with Jane, we are made to resent Bertha and what she represents (Gilbert & Gubar, 360). Bertha, beyond her role as a barrier between Jane and Rochester finding their happy ending, is also revealed to be the monster that has been terrorizing Jane for the duration

of her time at Thornfield. Now she is not only a passive obstacle, but an active antagonist. Bertha's characterization as a vampire solidifies her role as a narrative villain and prevents the reader from sympathizing with her. This also stops them turning on Rochester, who must remain redeemable in the reader's eyes for the story to attain a happy ending. The only way for Rochester to be saved from scrutiny is for the story to justify his decision to lock Bertha away by making her the monster he claims she is. This is much easier to do when she is already seen as a monster before we understand the situation.

By making Bertha bad, Brontë ensured that Jane remained good. This contrast between Jane as good and Bertha as bad is more than a common literary device. Vampire lore also has a heavy emphasis on the concept of doubling. Doubles can be found in the form of mirrors, portraits, or characters. Calling back to *Dracula*, Jane and Bertha are similar in theme to Lucy and Mina. One is a pious, respectable young woman who stays strong in the face of horror and temptation, while the other was a weaker willed woman whose promiscuous behavior and unchecked freedoms led to her downfall. In *Jane Eyre*, the main method of doubling exists in the contrast between Bertha and Jane as women: their stories and how they acted in response to similar predicaments.

The main separator between Bertha and Jane becomes their actions. In relation to one another, Jane is a clear victim of Bertha's antagonistic behavior. In *Jane Eyre*, Bertha is heard before she is seen. She is a wailing in the walls, a suspicious thump in the night, a cackle that reverberates in Jane's own terrified heart. She roams Thornfield, her own personal semi-abandoned castle in the middle of nowhere, like every good vampire has. Bertha is established as a monster before we even get to know her. She is first heard by

Jane at just after 2am, as “a demoniac laugh—low, suppressed, and deep—uttered, as it seemed, at the very keyhole of my chamber door” (Brontë, 173). This occurrence, like other similar ones, happens at night in the bedroom, a time and a place of privacy and intimacy that is often violated by vampires as tempting and vile seductive threats.

Bertha’s obsession with terrorizing Jane and Rochester drives her very being, it seems to be all she really has left to live for. Upon closer examination, it is interesting to find that her acts of violence have more than vampiric appearance. They all have vampiric motives, as well.

The first act of violence we can attribute to Bertha is her nearly successful attempt to burn Rochester alive as he was sleeping. Jane is pulled from her room by menacing sounds in the hallway, only to be met with “Tongues of flame,” which “darted around the bed: the curtains were on fire. In the midst of blaze and vapour, Mr. Rochester lay stretched motionless, in deep sleep” (Brontë, 174). This was Bertha’s attempt at killing the man who has locked her in the attic for life, and if we are brave enough to consider Bertha as a vampire, then it is a logical conclusion that the one who turned her would be Rochester himself, in many ways making this vampire-on-vampire crime. One of the most important plot points of *Dracula* is that the heroes need to kill the Count while he is asleep in his box. He is too powerful otherwise, so they must take advantage of the time he is vulnerable. The climax of *Dracula* is Mina’s perspective where she explains “I saw the Count lying within the box upon the earth.... He was deathly pale, just like a waxen image, and the red eyes glared with the horrible vindictive look which I knew too well” (Stoker, 460-1). This position, vulnerable and asleep, is critical to both *Dracula*’s situation as well Rochester’s. Bertha’s choice to target Rochester in his sleep is no

coincidence, it is the one time when he has no power over her. But, because Rochester is a victim, Bertha remains the villain and Jane remains the hero when she comes in to save the day by waking Rochester. Jane's goodness is the direct answer to Bertha's evil.

Later in the novel, Bertha's attack on her own brother, Richard Mason, is one of the more violent parts of the story. Jane is brought into the scene to bandage the man and overhears from the men how "this other wound in the arm: she has had her teeth here too, I think." Then Mason himself cries that "She sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart" (Brontë, 246). These are clear references to vampirism, even though Bertha is not actually a supernatural monster. She has attacked her brother, which to many might seem like she is a crazed beast who knows not friend from foe, but I argue that she understands her brother as a traitor who had a hand in her situation. At the very least he did nothing to improve it. Again, the scene is witnessed by Jane from the perspective opposite of Bertha. The damage that Bertha has done this time, the pain she has inflicted and the blood she has drawn, is now explicitly fixed by Jane's own healing work. She helps to nurse Richard to strength enough to escape the manor. Bertha's violence directly solved by Jane's compassion.

The final act of violence is less gory, and far more symbolic. Bertha's visit to Jane two nights before her wedding is a moment that highlights Bertha's role as an antagonist against not only our main characters in the story, but a villain against the civilized pillars of society, namely holy matrimony (Gilbert & Gubar, 336). She stands at the foot of Jane's bed, an almost identical scene to Le Fanu's *Carmilla* or Stoker's *Dracula*. Physically the resemblance is remarkable, "It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was

white and straight; but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell” (Brontë, 326). Then Jane’s account to Rochester describes how “it removed my veil from its gaunt head, rent it in two parts, and flinging both on the floor, trampled on them” (Brontë, 327). She violates a most holy union between man and wife, she is the product of a perversion of vows, and this physical protestation of Jane’s marriage to Rochester is clearly more than just jealousy. This series of actions is a revulsion and rejection of society’s standards and expectations.

All this considered, there are multiple instances in the book where Jane admits to darker desires and worries that she is turning into something she can’t recognize. The reader can make the comparison between Jane’s thoughts and Bertha’s actions and see Jane as all the more worthy of Rochester because she exhibits self-control and restraint (Gilbert & Gubar, 351). Bertha is a savage woman who knows no restraint. This is an attitude that is attributed to many women of the time who seek independence from men. For example, Bertha’s decimation of Jane’s wedding veil serves as a monstrous demonstration of her stance on “civilized” love. During this time in the Victorian era, the women’s rights movement was barely in infancy. Women were petitioning for the right to divorce, the right to own property, and the right to their children in the event of separation (Bloy, n.p.). This evolving upset to the traditional patriarchal values rippled through society. These feminists were seen as radical and a danger to the way things were.

Bertha’s vampirism can be understood as an indictment in multiple ways. The vampirization of her character comments negatively on promiscuity, women’s rights, and autonomy, and it reeks of xenophobia, as discussed below. Bertha’s incarceration is both cultural and literal. She has been forced into seclusion from society, mirroring the

restrictions of Vampires (Auerbach, 26). Like her, they cannot go out into the daylight; they instead sleep during the day and prowl around at night. This speaks to more than just vampirism, but to the plight of Victorian women in general.

When *Jane Eyre* was written in the 1840s, Victorian society had a lot of fear and tension surrounding female autonomy. This can be seen in the quashing of the smaller but nonetheless threatening women's rights movements. Divorce was still not an option for many women, and they likewise had no claim over their own children or property. Groups were fighting against this and appealing to the government to make changes, but it wasn't until the 50s and 60s that the feminist movement began to make progress. Marjie Bloy explains that according to the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act "divorce courts were established. Women were given only limited access to divorce which could be obtained only on a specific cause other than adultery" (Bloy, n.p.). It was not much, but it illustrates how dire the situation was prior to this law. Bertha's situation is partly a result of a lack of divorce options at the time. Rochester cannot divorce her; therefore, he hides her in the attic like a monster of the night. She is villainized and terrorized, turned into this vile vampire, simply because society fears her independence.

In Laurie Langbauer's "Women in White, Men in Feminism", she explains how hysteria has been weaponized against women who are doing nothing beyond acting outside of the patriarchal standards, of which there are many in 19th century England. It is a cultural incarceration that states "women's essential neurosis can only be explained and cured by the maternal, to reassert her dependence on man, her inferiority and subordination to him," (Langbauer, 220). This is usually tied to a form of maternalism, as women are often shamed when they express desires outside of motherhood and

domesticity. Bertha was not seen to be a maternal figure, even before Rochester deemed her mad. She was constantly sexualized, but never maternalized, as Rochester did not want a family with her, there was nothing deeper to their relationship than a financially motivated exchange between their families. Their matrimony was one based on whims of lust, not love and respect, like Rochester tries to convince everyone is his situation with Jane. This contrast is imperative to understanding Rochester's view of Bertha. She is nothing more than a victim of Rochester's, and subsequently the Victorian patriarchy's, opinion on how women, promiscuous foreign women specifically, ought to be treated.

When Rochester first explains how he came to be married to Bertha, he was sent by his father and brother to make a financial match, but he acquiesced under the implication that she was beautiful enough to tempt him. She was a sexy Jamaican woman and Rochester fell prey to her promiscuity. Jane, on the other hand, is consistently described as plain if not just outright ugly. She is the opposite of Bertha, and in turn Rochester falls for her on the basis of respect rather than sexuality. Jane, as a double to Bertha, suggests again that the fault lies with Bertha.

The imagery Jane recalls when she first lays eyes on Bertha quickly is threatening. In describing to Rochester, the face of the visitor, Jane laments she was "fearful and ghastly to me—oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face—it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments" (Brontë, 327). While the description is haunting in its own right, the similarities between Bertha and Count Dracula are numerous, particularly the roll of her noticeably red eyes. In Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Jonathan sees a similar creature roaming the halls of the castle one night and makes note of "the gleam of

a pair of very bright eyes, which seemed red in the lamplight” (Stoker, 20). Dracula himself is later characterized by Jonathan who confesses that he “saw... Count Dracula... with red light of triumph in his eyes, and with a smile that Judas in hell might be proud of” (Stoker, 68). Red eyes and an additionally crazed facial expression are present in both novels with a terrorizing effect.

This progression from tantalizing and sensual to frightful and grotesque is no coincidence. The moment her role as a woman slipped from submissive to autonomous, her sexuality was weaponized against her, and her looks became what made her a monster.

It is also worth mentioning that while Jane concludes her story with a claim that Bertha reminds her of “the foul German spectre—the Vampyre” (Brontë, 327) there is more to it than vampire stereotypes. The characteristics that Jane bases her claim on are also based in Bertha’s racial profile. Many readings of the novel have interpreted that Bertha’s character is not white (Thomas, 1). She is from the Caribbean and while it is unlikely her skin is of a very dark complexion, Bertha is likely mixed race and borders on “white passing”. This shines some light on the ‘dark’ features that are described in a conversation where Rochester attempts to dismiss the story by suggesting that “Ghosts are usually pale, Jane,” but pale is not Bertha. Jane counters “This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes.” Bertha is dark in various senses of the word. Her darkness terrifies Jane.

This concept of xenophobia is crucial to Bertha’s character. When Rochester recalls his years married to Bertha in Spanish Town, Jamaica, his characterization of the Caribbean in contrast to his motherland is telling. On a night when Bertha is screaming

mad in her room, Rochester tells of an oncoming storm where “The air was like sulfur-steams – I could find no refreshment anywhere.” This combined with the sounds of “the curses the maniac still shrieked out,” drove Rochester to a moment of suicidal intent. He is knelt before his trunk of pistols when he is seemingly saved by “A fresh wind from Europe” which “blew over the ocean and rushed through the open casement: the storm broke... and the air grew pure” (Brontë, 355). He resents her for being the reason he was not home in England. He was sent to marry her by his father and older brother under false pretenses in order to secure money from Bertha’s family, in exchange for his “good race” (Brontë 352) being added into the Mason family in return.

This attitude was not unique to Rochester. In *Fear, Loathing, and Victorian Xenophobia*, Tromp et al remarked that “In Victorian narratives, mixed blood is a familiar sign of trouble” (Tromp, 331). Bertha’s mixed blood is a signifier of her race, as well as a representation of the tainted blood vampires possess. Tromp et al, continues to explain that due to his Eastern European roots, “Dracula is the antithesis of the trueborn Englishman,” (Tromp, 331) for no real reason aside from the fact that he is not Western European. The years around 1848 were particularly contentious, with an “increasing number of political refugees who arrived in London after the revolutions of 1848—refugees whose radical affiliations and failed uprisings encouraged xenophobic feelings among their new British neighbors” (Tromp, 332). Bertha’s immigrant status may not reflect Eastern Europe, but she cannot be considered a full-blooded white Englishman and therefore any power she has is a threat to those who are.

The manner of Bertha’s death is also reminiscent of vampire lore. Vampires are killed for two reasons. One, so they will stop terrorizing the innocent and wreaking havoc

on the world, and two, so their soul might be saved. In *Dracula*, a large portion of the text is dedicated to saving Lucy Westenra's soul. Lucy is a character that draws many similarities to Bertha. At the time of Lucy's death, she is described as being saved because she was restored to the peaceful and kind woman she was before she was turned. Bertha's apparent suicide has a similar effect.

“And then they called out to him that she was on the roof, where she was standing, waving her arms, above the battlements, and shouting out till they could hear her a mile off: I saw her and heard her with my own eyes. She was a big woman, and had long black hair: we could see it streaming against the flames as she stood. I witnessed, and several more witnessed, Mr. Rochester ascend through the sky-light on to the roof; we heard him call ‘Bertha!’ We saw him approach her; and then, ma’am, she yelled and gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement.” (Brontë, 493).

Bertha lights Thornfield on fire in what some could interpret as an attempt to harm those in residence, but it could also be seen as Bertha's attempt at freedom.

We learn from Le Fanu that one way to kill a vampire is by burning. It is one of the only releases from the hellish existence and tainted soul. We also learned from each of the traditional vampire texts that when a vampire dies their soul can be saved. In *Dracula* when the heroes have finally won, and Dracula has been stabbed through the heart and decapitated, in his final moments Mina is relieved that “even in that moment of final dissolution, there was in the face a look of peace, such as I never could have imagined might have rested there” (Stoker, 461). This peace is what Bertha is so

desperate for. Based on this spring she takes before falling to her death, Bertha does not want to be locked away and treated like a savage animal. This was an intentional fall.

There is a reconciliation attempt between her and Rochester when he tries to call her off the ledge and to safety. He risks his own life to save hers, a woman he has detested and degraded. In many ways, his reaching out is salvation. It is a way for Bertha's life to be seen no longer as that of a monstrous demon in the attic. Rochester once again sees her as a person, and not only is she human to him again, but she is also worth saving. He calls out to her using her name. She is more than a beast. However, Bertha turns away from him and finally takes control of her own narrative again. She has control over her situation and has come out of her monstrous vampiric haze.

Unfortunately, the "right thing to do" to save those around her is to kill herself, but the sentiment is there. Bertha's vampiric life has ended, and peace can now be achieved for everyone in the story. Jane and Rochester can live happily ever after, and Bertha has found relief.

The added layer, however, is that alongside Bertha, all of the sins she represented died with her. The story can end happily because Jane and Rochester now live in a world free of Bertha and her radical and desperate grasp for independence, her raging and vile promiscuity, and her status as a foreigner who never belonged there anyway.

Every aspect of Bertha as evil can be traced back to something that the patriarchal society of Victorian England fears. Promiscuity, female autonomy, and immigration. The idea of making her a monstrous vampire is a simple shortcut to demonize her and these threatening ideas she represents. But Charlotte Brontë is not the only one to use this

shortcut. Charles Dickens uses the same tactic to demonize his own female character that the Victorian Patriarchy would want to see controlled.

MISS HAVISHAM

Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* was one of the most successful novels of the 19th century. It was serially released in 1860 before being published in novel form in 1861 and fans of the story were eagerly waiting for each installment. In a literary review from *The Atlantic* that talks about the novel in the year 1861, the critic concedes that "in none of his other works does [Dickens] evince a shrewder insight into real life, and a clearer perception and knowledge of what is called 'the world'" (Peterson, 381). Dickens is lauded for his ability to recreate life on the page, a life that reflects Victorian England as it is. This then allows for an interesting investigation of his characters and plots that are considered to be so real to readers.

Great Expectations is the story of a young boy, Pip, who suffers under the weight of his expectations of himself, others, and life. One of the characters who is seated in the center of his expectations is the secluded Miss Havisham. She is the one who tells Pip in the first place that he could hope for a better life. He could strive for a noble job, a salary, a life beyond the walls of his sister's house and the abuse that he endures. He need not settle for hard labor, and after he meets Estella, he dreams that he might dare to want love beyond what he has known as well. The novel is praised for its round characters and the critic argues that "The characters of the novel also show how deeply it has been meditated" (Peterson, 381). There is variety in character, in motivation, in behavior, and each character gets a moment when the reader can learn more about them. Miss Havisham is given the courtesy of a backstory, however the reader's perspective of her is

never changed for the positive (Nord, 509). She remains a villain, someone who let evil get the better of her in the face of tragedy, and in turn let the legacy of greater men fail and abused the potential happiness of a young woman.

Charles Dickens' choice to demonize Miss Havisham and make her the villain in his story is steeped in misogyny and fear towards women's independence. Miss Havisham's story is that of a scorned woman. Left at the altar and swindled out of money by a man she thought loved her, Dickens decided she would become a monster (Nord, 509). Cold and emotionally violent, she vows to spend the rest of her days locked away in her lair creating a smaller, more vicious monster than herself who can exact revenge on those who hurt her: men. To Pip, Miss Havisham is an obstacle and the cause of much of his suffering. She offers him money, status, but the one thing he wants more, love, is cruelly deprived from him on her orders. Kurt Hartog argues that "[a]t the center of Dickens' portrayal of women in *Great Expectations* lies a stark and melodramatic image: women, lacking the capacity to love, become destructive to themselves and to men. Like predators, they must be held firmly, even violently in check" (qtd. in Hall, 186). The latter portion of this claim, that these women must be held 'violently in check', reflects a proposed solution to the threat of feminism and female autonomy to the patriarchy that Miss Havisham embodies. But she is not just a predator, she is a vampire.

The commentary on Miss Havisham's danger and failure as an independent woman lives in the physical embodiment of herself and her environment as decrepit and diseased. She is vampiric, wasting away and surrounded by old wealth but unwelcome in society. She is disgusting, deteriorating, and infects others with her malice. Miss Havisham is characterized by her mental illness, and the subsequent behaviors and

coping mechanisms that result from her trauma (Nord, 353). She is framed as mentally unstable and dangerous, from the state of her house to the malice in her heart. Her mental illness is also linked to her existence as a female: the role of a scorned woman, the role of an evil mother. The first manifestation of her illness is rooted in her trauma response to her experience with love and betrayal. The clocks have stopped, the room is littered with various wedding knickknacks, and the old house is cloaked in darkness, Miss Havisham herself having not seen the sun in many years. All of these are rooted in vampirism. A suspension of time, an old, dusty, untouched castle, and an aversion to daylight.

Miss Havisham's portrayal as a vampire is heavily rooted in her appearance. Our first time hearing of her, Pip explains everyone in town knew her as “an immensely rich and grim lady who lived in a large and dismal house barricaded against robbers, and who led a life of seclusion” (Dickens, 56). When described physically, she embodies the female vampire tropes that we also saw in Bertha. “She was dressed in rich materials—satins, and lace, and silks— all of white” (Dickens, 62). There is wealth and sophistication, a vampire who could blend in seamlessly with civilized society, like Dracula in London or Byron’s Darvell. It made these vampires all the more dangerous, like Carmilla and her vicious matriarch attending lavish parties to scout potential victims. In *Carmilla*, this matriarch is described as the “elder lady” (Le Fanu, 25) who was “also masked, richly and gravely dressed, and with a stately air, like a person of rank” (Le Fanu, 111). This similar air of status and wealth is an important part of Pip’s perception of Miss Havisham and the possibilities for his future that she embodies.

The issue, however, is that this wealth and extravagance is wasted. Over the course of decades, Miss Havisham’s status has collected dust. One of the most notable

vampire tropes is their immunity to time. Days, months, years, even centuries may pass by, and a vampire will not suffer for it. Dracula himself was centuries old and appeared to Jonathan as if he were hardly older than forty-five. Time could pass for him, and he would hardly notice. This sentiment plays a pivotal part in understanding Miss Havisham's character. She herself is not immune to aging, but she is nevertheless stuck in time. She sits at her vanity, still clothed in her wedding gown as if not a day has gone by since she was done wrong. Time in Satis House is not kept. Pip, upon one of his visits to Satis House, notes that "there was a clock in the outer wall of this house. Like the clock in Miss Havisham's room, and like Miss Havisham's watch, it had stopped at twenty minutes to nine" (Dickens, 87). The passing of time means nothing to vampires, and Miss Havisham seems to be uninterested in the world outside of her eroding castle. Life paused for her all those years ago when she was so wronged by Compeyson. Pip is playing cards with Estella and says that "I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago" (Dickens, 65). He doesn't know the story, but he understands it has something to do with the wedding regalia and her yellowing wedding garments.

Relatedly, her room, and Satis House in general, is an extension of Miss Havisham. They are similarly characterized as a deformation of what once represented powerful rich men who had been respected in society. When handed over to a woman, it all fell to ruin. Pip's first sighting of the house says that "we came to Miss Havisham's house, which was of old brick, and dismal, and had a great many iron bars to it. Some of the windows had been walled up; of those that remained, all the lower were rustily barred. There was a courtyard in front, and that was barred" (Dickens, 59). A once great

house has been set behind bars, forced to fall from grace at the hands of this woman. However, looking further the house can be easily compared to other classic vampire lairs, most notably Dracula's Castle. Jonathan first approaches the structure in darkness, but still remarks how "In the gloom the courtyard looked of considerable size" (Stoker, 26). The inside of the Count's castle being all the more impressive than the imposing exterior. Jonathan, after being unable to find anyone working in the house, remarks "There are certainly odd deficiencies in the house, considering the extraordinary evidences of wealth which are round me.... The curtains and upholstery of the chairs and sofas and the hangings of my bed are of the costliest and most beautiful fabrics...." (Stoker, 31-2). Such a house of grandeur was abandoned by everyone but the inhabitant, save for the wolves howling outside. Satis house and Miss Havisham's room are similarly filled with all things rich and extravagant, but years of isolation give it an air of abandonment.

Miss Havisham's appearance falls deeper into vampirism and takes us back to Bertha Mason. Miss Havisham "had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair," all of which is evocative of Bertha and her perversion of holy matrimony. This serves the plot and the understanding of her backstory, but it is also classic vampire imagery. A long white dress, representing the purity of matrimony, but worn by someone who is understood to be a loveless creature. Not just in marriage, but in all aspects of family life.

An important aspect of Miss Havisham that was weaponized against her identity as a woman was her tragic inability to be a mother. Miss Havisham is not Estella's biological mother, but she still functions as a surrogate mother in many ways. In all ways that matter, however, she fails at this. In a time when being a mother was an expectation

for women, Miss Havisham's violent behavioral tendencies and vile manipulation of her pseudo-daughter is an incriminating indictment of independent women as unable to perform the role of mother.

This not so coincidentally coincided with legal action for divorced women to have rights to their children through the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act. It declared that the "Right of access to children after divorce was extended and women were able to repossess their property after a legal separation or after a protection order given consequent upon the husband's desertion," (Bloy, n.p). Women were getting more and more control over their lives and their families, able to raise their children themselves on the rare occasion they decide to split from their husband. The patriarchy was weakening with the possibility of independent mothers, so they had to be villainized.

Miss Havisham's vampiric personality manifests itself violently in the form of her relationship with Estella. One of the requirements for vampirism is the desire to turn others. Some vampires, like Lucy Westenra, are filled with an uncontrollable bloodlust. This mimics Bertha and her frenzied attack on her own brother which results in his near death. Others like to make a game out of it. This approach is more the style of Carmilla, particularly her supposed grandmother or matriarchal figure who looms in the shadows of the story. This is where we see Miss Havisham fall on the spectrum, with her victim Estella not far off from her. Carmilla's role is to prey on young girls and eventually kill them, at the command of her grandmother figure. Her obsession with the younger girl mirrors Miss Havisham's relationship with Estella. Pip describes the progression he sees upon returning to Satis House after some time away and remarks that Miss Havisham "was even more dreadfully fond of Estella than she had been when I last saw them

together; I repeat the word advisely, for there was something positively dreadful in the energy of her looks and embraces. She hung upon Estella's beauty... as though she were devouring the beautiful creature she had reared" (Dickens, 328). Both relationships have an unbalanced feel, a certain level of ownership and manipulation of the older woman onto the younger. The elder seems to be fascinated with watching their protégé in action, doing what they were created to do.

Miss Havisham's narcissistic personality causes her to believe that she has the power to manipulate people's lives and create, by corruption, deformed personalities. There is an oscillation here between womanhood and manhood that stems from the amount of power she perceives herself to possess, and that amount of power is usually reserved for men (Ciugureanu, 354). She represents the 'unnatural woman' that the patriarchy feared during that time. The easiest way to combat these fears is to label the 'unnatural woman' as insane, diseased, and hysterical (Nord, 508).

This concept of what constituted hysterical behavior has been weaponized against women for eons. I explained this phenomenon earlier and how it was used against Bertha. The term itself stems from an archaic word for mother, and is intrinsically associated with womanhood, e.g. 'hysterectomy' (Langbauer, 220). It was the base of a cultural incarceration designed to demonize women who stepped outside of the bounds ascribed to them by the patriarchy. As Laurie Langbauer explains, the patriarchy has always relied on "women's sequestrations or invisibility in patriarchal and phallogocentric systems" (Langbauer, 219). So, it was in the best interest of those in power, men, to find a way to justify their oppression of women. While this concept is nothing new, the use of vampirism as a condemnation of failed motherhood is an interesting twist.

One of the clearest examples of the effects of their relationship is the concept of love and how they both express it. Miss Havisham's love, like Carmilla's matriarch, manifests more as a sick obsession and manipulation. Famously, she tells Estella to "Break their hearts, my pride and hope, break their hearts and have no mercy!" (Dickens, 103). Miss Havisham's own definition of love is "blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission" (Dickens, 261). It is not love. It is a perversion of it. Estella, in turn, laments that she does not actually know how to love, as Miss Havisham only taught her to "wreak revenge on all the male sex," (Dickens, 191) but never to love. Estella tells Pip "'You must know,' said Estella, condescending to me as a brilliant and beautiful woman might, 'that I have no heart—if that has anything to do with my memory'" (Dickens, 258). An inability to love is a key part of a vampire's life. They are damned to a life of eternal misery on earth, never knowing peace. Vampires turn on their friends, as seen in Lucy Westenra, are threats to even family and they cannot help themselves.

Miss Havisham's relationship with Estella is what psychology would define as psychic vampirism or emotional vampirism. Miss Havisham's narcissism and trauma lead her to hyper fixate on Estella as a clone of herself to be a weapon against those who wronged her. According to psychoanalytic theory, "rather than being a self-object for the child... the mother uses the child as a self-object for her own needs" (Wilson, 180). Miss Havisham is not a good mother by any means, and exactly like the theory states, uses Estella for her own malicious purposes. She takes her time, years in fact, to fashion Estella into the perfect weapon against men. She is then unleashed into the world and the novel's protagonist falls into her trap. In Donald E. Hall's analysis of Estella, he explains

how Pip laments that Estella is a vicious woman who “toys with men and their affections, manipulates them to meet her economic, psychological, and perverse erotic needs” (Hall, 189). As disgusted as Pip is, he also finds himself inexplicably drawn to her, like all victims of vampires tend to be. Both Miss Havisham and Estella play the long game in their predatory lives, Miss Havisham having devoted years to training Estella, who in turn toys with Pip’s emotions for more years. This lines up with Le Fanu’s interpretation of vampires in *Carmilla*:

“The vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons. In pursuit of these it will exercise inexhaustible patience and stratagem, for access to a particular object may be obstructed in a hundred ways. It will never desist until it has satiated its passion, and drained the very life of its coveted victim” (Le Fanu, 153).

This kind of patience and specific intention of soul stealing, rather than blood-sucking, is usually attributed to female vampires. Nina Auerbach, in *Our Vampires, Ourselves* elaborates on this thought by arguing that psychic vampires are more or less powerfully masculine, perverse, and marginal. But they are parasitically feminine. This comes from a long and stigmatized historical treatment of women’s mental health (Langbauer, 220).

By making Miss Havisham such a vampiric character, Dickens destroys any shot at framing her as a redeemable character. There is an attempt, in the midst of her fiery death, at reconciliation with both Pip and Estella. But in a similar fashion to Bertha, Miss Havisham’s death releases our main characters from their struggles more than her regret ever could. Dickens relies on tropes of failed motherhood and ‘irrationally’ manifested

anger towards rich white men and uses this to demonize her status as an influential independent woman (Wilson, 177). Women's rights were a contentious issue during these decades, and on the whole, Victorian society was not prepared to allow women freedom like Miss Havisham can experience it. Miss Havisham was in a largely singular situation. The money she had was given to her under unforeseen circumstances and is not representative of the common woman. It wasn't until 1870 with the Married Women's Property Act that women were allowed to keep 200 pounds of their own money and later in 1882 when the Act was updated to allow all married women to continue as the separate owners and administrators of their property after marriage (Bloy, n.p.). Any woman before these times who was already acting according to these laws was a social pariah, a threat to the status quo, and as Hartog says, was meant to be controlled.

DORIAN GRAY

In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, there is no shortage of violence, secrecy, and sexuality. It is a prime example of a vampiric non-vampire text. The complexity of Dorian's character is derived from the fact that his vampirism is twofold. The first part of his character is Byronic in nature. He is a rich white man who is attractive and adored by everyone around him. He blends seamlessly into high society and there is nothing more that the Victorian patriarchy could ask for. What makes him Byronic is the importance of a major secret, a sin that society would frown upon and cast him away for (Marshall, 36). In *A Fragment*, this secret is vampirism. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, this secret sin is homosexuality. However, because Victorian society was not open to such taboo topics being the subject of literature, the question of Dorian's sexuality was instead hidden behind other evildoings, other traits that make him

Draculaic in nature. He is a dangerous combination of the two types of vampires, offering an interesting look at the Victorian patriarchy's sentiment towards homosexuality as a threat.

Dorian is charming to the high society to which he belongs. He is attractive, well-traveled and learned, and the influence and control he has over those around him are all suggestive of a Byronic vampire. His physical appearance fits this polished mold as well. He is described on more than one occasion as an Adonis, "Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair" (Wilde, 19). Importantly, throughout the novel he does not appear to age. Instead, his portrait does. His seemingly everlasting youth mirrors that of a vampire and their timeless nature. Dorian sells his soul to be young and beautiful forever, and to fulfill this wish he is turned into a monster that can hide behind a pretty face. When gossip of his wrong doings spreads through the Ton, many are inclined to brush it off as mere whispers with no merit to them, because how could a young gentleman as perfect as he do anything so vile? Physiognomy is a major theme in vampirism, as a vampire's most precious weapon is how disarming their looks are.

The power that Dorian has over those around him is a magnetism and attraction beyond reason. The first introduction we as an audience have to Dorian Gray is through Basil Hallward's recollection of their first meeting. He bashfully admits to Lord Henry that "I have always been my own master; had at least always been so, till I met Dorian Gray.... I had a strange feeling that Fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows" (Wilde, 10). This conflict is a staple in Vampire literature. There is always a sense of battle between desire and repulsion when in the presence of the vampire. Basil's

strange feeling regarding the opposing emotions of joy and sorrow mirrors this sentiment. Lord Henry is eager to meet Dorian and Basil becomes very protective over Dorian, worrying that Lord Henry will ruin whatever relationship he has with his muse. In a panic he pleads to Lord Henry “Don’t take away from me the one person who gives to my art whatever charm it possesses: my life as an artist depends on him” (Wilde, 17). Basil feels that his very existence and identity are now intertwined with Dorian’s. He worries that once Dorian is no longer a well-kept secret of his, he will sacrifice both himself and his art. This relationship is described as a charm, and there are undertones of magic and fate and devilry throughout the story that might account for Dorian’s effect. I argue this magical effect is a product of vampirism.

When Dorian finally enters the novel, he is a sitter and subject for Basil’s newest portrait. There is a debate between Basil and Lord Henry about whether or not the Lord should leave, and it comes down to Dorian’s own desire that he should stay. Basil then immediately caves and explains that “If Dorian wishes it, of course you must stay. Dorian’s whims are laws to everybody, except himself” (Wilde, 19). This control over others is another important characteristic of vampires. In the presence of vampires, victims seem to lose all sense of autonomy and control. They do things without much choice, unsure of why they are not fighting against it.

Dorian seems to be outwardly hitting all the marks of a Darvell-esque vampire, but inwardly, he is struggling. There is pull toward sin in the presence of Lord Henry, something young Dorian is afraid of but cannot stop himself from engaging in. In “Byronic(isms): Gender, Narcissism, and the Male Gothic,” Nowell A. Marshall explains that “The Byronic hero suffers under some secret sin, and in the entire structure of

alienations which he both exposes and represents is a function of that sin, which is never identified.... It has no name, this sin; it is the sin which dare not, cannot, speak its name precisely because it has imagined itself as the Unspeakable” (Marshall, 36). This can be interpreted as both vampirism, or homosexuality, and they are arguably interchangeable. In Byron’s “A Fragment”, we are introduced to a vampiric character who is clearly a monster, although it is only even insinuated. Dorian Gray’s secret is similarly obvious although never explicitly said. This secret and sin is leveraged by Lord Henry to turn his relationship with Dorian into something darker.

This revives the established concept of doubleness again, between more than just Dorian and his portrait. It exists as well between Dorian and the man who ‘turned’ him: Lord Henry Wotton. When they first meet in Basil’s art studio Henry immediately takes a liking to Dorian with an intent to corrupt him. He later thinks to himself how “he would try to be to Dorian Gray what, without knowing it, the lad was to the painter who had fashioned the wonderful portrait. He would seek to dominate him— had already, indeed, half done so. He would make that wonderful spirit his own. There was something fascinating in this son of Love and Death,” (Wilde, 38). The already established Byronic vampire in Dorian is soon to be warped and twisted into a much more Draculaic form with the guidance of Lord Henry. This is similar to the relationship between Miss Havisham and Estella in many ways, including in the way that the protégé eventually becomes more of a monster than their mentor intended, and they must suffer the consequences. When Estella is not what she wanted and unable to love, Miss Havisham has no one to blame but herself. When Dorian goes too far down the path of evil, Henry finds himself aged and regretful over how he influenced the boy. When Dorian returns

from years away traveling and exploring the world, Henry Wotton is alarmed at how little Dorian seems to have aged but how much darker his soul seems to have become. As Dracula himself is described, “what manner of man is this, or what manner of creature, is it in the semblance of man?” (Stoker, 49), Dorian is less than a man and more of a monster as the years pass by.

The beginning of the end for Dorian Gray is the downfall and ruination of his relationship with the young and promising actress Sybil Vane. Charmed by her youth and beauty, Dorian falls madly in love with her in no time at all, and after ensuring that she returns his affections, a torrid love affair begins. Now, the characters in the story are forming a sort of hierarchy of connection, with Henry dominating Dorian, and Dorian dominating Sybil. Sybil is the embodiment of a victim of vampires. Her obsession with him and blind devotion mirrors Basil’s own response to Dorian; she explains to her skeptical brother that Dorian, whose name she doesn’t even know, is:

“A prince!’ she cried musically. “What more do you want?”

“He wants to enslave you.”

“I shudder at the thought of being free” (Wilde, 68).

She is so enraptured by him; she is completely blindsided when everything changes and tragedy strikes. After Henry seems to get jealous of Dorian’s attention on someone else, he plants seeds of doubt in Dorian’s mind regarding the merits of this love story. There are questions of Sybil’s intentions, the matter of her social status, and the fact that Dorian is still so young and has so much life to live before he settles down. This negativity quickly seeps into Dorian’s impressionable mind, as is not uncommon when an older and respected figure begins to meddle with the emotions of a young protegee, a la Miss

Havisham and Estella. Dorian's innocence and charm are soon distorted, and he wrongs Sybil, depriving her of his attention and affection, driving her to suicide.

This tragedy is the inciting incident. It marks not just the death of the young actress, but the death of Dorian's own humanity as well. He is horrified to hear about the scandal, but we quickly find that the despair is not for Sybil herself, but rather his own reputation and safety in connection to her untimely demise. Lord Henry has turned Dorian into the vapid and unfeeling monster that he prides himself on being. In his time of fear and grief, Dorian turns to Henry for guidance, which is exactly what the older gentleman intended, and the descent into depravity and vampirism begins.

Dorian's developed tendency towards violence and depravity leans on the pillars of Stoker's vampire. There is animalistic frenzy, bloodlust, and darker emotions. Dorian spends much of the novel disappearing at odd hours of the night, participating in erotic activities that are considered foul and depraved for the times, and he finds himself surrounded by death on multiple occasions. These three tenants of Dorian's character later in the story are easily broken down through the Draculaic lens.

The leisure activities that Dorian participates in now occur almost exclusively during the dark hours of the night. They enter the back alleys and dirty streets of London's underground and begin a double life. While to the outside, Dorian remains a young attractive lord of high society, he abuses the dark for nefarious purposes. This is reminiscent of Dracula himself, who entertains Jonathan as a gentleman in the early hours of the evening, only to crawl out the window and down the wall of the castle like a beast the moment he believes he is unseen. Vampires rely heavily on a pristine reputation,

ensuring that any accusations of maliciousness would never fall into their laps. The idea would be preposterous to people.

The additional layer of Dorian's activities that makes it truly despicable to the public is the nature of sexuality and promiscuity. While both of our previous antagonists are demonized for their own levels of sexual heresy, Dorian's character is the perfect storm of hypersexual and homosexual. This theme is not unfamiliar to vampiric stories, both Carmilla herself being partial to young women and a moment between Dracula and Jonathan where the latter remarks how he felt oddly repulsed and enticed all at once. Dorian's villainy is rooted in his sexuality almost more than it is in his murderous tendencies.

We saw it before with Bertha, as Rochester blames his tragedy on her seduction and wantonness. She was a seductress and he fell prey to the sins of mortal flesh and desire. She allowed him to stray from God. More often than not, a heterosexual promiscuous man is not shamed by society as promiscuous women are. It is how the patriarchy was set up, to oppress women and allow freedom to men. This gets more complicated when you understand that the patriarchy upholds the power of cis straight white men most of all. Therefore, Dorian's homosexuality makes him a threat to this patriarchal society and his sexuality and promiscuity is in turn vilified as well.

Wilde's novel is a prime example of Eve Sedgwick's theory of the "Paranoid Gothic". The idea is that "the paranoiac is sick only inasmuch as he represents... both the homosexual and the fear of homosexuality", (qtd. in Halberstam, 108). Characters in *Dorian Gray* are constantly fighting internal battles, particularly in relation to feelings towards other men. Basil to Dorian, Dorian to Henry, and each of these in their inverse as

well. Dorian represents “a doubleness that is more than double, a threat that produces monstrosity precisely at the site of human identity,” (Halberstam, 110), and the site of human identity in this case is his homosexuality. His intimate relationships with the men in his life are precisely what pulls him from the purity and innocence of life, for example the possible life he could have had with Sybil Vane that Lord Henry pulled him away from.

I have explained how Dorian’s relationship with Lord Henry has exemplified an older younger vampiric relationship, but another kind of doubling occurs with reflection of the subject himself. Dorian’s story revolves heavily around the existence of his portrait and how it is a truer reflection of himself than his own body is. Due to magical means, Dorian’s soul is reflected through the altering of Basil’s artistic work rather than shown on Dorian’s own face. He remains youthful and gorgeous while the impact of time and evil behavior ruin his soul. This ruination of his internal being is outwardly seen, this is the concept of physiognomy that I mentioned before. The portrait is Dorian’s greatest secret because it is the one item in his house that could possibly out him as the monster he is. He is terrified of it himself, as he understands the danger it poses. Dorian’s portrait serves as a constant reminder of all of the evil he has done and how he has debased his soul by committing nearly every sin in the book.

In Halberstam’s book *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* he connects this to Gothic monsters, namely Dracula, and explains him as a “totalizing monster” who seems to demonize everything that does not conform to a very narrow notion of male bourgeois humanity. Dorian, insofar as we understand him as a vampire, also provides this function. In literature, “Monsters... embody threats to dominant forms

of culture and they represent such threats as self-division or insidious forms of doubling” (Halberstam, 112). While Halberstam here discusses other Gothic novels such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the doubling he references goes beyond just one story. It is applicable to vampire literature as a genre which makes the applicability to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* even more telling. His status as a homosexual man is the threat to the dominant form of culture noted by Halberstam. In every other aspect of his life, Dorian is what Victorian society would have lauded. He was white, wealthy, and a man. So, the only part of his identity left to attack is his sexual orientation. While Dorian was the closest of the antagonists to reach patriarchal status, his sexuality was too threatening and alas, he fell prey to the real monster: the patriarchy.

CONCLUSION

Evidently, the Victorian patriarchy was not difficult to threaten. The slightest stir of trouble seemed to send it into a tizzy, one that attempted to hinder the progress of independent women, homosexual men, and foreigners every step of the way to liberation through gaining rights and social acceptance. This fear is reflected in the literature of the time, where authors used vampiric tropes as a shortcut to villainizing these groups in their novels. Independent women were hysterical and angry, foreigners were violent and insane, queer people were perverted and dangerous. Monster literature and the vampire genre in particular were places that culture was subverted, challenged, and criticized. But the cost of this was the demonization of the oppressed groups that are being talked about. Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* track this sentiment through the 19th century, exemplifying how their vampiric antagonists were reflections of patriarchal fears of the time.

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