

MONSTROUS SILHOUETTE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMALE MONSTER
IN BRITISH LITERATURE

Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

Sam Houston State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Savannah J. Woodworth

August, 2017

MONSTROUS SILHOUETTE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMALE MONSTER
IN BRITISH LITERATURE

by

Savannah J. Woodworth

APPROVED:

Lee Courtney, PhD
Committee Director

Kimberley Bell, PhD
Committee Member

Linda Webster, PhD
Committee Member

Abbey Zink, PhD
Dean, College of Humanities and Social
Sciences

ABSTRACT

Woodworth, Savannah J., *Monstrous silhouette: The development of the female monster in British literature*. Master of Arts (English), August, 2017, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

In this analysis, I analyze the effects of social, political, and economic change and the historical effects of said change on the literary representations of female monsters as portrayed by male authors in medieval and Victorian literature. To contextualize the literature selected, each chapter involves extensive research which I argue influenced the presentation of the characters selected. Each chapter also includes extensive textual analysis to show direct examples in the text relating to the historical context, followed by a section tying the ideology of the thesis with the context provided in the historical and textual analysis sections. The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate the repercussions of social change on the social standings of women and the manifestation of those changes within literature as a form of expression for the conflicting representations of the nature of femininity and the anxieties of the male writers in these moments of upheaval.

At the beginning of this analysis, there was some expectation for a direct correlation between masculine anxieties and increases in female independence resulting in wholly negative portrayals of women, resulting on monstrous images; however, each character, despite their clearly monstrous traits, was nuanced in a way that was frequently empathetic, particularly when placed within the historical context of social change.

KEY WORDS: Medieval, Medieval literature, Middle Ages, Victorian literature, Victorian England, Feminism, medieval England, Feminist theory, Monster, Monster theory, Redundancy and emigration, The woman question, New woman, Angel of the house, Christianity, Paganism, The black death, Plague, Widows, Emigration debate, Redundancy issue

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Literary Criticism.....	7
CHAPTER 2: BEOWULF.....	11
Paganism and Christianity in the Early Middle Ages.....	11
Textual Analysis – Beowulf.....	17
Beowulf and Grendel’s Mother.....	25
CHAPTER 3: SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT.....	33
The Black Death and the Late Middle Ages.....	33
Textual Analysis – Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.....	40
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Lady Bertilak and Morgan le Fay.....	54
CHAPTER 4: CARMILLA.....	59
The Redundancy Issue and the Emigration Debate.....	60
Textual Analysis – Carmilla.....	65
Carmilla and the Vampiric Other.....	91
CHAPTER 5: DRACULA.....	96
The New Woman.....	96
Textual Analysis – Dracula.....	98
Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra.....	122
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION.....	128

REFERENCES	132
VITA.....	135

Chapter 1: Introduction

Considering today's political climate, it is important, potentially now more than ever, that we look at the marginalized members of society and how they are represented in literature. Because of the nature of marginalization, the media rarely depict minority groups in a fair or nuanced light. By looking at literary depictions of women through the lens of history, we can recognize the power of good and bad representation and how this representation creates a dividing line between the Other and the "mainstream". When the only representation of women, people of color, or queer identities are those created by authors who fit within the mainstream identity, the perception of these identities becomes skewed. This is not to say that those who represent the mainstream will consistently create one-dimensional or erroneous depictions; however, because of the nature of humanity, writers will always look through the lens of their own experiences during the creation process; this results in monstrous portrayals of pagan ideology through Grendel's Mother at the hands of Christian influence and overtly sexual portrayals of characters like Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla in the gender crisis of the 19th century. The key element of this analysis is not to point fingers at intentional fabrications of femininity, but instead to explore the nuanced reasons for and the historical factors which led to the creation of often monstrous women and to show the function they serve in portraying explosive moments in history.

One of the factors which often led to monstrous portrayals of women had to do with the fear of the unknown, which often coincides with dramatic changes in social structures. Attributes of the previous cultures (or incoming changes, depending on the period) are often treated as the negative Other, resulting in even more dramatic portrayals

in the literature created. Given the female focus of this analysis, and the male-focused mainstream, there are two particular ways of Othering women that I will point out here. When describing women, particularly in literature, male society dictates one of two preferred boxes for the “fairer sex”: what the Victorians called the “angel of the house” or the temptress/seductress. These are both one-dimensional interpretations that Other femininity from masculinity, without reference to nuanced understanding of humanity. Because these are black and white categories that allow for zero deviation, real life women struggle to find and accept their identity, which will no doubt lie beyond such limited descriptors. It is the aspects of female reality that do not fit neatly into either box which are demonized and turned monstrous. To demonize that which is beyond the mainstream because it is unknown or different is a traditional avenue and can be seen throughout all narratives of marginalized groups of people; however, it is in moments of great upheaval, such as the Christianization of the Middle Ages, or the Redundancy issue of the late 19th century, that the demonization typically becomes more prevalent, as will be explored further in this analysis. We see the “Othering” of femininity through the number of epithets male writers have given women over the years, of their unknowability and the confusion they generate. This perceived alien nature often results in one-dimensional depictions due to a lack of understanding of the female experience as it is depicted as being so far beyond the mainstream, bringing forth the monsters like Grendel’s mother, Lady Morgan, Carmilla, Lucy Westenra, and Mina Harker. Religion, social hierarchical changes, and identity crises all play a role in tilting the established paradigm off axis, and creating the female identities mentioned above.

In studying the historical shifts which result in dramatic monstrous portrayals, it is also important to discuss the overall function of the literary monster. I argue that through Othering the elements beyond the desired social structure of the mainstream, there is an attempt at creating balance and a feeling of justification on the part of the mainstream social structure. This is not to condone or support the creation of the Other, but instead, to argue that it is a natural fear-based response to hate what is different and what does not fit. In the case of *Beowulf*, Grendel and his mother are paganism personified in a world that is increasingly incorporating Christianity. In *Carmilla*, Carmilla is a prime example of the sexually aware New Woman that conservative Victorians feared. By creating and vilifying creatures barely resembling humanity, there is a justification in hatred and destruction. Due to the unusually dramatic social upheavals found in the Middle Ages and late 19th century Victorian England, I have selected four works, two from each period, as the focus of this analysis to demonstrate the results of unbalancing an established social structure on female perception.

Considering the drastic difference in time between the Middle Ages and the late 19th century, the reason for the selection of these two specifically may not be readily apparent. Both the Middle Ages and Victorian England provide two periods of socioeconomic upheaval, resulting in direct impact on the lives of women in those periods. The reason for selecting two periods, instead of focusing on one or the other is to show the consistency of the phenomenon of the reflection of this upheaval on female monsters, no matter the time difference. Given the extreme cultural differences between the Middle Ages and late 19th century, there would be an assumption that characteristics would manifest differently; however, this is not the case as I have found in this analysis.

For both time periods discussed here, there is a consistent level of nuanced characterization that I would argue is tied inextricably to the socioeconomic change surrounding the composition. The characters explored are portrayed in a certain way, largely because based on the climate of the period, there is little choice but to do so, as I will explore in the body of this analysis.

During the early Middle Ages, there was significant societal upheaval brought by the emergence of Christianity. This can be seen in the conflicting pagan and Christian imagery throughout some of the more popular texts, including *Beowulf*, where the anonymous poet exploits the tension for the narrative. During the early Middle Ages, many Christian traditions were adapted to coincide with pagan beliefs and practices to ease the way for conversion. This led to not only a shift in the practice of Christianity, but also a shift in social and political hierarchy. “The impact of culture on cult is as important in history as the reverse, and the terms in which the newly converted Anglo-Saxons interpreted the Christian religion were shaped by the tribal culture, impregnated, as it was, by the heathenism of the old religion” (Chaney 197). This is not to say that paganism ever fell completely out of favor with the Anglo-Saxons. Instead, the two religions melded, taking from each other until the practice was an amalgamation of the new and the old. “However much the merging of the two strands complicates the problem of survival, the [continued practice of paganism] is well attested—perhaps especially in the Anglo-Saxon charms—and the resulting syncretism at times makes for virtual neopolytheism” (Chaney 199). The merging of religions lead to social upheaval and unrest as seen in *Beowulf*, through the demonization of Grendel and his mother as the embodiments of remaining pagan practices in the society. The contradictory nature of

these two ideas pervaded medieval history as the two religions came to find their places in English society. Whenever there is major unrest in a culture, it is always of note to look at how a society treats those without power, in this case women and the Other, which are often given form as the monstrous.

The late 19th-century Victorian era was also a time of great social, political, and economic change. The idea of the New Woman was emerging as women gained more social independence and political power due to the Redundancy issue and Emigration debate which dealt with the disproportionate increase in women to men in society. “Socially, what took place at this juncture, was a demarcation of the home from the workplace. Along with economic activity, education of the young also moved out from the parameters of the family as the formal school system took root,” meaning the function and structure of the domestic home began to shift (Vaid WS-63). Mothers were no longer required to educate their children, leaving them instead with more time alone, and greater specialization of their domestic duties. Economically, Victorians were entering an age of industrialization and capitalism. Technology grew at a pace far more rapid than ever before, resulting in advances such as typewriters and bicycles, tools which also helped to increase female independence and mobility outside of the home. Although the innovations of this period often function to the advantage of women, many viewed industrialization as the destruction of Victorian values. “The degradation of the human spirit through mechanised work, its vulgarization through commercialization and urban living, its loneliness in the battle for survival, had to be fought. And this function too devolved on the home” (Vaid WS-63). The duty of spiritual purity and righteousness fell more heavily than before on the wives and mothers in Victorian England, leading to the

ideal of the “angel of the house” and the subsequent backlash as women struggled and failed to keep up with an unattainable ideal. Organizations such as the Langham Place group arose in 1856, sponsoring petitions for reformations of the Married Woman’s Property Act, starting the first feminist journal, *English Women’s Journal*, and creating the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (WS-63). The added pressure on women to conform and to be the pure moral compass of the family took the opposite effect, and while some embraced the New Woman, others argued against change, leading to social and political divide. This opposition can be seen in some literary works published during the height of the popularity of the “Woman Question”. While many characters, such as Mina Harker in *Dracula*, represent an almost idyllic version of the “New Woman,” taking elements from both conservative and liberal ideology, others, such as Carmilla in Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, are shown as the resulting negative influence of conservative ideology and the New Woman forced into violence.

Both of these periods are centered in times of change in the perception of the female position in society due to socio-economic upheaval. The medieval literary text selected is relevant as the shift in religions from paganism to Christianity created a social upset with repercussions throughout societal structure, including the use of monsters in literature and the perception of women. Late 19th-century Victorian England was a time of feminist revolution through the emergence of the Emigration debate and the New Woman where women were able to begin looking for meaning beyond the “angel of the house” ideal. By looking at each period, we can get an idea of how the portrayal of women in literature also demonstrates a shift in the societal perception of women through

chronological analysis. Addressing the overall attitude of feminist criticism and the treatment of monsters provides a foundation for the more specific analysis.

Literary Criticism

Because of the vast differences in time between the two periods in this analysis, the feminist critical theory I will use also spans a wide period to follow the changing theories over time. Below are the primary critics that I plan to reference and use in this analysis alongside their work that is most influential on mine.

Jane Anger's "A Protection for Women" (1589) addresses the idea of men writing female characters and their often disregard for nuanced understanding of femininity, looking only through the male lens and resulting in one dimensional depictions:

as often times they overrun the boundes of their own wits, and goe they knowe not whether. If they have stretched their invention so hard on a last, as it is at a stand, there remains but one help, which is, to write of us women. If they may once encroach so far into our presence, as they may but see the lynning of our outermost garment, they straight think that Apollo honours them, in yielding so good a supply to refresh their sore overburdened heads, through studying for matters to indite off. (Anger 20)

Anger argues that male writers struggle to think of women as whole beings with complex motivation and feeling as they have never been required to think of through abstraction, beyond their usefulness to men. Anger also claims that part of the disregard for nuance is the kindness of women around them. The perceived kindness has much to do with the female awareness of the power men have over women and the potential devastation a man can wield over a woman's reputation should she not bow to his desires:

If we wil not suffer them to smell on our smockes, they will snatch at our peticotes: but if our honest natures cannot away with that uncivil kinde of jesting then we are coy: yet if we beare with their rudeness, and be som what modestly familiar with them, they will have straight make matter of nothing, blazing abroad that they have surfeited with love, and then their wits must be showen in telling the maner how (Anger 21).

Although Anger takes an aggressive approach in her stance, potentially indicating a self-awareness and intentionality in the one-dimensional depiction of women by male writers (this analysis largely focuses on the incidental nature of these depictions due to a lack of self-awareness on the part of the author in many instances), it is interesting to note that the problem of men writing one-dimensional female characters is not new, nor is it a confined to a certain period of time. Anger's essay indicates the importance of awareness of time and the creator when looking at a character and to question the identity presented and see if the character has a true identity or simply the silhouette of a woman, or, in the case of this analysis, a monster.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792 addresses the forced infantilization of women to create a false innocence and naivete, as will be seen in Lucy Westenra in *Dracula*. Wollstonecraft argues that the education system of the late 18th century prevented women from accessing texts beyond what was directed at their sex to perpetuate a state of innocent childhood. The forced innocence is the direct reason for the perpetuation of the image of frivolous women, unable to cope with complex ideas. This so-called incompetence is due to a lack of experience, not a natural fault in the femininity. This explanation of the forced innocence explains the beloved literary

dichotomy of the innocent angel or self-aware temptress. By keeping women from educating themselves, the image of the “domestic saint” is easier to maintain as women are prevented from learning about anything beyond the home, or even themselves.

“Children, I grant, should be innocent; but when the epithet is applied to men, or women, it is but a civil term for weakness” (Wollstonecraft 44), and an involuntary weakness at that. Part of the reason for this forced childhood-like innocence on woman is to make them more pleasing to men in their angelic state. In turn, by pleasing men, women gain safety and acceptance:

Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives.

(Wollstonecraft 43)

Instead of teaching women to work for themselves and to secure their own happiness, the idea that they could obtain a semblance of safety and identity only through the protection of a man and through serving his happiness was perpetuated. Similarly, when a woman decided to work against this established dynamic, she was often shunned. This can be seen in the Redundancy issue of the late 19th century, as will be discussed further in this analysis, where unmarried women were regarded as an evil of society for refusing to do their “jobs” of marrying and having children, despite the real limitations placed on female members of society.

With the understanding gained from a variety of feminist critics the analysis of the selected texts can be undertaken with a more critical understanding of the reception of the chosen texts in feminist circles. Although critics like Anger were correct in their concern for the lack of multidimensional female representation, and are important to recognize, a fulfilling analysis cannot be achieved on feminist theory alone. The foundation of this analysis will rely heavily on historical context and how the shifts in hierarchy resulted in tumultuous gender relationships, and the reflection of the disconnect in influential literary works.

Chapter 2: *Beowulf*

Paganism and Christianity in the Early Middle Ages

When Christianity began to gain influence among the Anglo-Saxons, it did so subtly and with a conscious eye towards blending Christian ideology with pagan tradition. The blending of the two religions was important to the success of the Catholic missionaries and their conversion of the pagan Anglo-Saxons. According to Bede, when discussing attempted conversion in 601 A.D., Pope Gregory the Great wrote in a letter to Abbot Mellitus the following:

Since the departure of those of our fellowship who are bearing you company, we have been seriously anxious, because we have received no news of the success of your journey. Therefore, when by God's help you reach our most reverend brother, Bishop Augustine, we wish you to inform him that we have been giving careful thought to the affairs of the English, and have come to the conclusion that the temples of the idols among the people should on no account be destroyed. The idols are to be destroyed, but the temples themselves are to be aspersed with holy water, alters set up in them, and relics deposited there. For if these temples are well-built, they must be purified from the worship of demons and dedicated to the service of the true God. In this way, we hope that the people, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may abandon their error and, flocking more readily to their accustomed resorts, may come to know and adore the true God. (Bede I.29-I.30)

By keeping some of the outward appearance of paganism, Catholic missionaries contradict much of what the modern reader assumes when discussing the conversion of a

society from one religion to the other. When looking at religious conversion, the modern reader often thinks of the Christian Crusades. A peaceful transition of religious power is historically not found in the vocabulary of the modern reader; the unique nature of this religious shift is one of the reasons the Middle Ages is particularly interesting when looking at social paradigm shifts. The idea of subverting without outright eradicating paganism, and filling in Christian ideology, is arguably represented in *Beowulf*. For the purpose of historical background, I would note that the 6th century setting of *Beowulf*, the early 7th century time from of Pope Gregory's letter, and the late 7th/8th century time period of the *Beowulf* poet's composition, tie these texts together and show an important insight into the perception of Christianity and paganism in the early Middle Ages. Due to the stance taken on conversion by the Catholic church, it is likely that the mindset of blending the two religions led to the continued practice of paganism by the Anglo-Saxons, despite missionary presence. While attempting to make it easier for the Anglo-Saxons to convert to Christianity, the missionaries allowed for an easy avenue for paganism to combine with Christian ideology:

Although the Conversion of England transpired with little violence and few dramatic stands by organized heathenism, the opposite of tradition and embedded culture can be seen as the chief bulwarks against the triumph of the Cross. It is not merely that the new theology was translated into terms of northern life, [...] but heathenism itself continued. (Chaney 197-198)

Heathenism was not officially outlawed on record until 640 AD by King Eorcenberht of Kent. "In the last surviving Kentish law code, dating from the very end of the century, it is still necessary for King Wihtred to forbid both freemen and slaves from making

offerings to devils” (Chaney 198). While *Beowulf* is assumed by scholars to have been written between the mid-7th and early 8th century, the setting of the epic in the 6th century means the author was writing about a time that was only just starting to reject pagan ideology. Even in the 7th and 8th centuries, Christianity was still far from the only dominant religious influence in Britain. This explains the historically conflicting Christian and pagan imagery found in English texts written at this point, as can be seen in *Beowulf*.

Despite the comparatively peaceful conversion to Christianity and the attempts to assimilate aspects of paganism, there was much that was demonized of the old religion when Christianity began to gain influence. The pagan God, Woden, was one aspect that took on characteristics and meaning that modern readers would recognize as being distinctly anti-Christian. “[Woden] as might be expected, he was, in the first place, equated with the Christian Devil” (Chaney 201). To demonize Woden falls in line with the idea of Othering the unknown, in this case, the unknown of the pagan Gods to Christian missionaries. Figures in the pagan religion, like Woden, that were demonized set the stage for creating monsters out of pagan ideology through characters like Grendel and his Mother. Because of the continued pervasiveness of pagan ideology, it became important to change the views held by the elite in the hopes that the religion would move throughout the rest of society. Paganism and heathenism became synonymous as more and more of the elite converted. The struggle between Christianity and paganism also became a struggle of class and social standing.

The term *pagan* comes from the latin *pagani* which refers to those living in the countryside, and *heathen* was used in England to describe those living on the

heath: poor peasant people who continued to practice the old ways long after city people and the aristocracy had converted to Christianity. (Ewing 13)

One of the reasons that the Other, the lesser, were given the characteristics of paganism was to further make paganism undesirable. To be pagan, particularly in the middle and late Middle Ages, when Christianity was more dominant, was a characteristic of the poor and uneducated. Anything associated with the poor and the marginalized would naturally have a negative connotation for those in the upper-class as the elite converted increasingly to Christianity.

The [peasant] men were viewed as sexual predators, wild-eyed potential rapists who thought with their penises rather than their brains. The women were voluptuous, seductive Eves, waiting to lure good men away from virtue. Thus ethnic groups and social classes who rejected sexually repressive attitudes were, and by many still are, seen as inferior in moral character. (Ewing 13)

The poor were vilified and demonized with some of the worst sins in the Christian mindset. With the negative feelings toward women and sexuality found in the Christian religion, sexual activity shifted in perception from something natural to shameful.

Paul, the true founder of the Catholic church, preached against the evils of sexuality and the weakness of the flesh. He taught that a spiritual man should practice self-denial and the repression of all things of the body so that he might approach a state of purity while women, the weaker sex, were incapable of such self-restraint and must be controlled by men. (Ewing 14)

Any group that did not conform and continued to view sexuality in a neutral to positive light, in this case the poor and the unconverted, were labeled as sinful. Women took the brunt of the negative reactions toward sexuality in the face of the new religious shift.

Once again, as women took the much of the criticism in the new religious order, the idea of the seductive woman luring the man away from purity increases in popularity. While the seductive Eve is not represented in *Beowulf*, as we discuss the increasingly Christian world of the late Middle Ages further in this analysis, we will see how Eve is reasserted through the character of Morgan le Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and how that portrayal shows a change in the medieval mindset with the increasing influence of Christianity on the Anglo-Saxons. The treatment of Morgan and of Grendel's mother are vastly different, as was the reception and practice of Christianity between the early and late Middle Ages. There is a distinct difference in the treatment of paganism and Christianity in general shown in *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in how women and paganism were treated in the early and late Middle Ages. While the use of these two texts are by no means a comprehensive overview, they do provide two opposing views from before and after the increasing influence of Christianity. In the next section of this chapter we will discuss the specific treatment of Grendel's Mother in *Beowulf*, and the influence of Christianity on her character.

Christianity, even in the early Middle Ages, was already an influential force on the lives of the Anglo Saxons; however, while Christianity clearly influenced the Anglo-Saxon way of life, paganism was still the dominant force in the early Middle Ages. This can be seen in the literary works that were produced during that period, such as *Beowulf* and others:

Although no Anglo-Saxon work gives us full information on pre-Christian religion in England, almost no poem from before the Norman Conquest, no matter how Christian its theme, is not steeped in it, and the evidences for pagan survivals and their integration into the new faith go beyond even the literary sources.

(Chaney 200)

Beowulf is just one example of the ideas expressed here by Chaney. While there is a clearly Christian ideology present in the epic, it often conflicts with the overarching pagan themes. Despite the attempts to condemn pagan rituals such as honor killing through the death of Grendel's Mother, the themes are too pagan centered at times to be explained away. The condemnation and death of Grendel's Mother does happen, continuing in line with Christian ideology, but the idea of the honor killing had already been introduced in a favorable light by *Beowulf*, creating strife in the consistency of the Christian narrative. Christianity, while present in theme of the epic, is not the overarching influence that one might expect in a society coming under Christian influence, and it becomes clear through the conflict between actions and words spoken by the characters. Paganism still held a strong influence, and would function as the dominant force for most of the early Middle Ages.

There are many elements of Christianity to analyze as ideology became more readily accepted by the Anglo-Saxons. According to scholarly consensus, this is largely due to the likely Christian origin of the narrator speaking to a Christian audience in the 7th/8th century, looking back to the 6th century. For instance, "heavenly Grace appears in *Beowulf* as Christianized *mana*; the monsters of paganism become absorbed into the new faith also, as Grendel turns into the seed of Cain" (Chaney 208). The Christian and pagan

duality of Grendel and his Mother, is interesting as it could be argued that the giants of *Beowulf* each represent both the pagan characteristics that no longer fit into the new paradigm, while also attempting to fit into the Christian narrative. For example, the idea of revenge killing (*wergild*) is distinctly pagan, and Beowulf condemns Grendel's mother for exacting revenge for the death of her son, despite the contradiction of his own revenge killings also depicted in the epic. Alongside this, there is the image of Grendel as Cain, the self-serving narcissist. Admittedly, there are many elements of this comparison between Grendel and Cain that do not add up, but I argue that the very fact that the comparisons do not align perfectly is due to the nature of the attempted, and subsequently imperfect, assimilation of two religions, and the resulting conflict found in the somewhat forced merging.

Textual Analysis – *Beowulf*

I will now analyze *Beowulf* and the sections that deal directly with Grendel's Mother and her treatment by Beowulf and the other characters at Hrothgar's hall. By closely analyzing the text, I hope to illuminate further what is being represented by Grendel's Mother as not only a character, but as a metaphor for the consequences of social change in Anglo-Saxon society. This analysis will be taken chronologically, beginning with the first mention of Grendel's Mother after Grendel's death at the hands of Beowulf.

The first reference to Grendel's Mother is in conjunction with the idea of revenge killing, a concept that is both closely related to Grendel's Mother and with pagan culture. In the following passage, Grendel's Mother is called the "avenger" and is said that she "remembered her misery" brought on by Grendel's death. As the narrator relates:

It was clearly seen,
 obvious to all men, that an avenger still
 lived on after that enemy for a long time
 after that grim battle – Grendel’s mother,
 monster-woman, remembered her misery,
 she who dwelt in those dreadful waters,
 the cold streams, ever since Cain
 killed with his blade his only brother,
 his father’s kin; (1255-1263)

The fact that her existence, and the possibility of revenge being “obvious to all men,” speaks to the prevalence of revenge killing, and thus pagan traditions, still found in Anglo-Saxon society. Despite the fact that this passage introduces Grendel’s Mother and prepares for her eventual attack, she is never named outside of her relationship to Grendel. The epithet, “monster-woman”, is the closest to a name that she receives. Alongside the invoked ideology of the pagan revenge killing is also the Christian image of Cain and his descendants. Grendel and his mother live in their cave “ever since Cain killed with his blade his only brother,” linking them together as his exiled descendants. Already the mixing of the two religions is illustrated. While using *Beowulf* as the primary representative of the early Middle Ages cannot provide us with a comprehensive overview of how the two religions were blended, we can assume through the study of scholarly works on this time period that *Beowulf* was not alone in its blended representation.

The forced blending of paganism and Christianity historically created a system of following aspects of the two religions that often conflicted. One such instance is shown when we see how on multiple occasions Grendel's Mother invoked not just as monster, but as motherly figure as well. Despite descriptors of her as "greedy" and "grim-minded," the invocation of the mother creates sympathy:

[Grendel] went away wretched,
 deprived of joy, to find his place of death,
 mankind's foe. But his mother still
 greedy, grim-minded, wanted to go
 on her sorrowful journey to avenge her son's death. (1274-1278)

It is not beyond consideration that a mother would avenge the death of her son, despite social norms dictating revenge as masculine behavior. The strength and sympathy invoked by Grendel's Mother in this moment is a holdover from the paganism, idolizing motherhood through Danu, the Earth Mother, despite the Christian ideology of women as the bringers of sin and temptation. The conflict between the perceptions of women in paganism and Christianity is somewhat realized in Grendel's Mother, a sympathetic mother monster, both stronger than her son, but verbally described as weaker, despite actions showing otherwise.

The conflict between description and action is made explicit when Grendel's Mother arrives at Hrothgar's hall to avenge her son. In the lines that follow, the men are both too filled with horror to react properly, and yet Grendel's Mother is described as being significantly weaker than her son:

sudden turnabout

came to men, when Grendel's mother
 broke into the hall. The horror was less
 by as much as a maiden's strength,
 a woman's warfare, is less than an armed man's
 when a bloodstained blade, its edges strong,
 hammer-forged sword, slices through
 the boar-image on a helmet opposite. (1280-1287)

While the narrator states that Grendel's Mother is weaker than her son, the actions of Beowulf, Grendel's Mother, and others in the hall contradict this statement. Riuzza Liuzza notes in the translation of *Beowulf* used that "Grendel's mother is much more dangerous opponent for Beowulf; the point of these lines is not clear" (93). While the reason behind including these lines can never be fully known, there are several possibilities. Jane C. Nitzsche argues in "The Structural Unity of *Beowulf*" that "In their eyes recognizably female, she threatens them physically less than her son. But because female 'peacemakers' do not wage war, the analogy implies, by litotes, that her unnatural behavior seems *more* horrible" (293). If we accept at face value the idea that Grendel's Mother is physically weaker, the explanation that their fear comes from the broken social codes would make sense; however, I would argue that alongside this explanation, there is an attempt to lessen the power of Grendel's Mother in a society that has historically revered women through paganism. Mother Earth was a powerful central figure in the pagan Anglo-Saxon culture, resulting in a reverence incongruent with Christian condemnation of the mother, Eve, for original sin.

The warriors of Hrothgar's hall were too afraid to even dress properly, and yet we are to believe that Grendel's Mother is inferior, "by as much as a maiden's strength." The terror continues to increase as the attack continues despite the image of controlled destruction.

none remembered his helmet
 or broad mail-shirt when that terror seized them.
 She came in haste and meant to hurry out,
 save her life, when she was surprised there,
 but she had quickly seized, fast in her clutches,
 one nobleman when she went to the fens.

He was the dearest of heroes to Hrothgar (1290-1296)

Again, the text invites us to both sympathize with and feel repulsed by Grendel's Mother through the image of a mother coming to avenge her son, but also possessing a human fear of death. Grendel's Mother takes "the dearest of heroes to Hrothgar," a fitting revenge for the death of a son. The conflict arises through the breach of social contract, the breaking of the hospitality code but also the masculine nature of revenge. Despite the somewhat precarious continued acceptance of revenge killing as a system of law and order, Grendel's Mother's action neither align with Christian nor pagan views. As Nietzsche argues:

[Grendel's Mother's] attempts to avenge her son's death could be justified if she were human and male, for no *wergild* has been offered to her by the homicide Beowulf. The role of the masculine avenger is emphasized throughout the passage (1255-78) in defining her motivation to attack: she performs the role of avenger

(*wrecend*, 1256) ‘to avenge the death of her son’ (1278). Whatever her maternal feelings, she actually fulfills the duty of the kinsman. (292)

Not only has Grendel’s Mother performed an act that is losing support in a changing environment, she did so in violation of both religion’s ideologies. The slip in code is could point to a world that no longer has a firm foundation in either religion, leading to moral failings and mistakes. Something similar happens later: “She set upon her hall-guest and drew her knife, / broad, bright-edged; she would avenger her boy, / her only offspring” (1545-1547). The conflict and tension that arises surrounding Grendel’s Mother shows an inherent conflict between the pagan and Christian virtues that at times contradict within the same passage or even line, leading to outright anarchy, as seen in Grendel’s Mother’s actions.

One such contradiction is shown in the following passage where Hrothgar speaks in the aftermath of Grendel’s Mother’s revenge and the death of his men.

“She avenged that feud
 in which you killed Grendel yesterday evening
 in your violent way with a crushing vice-grip,
 for he had diminished and destroyed my people
 for far too long. He fell in battle,
 it cost him his life, and now has come another
 mighty evil marauder who means to avenge
 her kin, and too far has carried out her revenge” (1333-1340)

When Hrothgar speaks of revenge killing, he unironically both praises and condemns the action. On one hand, he thanks Beowulf for killing Grendel after the giant has killed

many of Hrothgar's men. To Hrothgar, this is a noble action; however, when he discusses Grendel's Mother's revenge in killing of one of Hrothgar's men for the death of her son, she has seemingly gone too far. Modern readers might consider the revenge enacted by a mother for the love of a son, while not necessarily justified by Anglo-Saxon law when exacted by a mother over a male relative, to at least be an understandable action. What is not considered is that, to Hrothgar and his court, Grendel and his Mother are little more than animals, worse even, because they are not shown understanding human interactions, and refuse to act in a socially approved manner. Nietzsche argues:

Because [Grendel's Mother] is legally justified in pursuing her own feud given the tribal duty of the retainer to avenge the death of his lord, regardless of the acts he has committed, she behaves monstrously then in only one way. For a mother to 'avenge' her son (2121) as if she were a retainer, he were her lord, and avenging more important than peace-making is monstrous. (292)

It is made worse by Grendel's Mother's inhumanity in her physical appearance alongside her gender. Grendel and his Mother function as relics of the past who refuse to change to the Judeo-Christian view of the world while also refusing to conform to the pagan way. Instead, they cling to warped versions of pagan ideals in isolation.

It is after Grendel's Mother attacks that Hrothgar tells Beowulf the legends of the two giants. This section is meant to be a warning for Beowulf's upcoming battle with Grendel's Mother; however, Grendel's Mother, despite being the one Beowulf will fight, is mentioned only in passing.

I have heard countrymen and hall-counselors
among my people report this:

they have seen two such creatures,
 great march-stalkers holding the moors,
 alien spirits. The second of them,
 as far as they could discern most clearly,
 had the shape of a woman; the other, misshapen,
 marched the exile's path in the form of a man,
 except that he was larger than any other;
 in bygone days he was called 'Grendel'
 by the local folk. They knew no father,
 whether before him had been begotten
 any more mysterious spirits (1345-1357)

While Hrothgar tells Beowulf where to find Grendel's Mother to kill her, she is presented as secondary to Grendel, literally. Despite being mentioned first, Hrothgar calls her the "second of them." Grendel's Mother is the target, but she is practically a footnote in this passage. While naming Grendel for Beowulf, Grendel's Mother still receives her identity from her attachment to her son. Instead of going into detail about the foe Beowulf will fight, Hrothgar speaks about a father that has never even been seen and is, for all current purposes, irrelevant. This leaves the question, why is the very monster that Beowulf is going up against barely mentioned in favor of discussing a monster that has already been killed, and one that likely no longer exists?

Despite Hrothgar condemning Grendel's Mother for avenging her son, it is not long before Beowulf delivers the following contradictory statement: "It is always better / to avenge one's friend than to mourn overmuch" (1384-1385). Up to this point, there has

been no overt acceptance or encouragement of pagan ideology surrounding revenge killing until this moment. While actions on behalf of Beowulf, Hrothgar, and the court have shown that the condemnation of pagan ideology is far from universal, verbal statements thus far have provided at least lip service to Christian ideology as it was understood by the Anglo-Saxons in the 7th and 8th century. The moment of overt homage to pagan ideology continues as Beowulf encourages that “each of us shall abide the end / of his world’s life; let him who can / bring about fame before death – that is best / for the unliving man after he is gone” (1386-1389). Gaining glory through actions on the battle field is a distinctly pagan idea. By behaving as the fearless action-based hero, Beowulf embodies more the traditional Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal than the Christian. By having the quintessential Anglo-Saxon hero behaving as an Anglo-Saxon pagan, but being blessed by God, the contention between the two religions continues in the text.

While we may never know the exact reasons behind contradicting lines and themes, the conflicting nature of the pagan and Christian ideology as expressed in *Beowulf* is clearly prevalent. Through my analysis, I plan to further study the influence of religion, gender, and identity as agents of change, explanations for contradictory ideology represented, and illumination of historical social perceptions.

***Beowulf* and Grendel’s Mother**

As seen is a double standard in the treatment of Grendel’s Mother and Beowulf. There are arguably several reasons for this. With Beowulf cast as a pseudo-Christian hero, under the protection of God, he is exempt from condemnation unlike someone outside of the Christian sphere. Although Beowulf is, in action, a pagan hero, who continues to practice pagan customs, he is coded as a form of Christian hero and is

protected by the Christian ideology of holy forgiveness. Because his actions were ostensibly done in the name of God, Beowulf was not punished the way a non-Christian would have been. While Grendel's actions were not excusable, his Mother's, when put in perspective, are a harder to condemn. Grendel's Mother, when her behavior is put simply, is exacting revenge for the death of her son. She is not the only person in the epic to exercise this pagan right as the entirety of the epic revolves around the theme; however, she is the only one condemned for it. As a pagan, a monster, and a female, Grendel's Mother is outside of the realm of God's holy forgiveness of Christians. Despite the fact that Beowulf's and Grendel's Mother's actions are identical, arguably both working for noble reasons, Beowulf to stop the destruction of Hrothgar's hall and Grendel's Mother to avenge her son, only Beowulf can receive forgiveness. Beowulf is exempt from condemnation through Christian theology through the forgiveness of sins, as described in the book of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (*ESV Bible*, Mark 16.16). Although Beowulf is wholly pagan, the use of the name and the belief expressed by the narrator may be sufficient to give him a pass. The Bible reinforces the anti-isolationism that compels Hrothgar and the court to view Grendel as Other even before the attack in the book of 1 John: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (*ESV Bible*, 1 John 1.7). Lastly, when looking at the book of Romans, we are able to find a Biblical reason for why the honor killing committed by Beowulf was acceptable, while Grendel's Mother's was not. "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (*ESV Bible*, Romans 5.1). Beowulf, and by extension, Hrothgar's court, most

likely felt justified in their behavior as those “in the right” through the approval of God, to Beowulf meaning Odin and to the narrator meaning the Christian God, within the identity of the pseudo-Christian hero and the condemnation of the sinful Other.

With the increased presence of Christian ideology, the concept of gender becomes more relevant. Gender is closely tied to the double standard treatment of Grendel’s Mother via Christian ideology. Historically, Christian heroes, or pseudo-Christian heroes, like Beowulf who served Christ through physical acts, were male, while female Christian “heroes” did so through pious acts of virginity, purity, and martyrdom. Grendel’s Mother subverts this ideology and works in the realm of the physical over the spiritual and pious. She more closely resembles the pagan female goddesses, like the Earth Mother, than any revered Christian woman in the Bible. As discussed previously, it became important to demonize parts of paganism to make Christianity more appealing in comparison.

Early Christianity was resisted by the masses until the 5th century when Mary was elevated as the mother of God. The church tried to maintain a balance between honoring Mary to attract the common people, and desexualizing her by emphasizing her virginity, not giving her any power except through her son, Jesus. (Ewing 15)

The identity of Mary derived from her son parallels the idea of Grendel’s Mother, whose identity is also derived from the existence of her son. She gains power only through Beowulf and Hrothgar’s knowledge of Grendel. Without her son, she would likely not be considered a threat. The importance of Mary was a thorn in the side of the early church. “The church recognized that the widespread worship of Mary was primarily the continuation of traditions associated with the great mother goddesses of an earlier time”

(Ewing 1006). An argument could be made that the demonization of Grendel's mother has much to do with the early Christian attempts to eradicate the influence of paganism on the Anglo-Saxons. By demonizing Grendel's mother, the character who, like Mary, derives her identity from her son, the church sends the message that the mother is the lesser than the son. The opposition of the ideal Christian woman in *Beowulf* through the representation of Grendel's Mother is important because of the strong ties to pagan deities and the attempt to more completely eradicate pagan influence as time progressed. As previously noted, the Catholic church was historically concerned with the pagan tendency to place women in positions of influence and power, while Christianity of the time traditionally viewed women with scorn. To present a character like Grendel's Mother, one who resembles the pagan Mother Earth, but to tie her to the cursed family of Cain, to have her killed is representative of an important point of Catholic missionaries. The shift in religious ideology from pagan to Christian, while not historically a violent movement in physicality, was ideologically violent in the shifting views of women.

While the analysis of *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* cannot provide a comprehensive view of this shift and its influence on gender roles and perceptions, they do provide possible interpretations and a glimpse at understanding. At least in this case, the portrayal of Grendel's Mother in *Beowulf* is a representation of the historical shifts of feelings towards women in the Middle Ages due to religious attitude changes and an attempt to further undermine pagan ideology in the Anglo-Saxon culture through a subversion of the traditional Anglo-Saxon woman.

Grendel's mother inverts the Germanic roles of the mother and queen, or lady.

She has the form of a woman (*idese onlīcnes*, 1351) and is weaker than a man

(1282ff) and more cowardly, for she flees in fear for her life when discovered in Heorot (1292-93). But unlike most mothers and queens, she flights her own battles. (Nitzsche 288)

While I agree that Grendel's Mother is the inversion of the traditional female Germanic roles, I do take exception with Nitzsche's characterization that Grendel's Mother was either "weaker than a man" or "more cowardly." The poet does characterize Grendel's Mother as being weaker for being a woman; however, it is common amongst scholars, even noted in the footnotes of the Liuzza translation, that Grendel's Mother is far from being weaker than her son and the purpose of these lines is not entirely clear. In the battle between Grendel's Mother and Beowulf, Beowulf wears armor and uses his sword, neither of which he used in his battle against Grendel. The reason for the change would only make sense if Grendel's Mother was in fact stronger than her son, not weaker. As far as Grendel's Mother's perceived cowardice, I argue that to fear for her own life makes her more human than Grendel. Fear of death and an awareness of death are traits traditionally associated with humanity. Grendel's Mother is not a coward for fearing for her life, she is likely more closely tied to humanity than Grendel: "the poet constantly contrasts the unnatural behavior of Grendel's dam with that of the feminine ideal by presenting human examples as foils in each of the two parts" (Nitzsche 289). Grendel's Mother is abnormal and Other in all aspects of society.

Alongside the attempt to devalue female influence in Anglo-Saxon culture through Grendel's Mother as a demonic parallel to Mother Earth, is also the lack of identity given to Grendel's Mother. Grendel's Mother has no name, no identity outside of her relation to her son. "As if the poet wished to stress her maternal role she is

characterized usually as Grendel's *mōdor* or kinswoman (*māge*, 1391), the former a word almost exclusively used for her, although other mothers appear in the poem" (Nitzsche 288). It is as if the poet invites us to recognize the concept of motherhood and to sympathize with Grendel's Mother's; however, despite this, we once again see the contradiction of putting Grendel's Mother in the forefront of the action and underlining her motherhood while dismissing her through dialogue. Even when Beowulf goes to battle Grendel's Mother, she is a footnote in Hrothgar's warning, who then chooses to focus on Grendel and his potential father. This is not to say that women in pagan culture enjoyed the same level of autonomy as men before Christian influence, but there was documentable historical shifts towards restriction of women at the increase of Christian influence. Also of note is the discussion of gender is the pronouns used to reference Grendel's Mother. While we have already discussed her identity as mother, Grendel's Mother is also avenger. By avenging the death of her son, Grendel's Mother essentially casts off some of her identity as female and takes on the masculine role, as seen in the language used to refer to her. "[The poet] occasionally uses a masculine pronoun in referring to her (*sē þe* instead of *sēo þe* in 1260, 1497; *hē* instead of *hēo* in 1392, 1394). [...] Other epithets applied to her are usually applied to male figures: warrior, *sinnige secg*, in 1379; destroyer, *mihtig mānscaða*, in 1339; and [male] guardian, *gryrelīcne grundhyrde*, in 2136" (Nitzsche 288-289). Because of this, Grendel's Mother's identity cannot be pinned down, causing even more discord and distress in a society attempting to form around a new ideology. "Such a woman might be wretched or monstrous because she insists on arrogating the masculine role of the warrior or lord" (Nitzsche 289).

The Middle Ages were a time of great change and social upheaval. While there isn't a specific literary term to describe this sort of encompassing change, business and economics does offer a close description in the term "inflection point". Per the Cambridge English Dictionary, an inflection point is a business term which refers to "a time of sudden, noticeable, or important change in an industry, company, market, etc." While the shift in religious influence during the Middle Ages is not a business shift, it did historically influence the lives of the Anglo-Saxons in their day to day life, including how they did business and conducting themselves in social settings. The term is apt because the change could be marked through texts such as *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain*, and also in religious practices, social movements, industry, and more. The religious shift, in large and small ways, had an impact on the lives of women in society. I say this with the understanding that there is a general consensus that medieval texts are rife with misogyny, and modern feminism has much to argue against, the modern feminist analysis would find obstruction when looking at the work as a literary piece, but also as a historical document. I am not necessarily arguing for a feminist reading in the context of ripping apart *Beowulf* for misogynistic transgressions. What I am arguing for instead, is the acknowledgment that the misogyny of these texts historically came from a series of events and social influences, not just general baseless hatred of women, as has been argued. Religion made a major impact on the lives of the Anglo-Saxons, and it did shift views of women, based on biblical history and ideology. Religion, while not the primary agent of change in either of the time periods I will discuss, historically influences society, no matter the time period. It is in the Middle Ages, however, that I argue religion had the

most influence on society as it was one of the agents of social standings that changed drastically at that time.

Through the discussion of *Beowulf* and the historical changes that were just beginning to gain traction in the early Middle Ages, we are able to see the importance of the religious shift on Anglo-Saxon society, even in its infant stages. In the following chapter, I plan to look at *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and analyze the glimpse it affords into a more matured influence of Christian ideology in the Middle Ages. The late Middle Ages, as will be discussed, was also a time of industrial change, which traditionally also shifted world views, including the view of female influence and family life.

Chapter 3: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

The Black Death and the Late Middle Ages

While religion remains an important point of literature in the late Middle Ages, industrialization and the repercussions on the economy and social hierarchy takes precedence. As Christianity is firmly grounded in the later Middle Ages, it no longer functions as a primary force against shifting religious ideology and social constructs. Therefore, this analysis will focus on economic changes which occurred due to the black death and resulting industrial changes. When dealing with the effects of the plague on female status, much of the conflict in scholarly papers centers on wages, and whether or not the plague legitimately advanced the power and status of widows and women in medieval England. There are numerous articles which both defend and strike down the claim that, due to the plague, women experienced a “golden age” with an increased economic, social, and even political power.¹ The argument that defends the idea of the “golden age” in many cases relies heavily on experiences of widows, of the female gentry class, and on the documentation of pre-plague wage amounts. Considering the hierarchical status of Lady Morgan in *Sir Gawain*, studies dealing primarily with the gentry are more relevant than peasant focused studies.

In contrast to the early Middle Ages, land-owning widows in the late Middle Ages, particularly after the Black Death (1348-1350), enjoyed significant economic and social power. Because of the loss of roughly one-third of the English population, there was a shortage of laborers, merchants, and farm holders, leaving the widows of these

¹Bardsley, Sandy. “Women’s Work Reconsidered: Gender and Wage Differentiation in Late Medieval England.” *Past & Present*. No. 165, 1999, pp. 3-29.

workers to run the businesses and lands. This was largely due to the fact that, as per Peter Franklin's article, "Peasant Widows' 'Liberation' and Remarriage before the Black Death", the land holdings of the male members of the family would pass onto the widows instead of the children. Peter Franklin largely focuses on the experiences of Thornberry widows in pre-plague 13th century England; however, Franklin does make a case for how the experiences of these widows is what sets up the possibility for the 14th century post-plague widows to experience a "golden age". With the foundation set by 13th century widows in Franklin's study, and the dominating influence of the plague, there is a larger expression of power by land holding widows and gentry. The combination of events leads to an increased sense of economic, social, and in some cases political, liberation among middle and upper-class women. Franklin does point out how, while the plague arguably turned into a beneficial point of time for widows, this was not necessarily the same for the unmarried female population: "Independent roles for unmarried peasant women may have been rare, yet villein widows often took up their husband's complete holdings and as tenants, they played a part in local affairs in the century *after* the Black Death" (Franklin 186). Due to the large death toll, Franklin found that widow land holders were not uncommon. In fact, per Franklin's research, they formed a surprising number of land owners as a sect. "Independent widows (those who kept their dead husbands' holdings and did not remarry) formed a considerable proportion of the tenants in medieval English peasant society" (Franklin 188). Franklin also states that widow landholders were largely supported, at least in some areas such as Thornberry, where Franklin's research focuses. "Widows might have had to find pledges for the payment of entry fines and (significantly) for the performance of services, but many lords seem to

have shown no objection to women as tenants” (Franklin 188). It is important to note here that Franklin’s study focused on the villein widows, whose experiences were, in some instances, vastly different from peasant widows or widows of the gentry. This is not to say that the women of the gentry were not subordinate to their male family members, but that their social standing afforded them more freedom after the death of their spouses.

Women’s subordination is a common feature of traditional societies often associated with elites and conquering aristocracies such as those of twelfth-century northern France and Norman England. Male dominance over daughters and wives remained at all levels of fourteenth-century English society, but the situation altered radically when husbands died. (Franklin 195)

The widow experience was not consistent across England, but the fact that even a section of women were able to further their position in society, even only briefly, is a difference from the early Middle Ages.

While Franklin’s study does focus on 13th century widows, the following paragraph charts the advances and decline of the female position as recorded by Franklin, into the 14th-century. Not only does his study set the scene for female status shifts, but also situates his study specifically with how it relates to the 14th century and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, by association:

Opportunities for peasant widows’ independence are unlikely to have remained constant in the long term. They might be assumed to have decreased in the thirteenth century as rising population created pressure for remarriage both from communities anxious to see their young men established as tenants and from lords eager to levy substantial fines for marriage to widows, but many early fourteenth-

century women still achieved independence. The history of Thornberry suggests that the improvements in women's condition which can be identified in the period 1350-1450 were the consequences of the post plague demographic decline and economic change. (Franklin 203)

Arguably, the improvements in the conditions of the female experience across the country were due to the Black Death. While Franklin makes it clear that any advancements in socio-economic and political female experiences were only temporary and did not extend past the "golden age", the spike in independence is still important. "It seems the prospects for widows' independence deteriorated after the end of the middle ages. This has been ascribed to the intensification of male control within sixteenth-century society, and we can indeed see in some early modern rival communities an un-medieval concern with the eldest son's rights" (Franklin 204). Anytime a marginalized group, such as the female population, experiences a shift in advancement, there will traditionally be an answering reactionary response and the works produced during this time will often times largely reflect the social shifts and changes, as this analysis explores.

Similarly to Franklin, Norman F. Cantor argues in *In the Wake of the Plague* that the Black Death disproportionately benefited lawyers and gentry widows. Cantor's *In the Wake of the Plague* deals with the social changes that the Black Death created in the 14th century as an entire movement, without focusing on the female experience; however, Cantor does comment on the changes the plague brought specifically to women, particularly the gentry class:

The other beneficiaries of the plague, besides the lawyers, were women of the gentry class. The common law had a procedure for protecting widows, partly because the gentry landlords engaged in serial marriages with wives who died like flies in childbirth and were often gone by age thirty. [...] Therefore, the law stepped in and decreed that every widow had a right to 'dower,' one-third of the income (not the capital) of her husband's estate until she died. Within forty days of her husband's demise she was supposed to vacate the family mansion. But one-third the income from the family lands would allow her to live comfortably elsewhere and play the role of the grand dowager. (Cantor 126-127)

The experience described by Cantor does show a difference of the change as felt by villein widows and gentry class widows. Traditionally, it would be expected that any social shift, even one that focused largely on women, would be experienced differently by class. While the experience of the gentry widows was not the same as the villein widows, both classes experienced an increase in independence and economic freedom after the death of their husbands from the plague. In fact, when Cantor does touch in the working-class women, his description of post-plague female economic freedom largely matches up with Franklin's description:

The Black Death was good for the surviving women. Among the gentry, dowagers flourished. Among working-class families both in country and town, women in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries took a prominent role in productivity, giving them more of an air of independence. The beer- and ale-brewing industry was largely women's work by 1450. The growth of a domestic

wool-weaving industry allowed working-class women to become industrial craftsmen in the textile industry. (Cantor 203)

Between Franklin and Cantor, there is a somewhat optimistic description of the life of the post-plague woman, as far as upper and working-class women are concerned.

Despite the consistency of Franklin's and Cantor's arguments, there is debate about the legitimacy of the "golden age" among scholars. Many claim the evidence used to prove the existence of the "golden age" is not contextualized and cannot be used to prove the claim. Sandy Bardsley, in her article "Women's Work Reconsidered: Gender and Wage Differentiation in Late Medieval England" argues against the "golden age". Bardsley claims scholars do not contextualize wage statistics in late medieval England when proving the "golden age" theory. While Bardsley recognizes the logical assumptions that led to the theory, she claims that there is a lack of evidence, outside of the anecdotal, provided by scholars. While there are some arguments that fall in line with Bardsley's claim, most focus on the experiences of peasants, and do little research on landowning and gentry widows. For the purpose of this analysis, the experiences of upper-class widows are more pertinent. As Lady Morgan, a wealthy high class woman, is the focus of this portion of the study, the works dealing with the experiences of middle class, land owning widows, and gentry widows are more relevant.

While we will likely never know with certainty the exact effects of the plague on female standings, it can be argued that, due to the deaths of the plague, the increased wages did give rise to at least a temporary middle class. With wage increases, women gained at least some increase in economic and social freedom. This can be charted through the literary portrayal of women compared between the early and late Middle

Ages. Even without a wage increase, the rise in available work for women would still have allowed for an increased access to funds and a rise in economic independence for working women. If not by wage increases, then an increased demand for women works did allow for more economic and social mobility. Agricultural work commonly demanded an all hands-on deck mentality even before the effects of the plague. “Seasonal demand for labour became even more acute after the Black Death. During the labour shortage of the late fourteenth century old people, children, people with disabilities, and women were all called upon to lend a hand and they took the opportunity to earn whatever wages they could command” (Bardsley 5). While the wages paid to widows and women workers may not have increased, women had an easier time of finding work due to labor shortages, and through the increased available work, were able to gain economic freedom beyond what they were traditionally able. Beyond wages, concept of wage would not directly impact a character like Morgan le Fay or Lady Bertilak in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. While it is important to note that the female “golden age” was not a universal age, to disregard the concept because it did not factor heavily into improving the wages received by peasant women is potentially just as problematic.²

While the extent of the effect of the Black Death on the status of women is not an easily quantifiable concept, a shift did occur and was reflected in the art and literature of the late Middle Ages. This can be seen in characters like Morgan, who have acquired

²Bardsley also cites Thorald Rogers, a 19th century scholar who argued that women were paid equally produced a work that, while it focused primarily on the male experience of post-plague England, provided the groundings for the interpretation of female economic standing that many scholars still rely on (6). The potential discrepancy between Roger’s claim that women experienced a disproportionately high increase in wages in comparison to men and the wage numbers reflected in records from the 14th and 15th century is a reflection of a mentality seen throughout history. The advancement of marginalized groups traditionally creates reactionary anti movements in response by the groups in power against a perceived threat.

power beyond what would have been possible in early medieval literature. As will be explored below, while Christianity is not as relevant from a reactionary analysis, it does feature heavily and plays a part in understanding Morgan and Lady Bertilak as characters in conjunction with Gawain and the Green Knight. The increased economic mobility and power that at least portions of the female class experience post-plague can also be recognized through Morgan and her use of power through the mantle of the Green Knight, as widows functioned under the mantle of their husband's name.

Textual Analysis – *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Although Morgan is the primary focus of this analysis, she features very few times directly in the text. Because of the lack of her physical presence, I will address Lady Bertilak, the Green Knight, and Sir Gawain, and how Morgan influences them throughout the narrative. It is through Lady Bertilak that I will discuss the actions and desires of Morgan as expressed Lady Bertilak fulfilling Morgan's bidding. The same can be said for the sections which feature heavily around the Green Knight/Lord Bertilak. Gawain, as the recipient of Morgan's focus, and his experiences as he ultimately fails her tests, is looked at with an eye towards Morgan's actions and how he measures up against her expectations. The tasks set before Gawain, and the behavior of Lord and Lady Bertilak are orchestrated by Morgan, and the results of the tasks are indicative of Morgan's will. Despite the how little Morgan is featured in the text, her presence is the overarching influence throughout the story.

At the introduction of Lady Bertilak, she is seen as pious and modest; when Gawain sees her he notes that "the lord attends alone; his fair lady sits / in a comely closet, secluded from sight" (933-934). Although Lady Bertilak is not supernatural or

monstrous, when placed in juxtaposition to Morgan, she becomes relevant as the vehicle for Morgan's plot. Lady Bertilak is, at least upon first introduction, a demure and Christian woman. She is concerned with appearance and sits apart from the men at the feast. Lady Bertilak is young and comely and easily attracts the attention of the young knight:

Then the lady, that longed to look on the knight,
 Came forth from her closet with her comely maids.
 The fair hues of her flesh, her face and her hair
 And her body and her bearing were beyond praise,
 And excelled the queen herself, as Sir Gawain thought. (941-945)

The beauty and purity of Lady Bertilak draws a parallel to Mary on whom Gawain relies on throughout.³ The parallel between Lady Bertilak and Mary is important as it sets the scene for how Gawain will come to rely on the Lady's material gifts over Mary's spiritual guidance. Lady Bertilak, and Gawain's eventual reliance on her, also opens the way for Morgan's test of Gawain. Lady Bertilak as pure, young, and innocent is in direct contrast to Morgan le Fay, described by Gawain as an older woman and unremarkable. The most powerful of the characters in *Sir Gawain*, is also the one who stands out the least. As we see in the historical notes above, landowning widows and gentry widows had the most independence and power after the death of their husband. These widows were able to work under the name of their late husbands and to continue in

³We see earlier on in the poem, Gawain's reliance on Mary "He prays with all his might / That Mary may be his guide / Till a dwelling comes in sight" (737-739). Also in lines 750-758.

good standing in society as they had done their part of fulfilling social marital obligations. Similarly to the early medieval concept of lineage and gaining honor and status through the conquests of the father, widows were able to work and gain status under the mantle of their departed husbands' names. Along the same vein, we see how Morgan gains power and the accomplishment of her will by using Bertilak/the Green Knight and operating under his name, even as she is the one in control.

After Morgan's introduction as the older woman attending Lady Bertilak, she is rarely mentioned again, often lumped in with Lady Bertilak's attendants. The continued disregard of the Morgan, the mastermind of narrative events, is similar to the disregard of Grendel's Mother, the most fearsome of the creatures, yet treated as weak by the narrator and as an afterthought by Hrothgar. Despite the shift in power dynamics, and the increased influence of women in the post-plague period, the changes were not so drastic as to eliminate the impulse to disregarding women, specifically women who were not marriageable. Because of this, Morgan is primarily referred to via her placement next to Lady Bertilak. How the characters are oriented around each other is an important distinction of perception and power dynamics. Here we see Morgan as she is seen by Gawain through her orientation to Lady Bertilak. "Another lady led her by the left hand / That was older than she—an ancient, it seemed, / And held in high honor by all men about" (947-949). The view of Morgan through Gawain's eyes is compounded in the long passage below as Gawain literally compares the two women in one entire stanza:

But unlike to look upon, those ladies were,
 For if one was fresh, the other was faded:
 Bedecked in bright red was the body of one;

Flesh hung in folds on the face of the other;
 On one a high headdress, hung all with pearls;
 Her bright throat and bosom fair to behold.
 Fresh as the first snow fallen upon hills;
 A wimple the other one wore round her throat;
 Her swart chin well swaddled, swathed all in white;
 Her forehead enfolded in flounces of silk.
 That framed a fair fillet, of fashion ornate.
 And nothing bare beneath save the black brows,
 The two eyes and the nose, the naked lips,
 And they unsightly to see, and sorrily bleared.
 A beldame, by God, she may well be deemed,
 of pride!
 She was short and thick of waist,
 Her buttocks round and wide;
 More toothsome, to his taste,
 Was the beauty by her side. (950-969)

The contrasting imagery foreshadows Gawain's interactions with Lady Bertilak as she is described as both pure as snow but also tempting in red. Throughout the description, Gawain continues to dismiss Morgan and play directly into her test. Gawain describes Morgan as plain and unadorned, and how he considers her to likely be a pious woman. By wearing a guise, Morgan plays on the ideology relating appearance to piety by appearing in a role that would traditionally be disregarded by a young knight, allowing

her to move more freely and plot without attracting attention. The little emphasis on Morgan in the narrative outside the first description until her identity is revealed simulates Gawain's lack of attention for the readers.

Despite the lack of attention drawn to Morgan, the first hint of Morgan's status takes place at the high table right away. "The old ancient lady, highest she sits; / The lord at her left hand leaned, as I hear; / Sir Gawain in the center, beside the gay lady" (1001-1003). The orientation of the high table here is different from how Gawain orients Morgan to Lady Bertilak. We now see the placement of the table through the eyes of the narrator. Because of the shift in perspective, we do not see Morgan situated through either Lord or Lady Bertilak's placement, nor is Morgan described in relation to Gawain. Instead, Bertilak is oriented by his placement to Morgan; Bertilak is to her left. In contrast to the idea that status comes from the masculine, as we see in *Beowulf* and his introduction through his father's deeds, or Grendel's Mother and her identity as defined by her son, Morgan is the one that defines Lord Bertilak in this moment. Through the language used, Morgan could be considered equal to the lord. At the very least, this moment is arguably a demonstration of Morgan's power over Lord Bertilak as the one in charge of the ultimate narrative.

We quickly see Lady Bertilak take on the role as Morgan's vehicle for her to test Gawain. The following scene does not necessarily read as a test at first, as it is coded as a chivalric episode, but nevertheless functions as the beginning piece to Morgan's plot:

Lo! it was the lady, loveliest to behold,
 That drew the door behind her deftly and still
 And was bound for his bed—abashed was the knight,

And laid his head low again in likeness of sleep;
 And she stepped stealthily, and stole to his bed,
 Cast aside the curtain and came within,
 And set herself softly on the bedside there,
 And lingered at her leisure, to look on his waking. (1187-1194)

The scene is described from Lady Bertilak's perspective, instead of Gawain's, although I would argue that, with Morgan as puppet master throughout the poem, we are seeing this perspective through Morgan's use of the Lady. Lady Bertilak is largely a pawn of Morgan's, and her behavior is influenced by Morgan's desires, if not by her magic.

Gawain's behavior during the courtship, even pursuing Lady Bertilak in the home of her husband, and Gawain's host, would not result in a social condemnation. The chivalric code, which gained popularity around the 14th century, encouraged knights to follow their true love, no matter the cost. While it did not encourage adultery, as some have claimed, the code did view the marriage of a true love to another man as an obstacle that the knight must overcome to prove his devotion "To the aristocrats of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, what mattered was not these heroes' adulteries but their excellence as lovers and therefore as models of chivalric value" (Benson 241). If the knight overcame the marriage obstacle, he would then prove to the lady that his love was true and honorable and he would be devoted to her forever. While the 21st century reader might initially condemn this behavior, Gawain does not break any boundaries here, per 14th century ideology. Lines such as mentioning his "mirthful speech" further underline the chivalric attitude and traditionally would support this interpretation. As Benson notes:

Courtly love, however, is especially dependent on the forms of speech, since not only is every lover a poet, but the main characteristics of the courtly lover – his courtesy, humility, and religion of love – are expressed in speech. To be adept at ‘luff talk’ is therefore the first requirement of the courtly lover. (Benson 243)

We see the idea of the courtly lover and chivalric knight underlined through the invocation of Gawain’s “model of fair demeanor and manners pure” (1297). I would argue that the continuous invocation of Gawain as the courtly lover is what protects him throughout the exchange with Lady Bertilak, even after he fails Morgan’s test. The invocation of the chivalric code in the lines which invoked Gawain’s manners and courtly speech, protected him from religious condemnation for his behavior. This same protection is arguably not extended to Lady Bertilak. As Lady Bertilak’s advances become increasingly forward, Gawain’s devotion seems to wane as he realizes that perhaps she is not his true love and his behavior is mistaken in pursuing her in love, and not of the chivalric code.

When Lady Bertilak enters Gawain’s chambers again, after the realization that perhaps something is not right in their exchanges, the narrator’s description of Lady Bertilak, and his own reactions, shift dramatically:

The lady, with guile in heart,
 Came early where he lay;
 She was at him with all her art
 To turn his mind her way. (1472-1475)

While “the lady” being described is Lady Bertilak, in these lines, it would seem that Morgan’s influence is at work even more than before. The task of turning his mind away,

and making him rely on Lady Bertilak and eventually the girdle, instead of on God and Mary, is Morgan's goal, not necessarily Lady Bertilak's, who serves as a pawn in Morgan's plot. Despite my argument that the deceit described here is more Morgan's than Lady Bertilak's, we do see a clear condemnation of Lady Bertilak in these lines. When describing her as having "guile in heart" and being "at him with all her art", we see not only a condemnation of Lady Bertilak but also an excuse made for Sir Gawain. Gawain is following the chivalric code and behaving honorably, while Lady Bertilak is tempting him and luring him away from virtuous behavior. Because Gawain is unaware of the false nature of his behavior, he cannot be condemned. The protection of him through the chivalric code is underlined here: "Thus she tested his temper and tried many a time, / Whatever her true intent, to entice him to sin, / But so fair was his defense that no fault appeared" (1549-1551). This line signals the end of the chivalric nature of their courtship. Gawain attempts to continue in the vein of honor as a chivalric knight, but Lady Bertilak is increasingly condemned by her forward nature and attempts to lure him into sin. There is an element of sexuality to this, like Eve, but the most important parallel is not the sexual, but the enticement to rely on something outside of God and Mary. Eve is characterized as luring Adam to rely on the words of Satan and to rely on the fruit of the tree of Knowledge so that he can rely on himself over God. Lady Bertilak, though in all actuality, Morgan, lures Gawain away from his reliance on God and Mary to rely on her and the physical in the girdle.

Morgan's influence is once again asserted when we see Lady Bertilak return to Gawain again the following night:

While our hero lies at home in wholesome sleep

Within the comely curtains on the cold morning,

But the lady, as love would allow her no rest,

And pursuing ever the purpose that pricked her heart, (1731-1734)

Up to this point, it could be argued that Lady Bertilak acts of her own will to tempt Gawain, and yet in this moment, she is officially characterized as a puppet, just as much as Gawain or Lord Bertilak. This passage provides confirmation that the overarching influence up to this point is Morgan. Lady Bertilak is just as much under her influence as Gawain or Lord Bertilak. To say that “love would allow her no rest” and that it “pricked her heart” shows that she is not unaffected. While we are asked to judge her more harshly than Gawain in these scenes, we are also reminded that Lady Bertilak is not acting entirely of her own volition.

Throughout most of the poem, Morgan sets up the test for Sir Gawain. Morgan sends the Green Knight to engage him in the game at Arthur’s court. Morgan uses the knight and Lady Bertilak as pawns in her game, all building up to Lady Bertilak’s presentation of the girdle to Gawain to tempt him to put his reliance in the physical world over God and Mary:

Then he bore with her words and withstood them no more,

And she repeated her petition and pleaded anew,

And he granted it, and gladly she gave him the belt,

And besought him for her sake to conceal it well,

Lest the noble lord should know—and the knight agrees

That not a soul save themselves shall see it thenceforth

with sight.

He thanked her with fervent heart,

As often as ever he might; (1859-1867)

Although Gawain rejects the gift several times, he does ultimately accept when the offer includes protection. The moment of weakness is important in two-fold. First, it foreshadows Gawain's eventual betrayal of the exchange game, but more importantly, it shows a wavering in his faith. When leaving the castle to finish the game with the Green Knight, it is emphasized the value and reliance on the girdle that Gawain places. "Yet he left not his love-gift, the lady's girdle; / Gawain, for his own good, forgot not that" (2030-2031). Gawain should put all faith in Mary, and rely on the Lord to protect him through the end of his quest. Instead, Gawain puts his faith in a material object, the true sin and failure of his knightly virtue and the moment he fails Morgan's test. Not only does he rely on the girdle over Mary, he forgets about the power of God and the protection offered to him through his Christian faith:

Sweetly did he swathe him in that swatch of silk,

That girdle of green so goodly to see,

That against the gay red showed gorgeous bright.

Yet he wore not for its wealth that wondrous girdle,

Nor pride in its pendants, though polished they were,

Though glittering gold gleamed at the ends,

But to keep himself safe when consent he must

To endure a deadly blow, and all defense

denied. (2034-2042)

The fact that Gawain thinks of the situation as having “all defense denied” shows that he will fail. He cannot be denied the defense of God, and yet he has forgotten the power of God and of Mary on his shield. His reliance on the material objects of the world condemn him right away.

With Gawain’s reliance placed in the material world, Gawain ultimately fails, both at passing Morgan’s test, and at maintaining his knightly honor. At first when Gawain is confronted by the Green Knight, Bertilak takes credit for the tests and games that Gawain goes through. “I know well the tale, / And the count of your kisses and your conduct too, / And the wooing of my wife—it was all my scheme” (2359 – 2361). Although Morgan will be revealed as the true mastermind, Gawain does not know this, resulting in a somewhat confusing and premature rant against Lady Bertilak and Morgan:

And commend me to that comely one, your courteous wife,
 Both herself and that other, my honoured ladies,
 That have trapped their true knight in their
 trammels so quaint.
 But if a dullard should dote, deem it no wonder,
 And through the wiles of a woman be wooed into sorrow,
 For so was Adam by one, when the world began,
 And Solomon by many more, and Samson the mighty—
 Delilah was his doom, and David thereafter
 Was beguiled by Bathsheba, and bore much distress;
 Now these were vexed by their devices—‘twere a very joy
 Could one but learn to love, and believe them not.

For these were proud princes, most prosperous of old,
 Past all lovers lucky, that languished under heave,
 bemused.

And one and all fell prey
 To women that they had used;
 If I be led astray

Methinks I may be excused. (2411-2428)

Gawain places the blame on women as a sex, even though he is the who failed the tests. While the events were orchestrated by Morgan, at this point, Gawain does not know this. The listing of biblical characters who had been led astray by women in this passage, starting with Eve, demonstrates a conflict that arose during the late Middle Ages between Christianity and the industrializing forces that gave women more independence and power in the home and economy. Gawain's monologue here is arguably a backlash against the increasing power afforded to women, and how they supposedly would use their powers for personal gain and the deception of men. Despite the predisposition to blame women, it is when Gawain asks for Bertilak's full name and title, the truth is revealed:

"That shall I give you gladly," said the Green Knight then:

"Bertilak de Hautdesert, this barony I hold.

Through the might of Morgan le Fay, that lodges at my house,

By subtleties of science and sorcerers' arts,

The mistress of Merlin, she has caught many a man,

For sweet love in secret she shared sometime

With that wizard, that knows well each one of your knights
and you.

Morgan the Goddess, she,

So styled by title true;

None holds so high degree

That her arts cannot subdue. (2444-2455)

It is difficult to tell if this is a condemnation of Morgan or not. Gawain is upset, and condemns the women, but Bertilak, the one who has arguably retained his honor while Gawain has not, praises Morgan. In the entirety of the narrative, it is only Gawain who receives retribution for his behavior. Because of this, can it be said that Gawain's behavior, once he departs from the chivalric code and his reliance on God, is entirely condemned, and the others are praised?

Bertilak praises Morgan, calling her a Goddess, just after Gawain has railed and ranted against her. I argue that the Green Knight and Morgan could be seen as the embodiment of progressive industrializing forces, or at the very least, the acceptance of the shift in femininity. I would not go so far as to say that the author of *Sir Gawain* is in support of the industrial forces and effects on women in its entirety, but it could be said that Gawain's rant is an expression of the anxieties of men of the shift in the social hierarchy and that Morgan and Lord Bertilak are presented ambivalently, neither good nor bad, but existing all the same, just as any change is not necessarily inherently negative or positive.

The feeling of ambivalence in Bertilak and Morgan's portrayal is continued here in Bertilak's quick and easy dismissal of a series of events that were largely traumatic for Sir Gawain:

“She guided me in this guise to your glorious hall.
 To assay, if such it were, the surfeit of pride
 That is rumored of the retinue of the Round Table.
 She put this shape upon me to puzzle your wits,
 To afflict the fair queen, and frighten her to death
 With awe of that elvish man that eerily spoke
 With his head in his hand before the high table.
 She was with my wife at home, that old withered lady,
 Your own aunt is she, Arthur's half-sister,
 The Duchess' daughter of Tintagel, that dear King Uther
 Got Arthur on after, that honored is now.
 And therefore, good friend, come feast with your aunt; (2456-2467)

It is perhaps the influence of the ambivalence and nonchalance of Lord Bertilak that does lead to Gawain's acceptance of the events. Despite the rant against Lady Bertilak and Morgan, Gawain does take full responsibility for his downfall. Unlike with Grendel's mother, where there seems to be a definitive statement on what is condemned by her rejection, there is not the same level of clarity. Over time, a more nuanced representation of women in society has started to emerge, and Morgan is one of the foundational characters that lays the work for the complexity of the next two female monsters in this analysis.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Lady Bertilak and Morgan le Fay

Unlike Grendel's mother, Morgan is not clearly defined as monster or as simply evil. Although her motivation is to test Arthur's court, there is not something inherently evil in this intent, particularly when looking at the history of conflicts between Arthur and Morgan. Considering the use of tests of honor throughout the Arthuriana, Morgan's task, as a test of Gawain's honor alongside Arthur's court, is also not beyond the realm of normalcy. With the exception of Gawain, Morgan is accepted, if not revered, at the court, given her position of authority over Lord Bertilak. Given the nuanced and nebulous portrayals of Victorian woman, like Carmilla and Mina Harker, it is possible that Morgan is an earlier iteration of the complex literary woman. Morgan is monster in that she is supernatural, but monster does not necessarily equate evil. For Sir Gawain, Morgan represents a personal foe, but only in the sense that she challenges him, and that he fails. For the most part, Morgan is seemingly ambivalent to the results of her test. She does not come forward herself to claim credit, and after the events, the Green Knight tells Gawain that Morgan is waiting to feast with him as her Aunt. The contradictory nature of the monstrous Morgan and the ambivalence calls to mind the series of contradicting dichotomies applied to Morgan as a character through various legends.

Recognized as a manifestation of the shadow-trickster phenomenon, the character of Morgan La Fee becomes, if not less complex, at least more comprehensible. Her characteristics embrace the same tension of opposites found in the other prototypes: violence opposed to healing; beauty against ugliness; sexual wantonness against fidelity; a goddess with human passions (Williams 40)

At the point of her introduction into the narrative, Morgan is in the guise of someone old, and ugly, at least in comparison to the Lady. She controls Lady Bertilak, and presents her as the image of fidelity while also plotting the eventual scenes of sexual wantonness to come. “True to the archetype of the shadow, Morgan bears within each of her detrimental behaviors the seed of its opposite, a redemptive trait; a preoccupation with eroticism is accompanied by its refining counterpart, a preoccupation with fidelity” (Williams 43). Morgan is powerful, some legends refer to her as a nymph, goddess like, but in *Sir Gawain*, she acts on a human playing field. Morgan, despite a relative lack of her physical presence throughout the narrative, uses the power of contradictory dichotomies to maintain control in her physical absence.

While Morgan is missing physically, her will is represented in Lady Bertilak. Likely due to Morgan’s influence, Lady Bertilak is also a series of contradictory dichotomies, though presented in a somewhat straighter forward fashion. At Lady Bertilak’s introduction, she is presented as a parallel to Mary in her physical identifiers of purity. Despite this, the wantonness mentioned previously does take hold, and the image of her red gown becomes more relevant than the purity of her beauty and supposed modesty:

A more accurate Vulgate analogue for the Lady, then, given Gawain's ultimate weakness to withstand her speech, is the proverbial temptress, [...] the Lady's persona is similarly imbued with the dangerous attractiveness of the smooth-talking but ultimately pernicious *aliena*, whose enticing words—promising Gawain safety and survival—a more powerful seductive force than mere sexual attraction alone. (Cox 380-381)

Through the Lady, Morgan implements her plan to test Gawain, and thus the fidelity of Arthur's court to virtue. Although the surface level of the temptation is seductive, the sexuality of the encounters is only a piece of the ploy. Gawain's downfall comes ultimately at a betrayal of his honor as a Christian knight when he forsakes heavenly protection for the earthly protection of a physical girdle presented to him by the Lady after the seductions have won her his favor. When the Lady plays into the chivalric code, she plays into the original perception of her as Mary, a pious woman worthy of Gawain's true love and chivalry; however, due to the "guile" used, the Lady continues to draw the dichotomy of Mary and Eve:

Like the Christian exegetes who embellish the woman's role as part of their larger antifeminist enterprise, and create an "Eve" to serve patriarchal ideological purposes in her role as a scapegoat for the moral lapses of men and women alike, so too Gawain finds a convenient extenuation for his compromised *lewte*. In his revisionist account, he adduces the Lady as an Eve-like temptress, thereby restoring his proper gender role: the victimized hero is a hero nonetheless, but only if his triumphant foe is a woman of compelling sexual attractiveness. Gawain accordingly reconfigures both the sin and its motivation with an appeal to biblical authority, a defensive maneuver on Gawain's part to reclaim his own masculinity once the threat of his becoming feminized is brought to the fore. Gawain, after all, has succumbed not to sexual temptation but to the fear of losing his life (Cox 381)

By using Lady Bertilak as a scapegoat to defend his own masculinity and making her the Other, Gawain could be expressing anxieties over the shift in societal power dynamics brought by the plague and industrialization. Although the Lady was not the primary

figure of female power in *Sir Gawain*, she was the visual representation of it as it was known to Gawain. Alongside this, the Lady exhibited power over him by testing his moral standings under the guise of her husband, who presented a seemingly outright test through the exchange game.

Through the series of tests, culminating in the cohesive ploy as created by Morgan, Gawain's character changes drastically at her hands. I would argue that the shift in Gawain could come from one of two origins. On one hand, Gawain has ultimately forsaken at least a portion of his faith in the process of Morgan's ploy. Despite the number of times he calls out to Mary, it does not eliminate the fact that Gawain puts his faith in a worldly possession to save him from the Green Knight. Like the multiple mentions of Christian ideology in *Beowulf*, at this point, the God centered calls are superficial when juxtaposed with action. The other possibility calls in Gawain's own failure of upholding the honor between a host and guest. By breaking the agreement of the exchange game, he broke an agreement with Bertilak and besmirched his honor. Although the exchange game is ostensibly Bertilak's own doing, it plays into Morgan's plan as it not only forces Gawain to choose to rely on the physical in his quest, breaking religious code, but also to choose to break chivalric hospitality code in the name of self-interest. Either of these actions negatively mark against his status as a Christian hero and each of these episodes can be traced back to Lady Bertilak, and then ultimately, Morgan. Lady Bertilak, functioning as a puppet for the Green Knight, who in turn works as a mouth piece and servant for Morgan, tempting Gawain into lustful and deceitful behavior. Either way, the temptation that ultimately marks Gawain, was organized by Morgan, a woman in power, and arguably a representative of the power gained by the

post-plague gentry widows. Although Gawain ultimately takes ownership of his own mistakes throughout the quest, absolving Morgan and the Lady of wrongdoing, I would argue that the outburst against them is a representation of the anxiety of masculinity in the face of shifting power distribution to widows during the post-plague period. Morgan, like the widows of the plague, used the mantel of the Green Knight as her front to control the venture, “deceiving” Gawain, not only in the outright form of her test, but also by the very nature of the mastermind.

Chapter 4: *Carmilla*

In this section I will explore two vampire works from the late 19th century. One of the reasons I have selected *Carmilla* and *Dracula* is to show a shift in perception as through the eyes of Sheridan LeFanu, an author who many scholars claim supported the liberation of the passions of women, and the novel that was inspired by *Carmilla*, *Dracula*, and the changes of perspective that occurred over a short period of time. This is in contrast to previous medieval chapters, where the texts used were far apart in time and demonstrated two drastically different periods within the Middle Ages. One of the primary justifications for choosing texts that were written so closely together in time for the Victorian chapters has to do with the volume of literature produced in the 19th century versus the Middle Ages. Significant scholarly medieval texts that remained intact between their conception and now are much fewer in number to the number of available Victorian texts. The level of literacy, availability of materials, and leisure time needed to produce texts were also a major contributing factor when looking at the availability of Victorian texts. Lastly, it is worth noting that, with the industrialization and globalization experienced in the 19th century compared to the Middle Ages, the 19th century experienced changes much more rapidly and opinions changed at a much swifter rate, meaning that the 25 years between the publication of *Carmilla* in 1872 and *Dracula* in 1897, happened at two times that did hold different enough social ideologies to justify comparison as will be discussed further in this section. With the popularization of such inventions as the typewriter and bicycles, women were able to gain increased independent movement, and the tone of literature in the late 19th century reflects this change.

The Redundancy Issue and the Emigration Debate

As was discussed in the previous chapters, great social and economic upheaval traditionally results in societal shifts that disproportionately affect female and minority populations. While the focus of the shift in the medieval chapters dealt largely with religious shifts and the effects of the Black Death, the changes in Victorian life that will be discussed deal specifically with social movements centered around women, specifically the emigration debate, the resulting feminist movement, and the concept of the New Woman. With the turn of the century, the emergence of the Victorian New Woman resulted in a number of conflicting ideologies: the new liberated ideology which worked for the advancement of women against the conservative Victorian church which fought to maintain the status quo and dispel the idea that women could possess passions and desires in the same way as men. Unlike in the medieval texts previously analyzed, where the negative connotations and subjugation of women did not necessarily have a movement in defense of the place of women, Victorians were somewhat divided on the place of women in 19th century British society, and the resulting social struggles were largely due to the division in ideology held by the middle class. Because of the tug of war between the two positions, we see elements of sexual expression that go beyond what was traditionally expected in literature and female characterization that bordered on the masculine in response during a time when many scholars agree there was a crisis of gender, for men and women alike. This resulted in an increase of the production of highly sexualized female characters and lesbian centered narratives. The movement away from the idea that a woman needed to be provided for and cared for by a man was heavily influenced by the disproportionate number of women versus men in English society,

resulting in a higher percentage of unmarried middle class women. These unmarried women were unable to provide for themselves due to social norms forbidding them from working for wages, but also unable to find husbands. Because of the shift in population statistics, women and men were then forced to question the established placement of women in society, resulting in more progressive feminist movements, including the New Woman, in an attempt to solve what was considered to be a social evil, the increasing number of unmarried women in English society.

One of the catalysts for the social shifts in the late 19th century dealt largely with the crisis of gender which took hold during the period. The emergence of the New Woman and the social upheaval of the redundancy issue helped to usher in a questioning of what masculinity meant for the male population, and how men would situate themselves in the new social paradigm that was attempting to make room for increasing female independence. This conflict underlined the already present concerns of men of what was becoming, at least by the numbers, a female dominated society. As Elaine Showalter discusses in *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle*, the shifting expectations for gender roles led to much confusion and helped to give shape to the reactionary movement against the liberated woman.

The redefinition of gender that took place at the turn of the century, was not limited to women. Gender crisis affected men as well as women, and the fantasies of a pitched battle for sexual supremacy typical of the period often concealed deeper uncertainties and contradictions on both sides. [...] The nineteenth century had cherished a belief in the separate spheres of femininity and masculinity that amounted to religious faith. In revolutionary periods, the fear of social and

political equality between the sexes has always generated strenuous counter-effects to shore up borderlines by establishing scientific proof for the absolute mental and physical differences between men and women.” (Showalter 8)

The gender crisis resulted in a rejection of femininity, and on some levels, women as well. Upper-class escaped to social clubs that were unavailable to women, and cultivated close friendships with other men.

The increasing popularity of all male clubs, or “clubland” as Showalter calls it, combined with the feminist movement, resulted in the gender crisis being compounded by the definition and condemnation of the idea of homosexuality. When placed alongside the rejection of women, the crisis resulted in conflicting emotions throughout male social interactions at clubs and social gatherings. “Fin-de-siècle Clubland existed on the fragile borderline that distinguished manly misogyny from disgusting homoeroticism” (Showalter 13). A large portion of the male population rejected the rising independence found in the feminist movements which started to gain ground at that time, seeking solace and comradery in male only clubs. A balancing act was needed between the distancing from female companionship, the increasing desire for male closeness, and the societal abhorrence of the homosexual and homosocial. Potentially, men feared the homosexual and the idea of occupying a traditionally female role in a relationship, especially in a moment when women were gaining increased independence and inhabiting positions more often held by men. The ongoing crisis of what it means to be a man at the end of the 19th century is an important one to take note of as it sets the scene for a society already predisposed to react against any major social shifts, especially like the ones that were brought up at the height of the female redundancy issue.

As stated above, one of the main ideological influences of the New Woman movement and the Victorian era feminist movement was the female redundancy debate and resulting emigration debate which gained traction in the 1860s and 1870s (Dreher 3). The redundancy debate of the late 19th century dealt with the idea that there were statistically a larger number of women in England than men, resulting in a higher number of unmarried women than previously experienced in society. As Nan H. Dreher discusses in the article “Redundancy and Emigration: The ‘Woman Question’ in Mid-Victorian Britain”, “Redundancy had both tangible (statistical) and intangible (ideological) components” (3). In 1851, there were 500,000 excess women in Britain, making up 2-3% of the total population, and of that percentage, 10-15% were middle class (Dreher 4). The reasoning for the dramatic shift in population percentages largely was due to an increased number of men moving to the colonies, men often had a lower age of mortality than women, and were also choosing to marry later in life (Dreher 3). All three of these shifts combined likely contributed to the dramatic increase in unmarried British women. Because of the number of unmarried women, there was also an increased number of women who were unable to support themselves due to social stigmas preventing unmarried middle class women from working to earn a living wage beyond the socially approved governess positions. “The existence of these unmarriageable, unemployable, and ideologically intolerable women provoked a vehement public outcry” (Dreher 3). Despite the fact that there simply were not enough men in society for the number of women in search of husbands, the historical perception of unmarried middle class women was to place the blame on the women for failing to “do their job” at finding husbands and having children. The idea of the unmarried women was largely negative, resulting in

negative perceptions of female worth, particularly under the already constraining rules of social etiquette and accepted female behavior. It is understandable that the Victorian feminist movement began to find traction in a social setting that was becoming increasingly hostile towards women, especially those who were not happy living under the prescribed social order.

The proposed solution for ridding England of these perceived social anarchists, the surplus in unmarried and unemployable women, was to send these women to British colonies (Canada and Australia) to remove them from proper British society (Dreher 4). While the emigration measure ultimately failed, it did gain a large amount of public attention and debate in the major newspapers which contributed to the early Victorian feminist movement and influenced the ideology of the emerging New Woman.

An examination of contemporary periodicals shows that the debate about middle-class female emigration eventually challenged and changed not only redundancy, but also broader ideas about class and gender by establishing work and singlehood as acceptable for middle-class women. Participation in this debate also influenced the early feminist movement, and both the ideological success and the practical failure of emigration contributed to later feminist campaigns. (Dreher 3)

The emigration debate, despite having very minor influence in actual implementation, as an idea gained a large amount of traction in feminist circles and conservatives alike, despite vastly different end goals in mind. Dreher references this here:

Social conservatives hoped to strengthen and even extend middle-class ideology at home through emigration, while feminists hoped to change it. [...] Feminists saw emigration as a remedy for the symptoms of redundancy, but fundamental

social reform as the permanent cure, while for conservatives, the reverse was true: societal reform could only address the symptoms of a female surplus, which must ultimately be removed to eliminate redundancy. (Dreher 4)

Although emigration as a solution to the redundancy issue was never successful, the colonies did serve as a form of testing ground to prove the usefulness and effectiveness of social reform. The results of which were then brought back over to England, and eventually were largely implemented. “In the end, the principle of emigration was more significant than its reality. Even those women who did not emigrate, or did not emigrate happily, clearly benefitted from the redefinition of female roles” (Dreher 6). The fact that the emigration movement created conversation and gained a large amount of public attention meant that the conversation on the roles of women took the spotlight on the stage of middle class social life, effectively spurring on the feminist movement that was developing at the time alongside the suffragette movement and helped to change the conversation about the roles of women in Victorian England.

Textual Analysis – *Carmilla*

With the understanding of the historical context surrounding *Carmilla*, I will now turn to the text for a closer analysis. LeFanu’s *Carmilla*, on the surface, is a horror story about the dangers of vampires. Carmilla, an ancient vampire who takes the form of a young woman, and at times, a large black cat, seduces women as she and her mother travel across England to feed from and kill. Carmilla does this by initiating a close friendship with the young women, in this case Laura, and creating such a close and binding intimacy that Laura feels entirely devoted to her. When evidence is eventually produced of Carmilla’s true nature, Laura is unable to turn against her. Ultimately,

Carmilla is killed by the General, a friend of Laura's father, and yet, even at the end of the story, when Laura is older and looking back on the events, she still thinks fondly of Carmilla. There is an inherent discrepancy between the idea that Carmilla, a vampire, is considered lovingly by her violent nature. Because of this, I would argue that there is more happening beneath the surface level of the horror story. While Carmilla is a monster in the supernatural definition, she functions also a commentary on the social constraints of women by conservative ideology and the danger of those constraints.

The first introduction we have to Carmilla is through a scene between her and Laura when Laura is a child. In the first meeting, we see the contradictory nature of Carmilla's personality that is present throughout their adult interactions. Carmilla is shown at the beginning to be a young and innocent girl, much like Laura, who is at times loving and nurturing as a mother. We see this in the scene where Carmilla appears to child Laura in a nightmare.

I saw a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of my bed. It was that of a young lady who was kneeling, with her hands under the coverlet. I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling; I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again. (10)

As will be discussed, the moments of nurturing often give way to possessive and violent behavior, traditionally attributed to men.

I was awakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly. The lady started back, with her eyes fixed

on me, and then slipped down upon the floor, and, as I thought, hid herself under the bed. (10-11)

Here we see Carmilla already functioning as the literal vampiric monster, the Othered monster version of the masculine woman, as well as hints of the embodiment of social oppression that results in illness and death in women, as will be discussed further. In her moments of masculinity in the first scene, Carmilla is aggressive. She goes to Laura in the dark and creates a visible mark of her claim on Laura. By biting her and drinking her blood, she creates a tie between them. Even the idea of her fangs entering Laura has sexual and aggressive overtones, especially in conjunction with the idea of penetration and masculinity. Through claiming and forcing a bond, Carmilla is Othered by acting outside of the bounds of human expectations (feeding on another person) and gendered social expectations (laying claim on another). LeFanu, who many scholars have argued was a supporter of the New Woman movement and an advocate against the oppression of women, possibly meant for Carmilla to be seen as the reactionary result of an overly oppressed woman, given to violence and even taking over masculine roles when forced away from being able to accept natural female passions. In regard to Carmilla as the embodiment of the social repercussions of the social pressures and suppression of the women around her in the town, it is important to note the emphasis LeFanu placed on the idea of duality. While Carmilla can represent the result of female oppression at its most volatile, she is also the creator of the sickness and death of the women that are affected by the oppression in the town. As we will see further in the textual analysis, the women around Carmilla sicken and die without discrimination, as the social pressures of the period affected all women, while not equally, each to a degree.

After Carmilla's first encounter with Laura, it is important to note Laura's reaction. As will be explored later, I maintain that the reason Laura was treated differently by Carmilla and resisted the illness she spread was due to a natural inclination of Laura's to reject the authority of the men around her and to be more likely to introspectively learn about herself when given the option. As we see in the passage below, even as a child, Laura did not readily accept the authority of her father after the first attack:

I remember my father coming up and standing at the bedside, and talking cheerfully, and asking the nurse a number of questions, and laughing very heartily at one of the answers; and patting me on the shoulder, and kissing me, and telling me not to be frightened, that it was nothing but a dream and could not hurt me. But I was not comforted, for I knew the visit of the strange woman was *not* a dream; and I was *awfully* frightened. (11-12)

While Laura is not the focus of this analysis, it is important to discuss her reactions to Carmilla as they support the idea of Carmilla as both the oppressed woman who broke through the social regulations and the bringer of destruction through the social suppression of female passion. Because Laura is loved by Carmilla, we see her nurtured by Carmilla and a passing of ideas and ways between them. In those moments Carmilla acts as a woman who has left behind the oppression of society to take on more "masculine" behavior in return. When Laura fights back in their first encounter, she signals to Carmilla that she is capable of breaking through the constraints and learning her own passions, while simultaneously fighting off the destructive nature of the oppression that Carmilla brings in her dual capacity.

Before we see Carmilla again, we indirectly learn of the destruction she has caused. A friend of Laura's family planned to bring his ward to be Laura's companion, reveals that she has died by Carmilla's influence, although she is still unknown to Laura and her father at this time.

Before then I had no idea of her danger. I have lost her, and now learn *all*, too late. She died in the peace of innocence, and in the glorious hope of a blessed futurity. The fiend who betrayed our infatuated hospitality has done it all. I thought I was receiving into my house innocence, gaiety, a charming companion for my lost Bertha. Heavens! what a fool have I been!

I thank God my child died without a suspicion of the cause of her sufferings. She is gone without so much as conjecturing the nature of her illness, and the accursed passion of the agent of all this misery. (16)

The letter from Bertha's guardian is the first revelation of Carmilla and her intent, but also of the social climate. Relying on the idea that LeFanu wrote with the idea of dual meaning in mind, the letter above can be read in multiple ways. First, there is the surface level information, that Bertha was killed by a dear friend, and that she never learned that her friend was at fault before her death; however, if taken piece by piece, a more detailed image can be revealed. Bertha "died in the peace of innocence," an important note when taking into account the traditional view that women should be kept innocent of their own passions and sexuality. This not only reveals that Bertha was unaware of Carmilla's betrayal, but it could also be read to mean that Bertha never recognized her own oppression or learned about her own desires as Carmilla intended to reveal to her. It is then emphasized again that Bertha died "without a suspicion of the cause of her

sufferings.” While her guardian likely meant the cause as Carmilla, in her vampiric capacity, he could also mean that Bertha was tempted away from the accepted social constructions by Carmilla. Carmilla’s dual nature as the suffering brought on by continued suppression is important to note here as Bertha was unable to shift away from the social constructs, she suffered by them, meaning Carmilla, instead. Because Bertha remained innocent and under the control of the established social paradigm, she succumbed to the illness of suppression without understanding the cause. There are historical precedents for this when looking at the mass number of cases of “female hysteria” that were diagnosed in the late 19th century. LeFanu’s own wife suffered a “hysterical attack” and died in 1858 (LeFanu 127). Lastly, Bertha’s guardian refers to Carmilla’s “accursed passion of the agent of all this misery” as “passion” was the very thing conservative Victorians attempted to deny existed in women. This would clash as one of Carmilla’s functions was to attempt to draw out passion in the women surrounding her. The letter reveals a dual feeling of horror in relation to Carmilla. Carmilla is monster in the physical sense in that she is vampiric and violent, but she is also monster in the ideological sense, that she is dangerous to the established social hierarchy. Carmilla is capable of creating fear in those around her in the novel and in the readers on a multitude of levels.

When we are reintroduced to Carmilla when Laura is grown, Carmilla is presented as conforming to the social paradigm and expectations of an upper-class young woman, like Laura. Carmilla is young, beautiful and afflicted with a nameless disorder as many fashionable young women of the period often were. “She was in delicate health, and nervous, but not subject to any kind of seizure [...] and perfectly sane” (LeFanu 27).

Her innocence is underscored when she is told her mother has left her and she cries like a child “on learning that her mamma had left her here, till her return in about three months, she wept” (24). The only indication that we are given that Carmilla is not what she seems at this point is the reaction of Laura’s father at Carmilla’s appearance. Her arrival is preceded by a feeling of foreboding by Laura’s father. “I feel as if some great misfortune were hanging over us. I suppose the poor General’s afflicted letter has had something to do with it” (19). The only characters in the novella who react negatively towards Carmilla are the men, even though Carmilla’s direct victims are only shown to be women. Taking Carmilla’s primary nature as being more antagonistic towards the male dominated social structure when acting as Laura’s friend, then towards actual physical harm, despite the number of deaths she causes, it would make sense that the men are the only ones to feel around Carmilla’s influence. Even when Laura is at her weakest under Carmilla’s hands, she still does not blame her.

When Laura sees Carmilla again, she recognizes her from her childhood nightmare. “I saw the very face which had visited me in my childhood at night, which remained so fixed in my memory, and on which I had for so many years so often ruminated with horror, when no one suspected of what I was thinking” (29) Despite the fact that Laura has lived in fear of her face and the memory of that night, the two become close quickly. From the vampiric perspective, the intimacy between Carmilla and Laura signals that Carmilla has singled out Laura as her next victim, but I would argue that it may also signal that Carmilla recognizes Laura as being inclined to react against social constraints and to be more susceptible to her ideological attacks as well. Laura describes

these early moments of intimacy in a way that falls in line with the difference between the physical danger and potential ideological freedom:

Now the truth is, I felt rather unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger. I did feel, as she said, 'drawn towards her,' but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging. (31-32)

Carmilla's physical danger as monster repels her, but Laura's desire to break from the social chains that have held her prevail in this moment and she falls under Carmilla's spell.

Young people like, and even love, on impulse. I was flattered by the evident, though as yet undeserved, fondness she showed me. I liked the confidence with which she at once received me. She was determined that we should be very near friends. (32)

Laura's appreciation of the forward and masculine style of Carmilla's attitude shows an inclination towards understanding her own desires outside of the ones expected of her. While the men in the novella are repelled by Carmilla's masculine traits, Laura is engaged by them and flattered. The early moments between Laura and Carmilla are important in establishing why Laura is outside of Carmilla's deadly attacks, and also explain how, in her presence, Carmilla exhibits more of her character function as an ideological image of a liberated woman.

Carmilla's possessiveness is shown from the beginning as an intense desire to absorb and overtake Laura into her identity, similarly to how a man would absorb the identity of his wife through marriage.

She used to place her pretty arms about my neck, draw me to her, and laying her cheek to mine, murmur with her lips near my ear, 'Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness; if your dear heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours. I live in your warm life, and you shall die—die, sweetly die—into mine. I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love; so, for a while, seek to know no more of me and mine, but trust me with all your loving spirit.' (36)

The idea that Carmilla wants Laura to die “into her” suggests a similar image much like how the identity of the bride “dies” in marriage as an individual and is recreated as a part of a whole in her husband's name. Carmilla functions, as we often see, as the husband or masculine figure; however, we see her also rejecting traditionally masculine behavior that is supported by the conservative aspects of Victorian society. Carmilla rejects the idea of gaining identity through her lineage, a tradition that was supported through the Middle Ages and into Victorian society through inheritance and titles in the nobility. By refusing to give Laura information on her lineage, she stands alone, beyond the constructs of the conservative male defined inheritance of identity. While there is a surface level explanation that she does not want to reveal her connection to the castle and the Karnstein family, the consistent rejection of male lineage is present and falls in line with the duality of meaning seen throughout the novel.

As Carmilla's possessiveness increases, we see Laura increasingly repelled by their interactions. Although scholars would say that homosexuality, as it is recognized today, was defined during this period, it is unlikely, that she is repelled by the idea of same sex attraction. The definition of homosexuality and reaction against the homosexual identity likely did not reach beyond the major cities such as London into the smaller towns like where Laura and her father lived. Similarly, the homosocial was encouraged during this time, between men and women as ways to create socially moral relationships that were not sexualized and to find companionship. To have a close female companion, as Carmilla and Laura were to each other, would not be unusual. I would argue it is more likely that Laura is repelled by the rebellion against social norms that Carmilla engenders by her nature as the Othered masculine female and in her rejection of established norms. Laura struggles to know herself and to understand her passions and desires for Carmilla under the constraints of a society that rejects the idea of women as passionate beings and this brings discord with her surroundings.

I used to wish to extricate myself; but my energies seemed to fail me. Her murmured words sounded like a lullaby in my ear, and soothed my resistance into a trance, from which I only seemed to recover myself when she withdrew her arms.

In these mysterious moods I did not like her. I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. I had no distinct thoughts about her while such scenes lasted, but I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence. This I know is a paradox, but I can make no other attempt to explain the feeling. (37)

Laura recognizes the paradoxical nature of her feelings. She is drawn to Carmilla in an intimate way, beyond the homosocial into the homoerotic, and through this, she finds a better understanding of her own desires and herself. But also, in recognizing that she is capable of strong passions and desires, Laura is pulled beyond the socially defined roles by Carmilla. Carmilla, in all her roles in the novel, is a destabilizing force. Carmilla destabilizes Laura's world view and breaks her from the societal expectations she previously accepted as truth. Carmilla as disease and death through the suppression of passions destabilizes the idea that the Victorian world view can continue to function through suppressing women and maintain a healthy population. Carmilla as monster destabilizes the idea of peace and existing in a world without supernatural influence.

Carmilla also destabilizes the idea of passionate love and possession only being within the realm of male capacity. She is wholly "masculine" in her advancements towards Laura and breaks free from societal constraints on emotion. Her example of following her passions and dismissing the realm of the "feminine" leaves Laura uneasy as she is conflicted by her own rising passion, attraction to Carmilla, and desire to know herself versus societal pressures. Carmilla, through experiencing and expressing high passion destabilizes Laura's worldview throughout the novella.

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardor of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet over-powering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips traveled along my cheek in kisses; and

she would whisper, almost in sobs, ‘You are mine, you *shall* be mine, you and I are one forever.’ Then she had thrown herself back in her chair, with her small hands over her eyes, leaving me trembling. (40)

With her worldview crumbling, Laura attempts to justify both her romantic and sexual attraction to Carmilla by building a fantasy of a male lover in disguise, explaining Carmilla’s traditionally masculine behavior. Laura attempts to salvage her worldview and bring the two parts of her burgeoning realization of identity and her past together, when they cannot coincide.

It was unmistakably the momentary breaking out of suppressed instinct and emotion. [...] I had read in old storybooks of such things. 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. [...] Except in these brief periods of mysterious excitement her ways were girlish; and there was always a languor about her, quite incompatible with a masculine system in a state of health. (40-41)

Even when Laura dismisses the idea of Carmilla as a male, she is flattered by the attention and feels passionate desire for Carmilla. The fantasy Laura builds of conjoining her new understanding and her old life crumbles quickly, but what remains is the new way of thinking and understanding herself.

Up to this moment, we mostly see Carmilla functioning as the societal Other in the role of masculine female. She is shown as frightening because she destabilizes social customs by stepping beyond her allotted identity. As the novella progresses, Carmilla’s

supernaturally monstrous characteristics start to become more distinct. Carmilla rejects traditional Christian ideology and is driven into a rage when she hears hymns sung at a funeral because she cannot stand the sound. “Besides, how can you tell that your religion and mine are the same; your forms wound me, and I hate funerals. What a fuss! Why you must die—*everyone* must die; and all are happier when they do” (42). This is one of the few moments up to this point where Carmilla starts to reference death and destruction verbally, and will continue to do so with increasing frequency. Although it is not stated explicitly here, we are left to infer by her passionate reaction to the funeral that Carmilla is responsible for the woman’s death. It is the first time that Carmilla references her liberation of the women from the suppression of society through death. Carmilla functions here in multiple layers of identity, the obvious monster who kills innocent women in the town, the liberated woman who rejects the church and the suppression of female passions, and as the vehicle for the manifestation of the physical and mental repercussions of the forced suppression of women by the church and bringer of resultant death. Carmilla is both the rejection and mode of conveyance of the conservative oppression of female desire and constantly slips between the two identities.

The vampiric element of Carmilla’s identity takes a greater part of the narrative in the second half of the novella, and her character becomes more traditionally monster as expected in the horror genre. As the element of traditional horror increases, there are more allusions to the superstitions of the surrounding area. The hunchback who brings the charms against vampires is the first to mention the supernatural as a serious explanation for the deaths of women in the village. “They are dying of it right and left and here is a charm that never fails; only pinned to the pillow, and you may laugh in his

face” (45). Carmilla’s behavior here becomes increasingly violent, and “masculine” and we start to see suggestions that the vampire is male, continuing the idea that Carmilla’s behavior is a masculine one and that due to conservative societal expectations of the time, women would not have possessed the passion to commit violent crimes, even in a vampiric state.

With the increasing number of deaths in the town and the speculation of the cause, Carmilla’s nature as the disruptor comes to the forefront again. When Laura’s father speaks about the “Creator” and leaving everything to him, Carmilla reacts violently and aggressively, one of the few times she acts this way with anyone beyond Laura. “‘Creator! *Nature!*’ said the young lady in answer to my gentle father. ‘And this disease that invades the country is natural. Nature. All things proceed from Nature—don’t they? All things in the heaven, in the earth, and under the earth, act and live as Nature ordains? I think so.’” (47) Carmilla rails against the idea of religion as an overseer and controller. Carmilla underscores what she thinks of the illnesses and deaths as caused by nature. Nature is the reason for these deaths as the natural way of women and their passions are suppressed, leading to illnesses and death from mental and emotional strain. Carmilla’s previously aggressively “masculine” behavior is no longer contained to moments only with Laura. Fighting against the conservative ideology in full view of Laura’s father, Carmilla acts as the liberated woman, explaining the results of her actions as the bringer of death brought on by suppression. Carmilla, as disrupter, disrupts the idea of a monster as she is supernatural monster, monster of death, and liberator in turn and sometimes all at once.

The idea of the illness as the manifestation of the negative effects of conservative oppression is eventually brought up in relation to Carmilla. Carmilla discusses an illness she had when she was younger and relates it to the illnesses and deaths of the local women. By tying the two instances together, Carmilla gives credence to the idea that the illness is not necessarily a physical one, but an emotional/psychological illness brought on by societal pressures.

‘Doctors never did me any good,’ said Carmilla.

‘Then you have been ill?’ I asked.

‘More ill than ever you were,’ she answered.

‘Long ago?’

‘Yes, a long time. I suffered from this very illness; but I forget all but my pain and weakness, and they were not so bad as are suffered in other diseases.’

When Carmilla says that she was “more ill than ever you were” this also likely confirms the idea of the illness as psychologically located. Because Laura actively learns about herself through her intimacy with Carmilla, unlike the women in the town who grow ill and die quickly, Laura’s illness never progresses as drastically. By accepting her intimacy with Carmilla and learning herself, Laura is saved from the extent of the repercussions. Like Carmilla before her, Laura is in the process of triumphing over her illness, and becoming a liberated woman beyond the total influence of the conservative ideology.

After the revelation of Carmilla’s illness there is an increased number of classic horror tropes introduced in the latter half of the novel. Carmilla becomes more aggressive in her language used towards Laura. Laura is startled by Carmilla’s outright passion and traditionally masculine style of declaration and claiming, invoking matrimonial language

reminiscent “until death do us part”: “‘But to die as lovers may—to die together, so that they may live together’” (48). Similar declarations of Carmilla’s love for Laura continue the idea of the matrimonial idea with overtones of monogamy: “‘I have been in love with no one, and never shall,’ she whispered, ‘unless it should be you’” (52). Carmilla’s words invoke a masculine penetrative imagery when she describes how she wants to “live in [Laura]” (52), underlining the Other nature of Carmilla, existing beyond social norms. Her emphasis on death and death together as in the line: “‘How jealous I am you cannot know. 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. There is no such word as indifference in my apathetic nature,’” (56) places her beyond the idea of the natural as well, showing her traditionally monster side as vampire and her obsession beyond the natural world. The frequency with which Carmilla proclaims her love for Laura and her desire for their intimacy only increases. Carmilla’s possessiveness is masculine, and the fear of the abnormal, the female taking on the masculine role, is increased by the fact that, not only does Carmilla wish to possess Laura as a man would traditionally possess women in the later 19th century, but she wants to possess her even in death, as man and as vampire.

An obsession with love and various kinds of love is noticeable in Carmilla’s behavior at this point. When she speaks of her illness, Laura questions her, revealing the cause that Carmilla declares as “love”. “‘You were near dying?’ ‘Yes, very—a cruel love—strange love, that would have taken my life. Love will have its sacrifices. No sacrifice without blood’” (56). Several meanings can be read into this moment. The surface level would be that Carmilla was near dying due to her own experience after a vampire attack. The illness was likely the same one that afflicted the townswomen,

meaning, both the literal illness of a vampire's bite, but also the metaphorical illness brought on by the constant forced suppression of the church and conservative society. Carmilla describes the love as, "a cruel love—strange love", once again invoking several potential meanings. There is the literal cruel love of a vampire, as seen between Carmilla and Laura's relationship; however, the love could also be the love of the church and how by submitting to the dominion of the church to receive that love, Carmilla was forced to sacrifice her freedom. This is supported by Carmilla's consistent contempt for the church. There is also the potential of the strange cruel love of a heterosexual love. When looking at the novella, we see Carmilla's interest lies in women, Laura specifically, but even her other victims are female. By submitting to the social pressures of a heterosexual romance, Laura was forced to give up her identity and awareness of herself, an idea that LeFanu privileged, and suffered under societal oppression and became mentally weak and ill before her transformation.

Up to this point, Carmilla's attack on Laura as a child has been largely glossed over and the first attack Carmilla commits against Laura as an adult is largely different as Carmilla finally demonstrates her supernatural abilities. Not only is Carmilla Othered as the masculine female, now, Carmilla is truly monstrous in appearance and behavior. Laura's description of Carmilla's first attack against her as an adult gives an idea of Carmilla's supernatural abilities:

I saw something moving round the foot of the bed, which at first I could not accurately distinguish. But I soon saw that it was a sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat. It appeared to me about four or five feet long for it measured fully the length of the hearthrug as it passed over it; and it continued to-

ing and fro-ing with the lithe, sinister restlessness of a beast in a cage. [...] I felt it spring lightly on the bed. The two broad eyes approached my face, and suddenly I felt a stinging pain as if two large needles darted, an inch or two apart, deep into my breast.” (58)

When Laura wakes from what she perceives as a dream, she sees a figure that resembles Carmilla at the foot of her bed, completely still and not breathing, before silently leaving. Because the image of the two large needles parallels her experience as a child, and as Laura ties the woman she saw at the foot of her bed right away to Carmilla, it is easy to draw a connection between the large cat and Carmilla beyond the hints and speculation we have been able to make up to this point. This is the first moment where we see Carmilla as physically monstrous with an awareness of who she is. Her behavior grew increasingly aggressive and masculine, her language used more monstrous in its depictions of death, but up to this moment, she has only been described as soft and beautiful in appearance. Now, we see her as feral and animalistic, large and dangerous, capable of inflicting pain and dominance beyond language. Carmilla is now someone who can carry out her possessive language from earlier in the novella with obvious strength and animalistic traits.

It is also at this point that we start to see an increase in Laura’s awareness of her changes through her connection and intimacy with Carmilla:

I felt myself a changed girl. A strange melancholy was stealing over me, a melancholy that I would not have interrupted. Dim thoughts of death began to open, and an idea that I was slowly sinking took gentle, and, somehow, not

unwelcome, possession of me. If it was sad, the tone of mind which this induced was also sweet. Whatever it might be, my soul acquiesced in it.” (63)

The blending of the supernatural and the natural is strong in passages like these where Laura is more introspective. The idea of death likely comes from the influence of the supernatural; however, the idea of melancholy changes could be brought through a natural discord felt between perceived reality and actual reality. Laura’s understanding of herself no longer fits into her allotted mold. The melancholy would not be unwelcome as it is accompanied by a better understanding of herself. There is a conflict of the vampiric nature of Carmilla’s influence, the rebellion against social suppression of women, and Laura learning to accept her passions and to know herself in a society that does not want her to acknowledge herself outside of male influence. This results in a series of contradictory emotions. The conflict is demonstrated in multiple paragraphs, such as the following:

Without knowing it, I was now in a pretty advanced stage of the strangest illness under which mortal ever suffered. There was an unaccountable fascination in its earlier symptoms that more than reconciled me to the incapacitating effect of the stage of the malady. This fascination increased for a time, until it reached a certain point, when gradually a sense of the horrible mingled itself with it, deepening, as you shall hear, until it discolored and perverted the whole state of my life. (63-64)

Laura’s emotions oscillate between fascination and horror. She moves from being pleased with her new understanding and describing her new experiences as “discolored” or “perverted” when compared to her life pre-Carmilla.

Laura's experience with illness confirms that it is largely psychological, as an illness brought on by emotional suppression would be:

I had no pain, I could complain of no bodily derangement. My complaint seemed to be one of the imagination, or the nerves [...] It could not be that terrible complaint which the peasants called the oupire, for I had now been suffering for three weeks, and they were seldom ill for much more than three days, when death put an end to their miseries. (65)

The length of Laura's ailment also confirms that she is different in her reaction to Carmilla's advancements. Laura's symptoms last longer, unlike the townswomen's, because not only has Carmilla singled her out, but Laura fights against the suppression to know herself. Unlike the townswomen, who accept the way of life they are allotted and interacting with Carmilla only in her capacity as bringer of death, Laura largely interacts with Carmilla in her capacity as liberated female who fought against her own oppression and turned vampiric as a result.

Because of the difference in Carmilla's function as Laura's companion, her attacks against Laura are also different. We finally see the culmination of Carmilla's violence against Laura during a nightly attack when Carmilla warns Laura of her own presence:

One night, instead of the voice I was accustomed to hear in the dark, I heard one, sweet and tender, and at the same time terrible, which said, 'Your mother warns you to beware of the assassin.' At the same time a light unexpectedly sprang up, and I saw Carmilla, standing near the foot of my bed, in her white nightdress, bathed, from her chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood. (66)

While this scene is one that is seemingly a classic horror image, and would point to Carmilla being the villain, in the following paragraph, Laura's immediate reaction is concern for Carmilla. "I wakened with a shriek, possessed with the one idea that Carmilla was being murdered" (66). The extent to which Laura cares for Carmilla and has given into their intimate relationship is revealed in this moment. No matter what Carmilla does beyond this point, Laura's alliance is with Carmilla. Despite all evidence pointing towards Carmilla being at fault for Laura's bad dreams and the deaths of the women in the town, she continues to remain in Laura's good grace even to the end of the novella. The only characters that ever turn on Carmilla are the men, Laura's father and the General being the most conspicuous examples. As will be discussed later, even when the General clearly marks Carmilla out as the reason for the death of his ward, and later decapitates her in her coffin, Laura still remembers her fondly and misses her. This is important as it notes a very distinct differentiation between the reaction of men to Carmilla, and the reaction of women. Laura is the only female character who gained Carmilla's favor that we see reacting to Carmilla, but it is largely favorable, even in the worst circumstances. Could an argument be made that the General's daughter never died, but was only dead to him based on her independent or lesbian behavior? While the answer to this question can never be known with absolute certainty, it is worth considering when comparing reactions between the men and women when addressing Carmilla.

After the final attack against Laura, we at last see Laura interacting with the male figures in her life after her ideological transformation. When the doctor comes to see Laura and she described her experiences, much like she did as a child, but his reaction

was entirely different. “When my statement was over, he leaned with his shoulders against the wall, and with his eyes fixed on me earnestly, with an interest in which was a dash of horror” (75). The doctor seems to take Laura’s complaints seriously now, even though when she first complained of the same experience as a child, it was dismissed by both her father and the doctor. I would pose that it is not so much the description of the attack that bothers the doctor, but Laura’s changed behavior. The interactions between Laura and her father at this point are also important, not because of Laura, but because the changes brought to Laura by Carmilla’s influence can be easily identified in them. When Laura attempts to push her father after the doctor’s visit, as the doctor refuses to tell Laura what is wrong, her normally complacent father reacts aggressively:

’But do tell me, papa,’ I insisted, ‘what does he think is the matter with me?’

‘Nothing; you must not plague me with questions,’ he answered, with more irritation than I ever remember him to have displayed before.’ (80)

Carmilla’s influence has made Laura more assertive, and thus “masculine” in her way of dealing with others in her life. When Laura insists for answers from her father in this moment, she breaks away from her traditional behavior, her socially approved “feminine” behavior, and does so under the “new woman” style influence of Carmilla.

With Laura’s changed internal reality, LeFanu shifts the narrative perspective to the General and we see Carmilla from a male point of view for the first time. Although the novella is told as a recollection by Laura after Carmilla’s death, every element is spoken in a way that, although aware of the dangers of Carmilla’s presence, also cherishes Carmilla. In Laura’s view, Carmilla can do no wrong. The General’s recollections of Carmilla have none of the softness of Laura’s. Although Carmilla’s

interactions with the General's daughter were similar to her relationship with Laura, the story the General tells is much more sinister than the one Laura has expressed up to this point. When the General talks about the death of his ward he does so with fury:

He then broke out in a tone of intense bitterness and fury, inveighing against the 'hellish arts' to which she had fallen a victim, and expressing, with more exasperation than piety, his wonder that Heaven should tolerate so monstrous an indulgence of the lusts and malignity of hell. (82)

There are several key phrases in this passage that are of interest. The fact that the General refers to Carmilla's behavior as "hellish arts" is interesting as it implies that Carmilla worked some magic and seduction on his ward, similar to the behavior exhibited by Carmilla with Laura. The expression also seems reminiscent of a conversion, that she worked arts on his ward, that she converted her to "New Woman" behavior, or to lesbianism, or likely both, in this instance. The General also refers to her behavior as "an indulgence of the lusts and malignity of hell" supporting the seduction theory, but also showing the fact that her behavior is outside of the church.

After the General's reintroduction into the story, the novel shifts in tone. While Laura is in charge of the narrative, *Carmilla* reads largely like a forbidden or dark romance, reminiscent of *Wuthering Heights*, that would not have been out of place in the late 19th century. When the General takes charge of the narrative, the shift in tone becomes one more in line with a traditional horror story. "I mean to unearth some of those fine people. I hope, by God's blessing, to accomplish a pious sacrilege here, which will relieve our earth of certain monsters, and enable honest people to sleep in their beds without being assailed by murderers" (84). Despite being the target of Carmilla's attacks,

at no point does Laura bring up the idea of destruction in relation to Carmilla. Laura is the one who experiences the brunt of Carmilla's lust, yet it is the General who defines the behavior in that term. "It is hard that they should, after death, continue to plague the human race with their atrocious lusts" (102). Laura, whether considered to be under the seductive spell of a vampire, or the beneficiary of understanding herself under the tutelage of a liberated women, has a rose-colored way of looking at and thinking of Carmilla. While it could be say that the General's way of looking at Carmilla is the expected response to a monster, I would argue that the General is equally clouded in his judgment, but by rage and disgust. When looking at Carmilla as simply a monster, and the General is the only one to regularly refer to Carmilla as a monster," "I mean, to decapitate the monster" (103), his reactions are likely normal. As previously discussed, however, Carmilla is not just a monster, but also the embodiment of the repercussions of the suppression of female passions and the violent results. The General could also be described as the male reaction against the masculine female and the violent distress expected when a Victorian male, during the 19th century gender crisis, perceives a female attempting to take a male designated social role. When the General meets Carmilla and confirms her to be Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, large numbers of men suddenly appear in the narrative to slay her.

That is the same person who long ago was called Mircalla, Countess Karnstein.

Depart from this accursed ground, my poor child, as quickly as you can. Drive to the clergyman's house, and stay there till we come. Begone! May you never behold Carmilla more; you will not find her here." (112)

Despite this characterization of Carmilla's nature, Laura still refers to her fondly and with some desire. While the men plot Carmilla's death, Laura is disturbed by her absence: "The sinister absence of Carmilla made the remembrance of the scene more horrible to me" (115). Despite the evidence in front of her, for Laura, Carmilla is still incapable of wrong.

As the novella ends, there is a passage which describes the nature of a vampire and explains Carmilla's passion for Laura:

The vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons. [...] It will never desist until it has satiated its passion, and drained the very life of its coveted victim. But it will in these cases, husband and protract its murderous enjoyment with the refinement of an epicure, and heighten it by the gradual approaches of an artful courtship. In these cases it seems to yearn for something like sympathy and consent." (121-122)

The idea that the vampire "husbands" enjoyment is particularly interesting as, even after Carmilla's death, the idea that she functions in a masculine role, and in Laura's case, in a marital role, is continued. The interaction between Carmilla and Laura is described as an "artful courtship" and we see, once again, the contradictory nature of Carmilla underlined. While the vampire is described as "murderous", the same paragraph says that "in these cases it seems to yearn for something like sympathy and consent" (122).

Carmilla singling Laura out is important and this likely confirms that Carmilla viewed Laura as someone who was like her in nature and able to come to know herself through intimacy.

The intimate nature of the relationship is emphasized one final time at the very end, when present-day Laura brings the narrative to a close. Despite everything, Laura still refers to Carmilla lovingly and as if she misses her:

It was long before the terror of recent events subsided; and to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations—sometimes the playful languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church; and often from a reveries I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing room door. (124)

It is through Carmilla that Laura discovered previously unknown parts of her identity. Through Carmilla, Laura was introduced to the idea of the liberated woman, and came to know herself, despite the contradictory pressures of the conservative church. Because of this, and despite the negative reactions of her father, the doctor, and the General, Laura never outwardly blames and speaks poorly of Carmilla directly in the novella.

The portions of the narrative from the General's perspective, in juxtaposition with Laura's narrative is a major element to understanding the multifaceted layer of Carmilla as monster, masculine Other, liberated woman, and bringer of death through masculine oppression. The General, a man who benefits from the accepted social constructs, reacts violently and aggressively, as a father who lost his daughter and as a man who fears losing his status. Laura reacts in conflict, as a woman who wants to know herself, but fears the repercussions of moving beyond acceptable society. Because of the opposing nature of their points of view, it makes sense that their reactions would be opposite as well. It could be said that Laura has an inherent understanding of Carmilla's position. She understands, if not consciously, the effects of the oppression of conservative Victorian

ideology on the internal life of women. Laura would be much more inclined to recognize and understand that Carmilla is functioning, not through a natural evil, but from being pushed beyond her limits by forced suppression of passions. The General, a representation of conservative Victorian society, would be unable to recognize even the issue with the suppression of female passions, largely because, like many Victorians, he likely did not believe that existed. To the General, Carmilla's behavior is entirely monstrous and has no explanation; however, Laura can recognize and process Carmilla's behavior from an intuitively understanding place based on her standing in society.

***Carmilla* and the Vampiric Other**

With the understanding gained from the in-depth textual analysis above, I will now discuss the social implications of a character like Carmilla in late 19th century England alongside the importance of the duality of meaning used by LeFanu. Many scholars have interpreted LeFanu's stance towards the New Woman and progressive ideology as being supportive and have interpreted *Carmilla* as representative of his stance against the oppression of female passion.

Beneath the dualisms of vampire-human and lesbian-heterosexual are levels which reveal civilization's discontents. What characters should want conflicts with what they actually want; and at a deeper level, the wants they admit conflict with what they really (often unconsciously) desire. Although men as well as women suffer repression in 'Carmilla,' LeFanu chooses female protagonists because he agrees with clear-sighted Victorians that woman in particular is stunted emotionally. (Veeder 198)

The impression of LeFanu's support and his commentary on the detriments of social conservative oppression of women in *Carmilla* can be better understood through the idea

of dual meaning as discussed previously. Many scholars note that it is necessary to take the idea of duality into consideration to understand the full meaning of *Carmilla* as both entertainment and social commentary.

The importance of LeFanu's use of duality can be seen in the representation of Carmilla, not just as vampire and monster, but through her masculine behavior in the face of conservative Victorian ideals: aggression, passion, and dominant behavior. Carmilla functions as both the supernatural monster and the social evil of the independent woman. "Carmilla' is part of that High Victorian self-examination which called into question literary and social conventions and the moral orthodoxies underlying them" (Veeder 198). Carmilla represents the female character that has been repressed to the point that the suppressed passions eventually break out into violence. We see this in the moments of aggression with Laura when Carmilla becomes possessive and "masculine" in her treatment. In the moments of possessive behavior, Carmilla functions as the embodiment of conservative fears as the independent woman beyond male control. Through the act of suppression, the forced gendered hierarchy became a form of self-fulfilling prophecy in Carmilla by creating the very "masculine" female that was feared from the beginning. In this case, fear brought the imagined monster into reality, in more ways than one. Carmilla has a character whose personality functions beyond the enforced gender binary is only one concern. As mentioned in the textual analysis, Carmilla is representative of all consequences of the forced suppression. She is the female made masculine, but she is also the bringer of distress caused by the suppression through her supernatural destruction through the sickness and death of the village women from her vampiric bite.

Throughout the novel, LeFanu mentions a number of female characters who die off screen due to a mysterious illness that leaves them weak and lethargic. The illness is caused by Carmilla's nightly attacks of the women, as we will see later in her own attacks against Laura; however, the difference between Laura and the women who are killed is that we see Laura struggling to find herself and to understand the passions that have been suppressed in her through her relationship with Carmilla. Just as Carmilla alludes to the fact that she was also ill, before regaining her strength and becoming who she is when we meet her in the novel, a character free of the suppression of society, Laura follows the same path. Carmilla embodies the most prominent of the negative repercussions of the conservative attempts at repression: woman pushed into violence through societal suppression as well as the physical and mental strain of oppression on women who cannot find relief or ever truly know themselves.

Beyond the negative implications of Carmilla, we also see the influence of LeFanu's progressive ideology as shown through Carmilla in the interactions between Laura and the Doctor. After both incidents of Carmilla's attack, the same Doctor is called. He repeatedly rejects Laura's story of an attacker and only after Carmilla's attack against Laura as an adult does his reaction change; however, his response is more towards her changed behavior than physical illness. The automatic rejection of Laura's own awareness of her experiences by the Doctor and her father falls in line with actual rejections of female independence by doctors in the late 19th century.

To the question posed repeatedly by conservative Victorians—Do Women have passion? —LeFanu, like Drysdale, sensation writers and others, answers a resounding yes. That so many authoritative Victorians, particularly physicians,

scientists, and clerics, answered no is indicative of a climate of mind that LeFanu fears. The more we deny the existence of passions, the more we can control those passions by repressing them. (Veeder 198-199)

The advent of the Victorian New Woman and the emerging feminist movement of the period is embodied in quotes such as these. Writers like LeFanu recognized that women are passionate, and often sexual, beings, and that through repression of this reality, there is a disconnect, and often severally negative ramifications.

If we accept the idea that LeFanu was not just writing an adventure/horror genre novel, as the research would suggest, but also a social commentary, then that leaves the question: Who is the villain? In a horror genre novella, it is expected that there is some kind of villain or monster. While Carmilla is clearly the monster in the physical sense, she is not necessarily the villain. Carmilla is the representation of the results of forced repression of women and their sexuality. Taken from this point of view, is she not the victim, at least from an ideological standpoint? With the forced binary of angel and seductress, good women versus bad, there are only two very narrowly defined boxes that have no room for the nuanced reality of humanity. There becomes a dividing line between women like the hyper innocent Laura, the superficial image of the desired conservative woman, and the overtly violent and sexual Carmilla, fighting against the repression through hyper sexuality and passion. Through repression society creates infantilized women who do not know themselves and violent sexual women who, without an outlet for natural passions, take on “masculine” identities that supersede the reality of human emotion and internal lives. While Carmilla is inarguably monster in the

supernatural sense, the societal hierarchy in place that creates her, and Laura, is also to blame.

Through the discussion of LeFanu's *Carmilla* in conjunction with the societal shifts that occurred due to the redundancy issue, emigration debate, and the emergence of the Victorian feminist movement, an idea of the social changes occurring during the late 19th century can be gained in how they directly affected the lives of Victorian women. The late 19th century was a time of fast paced change and adaptation to new ideas, frequently in conflict with one another. *Carmilla* reflects this through the conflict as seen through Laura's internal struggle, and the outward conflict between the changing Laura and the men surrounding her. The emergence of the New Woman shifted ideology of Victorian middle-class society and set off a series of changes which were then reflected both in reality and literary ideas.

Chapter 5: *Dracula*

Although I did not directly discuss the New Woman in depth in this section, in the following section, the idea of the New Woman will move to the forefront as we more clearly see the conflict male writers had when writing female characters in the age of the New Woman. LeFanu, as presented to us by scholars, was a man in support of the feminist ideology of the time. *Carmilla* as a character reflects this through commentary on the dangers of repression from the middle of the shift. Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as will be discussed in the following section, is the image of the writer in moderation. Stoker's Mina Harker is the embodiment of the New Woman, despite several remarks degrading the New Woman ideology. With *Carmilla* laying the foundation exploring the beginnings of the feminist movement, we will now discuss the effects from Stoker's vantage point of some 25 years after the start.

The New Woman

At the time *Dracula* was published, in 1897, the concept of the New Woman was largely a mainstream feminist ideology, although the specific use of the term "New Woman" did not occur until 1894. Over the past 30 years, from the introduction of *Carmilla*, to its inspiration, and resultant publication, of *Dracula*, English middle-class society had undergone drastic changes in the number of restrictions placed on single women. This is not to say that the last decade of the 19th century was a socially liberated period for women, but there were marked improvements that occurred after the Redundancy issue in the 1870s. At the time that Stoker was writing *Dracula*, the concerns over the New Woman ideology had shifted, and there was an increase in "liberally" minded men, like LeFanu, and in some capacity, Stoker; however, there was

also an increased anxiety about what the New Woman ideology meant to male society, now that it was an established part of English culture. As the New Woman became more established, anxieties manifested over the extent of the empowerment of women, and if said empowerment would place women above men in society. An amalgamation of the desired traits of the conservative “Angel of the House” and the socially liberal New Woman came to be seen as the moderate form of the perfect woman. This can be seen in characters like Mina, who are strong and independent, but not so much as to intimidate men, or to no longer need protection.

Despite the attempts at moderating the New Woman to be more appealing to a masculine audience, many still revolted against the change from conservative ideology, resulting in upset and contradiction as Victorians tried to assimilate a new concept into their world view. “Though few heroines of New Woman fiction actually dabbled in revolutionary politics, such alarmed commentators as Barry and Chapman persistently looked beyond specific episodes to read in the New Woman’s insistence on sexual equality and self-development a manifesto of contemporary anarchism” (Dowling 438). Because of this, women, particularly female characters written by male authors, are often presented as a set or series of dichotomies (which were often times contradictory in nature due to the attempts at New Woman moderation), with an emphasis on the two sides of the coin of the pure angel and the seductive, sexually aware temptress. Lucy is an example of this as she starts entirely pure until she is entirely evil, with little nuanced understanding or description in between, showing both sides of the dangers of the overly conservative naiveté, and the overly sexual New Woman. Alternatively, Mina is the example of the idealized moderation of the New Woman, morally upright and pure, while

maintaining a high degree of intellect, which allows her to better fight of the contamination of Dracula's bite. Stoker uses Mina as the example of the idealized moderate New Woman, effectively depicting Victorian anxieties over the social changes in female empowerment, while placing her in juxtaposition of the overly conservative Lucy, and the overly sexualized and self-serving wives of Dracula as a frame of comparison.

Textual Analysis – *Dracula*

While the focus of the analysis in this chapter will be primarily on Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker, it is important to look at the three wives of Dracula as a form of comparison which Lucy and Mina can be measured against after Dracula's bite. One of the few times that the wives of Dracula appear is at the Count's mansion to Jonathan Harker, who describes them thus:

All three had brilliant what teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. [...] They whispered together, and then they all three laughed—such a silvery, musical laugh, but as hard as though the sound never could have come through the softness of human lips. It was like the intolerable, tingling sweetness of water-glasses when played on by a cunning hand. (31-32)

Phrases such as “voluptuous” and the description of the “tingling sweetness” of their voices are important linguistic markers for the female vampire. Stoker only attributes phrases such as these to describe the female vampires and are indicative of moral impurity. The stage is set by this paragraph, delineating the differences between a

morally pure woman and the monstrous Other. A pure woman cannot be voluptuous; I would go so far as to say that no sexual attributes can be exhibited by a woman in *Dracula* without showing moral failings. The sexualization of women only appears when in conjunction with the monstrous. The statement here seems to be that, while the intellectual pursuits of the New Woman ideology is considered tolerable, or even celebrated, particularly when put to use towards male pursuits, the sexual freedom that was often attributed to a more liberal ideology was one that could not be accepted. Already, the anxieties of the late 19th century over how far the burgeoning feminist movement would go are coming to the forefront. After the encounter between Jonathan and the wives of Dracula, Jonathan draws the comparison himself. "I am alone in the castle with those awful women. Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the Pit" (45). The emphasis on the differences between the "voluptuous" and sensual vampires is drawn repeatedly throughout, often times as blatantly as the line previous.

In comparison to the three vampire women, the image of Lucy presented is a dramatic shift. While the vampire women are shown as being self-serving and highly sexual, Lucy is characterized as being self-sacrificing with a desire to please those around her. Lucy is indicative of the Angel of the House archetype, prior to the emergence of the New Woman movement. We see this in the letters Lucy writes to Mina where she discusses the disparity between men and woman. Lucy questions how successful a wife is at meeting the expectations of her husband, leaning heavily against the wife: "A woman ought to tell her husband everything—don't you think so, dear? —and I must be fair. Men like women, certainly their wives, to be quite as fair as they are; and women, I am

afraid, are not always as fair as they should be” (48) Similarly, Lucy frequently comments on the superiority of men to women, an idea that was traditionally pervasive, and largely unquestioned by the masses, prior to the feminist movements of the 19th century. When Lucy declares men “so noble” and women “so little worthy of them” (50) the idea of the traditional woman and the privileged ideologies of conservative society are defined. Even Mina, the reluctant New Woman of *Dracula*, describes the superiority of men in the same breath that she disparages the New Woman movement that her characteristics define: “I believe we should have shocked the ‘New Woman’ with our appetites. Men are more tolerant, bless them” (77). Much of the introductory portion of *Dracula* seems to follow a formula of delineation between acceptable and unacceptable female behavior. Through Lucy, we see an example of the traditionally acceptable woman, pure and innocent behavior. Mina is the New Woman, but tempered through the male tolerance of Stoker’s writing as we see throughout with Mina’s comments on the New Woman:

Some of the ‘New Women’ writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the New Woman won’t condescend in future to accept; she will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it, too! There’s some consolation in that. (77)

Incidentally, Mina is the only character to bring up the concept of the New Woman, which she does on multiple occasions. Lastly, we have the vampire wives, the New Woman gone beyond societal tolerance, overtly sexual and self-serving. Through these

three examples of female behavior, *Dracula* creates a guide book on socially approved manifestations of femininity.

After the guidelines of femininity have been laid down, we now have a ruler that Mina and Lucy's behavior can be measured against as they come under the influence of Count Dracula. The indicator of change comes as the image of blood staining Lucy's nightgown: "I [Mina] was sorry to notice that my clumsiness with the safety-pin hurt her [Lucy]. [...] I must have pinched up a piece of loose skin and have transfixed it, for there are two little red points like pin-pricks, and on the band of her nightdress was a drop of blood. (80) The staining of the nightgown foreshadows how the exchange of blood between Dracula and Lucy, and later Mina, will stain and soil the purity of their femininity. The importance of blood continues, not just in the literal in that blood is necessary for survival, but also as an indicator of value and strength. When Lucy needs a blood transfusion after the Count's bite, the men immediately dismiss the viability of the maids' blood as not being worthy, while their own blood is marked as superior through the virtue of masculinity: "A brave man's blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble" (128). The value of blood is determined by masculinity and power in men, and purity and moral righteousness in women; however, what defines a brave man is never clearly defined in the novel, only what defines a pure woman, and despite the fact that "that poor pretty creature that we all love has had put into her veins within that time the blood of four strong men" (130) Lucy's femininity is still tainted by the Count and cannot be undone. We see this in the way that, despite the introduction of the male blood, Lucy's transformation continues. "Her teeth, in the dim, uncertain light, seemed longer and sharper than they had been in the morning. In particular, by some trick

of the light, the canine teeth looked longer and sharper than the rest” (136). With the growth of Lucy’s fangs also comes the change in her behavior. When we reference the characterizations of acceptable female behavior against Lucy’s changing characterization, it is clear that her increased sexuality and self-serving behavior put her more in line with the wives of Dracula than her original behavior or Mina.

And then insensibly there came the strange change which I had noticed before in the night. Her breathing grew stertorous, the mouth opened, and the pale gums, drawn back, made the teeth look longer and sharper than ever. In a sort of sleep-walking, vague, unconscious way she opened her eyes, which were now dull and hard at once, and said in a soft, voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips: — ‘Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me!’ Arthur bent eagerly over to kiss her; but at that instant Van Helsing, [...] actually hurled him almost across the room. ‘Not for your life!’ he said; ‘not for your living soul and hers!’ [...] (138)

As previously stated, the use of the word “voluptuous” is only used in reference to female vampires. Although Lucy has not fully converted, through the descriptions used, it is clear that she cannot be redeemed and live. There is also an increase in anger in Lucy after her transformation. Violent emotions, such as anger and rage, are traditionally attributed to masculinity, and by exhibiting them, not only does Lucy reject the idea of the passionless woman that would have followed her originally conservative portrayal, but she also takes on masculine independent characteristics, exhibiting parts of the New Woman ideology that the novel had already rejected through the wives of Dracula.

Regarding the cautionary tale of Lucy, and the death of her humanity, I would argue that the narrative of Lucy and her death is a condemnation of wholly conservative ideology. Lucy was too pure and innocent, to the point of naiveté and weakness. As will be seen through Mina's own experiences with the Count, Lucy was unable to fight back in the same fashion as Mina. Lucy was not equipped with the same intelligence and intuitive thinking that Mina exhibits. While the wives of Dracula are the condemnation of the New Woman when done so to the point of extremity, Lucy is a condemnation of the conservative desire to keep women childlike as it prevents them from ever gaining self-preservation skills. Mina is then presented as the harmonious halfway point of intellectual prowess and moral purity. This can be seen multiple times through Van Helsing's comments on Mina's intelligence in comparison to most women: "Ah, then you have good memory for facts, for details? It is not always so with young ladies" (156). Van Helsing is pleased with her intellectual abilities, as are the other men in the novel. In fact, Mina's teasing nature and even intellectual superiority to the men around her is met with joy: "I come here full of respect for you, and you have given me hope—hope, not in what I am seeking of, but that there are good women still left to make life happy—good women, whose lives and whose truths may make good lesson for the children that are to be" (158). That being said, it is important to note that, while Van Helsing praises Mina's abilities, he puts them in relation to her eventual children, once again drawing the line. While it is good that Mina is intelligent and capable, it is only acceptable as long as she plans to continue her "job" of getting married and producing children. As the New Woman emerged in the time of the redundancy issue, where many women could not marry and were considered to be failures at their "job", the comment on Mina's eventual

children is a stance on the place of women in society, while still encouraging intelligence. Van Helsing continues to act as the mouthpiece against excessively feminist attitudes as he compliments Mina's intelligence while maintaining the desired self-sacrificing attitude:

'She is one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist—and that, let me tell you, is much in this age, so skeptical and selfish.' (161)

At this point, Van Helsing continues to add clarity to the definition of the proper manifestation of the New Woman, likely from the masculine point of view. It is good to be an intelligent woman while being true, sweet, noble, and not an egoist in a world that is "skeptical and selfish" and increasingly moving towards female independence beyond the confines of the household.

Despite the change in rhetoric used to describe Lucy in a more vicious and unappealing light, it is interesting that she is never treated as if she is a threat. Van Helsing specifically counters the idea of Lucy as a threat when asked:

For Miss Lucy, or from her, I have no fear; but that other to whom is there that she is Un-Dead, he have now the power to seek her tomb and find shelter. He is cunning, as I know from Mr. Jonathan and from the way that all along he have fooled us when he played with us for Miss Lucy's life, and we lost; and in many ways the Un-Dead are strong. (174)

Even though Lucy is represented with an increased strength and supernatural abilities, the Count is the one considered to be the threat, not Lucy. Even as a monster, Lucy is not

seen as dangerous. There are a number of potential explanations for this point of view. Lucy, as female, even supernatural, is still considered part of the weaker sex. Alongside this, Lucy as monster was created by man, or Dracula, in this case. The blame cannot be laid on Lucy, but on the Count, leaving her free of blame, and a continued form of innocence that she inhabited prior to the bite. I would argue that the commentary of the blame as Dracula's instead of Lucy's, the Angel of the House, holds a chastising tone for the outright conservative female role and largely blames the male members of society for creating a helpless form of femininity. In either explanation, Lucy persists as the archetypal angel instead of as a multidimensional character, such as Mina.

With Lucy's full transformation to a vampire, the foreshadowing images return through more extreme depictions. The scene where Mina thinks she pricks Lucy with a pin and stains her gown is revisited, but this time, the blood is not her own and the stain is much larger:

Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness was turned adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness. [...] by the concentrated light that fell on Lucy's face we could see that the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe. (180-181)

Once again, the use of "voluptuous" as a description is revisited, compounded by the image of her "wantonness". Her lips are a bright red, rouged but from the taint of blood, and her staining "the purity of her lawn death-robe". The foreshadowing of the stain on her dressing gown comes to fruition in this moment. Through the stain, there is also a

forced separation between the “Angel of the House” Lucy from before and the vampire before them:

When Lucy—I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape—
 saw us she drew back with an angry snarl, such as a cat gives when taken
 unawares; then her eyes ranged over us. Lucy’s eyes in form and colour; but
 Lucy’s eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew.
 At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she
 then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight. As she looked, her eyes
 blazed with unholy light, and the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile.
 (181)

The delineation of the two Lucy’s is made explicit in this paragraph. Each line shows a clear shift and difference between the two identities. “Angel of the House” Lucy was too naive and was not equipped to deal with corruption, while vampiric Lucy was the result. Since Lucy was kept innocent, there was no defense against the overt New Woman ideology to create a moderate, as found in Mina. The new Lucy is “unclean and full of hell-fire” as she has given up her purity in exchange for the supernatural. Her redemption is her passivity in the series of events, and even that only earns her death, although a spiritually fulfilled one at the end.

Despite Lucy’s passivity, and the claims of her weakness by Van Helsing in comparison to the Count, there is a moment where she becomes truly monstrous and violent and the image of Lucy is turned to one of contempt. Lucy truly becomes monster, not when she is turned, although this plays a part, but when she hurts a child. “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 [...] There was a cold-bloodedness in the act which wrung a groan from Arthur” (181) After this scene, the attempts to justify the differences between the two identities which inhabited Lucy’s body end until her final death. Lucy has become terrifying and entirely monstrous in this moment as the anti-mother. By harming a child, Lucy has not only tainted someone else’s innocence, as Dracula tainted hers, but through the nature of Victorian femininity, and the perception of motherhood as the “job” of Victorian women, this iteration of Lucy has rejected her approved role in its entirety. Unlike characters such as Grendel’s Mother, whose maternal nature are seen as her saving grace, there is no redemption for the “voluptuous” and “wanton” vampiric version of Lucy after the rejection of the child. It is through this rejection, and the decreased attempts at redemptory language used for Lucy, that we also see increased parallels between Lucy and the wives of Dracula: “There was something diabolically sweet in her tones—something of the tingling of glass when struck—which rang through the brains even of us who heard the words addressed to another” (181). The established parameters of female behavior once again provide a measuring tool for Lucy’s behavior. The “sweet” “tingling” quality of Lucy’s voice, as described here, is a direct parallel to the first encounter Jonathan has with the three wives, and the tone used to attempt to seduce him. Through this final parallel drawn, it is clear that Lucy is beyond God, as seen through her reaction to the cross: “Van Helsing sprang forward and held between him his little golden crucifix. She recoiled from it” (181). In this moment, Lucy is independently monster, and this is seemingly driven home in the following paragraph. Up to this point, the monstrous descriptions of Lucy have either been tempered by redemptory language, or through direct parallels to the wives of Dracula. The following description of Lucy’s

behavior and image is unique to her, and sets her apart as her own monster, beyond the simple influence of the Count:

Never did I see such baffled malice on a face; and never, I trust, shall such ever be seen again by mortal eyes. The beautiful color became livid, the eyes seemed to throw out sparks of hell-fire, the brows were wrinkled as though the folds of the flesh were the coils of Medusa's snakes, and the lovely, blood-stained mouth grew to an open square, as in the passion masks of the Greeks and Japanese. If ever a face meant death—if looks could kill—we saw it at that moment. (181-182)

With Lucy's individual description as independent monster, her humanity is forfeit. "But there was no love in my own heart, nothing but loathing for the foul Thing which had taken Lucy's shape without her soul" (183). Even to the men who loved Lucy, this is clear.

After Lucy's identity comes full circle, from the Angel, to the Devil, only then can redemption through death be achieved. "When this now Un-Dead be made to rest as true dead, then the soul of the poor lady whom we love shall again be free. Instead of working wickedness by night and growing more debased in the assimilating of it by day, she shall take her place with the other Angels" (184). Lucy, as known to the reader prior to Dracula, is already dead, forced to inhabit the body alongside the vampire. Van Helsing references Lucy's soul as a separate entity, marking the vampiric identity as a parasite. To kill the vampire is not to kill Lucy, who is already dead, but to free her soul. We see this after the moment of the death of the vampire Lucy. "For she is not a grinning devil now—not any more a foul Thing for all eternity. No longer she is the

devil's Un-Dead. She is God's true dead, whose soul is with Him!" (186). When Van Helsing describes her as "God's true dead" he refers to the fact that, while Lucy as the Angel of the House archetype has been dead this entire time, she is now allowed to rest.

In contrast to Lucy and the wives of Dracula, Mina is her own creature. Although Van Helsing described her as a "pearl among women" (187) and Seward as a "sweet-face, dainty-looking girl" (187) much like they described Lucy, Mina is very different in her characterization. Mina is intellectual and self-sufficient, without being self-serving, a point that Van Helsing touches on multiple times throughout the novel. Like with Lucy, the men worry about sharing too much with Mina and scaring her: "She does not know how precious time is, or what task we have in hand. I must be careful not to frighten her" and won't tell her about Lucy's death "Not for the wide world!" (189) Yet, unlike Lucy, Mina continues to assert her abilities and potential help to the men. When speaking to Seward, Mina advises:

'You do not know me,' I said. 'When you have read those papers—my own diary and my husband's also, which I have typed—you will know me better. I have not faltered in giving every thought of my own heart in this cause; but, of course, you do not know me—yet; and I must not expect you to trust me so far. (189)

Although Mina embodies the physical and spiritual purity of the Angel of the House, she has the intellect and self-sufficiency of the New Woman. Mina is not a damsel to be protected, but an asset. In her capacity as the "Angel of the House", and moral compass for the men, Mina is the shoulder to cry on when Morris breaks down after Lucy's death: "I suppose there is something in woman's nature that makes a man free to break down before her and express his feelings on the tender or emotional side without feeling it

derogatory to his manhood” (196). She is also the domesticating influence and respite for the men during the arduous hunt for Dracula. If Mina had remained only in that capacity, she would have been another one-dimensional example of the conservative Victorian woman, and would have, through my argument, fallen prey to Dracula. Instead, she combines the elements of both the Angel and the New Woman that traditionally liberal minded men desired into one. Van Helsing speaks directly to the desired combination:

[Mina] has man’s brain—a brain that a man should have were he much gifted—and a woman’s heart. The good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when He made that so good combination. Friend John, up to now fortune has made that woman of help to us; after to-night she must not have to do with this so terrible affair. It is not good that she run a risk so great. We men are determined – nay, are we not pledged? – to destroy this monster; but it is no part for a woman. Even if she be not harmed, her heart may fail her in so much and so many horrors; [...] She is young woman and not so long married; there may be other things to think of some time, if not now. (Stoker 201-202)

In the same paragraph, Van Helsing praises Mina’s intellect, while also alluding to her “job” as a married woman soon to bear children. It seems that from moments like these the preferred woman is an intellectual and strong woman who helps men in their pursuits, but also does her “job”.

Part of Mina’s complexity that we see, other than her representation as the ideal woman in *Dracula*, is the resultant conflict in combining conservative views and New Woman ideology. Although Van Helsing and the other men appreciate Mina’s

intellectual power, she is still treated as a delicate “Angel”, despite her proven abilities in helping to find the count:

‘And now for you, Madame Mina, this night is the end until all be well. You are too precious to us to have such risk. We shall tell you all in good time. We are men and are able to bear; but you must be our star and our hope, and we shall act all the more free that you are not in the danger such as we are.’ (207)

If Mina were to be the perfect conservative Angel, she likely would not have questioned this treatment; however, given her New Woman attitude and intelligence, the idea of being excluded does bother her:

It did not seem to me good that they should brave danger and, perhaps, lessen their safety—strength being the best safety—through care of me; but their minds were made up, and, though it was a bitter pill for me to swallow, I could say nothing, save to accept their chivalrous care of me. (208)

It is in moments such as these that the disparity between the perception of Mina to others and Mina’s perception of herself becomes clear. The line between too naive and too self-serving is a delicate one that Mina is forced to walk, and is only complicated by the anxieties of the men around her to force her only partially into both worlds, with the best intentions.

The moments of best intentions, and also the pressure of male society, such as that experienced in “clubland”, is most clearly seen through Jonathan Harker’s thoughts on his wife’s involvement:

I think I never saw Mina so absolutely strong and well. I am so glad that she consented to hold back and let us men do the work. Somehow, it was a dread to

me that she was in this fearful business at all; but now that her work is done, and that it is due to her energy and brains and foresight that the whole story is put together in such a way that every point tells, she may well feel that her part is finished, and that she can henceforth leave the rest to us. (213)

Jonathan is an interesting window into the male anxiety surrounding the New Woman. Jonathan frequently speaks of Mina's intelligence and input. As stated above, he admits that it was due to Mina's "brains and foresight that the whole story is put together" and yet, due to the influence of the surrounding men, Jonathan no longer supports her involvement. Jonathan himself admits that his opinion on the matter has changed, given the level of confidence and support he has gained from Mina in the past.

I am truly thankful that she is to be left out of our future work, and even our deliberations. It is too great a strain for a woman to bear. I did not think so at first, but I know better now. [...] I daresay it will be difficult to begin to keep silence after such confidence as ours; but I must be resolute. (218)

Through the influence of the men around him, it seems as though Jonathan's opinions changes on Mina's involvement. Mina's own reactions speak to the dramatic change. Although, because of the "Angel" portion of her character, Mina accepted the decision of the men, her New Woman traits and the differences in her internal reality versus the men prevent the acceptance from being unquestioning: "They all agreed that it was best that I should not be drawn further into this awful work, and I acquiesced. But to think that [Jonathan] keeps anything from me!" (220). Mina is used to being included, and to be left out is a sudden change. I would not say that the men are condemned for their conservative idea of exclusion; however, considering the decision is eventually revoked,

and Mina is included in all decisions, I feel it is fair to say that, when considering New Woman intelligence, *Dracula* encouraged involvement in so far as it can help male ventures. Beyond Mina's relationship with the men, there are many allusions and parallels drawn between Mina and Lucy, particularly involving Mina's almost transformation. There are multiple references to Mina as "looking tired and pale" (229) in the same fashion as Lucy; however, while Lucy became weaker and was eventually confined to bed, Mina grew stronger throughout the process. This speaks much to the empowerment of Mina as contrasted with Lucy's naiveté.

The empowerment of Mina is put to the test during her encounter with the Count where she is forced to drink his blood. This is the moment where Mina's blood becomes tainted through the introduction of the Count's blood. Just like Lucy, her femininity is tainted through the introduction of the Count's blood; however, there are noticeable differences in Mina's reaction to the experience:

Kneeling on the near edge of the bed facing outwards was the white-clad figure of his wife. By her side stood a tall, thin man, clad in black. His face was turned from us, but the instant we saw all recognized the Count—in every way, even to the scar on his forehead. With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink. (242)

The images of Lucy moving through the transformation are consistently passive in tone. Lucy does not fight against anything, but accepts it in passivity, or in paralyzing terror. The language used in the depiction of Mina's encounter is much more active. The description of the Count being required to force Mina to drink shows her natural resistance and aversion to the Count and the polluting nature of his blood:

Her face was ghastly, with a pallor which was accentuated by the blood which smeared her lips and cheeks and chin; from her throat trickled a thin stream of blood; her eyes were mad with terror. Then she put before her face her poor crushed hands, which bore on their whiteness the red mark of the Count's terrible grip, and from behind them came a low desolate wail which made the terrible scream seem only the quick expression of an endless grief. (242)

Mina's reactions continue to be more violent than Lucy's in regards to the Count. There is more physicality and lashing out in how her behavior directly affects those around her, unlike how Lucy's passivity in death was what caused the men around her to react. Mina is a force, acting upon those around her, while Lucy was always acted upon and moved by the men.

Another difference between Mina's and Lucy's transformations included an increased focus on Mina's own perceptions of her purity. Due to Lucy's natural naive state, I would argue that it would not have crossed her mind in the same way as Mina's to focus on her own level of purity and morality. Mina's perpetual state of balance between two worlds, walking the tightrope between too much liberal feminism, potentially falling into the "unclean" state of sexual liberation, and the too conservative naiveté of Lucy, would lend itself to a greater awareness of her social acceptability:

She shuddered and was silent, holding down her head on her husband's breast.

When she raised it, his white nightgown was stained with blood where her lips that touched, and where the thin open wound in her neck had sent forth drops. The instant she saw it she drew back, with a wail, and whispered, amidst choking sobs: — 'Unclean, unclean! I must touch him or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy, and whom he may have most cause to fear. (243-244)

Mina's fears of morality are closely tied to her husband, her identity as a wife, and to religion, all concepts related more so to her characterization as the Angel than her identity as the moderate New Woman. If Mina does not preserve those key parts of her personality which mark her as morally pure, she can no longer be the moderate version of the New Woman.

Despite Mina exhibiting fears of moral impurity, the framing of her as the moderate New Woman has placed her in a position well equipped to deal with the taint of the Count, unlike Lucy. When Dracula speaks to Mina and refers to her as the "blood of my blood" he claims her as one of his monsters, as Lucy became; however, in that same moment, he sets her apart as beyond his total control. "You have aided in thwarting me; now you shall come to my call. When my brain says 'Come!' to you, you should cross land or sea to do my bidding; and to do that into this!" (247) Unlike Lucy, Mina has actively worked against Dracula, and will continue to do so throughout the remainder of the novel, despite her increasing transformation, demonstrating the power of the intellectual female over the naiveté of the conservative "angel". The idea of the importance of the intellectual nature of the New Woman is repeatedly underlined as

Mina's competence continues to grow during her transformation, while Lucy grew weaker. It is due to the increasing level of Mina's competence that we also see the perceptions of the men change. Despite the original intent of the male characters to keep Mina out of the action and safe, she is centrally located in the plot, not just because of her connection to Dracula, but also due to the invaluable contributions she brings. The idea of disregarding Mina and removing her from the plan is characteristic of conservative ideology and treatment of women. It is through Mina's continued competence and contributions that the men are forced to see her value and adopt a more liberally minded outlook. "When the question began to be discussed as to what should be our next step, the very first thing we decided was that Mina should be in full confidence; that nothing of any sort—no matter how painful—should be kept from her" (249). It is after the shift in the treatment of Mina that the narrative picks up and the pieces begin to fall into place for the hunt for the Count, indicating the importance of Mina's assistance.

With Mina's return to the action, there is a greater amount of the text dedicated to her as Angel as if to temper her increasingly vampiric qualities. Mina is described as self-sacrificing like an Angel, but self-sufficient as a New Woman. The duality of this concept is embodied in her plans to kill herself to save the others. 'Because if I find in myself—and I shall watch keenly for it—a sign of harm to any of that I love, I shall die!' (249) A claim could be made that the impactful moment of Mina's suicidal plan is meant to balance out the upcoming rejection from God through the episode of the Wafer. The novel creates a feeling of sympathy and humanity in Mina to temper her declaration of monster as indicated by God's rejection. Even though Mina does not exhibit monstrous

attributes up to this point, the episode of the wafer is indicative of the shift and the physical changes that will come:

As he had placed the Wafer on Mina's forehead, it had seared it—had burned into the flesh as though it had been a piece of white-hot metal. My poor darling's brain had told her the significance of the fact as quickly as her nerves received the pain of it; and the two so overwhelmed her that her overwrought nature had its voice in that dreadful scream. But the words to her thought came quickly; the echo of the scream had not ceased to ring on the air when there came the reaction, and she sank on her knees on the floor and in agony of abasement. Pulling her beautiful hair over her face, as the leper of old his mantle, she wailed out: — 'Unclean! Unclean! Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh! I must bear this mark of shame upon my forehead until the Judgement day.' (254)

Despite the protestations of the men, the damnation of God is what counts in the definition of monster in *Dracula*. The men indicate Mina's potential redemption through their protection and rhetoric used to describe her, but, just as Lucy is rejected by God through the scene of the cross, Mina is rejected by God through the wafer, confirming her as monster. Despite this, both the men's reactions and the Christian imagery parallel the redemptive moments the men spoke of in comparison between pre-bite Lucy and post-bite; however, unlike where Lucy's pure nature eventually becomes so monstrous that the redemptive language ceases, Mina's purity is continuously reiterated by the men, despite the mark on her forehead, marking her as monster:

Oh, that I could give any idea of the scene; of that sweet, sweet, good, good woman and all the radiant beauty of her youth and animation, with the red scar on

her forehead, of which she was conscious, and which we saw with grinding of our teeth—remembering whence and how it came; her loving kindness against our groom hate; her tender faith against all our fears and doubting; and we, knowing that so far as symbols went, she with all her goodness and purity and faith, was outcast from God. (264)

Despite Jonathan's assurances that Mina is pure in his eyes, he recognizes that she has been rejected by God. In each moment, where he speaks redemptive rhetoric of Mina, it is tempered by the reminder of her religious rejection, as above, and in the following paragraph:

This I know: that if ever there was a woman who was all perfection, that one is my poor wronged darling. I love her a thousand times more for her sweet pity of last night, a pity that made my own hate for the monster seem despicable. Surely God will not permit the world to be the poorer by the loss of such a creature. (266)

Even though Jonathan speaks against the idea of Mina's rejection from God, he perpetually reminds the reader of the issue, showing his own anxieties about the mark, and also reflecting the aforementioned anxieties of real life Victorians over shifting female social standing. Mina's mark by the wafer is a mark showing the beginning of her shift, both as a vampire, but also a shift into a more uncontrollable form of the New Woman.

As Mina's transformation progresses, there is an increased number of parallels drawn between Mina and Lucy's previous transformation. The following paragraph describing Mina's teeth and eyes is almost identical to one describing Lucy previously:

“Her teeth are some sharper, and at times her eyes are more hard. But these are not all, there is to her the silence now often; as so it was with Miss Lucy. She did not speak, even when she wrote that which she wished to be known later” (277). Unlike with Lucy, where the parallels drawn during her transformation were to the three wives of Dracula, Mina is measured against Lucy. Potentially this is because Mina’s transformation never reaches a point where she is the same level of monster as the three wives, meaning that Mina is still more closely tied to the purity of the Angel archetype, than the sexuality of the vampire/overly liberal New Woman. Despite this, the parallels between Mina and Lucy largely cease after this point, and almost none are drawn between Mina and the wives, signaling a deviation from Lucy and the three wives’ experiences of the transformation. Mina, before and after Dracula’s bite, continues to be independent of entirely conforming to either the Angel or New Woman dichotomy. Despite her impending transformation, Mina continues to walk the line between the two ideologies without faltering, particularly in her self-sacrificing ways: “But you must remember that I am not as you are. There is a poison in my blood, in my soul, which may destroy me; which must destroy me, unless some relief comes to us” (283). Mina references here her previous promise to kill herself if she feels the transformation becoming too strong; however, even though this is entirely self-sacrificing, there is a strength and level of action to the declaration that is not seen in Lucy’s transformation. It could be said that Lucy was unaware of the potential danger she posed, but I would dismiss this claim in the face of her gratitude to Van Helsing for saving Arthur from her bite on her death bed. To act with strength while maintaining an air of self-sacrifice is the theme of Mina’s characterization as the moderate New Woman, and even in the face of her transformation, she maintains this throughout. The level at

which Mina is able to maintain the duality of the Angel and the New Woman after drinking Dracula's blood is almost superhuman, and continues to underline the unrealistic quality of the moderate New Woman. Lucy, as the idealized Angel of the House, quickly succumbs to Dracula's influence; however, despite minor physical alterations, and a subdued attitude, Mina is all but the same. With Mina's connection to Dracula increasing daily, unlike Lucy, who succumbs to exhaustion, Mina is still able to make her connection serviceable to the men: "That terrible baptism of blood which he gave you makes you free to go to him in spirit, as you have yet to get done in your times of freedom, when the sun rise and set. At such times you go by my volition and not by his;" (294). Despite the fact that it is Mina who goes to Dracula to learn about his plans, Van Helsing still takes credit for dictating her actions. This is a classic moment for the "moderate New Woman". Mina's superior skills are praised, but only as a tool used by Van Helsing and the other men; however, it does continue to show that, despite the situation, Mina is still able to function in her capacity as the moderate New Woman and aid the men around her.

Beyond the different form of Mina's transformation from Lucy's, the rhetoric used to describe them changes as well. While Mina and Lucy are each described in ways which connect them to the three wives, the language used to describe Lucy becomes increasingly similar to the descriptions of the wives at their first introduction, while the description of Mina, particularly when she meets the wives, shows a barrier between the two:

There were before me in actual flesh the same three women that Jonathan saw in the room, when they would have kissed his throat. I knew the swaying forms, the

bright hard eyes, the white teeth, the ruddy colour, the voluptuous lips. The smiled ever at poor dear Madam Mina; and as their laugh came through the silence of the night, they twined their arms and pointed to her, and said in those so sweet tingling tones that Jonathan said were of the end tolerable sweetness of the water-glasses: — ‘Come, sister. Come to us. Come! Come!’ In fear I turned to my poor Madame Mina, and my heart with gladness leapt like flame; for oh! The terror in her sweet eyes, the repulsion, the horror, told a story to my heart that was all hope. God be thanked she was not, yet, of them. (316)

If we consider the three wives as the manifestation of the anxieties of the overly liberal New Woman and look at the number of times that Lucy was measured against them to show her transformation, this moment is very different in its composition. When Lucy is measured against the wives, it is mostly done in a way where the descriptions used for Lucy are almost direct copies of the wives, creating a parallel without ever actually mentioning the wives in the text. The passage above not only directly mentions the wives, but describes Mina as their opposite. Other than the moments where Mina is shown similarly to Lucy, in a passage where she is being paralleled to the wives, Mina is never compared to the three vampires in a way that shows kinship. Lucy always acts as a barrier between the two identities, softening the comparison. When Van Helsing says “The terror in her sweet eyes, the repulsion, the horror, told a story to my heart that was all hope. God be thanked she was not, yet, of them” (316) Mina is signified as being entirely beyond them, even under Dracula’s power. The power to resist the temptation of Dracula’s blood is reliant on the New Woman aspects of Mina’s character. The innocence of the Angel of the House has already proven ineffective against temptation and tarnish;

here, the moderate New Woman is celebrated as she is represented by Mina. Because of this, while Lucy's soul was eventually saved, the "Angel" was only saved in death by the men around her and not based on her own intellectual merit, but the purity of her life. The overly self-serving New Women of the three wives died, without redemption. It is the moderate New Woman, Mina, who is saved in life: "Now God be thanked that all has not been in vain! See! the snow is not more stainless than her forehead! The curse has passed away!" (325). The end of the novel speaks to the mentality of the liberal minded men of the late 19th century, who celebrated the intellectual advancements of men, but still were unable to leave behind the conservative religious ideology of sexual purity and the desire for patriarchal dominance. This is not a condemnation of the message, but an understanding that Stoker's Mina is a necessary stepping stone for the creation of independently minded female characters at a time of social upheaval and uncertainty on the status of women.

Mina Harker and Lucy Westenra

One of the important dichotomies when dealing with Mina and Lucy concerns the differences found between perceptions and reality. The dichotomy of male perception of femininity parallels the real life conflicting perceptions of women in the late 19th century. When Bram Stoker wrote *Dracula*, the idea of the New Woman was an emerging concept, gaining support through the prominence of the redundancy issue and emigration debate. Through the Victorian feminist movement, women were able to gain an increase in independence creating a split in the outward perception of how women should be, how they actually were viewed, and their internal lives. We see the conflict of the idea of femininity in society through the examples of Lucy, as the Angel of the House, the three

wives of Dracula as the overly liberal New Woman, and Mina, as the moderation of the two. It is through these archetype representations that we are able to see the differing, and often contradictory, responses to the New Woman, particularly regarding sexuality and subservience to men. Unlike LeFanu, whose *Carmilla* displays little of the liberal anxieties related to the New Woman, Stoker's 25-year time difference provides a framework for those anxieties to have developed. By the 1890s, with the establishment of New Woman ideology more firmly in place in society than 30 years prior, liberally minded men, such as Stoker who supported female advancement, had developed concerns that the New Woman ideology would go 'too far' and displace favored established social paradigms. Mina, Lucy, and the three wives, when juxtaposed in the novel as they are, are representative of that concern. Mina functions as the ideal woman, with the intelligence of the New Woman but the domesticating force of the Angel of the House. Lucy is the idealized conservative Angel; however, due to the infantilizing nature of the Angel of the House movement, does not possess the intellectual power of the New Woman and falls easily to corruption and sexual immorality, while the three wives are representative of the New Woman beyond the palatability of male acceptance. By comparing three iterations of femininity, Stoker offers a commentary on the female role in late 19th century England, representative of the likely thoughts of the liberally minded male Victorian.

Because of the nature of the "Angel of the House" version of femininity, it is no wonder that, unlike Mina, when looking at Lucy, there is no contradiction between the perception of her personality and the internal reality of her diary entries and letters.

The popular Victorian image of the ideal wife/woman came to be ‘the Angel in the House’; she was expected to be devoted and submissive to her husband. The Angel was passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all—pure. (Melani)

The Angel of the House ideology did not leave room for a difference in outward and inward reality of female wives. The contradiction in Lucy then, is not in the reality of her character, but the reality of human nature beyond the novel. Beyond the idea of idealized femininity, traditionally, there will be differences between the perception of an individual and the reality of their internal thoughts. Lucy’s desires run exactly according to the perception of those around her: to be a good wife, to be a mother, and to run her own home. No one in the novel, including Mina or Arthur, attributes any perceived depth to Lucy beyond these three desires. Mina is Lucy’s closest friend, and yet their conversations revolve entirely around Jonathan and Arthur when discussing Lucy’s life. It seems very strange when reading about Lucy and Mina’s interactions, that, while they are clearly devoted friends to one another, Mina provides no more insight into Lucy beyond the shallow desire to be married. Even looking at her most personal thoughts in Lucy’s diary excerpts, the reader is provided with no internal depth. Characters such as Lucy, one-dimensional and clearly unrealistic, are the type of depictions to which feminist critic Jane Anger was likely referring to when she spoke of the types of female characters often written by male authors: “If they may once encroach so far into our presence, as they may but see the lining of our outermost garment, they straight think that Apollo honours them, in yielding so good a supply to refresh their sore overburdened heads, through studying for matters to indite off” (Anger 20). While Mina is an

embodiment of the traditionally contradictory feelings about the New Woman, Lucy represents what was historically desired in women, both real and fictional. Women were traditionally depicted as being one-dimensional because in many instances, one-dimensional women were the ideal. Women like Lucy presented no contradiction or challenge to the established patriarchal paradigm and were encouraged because of it. Lucy's death, including her death as a vampire, is fought against by the men with such intensity as a form of preserving the innocent past that she represents. In failing to do so, Lucy is able to make the transformation from "angel" to "devil", the purity of the conservative, to the image of the too far reaching New Woman. Through Lucy, there is also the potential to claim that conservative representations of women, despite working against the perceived threat of liberal advancement, are actually weaker against the temptation of immorality than a moderate form of the New Woman, such as Mina.

Mina, as the moderation of the Angel and the New Woman, is allowed to demonstrate a higher degree of complex thought and reactions. Unlike Lucy, whose entire identity is centered around becoming a wife and mother, Mina is allowed to have intellectual ambitions beyond being a wife:

Mina's commitment to work positions her as something other than Jonathan Harker's passive, chivalric ideal. Despite her disclaimers of wifely propriety, writing represents for Mina an attempt to establish a strong sense of self, which in this charged historical moment carries the political resonance of the New Woman. (Prescott and Giorgio 490)

There is a form of liberally minded condemnation of Lucy when compared to Mina.

Women with intellect and personal drive are celebrated, while the one-dimensional Lucy

is left behind. I would not say that Lucy is condemned for her naiveté, but more so, the culture of society that created Lucy is being chastised. Lucy cannot help but act in the fashion that she was brought up, just as Mina exists in a world where her husband encourages her intellect and flourishes because of it. I would argue that Mina is meant to function as a more realistic woman in contrast to Lucy, despite the still highly idealized version of Mina when placed on comparison to the reality of women.

The creation of an example of the idealized moderate New Woman would traditionally have been an important undertaking in the 1890s. There was a general fear of societal collapse if women gained too much freedom and independence, even for those who encouraged moderate iterations of women, like Mina:

To explain why late-Victorian critics proceeded so unhesitatingly from individual literary texts to rather cosmic conclusions about the collapse of their culture, we need only recall the deeply held Victorian conviction, that upon the ‘acquiescent feminine smile,’ as the heroine of *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894) bitterly reminds herself, ‘the whole fabric of civilization rested.’ (Dowling 440)

Despite the movement towards a more socially liberal England, the need for the moral pillar and domesticating force of femininity was still well entrenched in Victorian society. This explains the necessity for the moderated New Woman, to satisfy both the increasingly liberal ideology, while also maintain the established social paradigm and Mina is the product of these anxieties. Traditionally, by the end of the 19th century, many Victorians were not against increased independence for women, so long as women continued to be subservient to men in the end. These confusing fears and contradictions resulted in characters such as Mina, who embodied the hope of the future while still

residing in the fears of the present. Despite Mina's increased complexity when compared to Lucy or the three wives, I would argue that Mina is still an unrealistic portrayal of women, due to the almost superhuman level that she is able to balance the two ideologies to constant satisfaction of them men around her; however, Mina is a pathway into more complex female characterizations.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

At the height of the popularity of the New Woman in the late 19th century, John Davidson wrote a poem entitled, “To the New Woman”, where the following lines appear: “Be bold and yet be bold, / But be not overbold” (19-20). Despite the 1894 publication date of Davidson’s poem, the lines here resonate with the central idea of this analysis. The characteristics that were made monstrous in the depictions of women in this analysis were largely ones traditionally attributed to masculinity, resulting in an overstepped societal boundary during two time periods already experiencing dramatic social upheaval. During the early Middle Ages, it was not simply that Grendel’s Mother took on the masculine role of avenger, but that she did so in a time of religious change. Morgan was not just the mastermind of a plot against Arthur and a test of Gawain’s fidelity, but the period of the black death which drew attention to widows empowered under the name of their dead husbands. Carmilla was the sexualized and independent New Woman during the height of the Redundancy issue and emigration debate; Mina was the moderation of the New Woman and the Angel of the House during the increasing anxiety levels felt as the New Woman ideology gained traction. The central findings of this analysis are not that male authors Other female characters in their writing as a ham-fisted attempt to beat women down, although this does occur; instead, beyond the tension of a gender crisis, there is likely an external force of change, unbalancing the established social paradigm and creating anxiety in the dominant social group, resulting in the expression of monstrous women who exhibit these changes. The characters and works represented in this analysis function as a record of the repercussions of social upheaval and are indicative of the primary groups affected by the changes.

At the beginning of the process of writing this analysis, I had an idea of where I thought the paper would go. I expected that the correlation between male authors and the of Othering female characteristics would be a straight forward connection. I assumed that the forced gender based antagonism that is prevalent in modern society would be revealed in a similar fashion in the two periods addressed here. There was an initial bias in my original intent that I would find the antithesis of what Virginia Woolf showed as her representation of the “Angel in the House” in “Professions for Women”: “She was sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She scarified herself daily” (Woolf). In short, she was an impossible ideal that plagued the female mind with unattainable expectations. My original intent was to rely heavily on the religious influences that created the false binary between the expected and reality of femininity, while the use of two time periods of great social and political upheaval originally began through an assumption that in those periods there would also have seen a greater number of literary works produced reflecting male societal dominance. What resulted, however, was the revelation of a much more nuanced connection between the upheaval and the representation. Despite my original assumptions of an inherent gender based Othering, the historical context proved to be the most telling and revealed greater influences on the reason for the types of female monsters portrayed. Characters like Grendel’s Mother, Morgan le Fay, Carmilla, Lucy Westenra, Mina Harker, and the three wives of Dracula were all Othered in a way that is arguably inevitable. When placed in a situation where the inherent behavior associated with femininity becomes restricted or spotlighted, there is little alternative but to act in a way that is combative. Alongside this, considering the nature of literature, the unease

placed around the concept of femininity would then be blown beyond proportion into monstrous as a form of expression surrounding these concerns. The choice of male authors for this analysis was largely due to the available number of texts applicable to this study and I do believe this colored my analysis; however, it would be worthwhile to address the same question regarding female authors to see if a similar conclusion is drawn.

Considering other further research potentials, it is also worth noting that in the original iteration of this analysis, there was originally planned a chapter to deal with 20th/21st century works. Due to time/space limitations, as well as the shift in perspective from the original intent of the thesis, the section was cut from the final outline; however, it would be interesting to analyze how modern waves of feminism played out in conjunction with major socio-economic/political change. Events like the election of Margaret Thatcher, Vietnam War, or Roe v. Wade would provide points of cultural shock, resulting in reverberations of shifts in perceptions of femininity as we see in the texts discussed. Events such as Roe v. Wade and the election of Margaret Thatcher in particular would be notable as each redefines the rules of female behavior as created by the established paradigm. It would also be easier to work with female authored texts when considering more modern works and the increased availability. Based on the research done in this analysis, I would hypothesize that a similar conclusion could be drawn; however, considering the rapid changes brought by technology in the 20th/21st century, likely no assumptions would go untested.

Through the experience of this critical analysis, the importance of historical context surrounding literature has become paramount in my research. No text is created

in a vacuum, and this is particularly true when looking at periods of social upheaval. It is also in these periods where the voices of marginalized people, women, and people of the non-dominant race, are characterized as monstrous when their attributes become either too beyond the established norm, or too similar to the behavior of the dominant social groupings. This is done as a way of securing the paradigm as desired by the dominant social force, in this case, men. This is not to say that each text is set out to specifically demonize the outsider; however, the nature of humanity would lead to a potential bias, resulting in a similar effect.

REFERENCES

- Anger, Jane. "A Protection for Women." *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, W.W. Norton & Company, 2007, pp. 20-21.
- Bardsley, Sandy. "Women's Work Reconsidered: Gender and Wage Differentiation in Late Medieval England." *Past & Present*. No. 165, 1999, pp. 3-29.
- Bede. *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Edited by D.H. Farmer and Ronald Latham, Translated by Leo Sherley-Price, Penguin, 1991.
- Benson, Larry D. "Courtly Love and Chivalry in the Later Middle Ages." *The Geoffrey Chaucer Page*, <http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/special/lifemann/love/ben-love.htm>. Accessed 20 May 2017
- Beowulf*. Translated by R.M. Liuzza, Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2000.
- Cantor, Norman F. *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World it Made*. Simon & Schuster, 2015.
- Chaney, William A. "Paganism to Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England." *The Harvard Theological Review*. Vol. 53, No. 3, 1960, pp. 197-212.
- Cox, Catherine S. "Genesis and Gender in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'." *The Chaucer Review* 35.4 (2001): 378-390.
- Davidson, John. "To the New Woman." *Poetry Nook*, <http://www.poetrynook.com/poem/new-women>. Accessed 20 May 2017.
- Dowling, Linda. "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890's." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1979, pp. 434-453.

- Dreher, Nan H. "Redundancy and Emigration: The 'Woman Question' in Mid-Victorian Britain." *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1993, pp. 3-7.
- Ewing, Doris. "The Fall of Eve: Racism and Classism as a Function of Sexual Repression." *Race, Gender & Class*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2000, pp. 10-21.
- Franklin, Peter. "Peasant Widows' 'Liberation' and Remarriage Before the Black Death." *The Economic History Review*. Vol. 39, No. 2, 1980, pp. 186-204.
- Le Fanu, J. Sheridan. *Carmilla*. Toronto: The House of Pomegranates Press, 2012.
- Melani, Lilia. *The English Novel*. English Department at CUNY Brooklyn, March 2011, http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_19c/thackeray/angel.html. Accessed 7 Dec. 2016.
- Nitzsche, Jane C. "The Structural Unity of Beowulf: The Problem of Grendel's Mother." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 22.3 (1980): 287-303.
- Prescott, Charles E., and Grace A Giorgio. "Vampiric Affinities: Mina Harker and the Paradox of Femininity in Bram Stoker's 'Dracula'." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2005, pp. 487-515.
- Showalter, Elaine. *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle*. Penguin, 1991.
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Translated by Marie Borroff, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.
- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Dover Publications, 2000.
- The Bible*. English Standard Version, Crossway, 2011.
- Vaid, Sudesh. "Ideologies on Women in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1850s-70s."

Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 20, no. 43, 1985, pp. WS63-WS67.

Veeder, William. "Carmilla: The Arts of Repression." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 22.2 (1980): 197-223.

Williams, Edith Whitehurst. "Morgan La Fee as Trickster in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'." *Folklore* 96.1 (1985): 38-56.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, 2007, pp.43-47.

Woolf, Virginia. "Professions for Women." *IB English*, <http://s.spachman.tripod.com/Woolf/professions.htm>. Accessed 26 June 2017.

VITA

Education

- Sam Houston State University
 - MA – English Literature (Focus in Anglo Saxon Literature and Female Monster Theory)
 - Aug 2015 – Aug 2017
 - GPA – 3.90
 - BA – English Literature
 - Aug. 2011 – May 2015
 - Highest Honors
 - Sigma Tau Delta – English Honors Society
 - Honors College – Aug. 2011 – May 2015
 - GPA – 3.64
 - BA – Mass Communications (Print Journalism)
 - Aug. 2011 – May 2015
 - Houstonian - Campus Culture Staff Reporter – Aug. 2014 – May 2015
 - Global Center for Journalism and Democracy – Aug. 2014 – May 2015
 - Group Organizer for Mental Health Awareness Week

Research

- MA Thesis
 - Monstrous Silhouette: The Development of the Female Monster in Medieval and Victorian Literature
 - Thesis Advisor – Lee Courtney, Ph.D.
- Senior Honors Thesis
 - Medieval Monsters in Literature (Beowulf, King Horn, Monmouth's Historia) ○
 - Thesis Advisor – Kimberly Bell, Ph.D.

Employment

- Graduate Assistant at Sam Houston State University (Jan 2016 – Aug 2017)
 - TA for Rhetorical Studies Course (May 2017 – Aug 2017)
 - Assistant to the Chair of the English Department (Aug 2016 – May 2017)
 - Academic Success Tutor (Jan 2016 – Aug 2016)

- Sales Associate – Pier 1 Imports (June 2011 – Current)

Languages

- French – Basic
Understanding ○ Studied 6
years