

“EATING DEATH”: HUNGER, POWER, AND THE FEMALE VAMPIRE OF THE
FIN DE SIÈCLE

by

KERRY L BOYLES

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Dr. Ellen Malenas Ledoux
and approved by

Dr. Ellen Malenas Ledoux

Dr. Shanyn Fiske

Dr. Carol Singley

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THESIS ABSTRACT:

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THESIS DIRECTOR:

Dr. Ellen Malenas Ledoux

This thesis examines the overarching narrative of sinful female appetite that conflates eating with immorality, sexuality, and perversity. I begin by tracing nineteenth-century depictions of Eve, Lilith and Lamia as antecedents of the female vampires of the *fin de siècle*. I use these mythic women as an entrée into Victorian cultural associations with food and eating and analyze the ways that female vampires in Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872), George MacDonald’s *Lilith* (1895), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) evoke nineteenth-century anxieties about food, fat, and female appetite. Female vampires reflect moral uneasiness over gustatory indulgence and their unrestrained appetites represent a plethora of perverse desires. The vampires of *Carmilla*, *Lilith*, and *Dracula* seem to embody divided femininity, changing from the “angel” to the “whore.” However, they personify (at all times) all of the complexities and contradictions of femininity. These women are “desiring-machines,” and variously embody singular qualities that are just part of their complex, ever-shifting subjectivities. They are light and dark, feminine and masculine, virginal and sexual, pure and corrupt, vaginal and phallic, weak and powerful, dead and alive, animal and human, victim and victimizer, mother and

abortionist. By combining these extremes, they are the “abject” – concomitantly both alluring and repulsive – and their destruction suggests an inability for the patriarchal figures to permit female complexity and their desires to crush female subversion. Vampirism acts as a liberating “fall” for the constrained women featured in *Lilith*, *Carmilla* and *Dracula*, even as the texts validate and valorize their destruction.

Introduction: Female Hunger and the Fall

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton describes Eve's tragic and transgressive enjoyment of the apple from the Tree of Knowledge: "Intent now wholly on her taste, naught else / Regarded, such delight till then, as seem'd, / In Fruit she never tasted" (VIII, 785-787). These lines appear after Lucifer has seduced Eve into violating God's mandate not to eat from the tree, a scene in which he plays on her own vanity and intellectual curiosity, telling her that knowledge will make her a goddess. Interestingly, Milton embellishes the terse original biblical tale, emphasizing Eve's sensual, erotic enjoyment of the fruit. Jeanie Grant Moore explains that between "the Eve of Genesis and Milton was a centuries-old hermeneutic that clouded her image" so much so that "not only was the fallen Eve seen as the incarnation of evil, but the pre-lapsarian Eve was also seen as infected" (6). Though ostensibly pure in her sinless state, Milton's Eve is nonetheless draped in "loose" golden tresses that invest her with an enticing sexuality even as they cover her body (IV, 496). Like that of a mermaid, her "wanton ringlets" (IV 305) are both a "glory and a snare" and her "unfallen sexuality is at once God-given and dangerous" (Belsey 66). Catherine Belsey argues that the "instability is not individual but representative: this is what men, to be masters, must subdue, and it is precisely their ability to dominate such a powerful force that legitimizes patriarchal control" (66). However, Adam fails to rein in Eve's natural sensuality, and she succumbs to temptation, which acts as an initiation into sinful sexuality. Eve's fall is an erotic act. Her mouth is inflamed by the apple, as "Greedily she engorg'd without restraint, / And knew not eating Death: Sate at length, / And height'nd as with Wine" (VIII, 791-793). Though she does not die – as the serpent promised she would not – the act works as a symbolic death, or a

death of innocence. Though this act of consumption is one of defection and rebellion, it is even more so a depraved sexual experience. Her mouth – the center of her sensual pleasure – devours the fruit, and the language of these lines characterizes the act as a kind of sexual climax. The word “engorg’d” in particular evokes a dual meaning: that of eating to excess and filling with blood. Thus, not only is she animalistically glutting herself on the fruit, Milton seems to link her with a leech; she seemingly fills up and expands, as a parasite does with blood. The language presents Eve’s mouth as vaginal to such an extent that her sexual arousal is implied through the engorgement of this organ and her orgasmic euphoria. The heady aftereffects are compared with those of alcohol, making the sin seem like an intoxicating, liberating, and satisfying sexual act. That Adam and Eve engage in debaucherous sex following his consumption of the forbidden fruit further links eating with carnal sin and presents the mouth as a center of erotic enjoyment. As Moore argues, the Eve figure is a complex and contradictory one; nevertheless, she claims that “since Christian antiquity, the image of Eve had been distorted, and by Milton’s time the negative view of Eve had extended to all women, who were considered corrupt simply because they were her descendants” (1). *Paradise Lost* places guilt on woman’s shoulders, showing that unrestrained female hunger draws men into sensual sin. While Milton’s Eve may not be completely emblematic of feminine moral inferiority – Moore points to this Eve’s articulate intelligence and post-lapsarian acceptance of her fate – she is paradigmatic of a pervasive ambivalence about female appetite. Significantly, the first sin of mankind is the result of unrestrained female hunger, and the act links appetite with sin, sex, and subversion.

I have lingered on this example of destructive female appetite because it

prefigures those that appear in the late nineteenth century and establishes the overarching vilification of female hunger and the multitude of sins associated with it. This portrayal of Eve as the original and ultimate sinner permeates and underscores depictions of women in literature up through the demonic vampires of the *fin de siècle*. The hunger of Milton's Eve is connected with her disobedience as well as her sinful sensual pleasures. By tracing this Eve figure through successive permutations of hungry, voluptuous, and sinful women in British literature, a clear preoccupation with the dangers of female appetite and eating emerges. This preoccupation continues through to the Victorian period, where "women's hunger constitutes a vital mythic force behind both the novel and the culture" (Michie 13). Helena Michie explains:

Gilbert and Gubar and others have discussed Victorian novels – particularly those by women – as rewritings of the Fall myth, where women's sexuality, power, and hunger are conflated. It is in the mythic or metaphoric sub-texts of the novels, then, that women act out their hunger, reach for and periodically redefine the apple that is denied to them... Women's hunger operates with equal force in interstices of Victorian culture; it is as alive in those generic "sub-texts" of the period – etiquette books, beauty and sex manuals, pornography – as it is in the sub-texts of canonical novels. As hunger, which figures unspeakable desires for sexuality and power, becomes itself silenced by Victorian euphemism, a metonymic chain is set in motion where hunger is displaced from the "center" of literature and culture... (13)

Realist, sensation and fantasy texts from the Victorian period reinterpret and reimagine the fall narrative through euphemism and metaphor, a phenomenon made clearly manifest in fantastical works like *Carmilla*, by Sheridan Le Fanu, and *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker. During the nineteenth century, appetite was associated with all "sins of the flesh," to the point where even healthy eating was considered an indication of unnatural lustfulness. As a result, there resulted an "aesthetic validation of the slender female form as the physical ideal of beauty," which Anna Krugovoy Silver calls the "Victorian culture of anorexia" (27). While the thin female body was an emblem of virtue, wealth, and admirable self-

negation (for elite women), fat was associated with low, carnal desires and madness. These beliefs underscore representations of female appetite (or lack of such) in Victorian texts. Anorexia nervosa, as it is defined through Victorian heroines, is not a clinically diagnosed ailment involving a certain number of missed menstrual cycles, but, more broadly, a woman's self-denial of food as a response to cultural pressures that associate fat with vulgarity, lust, and immorality. The anorexic girl treats her body as a commodity, and slimness increases her value as *object d'art*. Emma Domínguez-Rué notes that "middle- and upper-middle-class women who displayed symptoms of emaciation showed their decorative status – and their husbands' wealth in being able to afford such an unproductive wife – and clearly exhibited their opposition to the typically large and fleshy working-class woman" (297). Furthermore, this resulted in "the notion that a true lady had to be petite and fragile in order to emphasize her angelic, bodiless and passionless nature" which "encouraged delicacy and an unnatural weakness in women" (297). Not only is the delicate, useless female body a nineteenth-century emblem of wealth, the emaciated figure is a symbol of a pure soul.

Thus, Victorian representations of female hunger are inexorably tied to overall discourses on virtue and sin. Virtuous angels were to have suppressed their appetites - for all physical needs - while only voluptuous demons gave into such bodily cravings. Though the body was a feminine space, the Victorian woman was expected to be the moral center of the domestic sphere. Coventry Patmore's term, the "Angel in the House," underscores the expectation for women to be so virtuous as to be beyond all low, physical needs. According to Silver, "women were urged to downplay every aspect of their physicality, including (but not limited to) their sexuality" and "meal times, in particular,

were seen as opportunities for women to demonstrate their incorporeality through the small appetite and correspondingly slender body” (9). The corset acts as a metonym for a suffocating and oppressive Victorian patriarchal culture, while fat and tight-lacing was associated with hypersexuality and insanity.

This concern over eating and the emphasis on the female figure as a signifier of morality or immorality underscores representations of women in literature throughout the nineteenth century, but is most apparent in works that feature female vampires. These monstresses of the *fin de siècle* are defined by their voluptuous bodies and unrestrained hunger for blood and sex. As I will show later, these texts also demonize characteristics that threaten patriarchy, reflecting male anxiety over growing female empowerment. Silver explains that “the female vampire illustrates, in hyperbolic form, cultural anxieties about women and hunger, in which hunger is symbolically related to women’s predatory sexuality and aggression” (117). In a period where healthy female appetite was so denigrated as a representation of immorality, the ravenous desires of female vampires take on a new significance.

Several scholars interpret Victorian realist novels as reiterations of the Fall, and others like Silver and Domínguez-Rué have explored the way vampires blatantly reflect Victorian anxieties over female eating habits and the assumptions of immorality associated with healthy appetites. Although these discussions are useful and incisive, they do not recognize an overarching narrative of female appetite and sin, as well as of female monstrosity in Western literature and imagination. They have failed to flesh out completely how other monstrous figures are intertwined with those of the ravenous, seductive female vampires. This thesis examines the overarching narrative of sinful

female appetite that conflates eating with immorality, sexuality, and perversity. Figures such as Eve, Lilith, and the Lamia act as mythic antecedents (and mothers) to demonesses of the *fin de siècle*. They are all joined by their perverse eating habits, which mark them as unmaternal, rebellious, liberated, and self-indulgent. By connecting iterations of female monsters through the appearances and re-appearances of the Eve, Lilith and Lamia figures in the nineteenth century, this thesis offers a more holistic vision of the female monster and her transgressive appetites and allows for a more complete understanding of the ways female vampires reflect the cultural resistance to the burgeoning first-wave feminism of the *fin de siècle*. Furthermore, it lays a foundation for a greater awareness of the ways contemporary anxieties over fat and the female body seem to derive, in part, from the thin ideal of the nineteenth century.

In many ways, vampire narratives act as a literary response to Victorian women's increasing drive for political, educational and economic opportunities. Even as the controversial Contagious Diseases Acts, first passed in 1864 and repealed in 1886, forced women to submit to invasive and demeaning compulsory venereal disease tests, married women were gaining rights through legislation like the Custody of Infants Act of 1839, which gave a woman the right to petition for access to or custody of her children. Also significant was the Divorce and Matrimonial Act of 1857 that made divorce easier and created an avenue by which a woman might reclaim her property from her deserting husband. Later, the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 established a married woman's right to own and inherit property. These acts essentially ended the system of *coverture*, which led early feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft to characterize marriage as a kind of legal prostitution. Notably, the female vampire

emerges at the same time that women are gaining political and economic power. In *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, Bram Dijkstra explains the connection between female vampires and changes in property law, describing the emerging dualistic opposition of femininity: “that of woman as man’s exclusive and forever pliable private property, on the one hand, and her transformation, upon her denial of man’s ownership rights to her, into a polyandrous predator indiscriminately lusting after man’s seminal essence, on the other” (334). Thus, the infection of vampirism could act as a metaphor for the seemingly sudden transformation of submissive maidens into (power) hungry, greedy fiends who attempt to dominate and penetrate their male victims.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues that the nineteenth century was a turning point in the history of female suppression. As working-class women increasingly joined the labor force in the wake of the industrial revolution, they were met with intense male hostility and attempts to systematically exclude women from many industries. While the “landed property lost power to some extent, the bourgeoisie clung to the old morality that found the guarantee of private property in the solidarity of the family” (xxiii). Most importantly, “woman was ordered back into the home the more harshly as her emancipation became a real menace” (xxiii). This seems to evoke the Victorian ideal of the “Angel in the House,” coined by Patmore in his poem of the same name published first in 1852 and then again in 1862, in which he celebrates a woman who fulfills her duty as moral paragon of the domestic space. Furthermore, de Beauvoir notes that “even within the working class the men endeavoured to restrain woman’s liberation, because they began to see the women as dangerous competition – the more so because they were

accustomed to work for lower wages” (xxiii). Angela V. John offers a contemporary interpretation of many of these points in *Unequal Opportunities*, explaining that “although there were signs of improvement for women (resented by the men), women were, in the main, excluded from the most skilled jobs and tended to be found the most subsidiary, servicing and casual work” (24). Even though “working-class men shared neither the bourgeois view of family nor the tenets of bourgeois political economy, they nonetheless almost unanimously concluded that the earnings of married women were secondary to those of their husbands, and that women should be employed on tasks which were clearly subordinate and/or auxiliary to those performed by men” (Osterud 53). So while men were attempting to exclude women from jobs because they viewed female workers as threats to their livelihoods, or trying to force them into more menial and lower-paying positions, much of the literature and art of the Victorian period emphasizes that the ideal bourgeois woman must stay in the home and stay idle in it.

My argument begins by tracing nineteenth-century depictions of Eve, Lilith, and the lamia as antecedents and contemporaries of the female vampires of the *fin de siècle*. I argue that their significance in the dialogue surrounding female vampires is not simply because they are predecessors, but also because they manifest within the Gothic genre alongside their corrupt sisters. Like Milton’s Eve, they embody destructive, sinful, and sexual femininity, while they prove powerful and alluring subjects that have fascinated and titillated Victorian authors, artists, and their audiences. I use these mythic subversive women as an entrée into Victorian cultural associations with food and eating and analyze the ways that female vampires evoke nineteenth-century anxieties about food, fat, and female appetite. Finally, I examine the ways that vampires reflect moral uneasiness over

gustatory indulgence, showing that appetite serves as a metaphor for a plethora of perverse desires. Just as Milton's Eve has been read as a blatant anti-feminist attempt at demonizing female hunger and sexuality by showing the supposed moral fallibility of women, the vampires of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), Macdonald's *Lilith* (1895), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) superficially seem to embody divided femininity as first the "angel" and then the "whore." However, like Eve, they really personify (at all times) all of the complexities and contradictions of femininity. To borrow from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, these women are "desiring-machines" – at various times they embody singular qualities that are just part of their complex, ever-shifting subjectivities. They are light and dark, feminine and masculine, virginal and sexual, pure and corrupt, vaginal and phallic, weak and powerful, dead and alive, animal and human, victim and victimizer, mother and abortionist. By combining these extremes, they are the "abject" – concomitantly both alluring and repulsive – and their destruction suggests an inability for the patriarchal figures in positions of power in science, medicine, government, the military, and the aristocracy to allow female complexity and their desire to crush female subversion. In this way, vampirism acts as a liberating "fall" for the constrained women featured in *Carmilla*, *Lilith*, and *Dracula*, even as the texts validate and valorize their destruction because these women violate patriarchal cultural attitudes that suppress female eating, sexual appetite, and hunger for power.

Lilith, Eve and the Lamia

Because they are inherently sinful and represent unrestrained female sexuality and hunger, Lilith, Eve, and the lamia are apt subjects for the broader discussion of the monstress and the Western cultural ambivalence over her eating habits. While Eve prefigures many sinful women who indulge their perverse appetites, Lilith is the mythical ur-demoness. As Bonnie Gaarden explains, “In Kabalistic tradition [Lilith] was Adam's first wife, created like Adam out of earth, who rebelled against the inferior position in intercourse and the subservience it implied, and left him” (23). Lilith's refusal to lie beneath Adam, to serve him submissively, and to reside with him as wife make her – in apocryphal Jewish lore – the first transgressive woman long before Eve bites into the apple. That lying beneath a man signals feminine submission is significant, as it marks sexual subversion and rebellion as distinctly demonic. While Eve is the mother of mankind, Lilith is the mother of monsters. She is said to have fled from Eden to reside with demons, where she produced hundreds more. According to myth, when angels threatened to slay her children to compel her back to Eden – and to submit to the patriarchal forces therein – she refused. And “when a hundred of her demon children were killed as punishment, in revenge she became a slayer of infants and seducer of sleeping men” (Bonnie Gaarden 23). Like that of Medea, the great murderess of Greek tragedy, Lilith's revenge against the patriarchal tyranny of man and God takes the form of slaying young children, “especially male babies, who were traditionally thought to be more vulnerable to her attacks” (Gilbert and Gubar 35). Lilith is a perversion of the Great Mother, or Madonna figure, through her dangerous sexuality and lack of maternal instincts. Moreover, her refusal to lie underneath Adam evokes the dominant positions

nineteenth-century female vampires take in their attacks on supine men. Lilith is a kind of proto-monstress of myth, and “she seems to be a Jewish adaptation of the Babylonian incubi and succubae” (Bonnie Gaarden 23). The word “succubus,” a demon who takes the form of a woman to prey on men while they sleep, derives from Medieval Latin “succuba,” meaning “strumpet.” Like many other monstresses and mythical women, including the female vampires that appear in *Carmilla*, Macdonald’s *Lilith*, and *Dracula*, the succubus is a combination of the supernatural shape shifter and the common fallen woman. Eve’s sin – eating from the Tree of Knowledge – is akin to a sexual initiation, as she corrupted by the act of consumption and realizes the significance of her own nakedness. In this way, these monstresses are both evil demons and Fallen women. In their seductive advances that captivate potential male victims, and their attacks on young children, the link between Lilith, or the succubus, and the female vampire becomes even more clear.

Bonnie Gaarden notes the connection between Lilith and this serpent-woman of Greek myth, saying “in the fourth century she was identified with the Greek Lamiae, who were vampires” (23). Similar to the siren or harpy, the lamia is a class of bogey-woman of Greek myth represented by a figure with a woman’s torso and serpent’s tail. While Lilith is not a vampire in apocryphal lore, lamias or lamiae were blood-drinking monsters that targeted male victims. However, though the lamia was often presented as a terrifying and seductive mythical monstress, Keats presents the monstress as a lamenting, “palpitating snake” in his 1820 poem of the same name (45). In this work, she is a study in contradictions, as either “some demon’s mistress, or the demon’s self” who bears the head of a serpent and a woman’s mouth filled with “pearls,” speaking “as through

bubbling honey, for Love's sake" (56, 60, 65). Hermes takes pity on the poor creature, returning to her a human form, and she becomes instead a "lady bright, / A full-blown beauty new and exquisite" (171-172). She finds her lover, Lycius and marries him, but the narrative ends tragically when an elderly philosopher exposes Lamia as a serpent to her new husband at their wedding. In this work, the lamia becomes a woman with a terrible secret that makes her unfit for marriage and leads to death and destruction, which recalls the tragedy of the fallen woman.

In Victorian iconography, the lamia is similar to a mermaid or siren, but does not always retain her signature serpent tail. Nineteenth-century artists like John William Waterhouse and Herbert James Draper represent her as a subtle and complex seductress. These artists avoid presenting the lamia as a true serpent-woman, instead denoting her otherworldly, dangerous identity solely through the subtle presence of the snakeskin draped across her lap or wrapped around her body – suggesting that almost any woman can be both alluring and corrupting. Waterhouse makes the lamia the subject of two paintings from 1905 and 1909, the first of which features the demoness on her knees, beseechingly gazing up at a knight. Though the pale hands that softly caress the knight's wrist and backhand are far from the sharp claws of a bloodthirsty demoness, her submissive position belies her entrancing power over the man who appears captivated by her charms. Her "corrupt" status as a lamia – which may suggest that she is a fallen woman – is implied by the snake skin winding around her arm, waist and legs. Furthermore, the pattern of the bottom of her dress evokes the pattern of scales, which recalls the more literal serpent-woman of Greek myth. In the later painting, Waterhouse features a similar titian-haired woman holding up her shining tresses and gazing at herself

in a pond in a kind of narcissistic moment of self-worship. This image evokes the lines of Keats's poem in which Lamia stood "By a clear pool, wherein she passion'd / To see herself escap'd from so sore ills, / While her robes flaunted with the daffodils" (182-184). Like many of Waterhouse's female subjects, one side of her dress has fallen to her waist in wanton display of her charms, while a snake skin drapes across her lap. Similarly, the lamia of Draper's 1909 painting is naked above the waist and wrapped in snake skin, though she is contemplating a small snake that slithers on her forearm while holding a drooping red flower in her hand. This flower could suggest that the lamia too is "out of bloom" or ruined. These iterations of the lamia figure do not strictly resemble the ravenous fiends of Greek myth, but rather use the lamia as a metaphor for the sexually initiated, corrupt woman who has the potential to pull men into sin, just as Eve helped seduce Adam into Original Sin.

All of these women are part of a sisterhood of demonesses – the succubus, the mermaid, the serpent-woman, the vampire, and the mythological Lilith figure – who share a common appetite for male essence and who feed on, or victimize, children. By refusing positions of sexual submission, these mythical women become aligned with the corrupt monstresses of the nineteenth century: the New Woman and the fallen woman. Though seemingly distinct mythological women, the Lilith, Eve, and the Lamia figures become somewhat conflated in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century art and literature through their physical depiction, their moral "falls," and their seductive ability to lure others into sin with them.

The Appetites of the Vampire

Recent critics have been exhaustive in their analysis of canonical vampire narratives like Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and, of course, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as well as pseudo-vampire texts like Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and even George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894). However, George MacDonald's 1895 fantasy novel, *Lilith*, has been excluded from conversations about female vampires of the *fin de siècle*. Like MacDonald's earlier work, *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), the tale features surreal adventures in an alternate realm and is fraught with religious overtones. In a clear homage to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), MacDonald's protagonist, the somewhat lackluster recent Oxford-graduate, Arthur Vane, enters a parallel universe through a mirror. In this world, he meets a host of bizarre creatures, including skeletons dancing minuets, a raven that speaks in riddles, and a band of children called "Little Ones" who grow into bad "giants" (adults) if they eat too much. Eventually, he meets Adam, Eve, and Lilith, as well as their two daughters. The narrative eventually becomes a redemption tale for Lilith, the blood-drinking, demonic princess of Bulika.

Despite its comparative lack of critical attention, *Lilith* should be re-considered as an essential part of the Gothic depiction of demonic women that occurs in the late nineteenth century as a reaction against the burgeoning first-wave feminist movement, the emergence of the anathematized 'New Woman,' and increasing rights for married women. Lilith and the other female vampires of *Carmilla*, *Dracula*, and even the penny-dreadful *Varney the Vampire*, share common subversive traits that threaten patriarchal control. Lilith mounts and penetrates her supine male victim, attacks and drains the blood

of children – she even murders her own daughter – and transforms into a leopardess. Paradoxically, she is a disgusting leech and a ravishing princess; she is both dead and alive. Like the demonic women in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*, Lilith is simultaneously alluring and repulsive, marking her as “abject” and underscoring her seductive powers. Furthermore, all of these women embody and perform femininity while appropriating masculine prerogatives through their phallic fangs.

In MacDonald’s novel, while travelling through the “region of the seven dimensions,” Arthur Vane views the bloodthirsty Lilith from afar before he stumbles upon her apparently lifeless body and attempts to nurse her back to health. He describes her wasted figure: “Its beautiful yet terrible teeth, unseemly disclosed by the retracted lips, gleamed ghastly through the dark” (96). This passage not only links Lilith with Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, who sports the needle-like “tooth of a fish,” but with the tubercular wasting transformation of Lucy Westenra which is characterized by her corpse-like appearance (269). In Stoker’s novel, Dr. Seward makes note of Lucy’s mouth after a particularly brutal attack: “even the lips were white, and the gums seemed to have shrunk back from the teeth, as we sometimes see in a corpse after a prolonged illness” (118). While Lilith and Lucy’s bloodlessness may evoke connections between the drained victim who “wants” blood and the menstruating woman who loses blood, MacDonald’s characterization of Lilith as a parasite is significant, as it links his novel with other vampire narratives. Furthermore, through the presentation of Lilith as a leech, the author further evokes the social and economic dependence of women in the nineteenth century.

The emphasis on Lilith’s teeth and mouth foreshadow her eventual attacks on Arthur and the revelation that she is the “Vilest of God’s creatures” who “lives by the

blood and lives and souls of men” (148). After caring for Lilith’s lifeless body for some time, Arthur awakes to bites on his hands that form a “triangular wound, like the bite of a leech” (103). Whether Lilith is in a trance or simply lifeless during the day is unclear, but the attacks continue at night. Unaware that his beloved, unconscious companion is attacking him, Arthur explains: “It now generally bit me in the neck or the arm, invariably with but one bite, always while I slept, and never, even when I slept, in the daytime” (105). Lilith’s attacks are clearly similar to those of the female vampires in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*, who also prey on sleeping victims. Carmilla feeds on unconscious young ladies in the evening, and the “Weird Sisters” of *Dracula* attempt to attack the sleeping Jonathan Harker in much the same way. Like her vampire sisters, Lilith is a parasite who drains both children and men. Eventually, Lilith awakes and claims to have seen the “creature” that has been preying on Arthur, calling it “a great white leech” (105). Lilith lies about her own ravenous appetites, but the association between the woman and the leech is a significant one, because it evokes her dependent social and economic position during the Victorian period. Dijkstra argues that Victorian women “were, in essence, human parasites,” who “could not live without men or without each other” (219). The decorative, useless woman who was so fashionable during the nineteenth-century was, on some basic level, a parasite that sucked resources from her father and husband. Significantly, this kind of elite woman was also expected to emphasize her angelic self-negation through her weak body and dainty appetite.

Dijkstra calls the nineteenth-century adoration of the consumptive, wasting woman the “cult of invalidism” in which a “wife’s physical weakness came to be evidence to the world and to God of her physical and mental purity” (25). Moreover,

“realizing that a consumptive look in women was thought to be evidence of a saintly disposition,” many women “began to cultivate that look of tubercular virtue by starving themselves” (29). The fashionably thin, anorexic aesthetic was the ideal for wealthy women, but was not romanticized in the starving poor. While thinness was a natural consequence of a poor woman’s inability to procure sustenance, an upper class woman displayed her virtue through her thin, weak frame. Yet the female vampire’s association with the parasite may act as a criticism of this cultural celebration of useless, invalid women. This seems most fully represented in *Dracula* through the wasting figure of Lucy Westenra, who, once attacked, must be constantly re-filled with blood by the male members of the Crew of Light. Significantly, Lucy is the fashionably idle miss, while the other notable female character, Mina Murray, the novel’s ostensible ideal woman, is a working woman who develops her skills solely so that she might be a valuable asset to her husband. Thus the text seems critical of Lucy’s frivolity and uselessness as she develops into a parasite who drains men of their (bodily) resources. Perhaps it is because Mina is a useful, middle-class helpmeet to her husband and the Crew of Light that she is spared Lucy’s ignominious death, though she too is bitten by Dracula. Phillis A. Roth argues that both Lucy and Mina are mother figures, but Lucy, the potential sexual partner of these men, is “more desirable, more sexual, more threatening and must be destroyed” (417). Lucy is also more decorative, childish, and useless, and *Dracula* seems to literalize the parasitic nature of the “Angel in the House” by transforming her into a leech. Lucy is just one example of this kind of parasitic woman, however, as the “Weird Sisters” depend upon Dracula to procure their dinner, while MacDonald’s Lilith and Le Fanu’s Carmilla are aristocratic, languid women. In this way, all three texts emphasize the natural

parasitic nature of wealthy, idle women.

Yet Stoker uses similar language to describe Count Dracula, characterizing him as a parasite, which suggests that the text does not simply criticize the “Angel in the House.” Jonathan Harker describes the Count lying in his coffin:

There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for...the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. Even the deep, burning eyes seemed set amongst swollen flesh, for the lids and pouches underneath were bloated. It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood. He lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. (53)

The Count displays his grotesque appetite through a bloated appearance and bloody mouth, rather than by floating in a pool of blood, as Carmilla does. As shown in this passage, the novel’s characterization of vampires as parasites is not limited to undead female characters. Though he is quite Puritanical in his destruction of Jonathan’s mirror, which he calls a “foul bauble of man’s vanity,” the Count’s unrelenting appetites evoke the sensual, hedonistic aristocrat whose conspicuous consumption is supported by his exploitation of lower classes (31). Furthermore, while he is depicted as bloated here, he is often characterized by his thin frame, even though he feeds quite extensively. Carmilla, too, is characterized by her boyish figure and extreme slenderness, though she enjoys a healthy diet as well. Carmilla is not thin because she lacks appetite, but “because she can never eat enough” (Silver 125). As Silver notes, it is also the refusal to eat with others that marks the vampire as a monster. Consequently, though many female vampires are defined by their voluptuous mouths and bodies, which suggest their vigorous hunger and sexuality, the converse characteristic of thinness also denotes a ravenous appetite that can never be satisfied.

Thus, the body of the vampire and his or her appetite is innately sexual and gendered. As with Eve, Dracula's engorgement works on many metaphorical levels. Just as the original woman's consumption of the apple in Milton's *Paradise Lost* is an intoxicating, sexual experience, so are Dracula's attacks inherently sexual, especially when his victims are enticing young ladies. As Phillis A. Roth establishes, "vampirism is associated not only with death, immortality and orality; it is equivalent to sexuality" and, "in psychoanalytic terms, the vampirism is a disguise for greatly desired and equally strongly feared fantasies" (414). The description of the bloated, satisfied Count has significant sexual overtones; he has been revived through his act of penetration, which has left him "exhausted with his repletion." Silver explains, "fatness in *Dracula* appears as a sign that the vampire has satisfied its hunger for blood, and is therefore a token of evil and excessive sexuality" (118). The Count's extreme virility and insatiable sexual appetite is fundamentally threatening to his impotent foes. Jonathan Harker, who is defined by his "sweetness and gentleness," is emblematic of British weakness in the novel, as he intermittently weeps and faints while prisoner at Dracula's castle before being (metaphorically) cuckolded by Dracula (95). Jonathan's extreme powerlessness is especially evident when he lies unconscious while Dracula attacks Mina in their bed. Though many mark the birth of his son, Quincey, at the end of the novel as the Crew of Light's final victory over Dracula, the child has a "bundle of names" which link their "little band together" (326). As Stephen D. Arata notes, Quincey is symbolically fathered by all four men through his many names, and this collective paternity underlies the novel's representation of the weakening of the Anglo-Saxon race. Just as Lucy must ingest the blood of four men to replace what Dracula has taken, so does it require four

men to impregnate Mina, and the two acts seem linked through the sexual nature of the transfusions. Lucy receives blood from all of her suitors, and Seward mentions that Arthur “felt since then as if they two had been really married and that she was his wife in the sight of God” (157). Even Seward himself feels some amount of satisfaction at “filling” Lucy with his blood, saying, “It was with a feeling of personal pride that I could see a faint tinge of colour steal back into the pallid cheeks and lips. No man knows, till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own lifeblood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves” (119). There is a clear conflation of blood and semen, and, through the transfusions, Lucy actualizes her desire to marry all of her suitors. That she needs to receive blood from so many men to satisfy her, however, highlights these men’s lack of virility and her own insatiability. The text forefronts Anglo-Saxon racial procreative weakness and conflates Dracula’s conquest and corruption of British female bodies with his colonization of British land. Dracula reveals his plans to colonize England by contaminating British women: “You think to baffle me, you – with your pale faces all in a row... Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine – my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed” (267). The racial distinction between Dracula, the Eastern European other, and the Crew of Light is underscored by Dracula’s dismissal of their “pale” faces, which links their race with their impotence and fear. That “*Dracula* concerns competition between men for women can hardly be questioned” because the Count is “exclusively interested in the women who belong to someone else” (Stevenson 139). Dracula’s form of imperialism is one of sexual conquest, and his bites awaken the sexual appetites of repressed Victorian “angels.”

As critics have shown, Dracula is singularly dangerous because he liberates female sexual desires; he does not create them. Domínguez-Rué points out that many critics have established that “Dracula becomes more of a catalyst for women’s desires and transformative powers rather than an active character himself” (302). The “Weird Sisters,” who function as a unified, voluptuous, and terrifying trio rather than as individuals, are only described as vampires and the text never offers any descriptions of their human selves. Thus, Dracula is only shown liberating the English roses whose natural appetites are repressed by Victorian social mores. In this way, they seem to represent the cultural perception of fallen women as filled with animalistic sexual impulses. According to Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Hume, there is a “fundamental paradox at the heart of Victorian notions of female sexuality, that sees the female ideal as ‘naturally’ sexless, and the fallen woman as ‘naturally’ libidinous” (40). *Dracula* seems to marry the two extremes through the initial presentation of the unfallen Lucy whose repressed impulses seem to manifest in her sleepwalking, an act associated with unconscious urges. Roth notes: “Only when Lucy becomes a vampire is she allowed to be ‘voluptuous,’ yet she must have been so long before, judging from her effect on men and from Mina’s description of her” (414). Though Mina does not suffer from this voluptuousness at any time – nor is she physically described except briefly as a “sweet-faced, dainty-looking girl” – she still remarks that she and Lucy “would have shocked the New Woman with [their] appetites” while at tea (194, 86). Because appetite is conflated with sexual desire, “Mina and Lucy’s large appetites hint at” their erotic desires, “albeit genteelly repressed” (Silver 119). Though they are apparently sinless and pure at this point in the text, with Dracula still far away in Transylvania, “these two ostensibly proper

women reveal their latent physical appetites through eating and thereby demonstrate their innate tendencies toward vampirism” (119). Lucy’s appetite becomes far more questionable than Mina’s, as her sexual insatiability is implied through her desire to marry all three of her suitors. Yet neither Mina nor Lucy subscribes to Victorian standards that associate purity with anorexic self-negation. Domínguez-Rué concludes, “Mina and Lucy thus reveal their unconventionality – and hence, we infer their discontent at the roles they have been allotted – by acknowledging their instincts and satisfying their appetites, an exclusively male prerogative” (301). But these women do not simply commit the unseemly acts of gorging themselves with food and fantasizing about polyamory, they appropriate the male phallus – through their penetrating fangs – which they command as the dominant sexual partner.

Notably, the female vampires in *Dracula*, *Lilith*, and *Carmilla* assume both the dominant position (on top) and dominant act (penetration) during their attacks, which function as metaphorical sex acts. Phillip Burne-Jones’s most famous painting, *The Vampire*, features a ravenous, dark-haired virago mounted atop a helpless, sleeping man. The vampire is poised to attack, her mouth open enough to just hint at the fangs beneath. This image is a reversal of the male monster atop sleeping maiden trope that appears in earlier paintings like Charles Walker’s *Incubus* (1870) and Henri Fuseli’s *The Nightmare* (1781), which present a male demon hovering over or on top of a sleeping, luminescent maiden. In these earlier works, the sleeping woman’s body language is very similar to that of the male victim in *The Vampire*, which even more directly suggests Burne-Jones’s inversion of gender. The reversal of victim and victimizer in these paintings is indicative of larger sexual gender roles that become inverted by female vampires. As Christopher

Craft explains, the sexually aggressive, penetrating female vampires subvert “conventional Victorian gender codes, which constrained the mobility of sexual desire and varieties of genital behavior” and conferred “to the more active male the right and responsibility of vigorous appetite, while requiring the more passive female to ‘suffer and be still’” (445). Many have discussed the vaginal imagery associated with the female vampire’s mouth as the redirected center of sexual pleasure, and the phallic nature of her teeth. The “shining scarlet lips” of the vampire’s mouth once again evoke anxieties of both sexual and gustatory excesses in women. Domínguez-Rué explains, “Although women were idealised as angelic beings, they were simultaneously feared as sexually voracious monsters” who would appropriate the natural male sexual impulses and behaviors in their assaults on supine men (299).

In MacDonald’s *Lilith*, the demoness attacks Arthur Vane several times, and, in one notable scene, while he sleeps in her palace. The sexual nature of the attack is clearly apparent in Vane’s description of the sensual pleasure he receives: “A delicious languor infolded me. I seemed floating, far from land, upon the bosom of a twilight sea. Existence was in itself pleasure. I had no pain. Surely I was dying!” (132). This assault begins with Arthur’s relaxed enjoyment of erotic pleasures but quickly turns into a horrific rape scene. Lilith’s fangs – which produce the sensation of “sharpness itself” – suddenly begin penetrating Arthur over and over again (133). He exclaims, “what a sickening sting! It went right through my heart! Again!” (133). Arthur is powerless to resist and his body “seem[s] paralyzed,” marking a reversal of roles as Lilith manipulates his body. He realizes “some evil thing was upon [him]!” (133). However, he explains that he cannot resist her:

I would have struggled, but could not reach a struggle. My will agonised, but in vain, to assert itself. I desisted, and lay passive. Then I became aware of a soft hand on my face, pressing my head into the pillow, and of a heavy weight lying across me. (133)

The reversal of sexual gender roles creates a passive male victim who is physically dominated and penetrated by a woman who is both “sharp” and “soft.” Here, Arthur’s resistance becomes futile against Lilith’s assault and he must “suffer and be still” while she uses his body as a means to satisfy her wicked hunger. It is clear that Lilith is, perversely, on top of him, just as the vampire in Burne-Jones’ painting sits astride her male victim. Afterwards, Arthur finds Lilith standing above him, her “mouth [wearing] a look of satisfied passion” from which “she [wipes] a streak of red” (133). It is clear that the exchange has satiated Lilith’s sexual and gustatory appetites, and Arthur realizes, with horror, that he is “a tame animal for her to feed upon, a human fountain for a thirst demoniac” (133).

This scene is remarkably similar to that of Harker’s near assault by the “Weird Sisters” in *Dracula*, which has been exhaustively covered by many critics. Arthur’s “delicious languor” prefigures Jonathan’s “languorous ecstasy” as he anticipates the “kisses” of three voluptuous female vampires. In the scene, Harker lays “quiet” on a couch, both thrilled and repulsed by the trio of vampires who inspire in him a “wicked, burning desire” to be kissed “with those red lips” (42). The characterization of the vampire assault as a kiss once again conflates sex and eating, as, like Lilith, “the sisters are equipped with sharp teeth, an aggressive instrument that subverts the masculine prerogative of penetration and subdues Harker into ecstatic passivity” (Domínguez-Rué 301). One vampire, with “wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires,” bends over Jonathan, who looks “out under [his] eyelashes in an agony of delightful

anticipation” of the “kisses” (42). Stoker repeatedly draws attention to the vampires’ mouths, and Jonathan notes that the blonde licks her lips “like an animal” until he can “see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth” (42). This vampire’s mouth is like a *vagina dentata*, or the mythical vagina with teeth that threatened to impale an unwitting male partner. Both the vampire’s mouth and the *vagina dentata* promise sensual pleasure but can only deliver pain and emasculation. As in *Lilith*, the penetration of a male hero would signify castration, because he would be the receiver, or the feminine partner, in the sexual act. The blonde vampire is transgressive as she indulges her erotic and gustatory appetites, becoming animalistic in her depraved, deliberately voluptuous assault. The act is subversive in the patriarchal household dominated by Count Dracula, because he has expressly forbidden his “wives” from feeding on his guest. The female vampires are appropriating a myriad of masculine privileges here: that of at once indulging their appetites for both sex and food; of assuming the role of hunter and seducer; of usurping the role of active, penetrating sexual partner; and of obeying their own wishes in direct opposition to male orders. This final privilege is reassumed by Dracula when he interrupts the exchange, instead providing the monstresses with a young child on which to feed. Nevertheless the women threaten to undermine the authority of Dracula and question the virility of the Count. The fair vampire says, accusingly, “You yourself never loved; you never love!” to which Dracula replies, “Yes, I too can love; you yourselves can tell it from the past!” (43). The word “love,” like “kiss,” acts as a euphemism, and the exchange indicates that the “wives” are sexually unfulfilled because Dracula only bites human women. This scene establishes the anxiety over and vilification of female

polyamory, which runs throughout the text. These women reject traditional limitations on female sexuality and appetite, and their refusal to be submissive sexual partners links them with the Lilith of apocryphal Jewish lore as well as the demoness of MacDonald's novel.

Le Fanu's *Carmilla* is perhaps the most subversive of these women because she does not simply refuse to lie passively beneath a man, she refuses to lie with men at all, instead preferring the company, and blood, of beautiful young women. Like Dracula, she is an undead aristocrat who engages her prey in a kind of twisted courtship. Laura explains that the vampire is "prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons" (317). Though vampires eventually devour their victims, they sometimes will "husband and protract [their] murderous enjoyment with the refinement of an epicure" (317). Carmilla does so, draining ordinary village girls while befriending and seducing beautiful aristocratic ladies. Like *Dracula*, Le Fanu's tale features two victims, one of whom does not survive her "friendship" with Carmilla. Both Bertha and Laura have "vague and strange sensations" when Carmilla visits them in their beds at night. Laura describes disturbing dreams followed by various feelings:

Sometimes it was as if warm lips kissed me, and longer and more lovingly as they reached my throat, but there the caress fixed itself. My heart beat faster, my breathing rose and fell rapidly and full drawn; a sobbing, that rose into a sense of strangulation, supervened, and turned into a dreadful convulsion, in which my senses left me and I became unconscious. (282)

Carmilla's attacks are both sexual and seductive, and are even more insidious because Laura enjoys them. Laura's convulsions evoke the languorous ecstasy mixed with pain that Arthur Vane experiences, and bear some resemblance to a sexual climax. Carmilla is

similar to Dracula in her ability to awaken the latent (homo)sexual impulses in her repressed female victims. Though she calls them her “sufferings,” Laura’s persistence in hiding these nighttime visits from her father may imply that she enjoys them on an unconscious level. As many have noted, Laura even fantasizes that Carmilla is really a “boyish lover” in disguise who has come to woo her, and, while she is ostensibly embarrassed by Carmilla’s romantic advances, she contradicts herself many times (265). Laura later describes the “foolish embraces” in which Carmilla “soothed [her] resistance into a trance;” however, she reveals that in these “mysterious moods” she “experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable...mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust” (264). While Laura claims she is repulsed by Carmilla’s passionate embraces, “the sense of attraction immensely prevailed” (261). The two women are depicted as both friends and lovers, and Carmilla later implies that their relationship will continue on in the afterlife. She tells Laura, “You will think me cruel, very selfish, but love is always selfish; the more ardent the more selfish” (276). Carmilla continues, saying, “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” (276). Here, the transgressive sexual relationship between Carmilla and Laura becomes a kind of selfish passion in which one lover literally consumes the other. It is implied that Laura will become a vampire, and will be condemned because of her intimate relationship with Carmilla. Tracy explores vampires as a sexual menace, and explains that “though they do physically harm their victims, and often bring about their deaths, the vampires also threaten their victims’ souls” (33). Not only is Carmilla threatening Laura’s eternal soul by potentially turning her into another vampire, she has also corrupted Laura by tempting her in an “unnatural”

sexual relationship and has awakened her natural sexual impulses. In this way, Carmilla becomes the ultimate seductress, luring her victims into a perverted sexual relationship with ramifications that extend into the afterlife.

Like the female vampires of *Dracula* and *Lilith*, as well as the mythical Lilith, Carmilla's subversion of male control is denoted by her refusal to submit to male sexual dominance. Like her viraginous sisters, Carmilla appropriates the act of penetration, a male prerogative. Yet the "lesbian" vampire is the ultimate threat to patriarchy because she uses and controls the bodies of female victims without male control or interference. Elizabeth Signorotti explores this in "Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in 'Carmilla' and *Dracula*," saying, "Laura's and Carmilla's lesbian relationship defies the traditional structures of kinship by which men regulate the exchange of women to promote male bonding" (607). While Le Fanu "allows Laura and Carmilla to usurp male authority and to bestow themselves on whom they please," Stoker responds to Le Fanu by "reinstating male control in the exchange of women" (607). Essentially, Dracula "seeks to repossess the female body for the purposes of male pleasure and exchange, and to correct the reckless unleashing of female desire" (607). Through Lucy, Dracula feeds on Seward, Van Helsing, Quincey Morris, and Arthur, which reflects the economic transmission of wealth from man to man through women. Citing Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men*, Signorotti explains that "the only way to eliminate the homosexual threat between men is to include a woman in the relationship, forming a (safe) triangular configuration rather than a (threatening) linear, male-to-male union" (607). Likewise, by drinking the men's blood through Lucy, Dracula avoids the homoerotic awkwardness of drinking directly from them (607). In this way, for female vampires to feed directly on

young women breaks down this “safe” triangular relationship, and eliminates men from the equation. Carmilla wrests control of her young prey from hetero-patriarchal means of control and penetrates them before their future husbands can. Her victims – Bertha, and Laura – are both under the protection of single men. As unmarried girls, they are essentially property to be passed from their father or guardian to their future husband. Carmilla intervenes in this patriarchal transfer, invading the home and preying on the young women while their guardians are powerless to stop her. Consequently, as an even more monstrous kind of New Woman, female vampires are inherently threatening to patriarchy because they evade and subvert male control.

The ability for female vampires to seduce their prey with their voluptuous lips and enticing beauty makes them singularly dangerous monsters. As with Arthur and the men of *Dracula*, the young Laura is simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by Carmilla, and says, “I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence” (264). These demonic women, who threaten to engulf their victims in the liminal state between life and death, and consciousness and unconsciousness, are the abject. Jerrold E. Hogle describes abjection within the Gothic genre as the way conflicting fears and desires “become embodied in, even scapegoated on, the half-alive/half-dead, half-organic/half-artificial, and obscurely desirable/obviously repellant specter/creature” (5-6). The abject “fascinates desire” but “desire turns aside” and “it rejects” (Kristeva 1). In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva explains:

The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*. Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were imagined as representatives of sex and murder” (12-13)

Vampires are compared to leeches and other parasites; their attacks are sexually charged and morally and physically polluting. They bite their victims and consume their bodies. In this way, the vampire epitomizes the combination of “sex and murder” Kristeva discusses here. Abjection is inherent in the conflation of sex, death, and eating, as it “persists as exclusion or taboo (dietary or other) in monotheistic religions...but drifts over to more ‘secondary’ forms such as *transgression* (of the Law) within the same monotheistic economy” (17). These monstresses embody myriad cultural taboos, including necrophilia, incest, polyamory, pedophilia, cannibalism, homosexuality, bestiality, adultery, and a host of other sexual sins. Yet just as the abject confronts us with our cultural primitive and animalistic past, it also confronts us “within our personal archeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of *maternal* entity even before ex-isting outside of her” (13). More than any other, female vampires in particular evoke the abject as the threat of re-assimilation back within the mother, or the Freudian death drive. As Hogle interprets Kristeva’s theories of abjection, “whatever threatens us with anything like this betwixt-and-between, even dead-and-alive, condition, Kristeva concludes, is what we throw off or ‘abject’ into defamiliarized manifestations, which we henceforth fear and desire because they both threaten to reengulf us and promise to return us to our primal origins” (7). Through death and consumption, the female vampire threatens to return victims – especially young children – back into the mother’s body. Hogle explains that the “other” – here, the vampire – “locates and focuses our longings and fears as though they are and are not ours, allowing them to be visible as part of our present fearfully threatening us and yet making them either a relic of the decaying past or perhaps the avatar of a mechanistic or racially other future” (6). The female vampires in

the works of MacDonald, Le Fanu, and Stoker represent unrepressed female sexuality and hunger, the female appropriation of the phallus and position of sexual dominance, and various threats to male patriarchy. They allow readers to confront their repressed desires, while their bloody deaths act as a kind of catharsis. These fears of growing female power and unrestrained appetite are ultimately neutralized through the destruction of female vampires. As Kristeva explains, “An unshakeable adherence to Prohibition and Law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside” (16). Thus, the hyper-conservative nature of these texts is a consequence of their dealing with and disabling of the abject (16). The men who represent patriarchal authority disarm and disempower the female vampires in a way that is “unfailingly oppressive” as well as “laboriously prevailing” (16).

While Lilith finds absolution through a painful process of redemption and change, the female vampires of *Carmilla* and *Dracula* meet bloody, violent ends. Lilith is able to be redeemed because she is already dead, having committed suicide to escape her marriage to Adam and the subjugation it entailed. As she is already dead, the “region of the seven dimensions” represents a kind of purgatory where souls must achieve some spiritual growth in order to join with the Almighty deity. The major narrative of Lilith is one in which the villainess chooses to cast away her pride and thirst for blood willingly. Adam explains the central message of the text: “Only good where evil was, is evil dead. An evil thing must live with its evil until it chooses to be good. That alone is the slaying of evil” (153). According to Bonnie Gaarden, MacDonald, a failed Congregational minister, “was convinced that all humankind, not just Christians, would eventually enjoy reconciliation and unity with God, because God loved all people so much that he would

send them deeper and deeper into the Hell of their miserable, isolate natures until – before or after physical death – they finally became desperate enough to repent, turn toward him, and undergo a spiritual education and/or purgation that might take millennia” (20-21). Though much of this text is devoted to Arthur Vane’s fantastical adventures and misadventures in the surreal alternate reality, the end is entirely devoted to presenting Lilith’s redemption. Yet just as knowledge caused the fall of man, so is self-knowledge the only path to good from evil, according to MacDonald. Lilith must visit the cottage of Adam and Eve’s daughter Mara, whose name means “bitter (Ruth 1:20)” and who “incarnates MacDonald’s notion of life” as “purgatory,” or “human suffering as the necessary instrument of sanctification” (Gaarden 25). Lilith is identified by two major physical peculiarities: a dark spot on her side, and her left hand, which has grown into a closed fist and holds the rivers of the world in an egg. Both of these injuries have bearing on her suffering and redemption. In her trial of self-knowledge, Mara sends a glowing serpent into her body through the dark spot on Lilith’s side. Arthur explains “the creature had passed in by the centre of the black spot and was piercing through the joints and marrow to the thoughts and intents of the heart” (201). The princess shudders and writhes, and he says, “I knew the worm was in her secret chamber” (201). Like Carmilla, Lucy, and the “Weird Sisters” – who are dispatched via stake – Lilith’s body must be penetrated, and she must writhe and suffer, in order to be purified. In these texts, the woman who appropriates the phallus must be penetrated herself so her transgressive power can be neutralized. While the worm’s invasion of her body offers Lilith self-knowledge, she must open her hand to be fully redeemed. As the “fingers have grown together and into the palm,” she has Adam cut her hand off with a sword, and from the

deformity grows a new “lovely hand” (218, 219). Though Gaarden reads this as “surgery” rather than “mutilation,” the clenched hand, or “offending member” that symbolizes Lilith’s resistance and perverse will, is purged by violence (30). This acts as a symbolic castration, though Lilith must willingly submit to her role as woman and mother. Perhaps it is because the patriarchal powers of Adam and God are absolute in this world that Lilith is able to survive and be redeemed, if only by finally becoming submissive. Though she is fundamentally unlike the vampires in other Victorian texts because her descent into depraved, bloodthirsty wickedness is of her own choice – and by the same token, she must eventually choose to be good – penetration and mutilation are inherent parts of her redemption and force her to become the passive (sleeping) woman patriarchy desires her to be.

The deaths of Carmilla, Lucy, and the “Weird Sisters” are similar, though bloodier. Just as acts of metaphorical rape – the bite of the vampire – awaken their repressed sexuality and transform them into bloodthirsty viragos, so must an act of rape, via the stake, revert them to their pre-fall, passive state. Carmilla’s abrupt death is quite different from those in *Dracula* simply because Carmilla is more active than her clueless male foes for the majority of the text; however, it nonetheless establishes a precedent for the manner and symbolic resonance of the later vampire killings. General Spielsdorf, the adoptive parent of the young Bertha Rheinfeldt, and Laura’s father find Carmilla, or the Countess Mircalla Karnstein, lying in her coffin and immersed in blood. Laura explains that Carmilla, now referred to simply as “the body,” was “raised, and a sharp stake driven through the heart of the vampire, who uttered a piercing shriek...in all respects such as might escape from a living person in the last agony; then “the head was struck off and a

torrent of blood flowed from the severed neck” (316-316). Here, symbols of patriarchy reassert their authority over the female body, and the scene acts symbolically as both rape and castration, as the men reappropriate their phallic power.

The executions of female vampires are even more gruesome in *Dracula*, perhaps because The Crew of Light has a longer way to go to reassert their masculine control. As Dijkstra explains, “The turn-of-the-century male’s fascination for, horror of, and hostility toward woman, culminat[ed] in an often uncontrollable urge to destroy her, to do violence to that perverse, un-Platonic reflection of the Platonic ideal of perfect beauty he was so eager to pursue” (Dijkstra 149). It is only by destroying the subversive female vampire that the Crew of Light can reclaim their masculine “right” to penetration and dominance. Dijkstra discusses the Victorian preoccupation with what he calls “the mythology of therapeutic rape,” and claims there is “direct link between the aggressive ‘invitation to rape’ fantasy represented by the works of painters of the Cabanel curve” – as in Cabanel’s “Birth of Venus” – “and a similar ‘take them by force’ notion reflected in the late nineteenth-century vogue for paintings depicting scenes from life in barbarian times or among ‘barbarian’ peoples” (109). Many paintings from the *fin de siècle* present scenes of barbaric rape, celebrating when “men were men and women were mere property” (109). Middle-class men were able to guiltlessly enjoy the displaced violence of the pieces, and it was “precisely this mixture of a vicarious feeling of mastery, the pleasing sense of predestined suffering on the part of a beautiful victim, and the comforting knowledge of the absence of any personal responsibility for the misery portrayed which made Orientalist scenes of female slavery so delectable to the art lovers of the *fin de siècle*” (115). *Dracula*, then, seems to be a call to action for its manly heroes

to revert back to these primordial origins and assert themselves in the most primal way possible. By staking female vampires, these men achieve – through prosthesis – the virility and power of Dracula, their more barbaric, warrior enemy.

Though the deaths of Lucy, the “Weird Sisters,” and Carmilla are not displaced to the more primitive past, their symbolic rapes are presented as heroic acts by brave men. Upon seeing Lucy as a vampire for the first time, Seward remarks, “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” (188). The love that the passive, dead Lucy inspires in Seward is erased when he sees her as animated and powerful. He, and the other men, view the murder of the vampire Lucy as moral, but even take some necrophillic “delight” in it. All of the female vampires are eventually destroyed, utterly and completely, by groups of men who “rightfully” neutralize their subversive power and their voluptuousness. Seward describes the vampiric Lucy in her coffin, saying, “She seemed like a nightmare of Lucy as she lay there; the pointed teeth, the bloodstained, voluptuous mouth – which it made one shudder to see – the whole carnal and unspiritual appearance, seeming like a devilish mockery of Lucy’s sweet purity” (190). Lucy is an uncanny distortion of her former self, and because of her indulgence in sexual and gustatory excess, she must be destroyed. Even Seward notes that Van Helsing’s visual assessment of Lucy’s corpse is a violating act, and “these words expose a male fantasy of sexual power, while they reveal a morbid attraction for Lucy’s corpse that borders on necrophilia and conforms to the anorexic ideal” (Domínguez-Rué). Lucy’s mouth epitomizes her appropriation of male prerogatives, and she must be horrifically punished for her subversive behavior. Seward describes Lucy’s second, and final death:

The Thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions [Arthur] looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. (192)

As has been established by many critics, Lucy's penetration by her would-be husband Arthur Holmwood is evocative of grisly rape. It is only once they have administered this cathartic forced penetration that Lucy can no longer act as a voluptuous wanton, and reverts to the virtuous angel they can desire without guilt. It is in her true death that Lucy becomes the beautiful, worn, and slender object the men can admire. Once she has been raped into submission again, Lucy is no longer the "foul Thing that [they] had so dreaded and grown to hate that the work of her destruction was yielded as a privilege...but Lucy as [they] had seen her in her life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity" (192). Seward even notes that there are "traces of care and pain and waste" but says they are "dear to [them]" (192). If Lucy's increased appetites and growing girth before death indicated her evolving vampirism, here Lucy's wasted frame reflects her righted, re-suppressed sexuality. As Dijkstra concludes, "thus, by means of a little show of monogamous masculine force, Lucy, the polyandrous virago, has been transformed into that ideal creature of feminine virtue of the mid-nineteenth century: the dead woman" (Dijkstra 346).

This scene is repeated, and multiplied by three, at the end of the novel when Van Helsing kills the Weird Sisters. He calls the deed "butcher work" saying:

Had I not seen the repose in the first face, and the gladness that stole over it just ere the final dissolution came, as realization that the soul had been won, I could not have gone further with my butchery. I could not have endured the horrid screeching as the stake drove home; the plunging of writhing form, and lips of bloody foam...But it is over! And the poor souls, I can pity them now and weep, as I think of them placid each in her full sleep of death... (320)

Once again, the destruction of the female vampire comes in the form of a violent rape (or three). If the mouth of the vampire is a vaginal symbol, the bloody mouths emphasize the brutality of this rape sequence, as it is the vampire's subversive center of hunger and sexuality that is ravaged and destroyed (119). The practice of stuffing the mouth with garlic seems, at its most basic, a way of neutralizing and restricting the vampire's greatest weapon and lure for prey. The scene emphasizes male weakness against the beauty of the female vampire, as Van Helsing admits: "Yes, I was moved – I, Van Helsing, with all my purpose and with my motive for hate – I was moved to yearning for delay which seemed to paralyze my faculties and to clog my very soul" (319). He is mesmerized by the blonde vampire's voluptuous, sensual allure: "She was so fair to look on, so radiantly beautiful, so exquisitely voluptuous, that the very instinct of man in me, which calls some of my sex to love and to protect one of hers, made my head whirl with new emotion" (320). Van Helsing channels his baser emotions into his attack on the women, staking each in succession. However, this scene most provocatively evokes the abjection of necrophillic impulses, as Van Helsing is clearly aroused by these women's corpses lying in tombs with "horrid odour" and "fretted with age and heavy with the dust of centuries" (319). Rather than succumb to physical intimacy with these women, Van Helsing must channel his excitement into the only acceptable violation of these women's bodies, destroying the fiends who hunger for food, sex, and power and replacing them with passive, angelic figures.

Thus, these vampire narratives seem most concerned with suppressing female power, idealizing passivity and chastity in women – which can only be ensured through death – and with valorizing the rape and destruction of hungry, powerful monstresses. In

this way, these texts are also participating in the Victorian preoccupation with the wasting woman whose self-sacrifice ennobles her patriarchal masters and the dead angel whose virtue and powerlessness is assured forever. Yet the texts distinguish between the soft, angelic dead woman and the alluring, aggressive undead woman who can corrupt and pollute her paramour, exciting man's most animalistic urges. Through this violence, the English men reassert their privileged position of sexual dominance and penetration, reclaiming the phallus from the threat of the 'New Woman.'

Vampire as 'New Woman'

The female vampire's indulgence of her carnal appetite links her with the fallen woman, but her refusal to submit to male authority and her lack of maternal instincts evokes the 'New Woman,' who was "a caricature of the late nineteenth-century feminist" (Reynolds and Humble 38). According to Reynolds and Humble, the nineteenth-century was a period that mobilized women around "single-issue campaigns (against slavery, for women's education, for the foundation of hostels for fallen women, for the reform of divorce law and laws dealing with married women's property)" (38). These women, fragmented into various campaigns, coalesced in opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts, which produced the "intense shock and anger" that provided the "galvanic force that allowed overt feminism to become speakable – and successful" (38). The Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869 gave policemen the authority to arrest, detain, and examine suspected prostitutes for venereal diseases as well as force them to undergo involuntary treatment if infected. Those in opposition to the Acts argued that it placed the onus for transmitting venereal diseases too heavily on women and criticized male lust as the cause of venereal peril. Many have noted "that the vocalised feminist disgust at male sexuality was not very far from the emotions traditionally expected of the domestic angel" (39). Perhaps this explains why Mina finds men more forgiving of female appetite in *Dracula*, though her pointed attacks against the "New Woman" are questionable, considering that, as an educated, working woman, she is similar to the mannish creature she seems to revile. Van Helsing presents her as an unsettling hybrid, saying, "She has a man's brain — a brain that a man should have were he much gifted — and a woman's heart" (207). Yet her abilities are tempered by her stalwart adherence to traditional self-

negation, as she explains (in her first letter in the novel): “I have been working very hard lately, because I want to keep up with Jonathan’s studies...When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan” (55). Like the ‘New Woman,’ Mina works outside of the home and is progressive in her adoption of new technology. Nevertheless, her profession is in childcare, and her skills are only valuable in their ability to promote her husband. In this way, Stoker presents the ideal marriage as one in which a woman acts as a trained helpmeet for her husband and submits to patriarchal authority. Furthermore, he divorces motherhood and sexuality, presenting Mina as an asexual Madonna figure. While Lucy is eroticized by the Crew of Light, Mina mothers them. She soothes Arthur after Lucy’s death, saying, “We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked; I felt this big, sorrowing man’s head resting on me, as though it were that of the baby that some day may lie on my bosom” (203). This not only prefigures the birth of little Quincey Harker, it places Mina and the rest of the women of the text in diametrically opposing positions.

Lucy and the “Weird Sisters” choose to drink from children, evoking the fears of the unmaternal “New Woman.” Before killing her, the men find the “Bloofer Lady” with one of her young victims, and, more than anything else, they are horror-struck by her treatment of the child when, “with a careless motion,” she flings it to the ground “callous as a devil” (188). This grotesque perversion of breastfeeding appears in *Carmilla*, as Laura describes her first attack when she was a young child. She explains that upon waking she was vexed to find herself alone in her nursery and was soothed back to sleep by the caresses of a pretty woman. Like Arthur Vane, she initially enjoys Carmilla’s “assault” but says, “I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast

very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly” (246). It seems safe to assume that this is not a dream because Carmilla acknowledges the episode when they meet again, claiming that she too “dreamt” about Laura as a child. Carmilla’s attack on the young Laura reveals her lack of maternal instincts, as she fondles and then bites the girl, and epitomizes the text’s abjection of cultural taboos. The attack is incestuous because Carmilla acts as a replacement mother figure and is also distantly related to Laura through her mother’s family. It also suggests fears of necrophilia, pedophilia, cannibalism, and homosexuality. In this way, the attack on a child violates almost every cultural taboo. Yet this perversion of breastfeeding finds parallels in *Dracula* when the Weird Sisters make a meal of a young child and in *Lilith* when the princess’s penchant for killing all of the newborn children in the city of Bulika is revealed. Thus, female vampires violate the “natural” law that women must be maternal, and seem to evoke fears of the New Woman’s mannish disregard for motherhood and rejection of traditional gender roles.

Like the penetrating female monster, the New Woman’s masculinity, or intellectuality and demands for power and independence, was viewed as a threat to male authority. As Dijkstra explains, “It was the New Woman’s insistence on power, equality with men, and an active life in which she and her sisters might, in Tennie C. Claflin’s words, ‘boldly advance into the heat and strife of active business life...’ which struck fear into the hearts of males who were terrified of losing their own privileges” (265). Paradoxically, though she was called ‘New,’ this woman finds her mythical antecedent in *Lilith*. Like Stoker, MacDonald suggests that women who refuse to be submissive helpers to their husbands are unnatural and arrogant. In the novel, *Lilith*’s refusal to submit to

Adam stems from her pride, a trait that leads her to evil and corruption. Adam explains their origins to the narrator and protagonist: “Mr. Vane, when God created me...He brought me an angelic splendour to be my wife” who “counted it slavery to be one with me, and bear children for Him who gave her being” (147). Not only does this passage characterize Lilith as a perverse woman who dares rebel against the patriarchal control of her heavenly father and earthly husband, it evokes and seems to refute eighteenth- and nineteenth-century feminist arguments against British marriage customs, including *coverture*, the legal system in which a woman’s legal identity and rights were subsumed and controlled by her husband. Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) as well as her fragment *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (1798), published posthumously, directly compare marriage under the system of *coverture* with slavery. In the *Maria*, the eponymous heroine complains, “Married when scarcely able to distinguish the nature of the engagement, I yet submitted to the rigid laws which enslave women” (351). Indicting the system that forced her to submit to a wicked man, she says, “I exclaim against the laws which throw the whole weight of the yoke on the weaker shoulders, and force women, when they claim protectorship as mothers, to sign a contract, which renders them dependent on the caprice of the tyrant, who choice or necessity has appointed to reign over them” (351). MacDonald seems to refute such feminist writing, which uses distinctly revolutionary rhetoric to link the husband with the slave master and tyrant. By the time his novel was published, a series of Married Women’s Property Acts essentially ended *coverture*, giving married women the same rights to own and control property as single women. The last of these acts was passed just two years before the publication of *Lilith*, while an earlier act of legislation, the

Matrimonial Causes Act of 1884, ended the enforcement of the restitution of conjugal rights and the ability for husbands to imprison their wives for refusing to cohabit with them, an injustice that Wollstonecraft's heroine endures. This was cemented by the 1891 court case *R. v. Jackson*, which decided that a man who kidnapped his errant wife as she left church had violated her right of *habeas corpus* (Richardson and Willis). MacDonald may be responding to the feminist movements of the Victorian period and demonizes a woman who refuses to submit, but who would prefer to reign instead.

The texts that display the "viraginous tendencies of the New Woman" reflect late Victorian fears that the dissolution of patriarchal control would result in a matriarchy (Dijkstra 215). As Dijkstra notes, "any sign of a move toward the personal independence on the part of a woman was enough to make the later nineteenth-century male think of catastrophic events" including the complete dissolution and devolution of society "into the abyss" (215). As the proud, child-killing princess of Bulika, Lilith recalls a primeval matriarchal ruler or destructive fertility goddess. Adam declares that Lilith's "first thought was *power*" and explains: "On child, indeed, she bore, then, puffed with the fancy that she had created her, would have me fall down and worship her!" (147). Adam's incredulous derision of Lilith's inflated ego upon birthing their daughter, Lona, seems to directly evoke the patriarchal response to nineteenth-century conceptions of early matriarchal societies. In his 1861 study of matriarchy, Swiss scholar Johann Jakob Bachofen theorized that early societies were gynaeocracies based on a primitive reverence for mothers. According to Joan Bamberger, "Arguing from mainly poetic and frequently dubious historical sources (Hesiod, Pindar, Ovid, Virgil, Horace, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Herodotus, and Strabo) Bachofen tried to establish as moral and historical

fact the primacy of “mother right,” which he thought sprang from the natural and biological association of mother and child” (263-264). Adam – perhaps the voice of MacDonald – rejects female fertility as a basis for matriarchal rule, depicting Lilith’s pride as vicious, monstrous, and sinful.

Indeed, Adam’s disdain seems markedly similar to nineteenth-century reactions to the “New Woman,” the masculine intellectual who threatened to destabilize the patriarchal status quo. Like Lilith, the “sexually independent New Woman criticized society’s insistence on marriage as woman’s only option for a fulfilling life” (Showalter 38). Elaine Showalter explains that, by rejecting marriage, this woman “engendered intense hostility and fear as she seemed to challenge male supremacy in art, the professions, and the home” (38). The New Woman was an “anarchic figure” linked with “sickness, freakishness, sterility, and racial degeneration” and who “doctors maintained...was dangerous to society because her obsession with developing her brain starved the uterus” (38, 40). Though she does give birth to a daughter just as Eve later does, Lilith’s daughter, Lona, is a child whose development has stalled out just on the cusp of adolescence. Lilith is the epitome of dark femininity whose subversive pride and wanton willfulness must be smothered and contained by God and man. As previously noted, the female vampires of *Dracula* and *Carmilla* attack very young children, evoking the abortions and infertility associated with the degenerating uterus of the New Woman. Lilith, too, is the enemy of children, and “sends witches around to teach the women spells that keep babies away” and “some say she is in league with the Shadows to put an end to the race” (115). Thus, like the New Woman, these *femme fatales* are associated with racial degeneration and sterility, and their demands for power and their appropriation of

male prerogatives threaten masculinity.

Discovering that Adam would “but love and honour, never obey and worship her,” Lilith then “poured out her blood,” fled “to the army of aliens,” and “so ensnared the heart of the great Shadow, that he became her slave, wrought her will, and made her queen of Hell” (147-148). Recalling the mythical virago’s role as demonic consort, Lilith is connected with the “great Shadow,” the figure of Satanic evil in the text. A bloodthirsty tyrant, she reigns over Bulika, killing all young children in the shape of a leopardess. A matriarchy, then, literally becomes a wretched hellscape where the inhabitants are held “in constant terror” despite their proficiency at “selling and cheating” and “despising every one they get the better of” while “never doubting themselves the most honourable of all the nations, and each man counting himself better than any other” (75). These people never think of the poor, but think it a disgrace to work. While Bulika may act as a veiled critique of the corrupt British Empire, ruled, of course, by Queen Victoria, Lilith bears no resemblance to the mourning Queen. Rather, the text seems concerned with subjugating the errant woman and directly refutes the gynaecocratic basis of matriarchy. As Showalter notes, *The Revolt of Man*, an anonymous novel published in 1882, “described the war between the sexes led by insurgent New Women” and shows a “matriarchal England” in which “women have become the judges, doctors, lawyers, and artists, while men are kept in complete subordination” and “taught to cultivate their beauty in order to be chosen in marriage by successful matrons” (41). Though *Lilith* does not showcase such a clear reversal of gender roles, it does suggest that the matriarchal tyranny Lilith asserts is unnatural, as it marks her refusal to bend to God’s power. Though Satan, or the Shadow, is similarly expelled from heaven for his refusal to submit,

Lilith's journey of redemption requires her to become passive, and MacDonald positions Lilith as a woman who must be reformed. It is only when Lilith submits to Adam's and God's authority, rejects the influence of the sinister Shadow, and develops instincts of self-sacrifice and maternal compassion, thereby accepting her "natural" role, that she is "redeemed."

All versions of nineteenth-century female vampires are monstrous in part because they do not "suffer and be still," but appropriate the phallus through their penetrating fangs. This seems to represent fears of the "freakish" and masculine "New Woman," who emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. MacDonald and Stoker suggest that the New Woman must be reformed into a passive corpse or maternal helpmeet. Above all, their texts emphasize the anarchy that is possible when women run amok.

Corruptible Women and Shape-Shifters

In many ways, *Carmilla*, *Dracula*, and *Lilith* each seem to offer an ideal version of femininity, celebrating the traditional qualities such a woman possesses, while it vilifies another who lacks such characteristics. One difficulty with this reading is that both the ideal women and the demonic women in these texts are constantly shifting and even merging into and evolving from one another. Many of the viragos begin as demure angels, while those who do not become vampires themselves are corrupted. Central to these texts is the suggestion that any woman, whether pure or not, can be polluted by the vampire bite. They are complex, mutable individuals, which is emphasized by their ever-changing physical forms.

Significantly, all of the vampires in these works by Le Fanu, Stoker, and MacDonald can manipulate their figures in unnatural ways. This is the least developed in *Dracula*, though Seward describes the men's horror when they see vampire Lucy, "with a corporeal body as real at the moment as [their] own, pass in" to her crypt "through the interstice where scarce a knife-blade could have gone" (189). This power over her own body underlies Lucy's escape from patriarchal restrictions, which are reasserted in her second death. Carmilla and Lilith both transform their bodies in similar, though far more complex ways. Laura describes one of Carmilla's attacks, explaining that she sees "a sooty-black animal" resembling a "monstrous cat" prowling the foot of her bed (278). Laura says, "It appeared to me about four or five feet long...and continued tooting and froing with the lithe sinister restlessness of a beast in a cage (278). This powerful animal contrasts with the snobbish, beautiful, and languid aristocrat that appears as Laura's houseguest during the day. Evoking the abject as the liminal figure who confronts us with

our own animalistic, primal natures, General Spielsdorf echoes Laura's description later in the novella. Peeping in on his sleeping ward, General Spielsdorf sees a "large black object, very ill-defined, crawl...over the foot of the bed, and swiftly spread itself up to the poor girl's throat," swelling into "a great palpitating mass" (311). Silver argues that this description reveals Carmilla's slender form is a ruse which disguises her true "Cleopatra-like fleshiness" that is "thoroughly out of bounds, undisciplined, shapeless, and not even human" (125). Once again, the female vampire is characterized as a large parasite or leech, but Carmilla's shape shifting makes defining her gender problematic. Though ostensibly she was fully female while still the human Countess Mircalla, Carmilla's shifting form emphasizes and reinforces the female vampire's ever changing persona. Carmilla herself is a study in contradictions. She is apparently young but has lived for centuries as the un-dead; she has wild mood swings, with periods of apathy followed by intense ardor; she embarrasses Laura with her caresses and declarations but callously feeds on her at night; she is variously listless and vigorous; her hair is "very dark brown" but with "something of gold" (262); and she is a beautiful, alluring young woman and a disgusting, palpitating mass. Furthermore, she is first an innocent victim and later a demonic victimizer. She describes the attack to Laura, and points to her breast, saying "I was all but assassinated in my bed, wounded *here*...and never was the same since" (276). Thus, Carmilla's identity is ultimately ambiguous, as she morphs from innocent girl to wild, insatiable vampire. Moreover, her manipulation of her own body echoes her control over those on whom she feeds.

Lilith, too, transforms into a spotted leopardess, and in this form she hunts down the children of Bulika. A woman fleeing the city with her baby explains: "If the princess

hears of a baby, she sends her immediately to suck its blood” (114). Lilith is later revealed as the animal after a confrontation with the pure white leopardess, Astarte, a familiar of the “Cat-woman,” Mara, who protects the young children of Bulika from Lilith’s murderous thirst. Arthur witnesses a catfight and describes Lilith’s transformation from animal to human: “Erect in the moonlight stood the princess, a confused rush of shadows careering over her whiteness – the spots of the leopard crowding, hurrying, fleeing to the refuge of her eyes, where merging they vanished” (135). Lilith’s spots as a leopard and her dark spot as a human suggest her moral corruption, but MacDonald’s emphasis on her “whiteness” links her with the seemingly pure foe she fights. Responding to McGillis, who calls Astarte Lilith’s “inmost soul,” Gaarden explains: “Astarte is Mara's agent, and to say she is Lilith's inmost soul is to say that, at the end of time, Lilith the Slayer will be raised as Mara the Savior” (31). As the Cat-women, Lilith and Mara are intrinsically connected, which blurs the novel’s distinctions between good and evil.

Furthermore, this connection underscores Lilith’s transformation from subversive fiend to passive angel, and troubles the text’s portrayal of light and dark femininity. Even Eve, the Great Mother of the novel, is vampiric when she emerges for the first time. Arthur Vane explains: “the first thing I saw was the lid of a coffin, as I though, set up against the wall, but it opened, for it was a door, and a woman entered” (28). Here, MacDonald compares Eve’s entrance into the room with her emergence from a coffin and seems to link her with the undead. Adam emphasizes that Eve is the pure feminine ideal of the text, saying, “God gave me another wife – not an angel but a woman – who is to [Lilith] as light is to darkness” (148). Yet Eve is a more complex figure, as she reigns

over a tomb of sleeping dead will rise when they grow young again. Gaarden explains:

Eve's dead are likened, therefore, both to the damned and to the redeemed in the *Divine Comedy*, and she is a Beatrice surrounded by the traditional paraphernalia of witchery (cottage, candle, coffin, cat). We remember that witches, in folktale and rumor, eat children – even, and sometimes especially, their own, Eve is thus the great all-Mother: all-birthing, all-nurturing, yet all-devouring. (25)

Thus, though Eve and Lilith are apparently diametrically opposed versions of womanhood, they are both simultaneously light and dark, and they both represent the mother as devourer. Once Lilith begins to show concern for the Little Ones, she and Eve unite in their shared position as mothers. This undermines the text's separation between good and evil and epitomizes the way vampire narratives erode the division between the “pure” and “fallen” woman.

Conclusion: The Desire-Machines

In this way, the women of these texts, whether ostensibly good or evil, are ever-changing and evolving. They are far more complex figures than much criticism acknowledges, and evoke the Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari concept of the “desire-machine.” In “The Machines,” Deleuze and Guattari do not compare the human to a machine, but define a human as a machine. Like the machines the authors describe, the female vampire is the subject that “consumes and consummates each of the states through which it passes, and is born of each of them anew, continuously emerging from them as made up of parts, each one of which completely fills up the body without organs in the space of an instant” (300). Though the female vampire is motivated by her desires for blood, sex, and power, she is constantly born and reborn anew. She is perpetually set free and re-chained in the patriarchal system in which she lives.

The metaphor of vampirism allows the authors of these texts to blend the most transgressive female desires into one massive monstrous appetite. Le Fanu, Stoker, and MacDonald display abjected, perverse longings that threaten us with our primal past and punish the female vampires who engender both desire and disgust. The patriarch’s staking of the female vampire represents the male’s reassertion of phallic power and the negation of the female vampire’s usurpation of masculine prerogatives. The death or suppression of the demoness ends the threat to patriarchy implied in her assumption of the phallus (through her fangs), her sexual deviance and dominance, and her attacks on children. As I have shown, Eve, the mythical Lilith, the lamia, the succubus, and the vampire all bear perverse characteristics that make them threatening, as they are dominating, hungry, and sexually voracious women. The *femme fatales* of *Carmilla*,

Lilith, and *Dracula* represent fears of perverse sexual dominance and transgressive sexuality, including incest and homosexuality, and echo earlier representations of women as simultaneously enticing and corrupt. In this way, these three texts are all part of the overarching narrative in Western ideology that has systematically oppressed women through the depiction of unmaternal, sexually initiated and otherwise “Fallen” ladies of the evening. In a time when patriarchal control was at risk due to the expansion of rights for women, these texts enforce and legitimize patriarchal power and police female appetite, destroying subversive women who threaten to upend the status quo. Thus, not only do these texts show the anti-feminist response to the emergence of the New Woman and early feminist demands for political and economic power at the end of the nineteenth century, they actively suppress female power by demonizing women who reject traditional gender roles. This demonizing and suppressing of women, however, is not limited to the Victorian period, but transcends time and space through the common Western mythology of demonic women who share a subversive hunger for food, sex, and power.

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