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“THE PROFOUNDEST ARCANA OF OUR DUAL EXISTENCE, AND
ITS INTERMEDIATES”: THE TECHNOLOGY OF MONSTROUSLY
GENDERED BODIES IN “CARMILLA” AND HAVELOCK ELLIS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
English

by
Dennis Ranahan
May 2021

Accepted by:
David Coombs, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

Queer readings of the Gothic traditionally privilege and prioritize a lens of stabilized sexuality at the forefront of their framework for tackling the genre and its works, often dismissing the destabilizing effects of gender queerness in their theoretical pre-occupations. This thesis takes up Susan Stryker's political project of de-centering and de-privileging queer-sexuality as the primary lens of queer critique and does so through a reading of Le Fanu's "Carmilla" to read Carmilla as a prototypically trans character, a topos that is woven in and inseparable from her status as a paradigmatic Gothic monster. The Gothic is read as trans and the trans as Gothic through a framework constructed with Ian Hacking's notions of "Making Up People," tracing the pessimistic past and trauma in the advent of queer identities in how they are constructed. It also examines some of the earliest crystallization of transgender embodiment in medical literature through Havelock Ellis' *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* as a way to understand the transgender-tinged queerness of Carmilla fifty-six years prior. This thesis then concludes that both Gothic technology and the technology of medical literature, where gender-aberrant subjects are concerned, are devoted to a necropolitical project of creating boundaries for the kind of gender-aberrancy they explore, ensuring through necropolitics that the monstrously gendered subject cannot upend hegemonic notions of gender that it is created to undergird.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Angelus, my partner. Without your light, love, and constant companionship throughout these dark times and beyond, the work produced here would have never been possible. You have always pushed me to be the best I can and to produce the best work I can. For all our messy queerness.

I also dedicate this thesis to Joan, my best friend. Your friendship throughout these years and your particularly vibrant queer presence have been an invaluable anchor to me. I never would have read “Carmilla” without you. This thesis would not be as it is without you.

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I would like to thank Dr. David Coombs for many things: seeing me through six years of time at Clemson University as both an undergraduate and graduate student; agreeing to chair this thesis and dealing with my eccentricities; most importantly, for being a friend and mentor to me when it was needed most. Dr. Erin Goss, too, for being on the committee for this thesis; this thesis comes indirectly from being given free allowance one semester to write on any text we would like, and I chose *Dracula*. And to Dr. Matt Hooley, for introducing me to much of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks employed here, and for lending me his keys to use the gender-neutral restroom during long graduate seminars.

I would like to acknowledge and thank many more people than I might fit within this page. Clemson University has been my home for six years and this thesis is a direct product of that—all of my educators, my friends, everything. The publication of this thesis marks my moving on to a new home.

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Creator! *Nature!* And this disease that invades this country is natural. Nature. All things proceed from Nature—don't they? All things in the heaven, in the earth, and under the earth, act and live as Nature ordains? I think so. —The Vampire Carmilla

INTRODUCTION: A CASE FOR THE TRANS AS GOTHIC

Over the past 40 years, the genre of Gothic horror has become a recognizably queer genre. From where we stand now, on the shoulders of the foundations of queer theory and all the scholarship between here and then, it is easy to see the homoerotic subtext of such genre-defining works as *Dracula*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Frankenstein*, etc. As a genre that escapes easy definition and pinning-down in all its permutations throughout the years, we as scholars have come to generally accept that Gothic horror is a queer genre in all the multitude of meanings wrapped up in “queer.” As Jolene Zigarovich notes in *Transgothic in Literature and Culture*, the first collection of its kind to flesh out trans explorations of the Gothic, queer Gothic theorists have, since the 90s, claimed that “the Gothic has always been queer” (3). This claim makes an unstable genre stable and in doing so requires that uncomfortable and inconvenient matters that might continue this unstable nature be kept in the closet, confined to the secret passageways of the Gothic. Queerness is an umbrella term, and one that in its broad expanse should largely have little in the way of stability to it outside of the fact of alterity, yet this is not so with queer readings of the Gothic. What is proudly brought out of the closet to stake out the territory of the Gothic as queer is by and large cisnormative gay and lesbian readings of the genre and its texts, while little else is allowed out of the

closet. What, then, might it look like to bring forth these other neglected queer elements from the closet and bring the Gothic to task in scholars' claims that it has always been queer—in the truest sense of the term?

The kind of queerness I would like to bring forth out of the closet is gender queerness—transgender being. Such a queered-gender reading of the Gothic—in this thesis “Carmilla” by Sheridan Le Fanu—ultimately becomes abrasive to prior queered-sexuality readings of the Gothic. Not because of any innate incompatibility—both are kinds of queerness, after all, and often go hand in hand in lived experience—but because the latter relies on a particularly cisnormative stabilization of notions of gender to reach the ends of proclaiming the genre to be queer (here read as implying a strictly cisnormative gay/lesbian kind of queerness). A trans reading of “Carmilla,” the Gothic, or any text or genre brings a kind of gender instability along with it, which in turn destabilizes certain kinds of gay/lesbian reading that are more common than not within queer scholarship. This incompatibility is Susan Stryker’s central point in her essay “Transgender Studies: Queer Theory’s Evil Twin,” in which she writes:

When I came out as transsexual in 1992, I was acutely conscious, both experientially and intellectually, that transsexuals were considered abject creatures in most feminist and gay or lesbian contexts, yet I considered myself both feminist and lesbian. [I] saw in queer theory a potential for attacking the antitranssexual moralism so unthinkingly embedded in most progressive analyses of gender and sexuality without resorting to a reactionary, homophobic, and misogynistic counteroffensive. I sought instead to dissolve and recast the ground that identity genders in the process of staking its tent. By denaturalizing and thus deprivileging nontransgender practices of embodiment and identification, and by simultaneously enacting a new narrative of the wedding of self and flesh, I intended to create new territories, both analytic and material, for a critically refigured transsexual practice. Embracing and identifying with the figure of Frankenstein’s monster, claiming the transformative power of a return from abjection, felt like the right way to go.

(...)

A decade later, with another Bush in the White House and another war in the Persian Gulf, it is painfully apparent that the queer revolution of the 1990s yielded, at best, only fragile and tenuous forms of liberal progress in certain sectors and did not radically transform society—and as in the broader world, so too in the academy. Queer theory has become an entrenched, though generally progressive, presence in higher education, but it has not realized the (admittedly utopian) potential I (perhaps naively) sensed there for a radical restructuring of our understanding of gender, particularly of minoritized and marginalized manifestations of gender, such as transsexuality. While queer studies remains the most hospitable place to undertake transgender work, all too often *queer* remains a code word for “gay” or “lesbian,” and all too often transgender phenomena are misapprehended through a lens that privileges sexual orientation and sexual identity as the primary means of differing from heteronormativity. (213-214)

This lengthy block quote is all the more striking when we consider that Susan Stryker is the author of “My Words to Victor Frankenstein above The Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage,” which she alludes to here. First performed in 1993 and later published academically in 1994, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein” paved the way for queer readings of Frankenstein’s monster and marked the explosion of queer readings of the Gothic (“The Trans Legacy of *Frankenstein*” 264). Queer readings of the Gothic and queer theory as applied to the Gothic have, so far, been insufficient in capturing human possibility outside of a very strict interpretation of queerness as queerness-as-gay/lesbian. Though trans studies has recently begun to find traction and become the “evil twin” to queer theory, and particularly queer readings of the Gothic as evidenced by the 2018 anthology *Transgothic in literature and culture*, by and large these queerness-as-gay/lesbian readings of the Gothic still stand as the de facto queer readings of the Gothic. Thus this thesis will present a trans reading of Le Fanu’s 1872 cult-classic novella, “Carmilla.” But *how* do we read “Carmilla” in a productive, against-the-grain queer way without falling into surface-level character study?

People are made up, just as fictional characters like Carmilla are made up. What I mean is who we are, who we perceive ourselves to be, how others perceive us, how we perceive them, and the very outer limits of what we consider as possible kinds of people to be are fabricated in our cultural-historical contexts. The philosopher Ian Hacking both makes this claim and aims to elucidate the mechanics of how we create people in “Making Up People,” first published in 1986 and then re-written for the London Review of Books in 2006. In the 1986 version, he writes, “[The “official statistics of the nineteenth century” are] obsessed with *analyse morale*, namely, the statistics of deviance. It is the numerical analysis of suicide, prostitution, drunkenness, vagrancy, madness, crime, *les misérables*. (...) I do not believe that motives of these sorts or suicides of these kinds existed until the practice of counting them came into being” (*Historical Ontology* 161). It should be little surprise that Hacking is setting out to elucidate and map out, generally, the mechanisms that underpin Foucault’s famous claims that the pervert and the homosexual did not exist until the 19th century, along with his notions of the power of reverse discourse—Foucault was a giant at the time this was written, and still is in many ways. Anecdotally, and pertinent to the trans-queer readings offered in this thesis, I am a transgender person that does not exist *as* a trans person without the creation of the category and initially oppressive taxonomy of the trans person. Quite literally, the interventions of the medical apparatus are writ large on my body and in my physiology by its bio-chemical interventions, creating the kind of body and person that perhaps the Chevalière d’Eon had once dreamt of but never thought possible for herself, no more than the medieval peasant would have thought moon travel to be possible, as Hacking argues

(*Historical Ontology* 169). The Gothic monster as we recognize it, the vampire as Carmilla is, did not exist until they were made up in the 19th century. Likewise, trans people and trans bodies as we recognize them now did not exist until they were invented in the 19th century, as part of the proliferation of perversities and pathologies. The Gothic monster, too, was just as ensnared in that fascination with perversities, pathology, and the taxonomy of human possibility. As I will come to argue, these two beings, birthed in the 19th century, owe their existence to one another.

These notions of making up people are intimately linked to social control. Should a society built upon bourgeois ideals and capitalism encounter murky and vague but still starkly non(re)productive sexualities and gendered embodiments, then naming them and staking out their characteristics in a taxonomy is fruitful in correction. As Hacking writes, “We may be observing a particular medico-forensic political language of individual and social control. Likewise, the sheer proliferation of labels in that domain during the nineteenth century may have engendered vastly more kinds of people than the world had ever known before,” (*Historical Ontology* 164). He expands upon this and creates a framework in the later version of the essay, which I find integral to the analysis produced here:

This story can be placed in a five-part framework. We have (a) a classification, multiple personality, associated with what at the time was called a ‘disorder.’ This kind of person is now a *moving target*. We have (b) the people, those I call ‘unhappy’, ‘unable to cope’, or whatever relatively non-judgmental term you might prefer. There are (c) institutions, which include clinics, annual meetings of the International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality and Dissociation, afternoon talkshows on television (...), and weekend training programmes for therapists (...). There is (d) the knowledge: not justified true belief, once the mantra of analytic philosophers, but knowledge in Popper’s sense of conjectural knowledge, and, more specifically, the presumptions that are taught, disseminated and refined within the context of the institutions. (...) Finally, there are (e)

the experts or professionals who generate (d) the knowledge, judge its validity, and use it in their practice. They work within (c) institutions that guarantee their legitimacy, authenticity and status as experts. They study, try to help, or advise on the control of (b) the people who are (a) classified as of a given kind. (*London Review of Books*, emphasis added)

Here is a complex and interwoven web of moving parts, institutions, and people that contribute to making up people—people who, as Hacking writes, are “moving targets,” slippery and elusive to the people who create them (what he refers to as the “looping effect” at the start of this version of the essay). With the kinds of people made up in the 19th century of interest here, the medico-forensic apparatus of state-sanctioned institutions is a kind of linchpin in this process of making up people—the experts reside in the medico-forensic institutions, which interact with other institutions like talkshows (popular media and entertainment dissemination), which interact with the individuals to be taxonomized and controlled, which all feeds back into itself in an endless loop and effort to pin a moving target of human behavior. Thus, the trans person’s ability to exist as trans is (at least in the eyes of state-sanctioned institutions) dependent upon the conjectural knowledge and assumptions of non-trans trans experts, much in the same way medical men and men of science are proliferous throughout Gothic fiction—creating the monsters, dissecting the pathology of the monsters, and killing the monsters. The medical apparatus and the institutions of experts, for all claims to objective knowledge, are attuned keenly to the vibrations of prejudice, popular thought and culture, and a drive to form tidy narratives. As Hacking writes, “The various ways of killing oneself are abruptly characterized and become symbols of national character. The French favor carbon monoxide and drowning; the English hang or shoot themselves” (*Historical Ontology* 169). Various mechanisms within a cultural context, all tied together through

the legitimacy granted to the medical expert and their state-sanctioned institutions, scramble to hit a moving target and weave some narrative around perceived outliers of human behavior to craft a meaning, a taxonomy, and a pathology.

With Hacking's framework in mind, and a commitment to reading against the grain of traditional queer readings of the Gothic, I propose to read the Gothic as inherently trans and the trans as inherently Gothic. To this end, I will read Le Fanu's "Carmilla" as a prototypical transgender embodiment in its eponymous character Carmilla, revealing the roots of cultural logics that would come to be conceptualized as transgender embodiment in the lineage of the Gothic monster; and Havelock Ellis' work on Eonism in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, some of the earliest English work aimed specifically at taxonomizing transgender being, will be read as a crystallization of the pathologizing of the Gothic monster into the monstrous body of the Eonist, the transgender body. As Jolene Zigarovich in the introduction *Transgothic* writes, "Understanding the gothic as an aesthetic or affective mode of reception through which publics have confronted the implications of new biomedical possibilities for bodily transformation—a foundational condition for contemporary notions of transgender identity—is likewise a vital task for trans studies" (xv). The two are bound through the potential for "biomedical possibilities for bodily transformation," the two are creatures created in the same back-and-forth efforts to pin down the moving targets of human possibility and perversity in the 19th century. I argue that the two monsters here, the Gothic monster and the monstrously gendered body, are then connected by a sort of necropolitics-as-becoming in the process of their being made up, which I term the

Voluptuous Death. Both monsters exist to die to suture a rupture in possibilities that, in its non(re)productive nature by bourgeois cultural logics, is antithetical and threatening to a stable and bio-essentialized gender binary. Thus, the two of them come about at the same time and find themselves intimately bound together in both their popular use and the cultural logics that construct them—make them up. This in turn functions as a kind of explanation of why trans people find it, by and large, incredibly easy to identify with the monstrous and fantastically perverse bodies of 19th century Gothic fiction.

The two objects of analysis here, “Carmilla” and *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, are separated by fifty-six years and it would be a mistake to read them as direct and contemporaneous commentaries upon one another. Instead I propose to read them as different installments in the haunting of the bio-essentialist gender binary by a particular kind of subject—first sensationalized, then brought under the heel of medico-forensic investigation, to simplify and tidy a messy process where these two overlap. Raymond Williams, in his book *Marxism and Literature*, proposes the concepts of “dominant,” “residual,” and “emergent” tendencies for tracking and diagnosing the changes in cultural systems over time in their attitudes, functions, and beliefs projected. The dominant is that which holds the most sway, often in direct control of the means of disseminating ideas, values, and practices; the residual is often leftover artifacts of older dominant ways; the emergent is “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships”; that is, new possibilities of being and kinds of people to be made, or people-newly-minted who have taken on a life of their own (121-123). The dominant does not wish to give up its position, nor can it simply will that which is antithetical to its

existence out of existence—thus the residual and the emergent continue to cling to the margins, or are brought to the spotlight when the dominant wishes to directly control and constrict these elements of a cultural system. I invoke Williams here to give some sense of structure to the temporality of this project; just as the various parts of Hacking’s framework shift in their relations over time, and from subject to subject in the kinds of people made up, so they also shift around within temporal continuity and the concepts of the dominant, residual, and emergent. Pinning down and unpacking these subjects and these texts and connecting them is something like attempting to pin down a moving target.

Instead, “Carmilla” is to be read as looking forward to the development of the bio-medicalized subject of the Eonist, a kind of crystallization of a certain subjecthood that has haunted dominant cultural ideologies, as *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* is to be read as looking backwards to popular fictional staking-outs of the perverse and the margins of the possibilities of embodiment and human being in the heyday of the 19th century’s obsession with perversion. In her book *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, Heather Love writes about the abject parts of queer history we wish we could toss to the winds, about the ghost of suffering and furtive shame that haunts us all in reckoning with our history as queer subjects. In tracing the “history of injury” inherent to queerness, she focuses on connections “oblique rather than direct,” which I take as the nature of the connection between Ellis and Le Fanu (29). More importantly to my project, she writes:

Contemporary gay identity is produced out of the twentieth-century history of queer abjection: gay pride is a reverse or mirror image of gay shame, produced precisely against the realities it means to remedy. In the darkroom of liberation, the “negative” of the closet case or the isolated protogay child is developed into a photograph of an out, proud gay man. But the trace of those forgotten is visible right on the surface of this image, a ghostly sign of the reversibility of reverse discourse. (19-20)

I take from her these notions of the trace of abject history, trauma, and pain existing as a ghostly afterimage on the surface of our contemporary marginalized embodiments as queers. Read alongside Stryker, the trans-queer becomes the abject object of the abject object, the space where the quality of being abject is most profoundly concentrated and left forgotten in the “darkroom of liberation,” precisely because it cannot be liberated from this abjection—it is all abjection and little else, thus giving us Stryker’s rage performed in “My Words to Victor Frankenstein,” further voiced in “Transgender Studies.” To trace this abjection and arrive at a formulation of the Voluptuous Death that ties the Gothic monster and the monstrously gendered body together in abjection as necropolitical instruments requires this temporal looking backward-and-forward through the two literary objects explored herein. “Carmilla” has been chosen because, despite existing on the margins of Gothic scholarship as a ghost largely only referenced in relation to *Dracula*, has immense staying power in queer culture; it has been chosen because Carmilla is a figure of abjection and rage bundled in a body of gender-queerness that epitomizes the Voluptuous Death in Gothic fiction, both within the text and the responses provoked in queer scholars. Havelock Ellis has been chosen as a crystallization in the Anglophone world’s elite medical apparatus (and most importantly the British Isles, birthplace of Gothic fiction and Gothic horrors and today home to some of the most virulent transphobia—facts not unrelated in the conclusions to be had on the Voluptuous

Death) and as one of the most influential sexologists working on queer deviancy whose ideas still leave an indelible mark on trans existence today.

SECTION ONE: HAVELOCK ELLIS AND THE DECONSTRUCTIVE TRANS BODY

Havelock Ellis was one of the pre-eminent sexologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, one of the first in the Anglophone world to bring us concentrated and thorough studies of queerness, going so far as to write the first full-length publication on sexual inversion. Alongside Magnus Hirschfeld, Ellis casts a long shadow which we still live in as queer individuals. Ellis, however, did not live in the Weimar Republic and subsequently Nazi Germany, did not have Nazis hound and exile him, burn down his research institute, and devote untold resources towards erasing his work from existence. In this way, Ellis' written sexological texts on queerness are left towering alone at the fin-de-siècle and the early 20th century as both a diagnostic of cultural system logics and as the traces of the beginning of a crystallized pathology of transgender people to be used by the state medical apparatus in diagnosing, medicating, controlling, and otherwise doing away with trans persons. Ellis' groundbreaking text on homosexuality, inversion as it was called, was published in 1900 and titled *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume II: Sexual Inversion*. Twenty-eight years later, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Volume VII: Eonism and Other Supplementary Studies* was published, intending to explicate on and properly term what Ellis saw as a distinct and widely known to the public phenomenon: the transfeminine individual, or as he came to call us, "Eonists," are mediated upon via

case studies for a hundred-something pages of the over five hundred page volume. Ellis' work, examined in Hackings framework and understood as the linchpin in an intricate web designed to make up people while simultaneously looking backwards through Ellis' work to the Gothic and "Carmilla" reveals that the Eonist, as a kind of person, is a kind of crystallization of the popular Gothic monstrous topos that haunts and threatens to dissolve the stabilized gender binary built into the bedrock of the normalcy that these 19th Gothic monsters subsequently threaten.

For Ellis, the most fundamental aspects of the Eonist are an irreducible irreconciliation with the waking world spurred on by innate degeneracy; liminality between two absolute and concrete beings; over-identification with what one can never be, producing a monstrous mockery of the beloved's skin which he dubs "aesthetic inversion" (40) ; and a perverse corruption of normal gendered/sexed relationships amongst people. Against this monstrosity of the Eonist, he upholds a kind of nobility-in-tragedy for the Eonist who has a strong lock on their closet door, trapping themselves inside, and refusing to indulge in their monstrous nature to preserve what is natural; indulging in instinct is, then, monstrous and insane. On the paraphrased case study of a transmasculine individual known as Elsa B. conducted by E. Gutheil and W. Stekel, Ellis writes in his "summary of a summary" that "[We] might further observe that the neglect which was Elsa's lot in early life... furnished exactly the favoring conditions demanded by any *perverse innate germs*... *[We] are concerned with individuals who are constitutionally abnormal*" (23; emphasis my own). This notion of the "perverse innate germ" is fundamental to the topos of the Eonist; the Eonist cannot help it, for the Eonist

was born an Eonist, constitutionally and fundamentally abnormal, arrayed against normalcy. Though the connotation might have changed, the understanding of an “innate germ” of trans being to be identified and registered in some way still endures, and indeed is central to any intelligibility afforded to this subject position, from Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way” to HBO’s “Euphoria.” Without this understanding forged by Ellis and other sexologists, it is an unintelligible kind of person to be. This casts the Eonist as a kind of person that is eternally stable in their Otherness; the “perverse innate germ” is left unqualified and therefore timeless, mimicking the stability which it threatens. Stabilizing the threat into an archetype that is inherently what it is within a tautological claim (it is perverse because it is perverse) de-fangs the threat. Eonism becomes both perverse and primal, innate and inevitable, yet to be shunned and stunted by any means; its flourishing is a product of neglect and bad upbringing yet could only ever be. It is to be blamed for its own being and pitied with a tinge of awe at the “primal” and dark recesses of the human mind. This, as we will see, is also a core feature of the monster in the Gothic, and of Carmilla in particular. The Gothic monster is innately bad because it is made bad and has given into bad instincts—warped and twisted variants of good and normal instincts. In the Gothic monster and the Eonist being portrayed in this way, their ability to dissolve normalcy begins to be reified into a kind of evil twin to normalcy—evil and opposite, but diametrically so.

In the same maneuver that pin-points the Eonist’s fault in their “perverse innate germ,” they are also made creatures of an irreconcilable alterity that becomes intelligible and knowable as a kind of person through their alien nature. That is, it is stable and

intelligible by the very fact that it is unstable and unintelligible to dominant cultural systems founded in cisheteronormativity. On a particular case study of an unnamed individual in which “she” dreams of herself as a man making love to a nameless woman, Ellis states: “In these dream experiences we see *aesthetic inversion* carried to a point which is not possible in *real life* except during *insanity*.... This *aesthetic heterosexual inversion* in dream-life is, in the nature of things, a manifestation which cannot occur in *sane waking life*” (40-41, emphasis added). What Ellis makes clear here is that the logical endpoint of “aesthetic heterosexual inversion” (another term used to describe the Eonist) is insanity—an insanity so complete in its magical reversal of “the nature of things” that it is only possible in the realm of dreams. Its fulfillment relies on the instability of imagination and what, to the “real world,” is a nightmare. The Eonist, in their radical Otherness, becomes such a threat to the fundamentals of how people are understood that the fulfillment of Eonistic desires—a person recognized by Ellis as a woman making love to a woman as a man—becomes insanity and horror unrealizable in the waking world. This turning inside-out of the skin-deep aesthetic of normalcy reveals at once the instability of the normal as it simultaneously shunts this instability onto the Other—the Eonist.

Understanding that the instability shunted onto the queer is more reflective of the “real life” order of cisheterosexuality is nothing new; it is an integral understanding of the place of queerness within the Gothic. To use a foundational example in scholarship on vampire literature, Cristopher Craft writes in “‘Kiss Me with those Red Lips’: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*”:

Desire's excursive mobility is always filtered in *Dracula* through the *mask* of a *monstrous or demonic heterosexuality*. Indeed, *Dracula's* mission in England is the creation of a race of monstrous women, *feminine demons equipped with masculine devices*.... This *monstrous heterosexuality* is *apotropaic* for two reasons: first, because it *masks* and deflects the anxiety consequent to a more direct representation of same sex eroticism; and second, because in imagining a sexually aggressive woman as a *demonic penetrator*, as a usurper of a prerogative belonging "*naturally*" to the other gender, it justifies, as we shall see later, a violent expulsion of this deformed femininity. (111; emphasis added)

As Ellis hammers home again and again, the Eonist is perverted, constitutionally abnormal, raised wrong yet born wrong, etc. etc.; his is a project instantiating Craft's claims about the device of the fictional monster in *Dracula* into a kind of person to be in the mundane world. In doing so, we are given a kind of real-world bogeyman against which cisheterosexual naturality can rally and define itself against—it creates Craft's "monstrous heterosexuality" within a kind of person as a thing to be violently expelled. In the case study of R.L., a trans woman who lived as fully out as she possibly could, Ellis brings us a particularly bitter statement in her own words: "‘Manners maketh the man’—‘character and personality tells’—all were disproved by the fact that ‘by their flesh ye shall know them.’ I realized that... males must not be allowed to dress as women, the usual result being unsatisfactory from a moral point of view. Yet I felt, and still feel, that my real self has had to be subject to my physical self, my body" (83). After Ellis has wrapped up his case studies, he writes:

Psychologically speaking, it seems to me that we must regard sexo-aesthetic inversion as really a modification of normal hetero-sexuality.... It is a modification in which certain of the normal constituents of the sexual impulse have fallen into the background, while other equally normal constituents have become unduly exaggerated. (103)

In order to make the Eonist intelligible as a kind of person, it must at once be an aberration and yet a perfectly understandable person within cisheteronormativity. A freak by the very fact of their "pathological exaggeration of... the normal heterosexual

impulse” (104), the Eonist becomes crystallized in their “insanity” by remaining within the valence of the cishetero person they define in the abject shadow they casts. To break this tether and place them outside of this relation would be to admit to the possibility of being a person outside of this all-consuming relation. Thus, they become an evil twin of sorts to cisheterosexual subjectivity, a shadow by which the full body can be defined and known. It should be of little surprise then that this purpose Ellis constructs in his pathologizing mirrors Susan Stryker’s assertion that trans studies is the “evil twin” to queer theory; the kind of person or topos that *might* be destabilizing is written and confined within terms that ultimately bolster what it might otherwise destroy. For Ellis, and for 19th, 20th, and 21st century medical apparatuses, the Eonist/transsexual/transgender individual must be abject and defeated from their inception, pitied at best and labelled insane at worst—these two affective responses lie along the same axis and slide into one another as they both rely on a fundamental registering of *wrongness* in the body, itself built on an axiomatic presumed *rightness*. Thus R.L. tells us, through Ellis’ delivering of her narrative, that “[My doctor] said he saw no reason why I should not dress now and again as a relief to what becomes an overpowering desire, but if I let it get hold of me to an undue extent it became pathological” (86). The realization of the Eonist as a person shores up cisheteronormative assumptions insofar as the Eonist remains an impossibility in the total realization of its being—it must be violently expelled to become a kind of abject and miserable type of person to be that stabilizes the normal, in much the same way the monster, in its queer

being, must remain an impossibility and be violently expelled via death to ensure its unviability as a way of being to shore up the normalcy it threatens to dissolve.

That Havelock Ellis conceptualizes the Eonist as being an aesthetic inversion is a key fact to the connection between the Eonist as a person and the Gothic monster as literary device. Ellis writes:

The subject of the anomaly is not merely experiencing an inversion of general tastes in the sexual sphere; he has really attained to a specifically aesthetic emotional attitude in that sphere. In his admiration of the beloved he is not content to confine himself to the normal element of *Einfühlung*; he adopts the whole aesthetic attitude by experiencing also the impulse of imitation. He achieves a completely emotional identification which is sexually abnormal but aesthetically correct. (...) The Eonist thus becomes simply a person in whom a normal and even quite ordinary and inevitable process of thought is carried to an undue and abnormal length. He has put too much of 'me' into the 'you' that attracts him. (107-108)

That perverse and innate germ of the Eonist, a distortion of normalcy, finds expression through an aesthetic inversion, a marking on the skin of Otherness. This marking on the skin and the aesthetic expression of the Eonist becomes a metric by which their insanity, how far gone they are to their perversion, and how weak their will is to resist this wrong and pale simulacrum of normalcy. By framing this deviancy as an “aesthetic inversion,” it becomes writ large across the skin when indulged in a way many other forms of deviancy do not become readily legible upon the outward body aesthetic of the deviant. This makes Eonism in its own right visually and integrally distinct from inversion—unqualified and left to the internal depths of the psyche, it is largely undetectable in the outward appearance. Though bio-essentialist concepts of gender pin the locus for gender differences to the internal world, they, too, carry with them the notion of sharply distinct aesthetics for the two genders of the binary: men are distinctly visually men, women are

distinctly visually women. To indulge as an Eonist is to invert the skin, flip it inside-out to its opposite, and mimic the object of desire so intensely as to assume its form; it is a perversion we wear on the skin and of the skin.

On the topic of skin, I would like to turn for a moment to one of the most influential queer works on the Gothic focused on skin and the aesthetic: *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. In this book, Jack Halberstam makes two key claims about the Gothic early on that I would like to bring forth in light of the exploration of Havelock Ellis' work so far. These claims are:

The immediate visibility of a Buffalo Bill [from *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)], the way in which he makes the surface itself monstrous transforms the cavernous monstrosity of Jekyll/Hyde, Dorian Gray, or Dracula into a beast who is all body and no soul. (1)

Gothic fiction is a technology of subjectivity, one which produces the deviant subjectivities opposite which the normal, the healthy, and the pure can be known. (2)

It bears noting that Halberstam's example on page one, the case study laid out to stake out a difference between the Gothic horror of the 19th century and the Gothic horror of the 20th century, is perhaps one of the most infamous transmisogynistic figures in the present day cultural imagination. Buffalo Bill, in stealing women's skin to wear for himself, becomes the paradigm of monsters who "makes the surface itself monstrous," and transforms the "cavernous monstrosity" of his queer Victorian predecessors into "all body and no soul." As Halberstam goes on to describe on the next page, we come to an understanding of monstrosity and the technology of the Gothic that begins to bear a resemblance to the project of the 19th century sexologist—particularly for this work, Havelock Ellis. As discussed, Ellis' project is one that produces the pale shadow of "the normal, the healthy, and the pure," and without the Eonist as an extreme example of

normalcy warped too far, the margins of the normal were left fuzzy and unknown without the existence of the Eonist. With the Eonist created as a kind of person, it can then easily be deduced just where the line can be drawn between normal heterosexuality and heterosexuality taken so far it becomes a monstrous being (to put Eonism within the parameters of heterosexuality that Ellis gives to us). Just as the Eonist is an aesthetic invert, who comes to metaphorically wear the skin and literally wear the clothes of the beloved object, they too become a monster that is all body and whose visible marker of sin lies on the aesthetic surface. To make the linkage between Ellis and the Gothic horror of the 19th century, I would like to suggest that Halberstam errs in sectioning off the monsters of the 19th century from participating in the spectacle of the grotesque surface. Frankenstein's monster is made a gentle soul that becomes monstrous through the reception of its own monstrous and mangled flesh; Dracula is marked out by curiously hairy palms, pointed teeth, pale skin—so many of the telltale classic markers of the literary vampire stem from him—the physiognomy of the vampire; Dorian Gray transposes, but is still linked to, a grotesquery of flesh held by the painting in his attic that bears all of his sins and deviancies; Jekyll and Hyde physically appear distinct; and so on and so forth. This horrifying physiognomic marking-out of the monster is their queerness worn in the realm of gender presentation—on the aesthetic surface of the skin—with Buffalo Bill as the extreme and logical endpoint of this representation of monstrosity that always corrupts and marks the exterior skin. And just as these monsters are irrevocably and instantly recognizable as the Other and as monstrous, so too is the Eonist—unless they manage to keep in the closet. As Ellis' case study R.L. noted earlier, “all were

disproved by the fact that ‘by their flesh ye shall know them.’ I realized that... males must not be allowed to dress as women, the usual result being unsatisfactory from a moral point of view” (Ellis 83). By their flesh these monsters are known, and by their flesh are they made into monsters—the flesh of the vampire craves blood, a visceral and bodily perversion of lust and desire, to note the bodily factor of a Victorian monster pertinent to this study. As R.L. goes on to say about her doctor advising her on relieving her desires: “if I let it get hold of me to an undue extent it become pathological” (Ellis 86). In making the monster and the Eonist monsters of aesthetic inversion—a corruption worn on the flesh and born of instincts perverted by a “perverse innate germ,” they are both damned in their making as inherently visible monsters and made to sin and indulge in their perverse desires. The Eonist, of course, always becomes pathological—it is why they are brought to the office of the sexologist or psychiatrist, and it is why even today the trans psyche must be scrutinized for soundness before indulged in their wishes. The Eonist always indulges too much at one point or another and becomes monstrous, attempting something marked out as insane and wrong—wearing the flesh of the beloved object. The Gothic monster of the 19th century, too, is always pathological in following their desires. Both the Eonist and the monster are then, in the very crucible of their creation, mandated to die a death—whether it be the literal death of the body that signifies their monstrosity, or the death of the closet and isolation. As they are made up as kinds of people, both mundane and fantastic, they are conceptualized as necropolitical tools to stabilize what they seek to destroy—metaphorically in the case of the Eonist and quite literally in the monster who kills and corrupts.

SECTION TWO: CARMILLA AND THE VOLUPTUOUS DEATH OF THE TRANS BODY

It is of little controversy to claim that Le Fanu's "Carmilla" is one of the first proper Gothic tales of vampirism, following in the footsteps of Polidori's "The Vampyre" and directly paving the way for the monumental work that eclipses both, *Dracula*. Scholarship directly written on "Carmilla" is scant, with the novella usually being mentioned as a building block for *Dracula*. Of the scholarship directly written on "Carmilla," the focus is placed primarily on reading through the intensely homoerotic relationship between Carmilla and the protagonist, Laura, in the altogether cisnormative way that queer Gothic readings tend to do. Generally, it's accepted that *Dracula* was written with knowledge of "Carmilla" in mind and as a kind of response and rebuttal (Signorotti 607). In this way, "Carmilla" is the evil twin and pale shadow by which such an iconic and genre-defining giant like *Dracula* can be known and made articulate. As the mostly forgotten evil twin of *Dracula* that sensuously and philosophically lingers over the trans-gendered, homoerotic, and sexually violent monstrous body, there is hardly much else that could function as such a paradigmatic monstrous body while ready through a queer-trans framework. Carmilla, the eponymous vampire of the novella, embodies the necropolitical object that threatens to de-stabilize, yet is ultimately used to reinforce, dominant bio-essentialist notions of gender and sex that become crystallized in the flesh of real bodies in the Eonist some years later. That is, Carmilla in her vampiric embodiment, is a prototypical Eonist before it is invented as a kind of person to be in the mainstream—she is a bundle of all of its features, characteristics, and narratives wrapped

up in a literary device. This prototypical Eonistic being is not incidental to her character and the novella but rather core to its functioning as a Gothic object. I would like to read how this manifests in several areas of the novella: how Carmilla is hemmed in, framed, and made knowable both diegetically to the characters and non-diegetically to us, the audience, through the expertise and professional knowledge of medical men; Carmilla's own tortuously circuitous logic and which defy a noble entrapment in the closet; and Laura's own reading of her lover's body and habits that undergird the bio-essentialist gender binary while constructing Carmilla as trans. I then would like to discuss what I see as the *raison d'être* of making up monstrously gendered bodies—both the more mundane and real Eonist's body and the more fantastical and literary Gothic monster's body—that I term the Voluptuous Death, taken from Ellis' work, in light of the final erotic scene of "Carmilla" to begin to understand the necropolitical telos of this concept and the kinds of people created in service of it.

In the final and second version of "Carmilla" published shortly before Le Fanu's death, contained in the collection titled *In a Glass Darkly*, we are given a framing narrative of Doctor Hesselius and his investigations into occultic and biologically impossible occurrences; in either version of "Carmilla," the narrative ends with Laura, in the wake of Carmilla's death, rattling off scientific facts that define the existence of the vampire from heavy and authoritative tomes on vampiric physiology. The medical-investigative framing narrative, or else the presence of a doctor of some sort within the narrative proper, is hardly unique to "Carmilla" and could more accurately be described as a stock Gothic narrative device. Doctors and scientific men of professional expertise

define, discover, locate, and kill monsters within the genre. “Carmilla” begins with the words of an investigative medical man preoccupied with duality, Carmilla’s existence is discovered by a medical man within the narrative itself, and Carmilla’s existence is ultimately explained, reified, and buried post mortem by medical experts; from beginning to end, the figure of the petit bourgeois professional entrusted to explain away and treat the bizarre (here the outlandishly and biologically impossible bizarre) hounds, entraps, and kills Carmilla’s ability to be any kind of person except one known through her (second) death.

Dr. Hesselius begins the novella’s, and by extension the reader’s, preoccupation with duality and liminality in the very brief prologue preceding Laura’s narration of the events that befell her when the vampire Carmilla came into her life. As Laura’s manuscript, in possession of Dr. Hesselius, is published after his death, precious little of his own words are present. According to the individual handling Hesselius’ affairs, who writes the short prologue to Laura’s story, Dr. Hesselius had much to say on the subject, though it was dense and professionally intricate, unsuitable for the “laity” to which his papers are being published (1-2). The readership already is being constructed as a group of common lay persons peering into the world of professional medical knowledge, gleaning both insight and entertainment from its findings. The interlocutor spares us Dr. Hesselius’ writings on the incident, for we the readers, the laity, could not understand it. The interlocutor does, however, quote Dr. Hesselius describing Laura’s story as “involving, not improbably, some of the profoundest arcana of our dual existence, and its intermediates” (2). What is important to note here is that out of all of Dr. Hesselius’

profound and in-depth writing on the story of Laura and Carmilla, it is a great pre-occupation with the liminalities of binary systems that categorize human conditions which is impressed upon the laity readership who is about to embark on reading Laura's manuscript held by a man of science. Life and death, male and female; these are taken as essential and unbreakable axioms of the human condition upon which all human activity revolves. Homosexual and heterosexual, too, become implicated in this binary essentialism, as the 19th century gives us the advent of what Ellis has termed the "perverse innate germ" and subsequently inversion, both sexual and aesthetic. The vampire lies between life and death ("Un-death" as Van Helsing calls it in *Dracula*), and Carmilla comes to lie between male and female in the way she is constructed, both in her own actions and in the way she is understood and constructed by others, namely Laura. The parallel here to the duality of the Eonist, and the incoherent paradox which lies at the core of the Eonist and places them in a liminal gendered space, is already implicated in the first words of the novella's framing narrative. Of course, Dr. Hesselius never tells what exactly the "profoundest arcana of our dual existence" exactly is. As the exact nature of the duality is left open, "dual existence" then attaches itself to the dualities sprinkled throughout the narrative: life and death, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual, the diseased body and the healthy body. All of these come to be entangled in the way monstrosity reveals itself and plays out upon the skin of the vampire—Carmilla is all of these and monstrosity quite literally becomes her flesh. Transgender being, then, as Carmilla portrays it, becomes a kind of ur-text in which all of these dualities reside.

As the narrative is told entirely from Laura’s point of view, Carmilla’s existence as a lacunae between binary poles is solidified for the reader through Laura’s feelings towards Carmilla, which are expressed primarily through the logic of paradox and echo not only Ellis’ description of the Eonist, but the feelings towards transgender bodies which continue to persist today. Shortly after the lonely Laura—living in a secluded schloss with her aging father and servants for company—meets Carmilla in a carriage accident outside of Laura’s schloss, the two quickly become enamored with one another and begin their affair. As Carmilla has been sworn to utmost secrecy by her mother on matters pertaining to her family and her affairs, she will tell Laura nothing about her past and who she “really” is; this agitates Laura greatly who, wild with curiosity, presses Carmilla upon the subject. In one particular episode of this not-quite quarrel between the two, Carmilla responds:

Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey *the irresistible law of my strength and weakness*; if your dear heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours. In the *rapture of my enormous humiliation* I live in your warm life, and you shall die—die, sweetly die—into mine. I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love; so, for a while, seek to know no more of me and mine, but *trust me* with all your loving spirit. (19; emphasis added)

In giving Laura a non-answer, Carmilla tells Laura exactly what she is; a vampire. In the fashion of circuitous logic that never reaches any solid statements of fact (“I am X”), Carmilla nevertheless encapsulates all that she is to Laura. What is curious here is that Carmilla echoes the sentiment of the perverse innate germ, knows it to reside in herself, and knows she cannot be anything but; this is “irresistible law” of her “strength and weakness.” Yet even knowing this fact, and knowing that she is a perverse and abnormal

body in the lacunae between man and woman, life and death, the fact of her existence as a freak is an “enormous humiliation,” one which she embraces and finds rapturous pleasure within. Carmilla eschews the noble strength Ellis finds in the closet of the Eonist that resists their impulses and embraces her freakish nature and stakes a right to live as such; this is the impetus for her monstrosity, which she otherwise could have fought and subsequently died of to preserve a sense of morality. Carmilla, bound already by names and descriptions and lineage and physiognomy (as we come to learn, Carmilla is an anagram of her original name, Mircalla, and she is always bound to her original name thusly) refuses or perhaps cannot tell Laura of her and hers, cannot name and taxonomize herself, but rather beseeches Laura to trust her and love her wordlessly and without articulation of conditions. It is Carmilla who first creates herself as a person knowable-by-unknowability, a crystallized lacuna, because these are the only terms on which she can dare to ask for companionship and love: ask no questions of who I have been or what I have been or may be, only love the body you see before you because I cannot be known as you wish to know me, or else you may not accept me. Any other rhetorical maneuver outside of the circuitous and the paradoxical leads to an expediting of the Carmilla’s fate: death and isolation.

While it is Carmilla that puts forth these terms laid out for her right to exist, perhaps as the only way she might safely exist in the company of others, it is Laura as our narrator who ultimately affirms and concretizes these conditions of Carmilla’s existence with all the weight lended her as our own point of view into this narrative. Directly after Carmilla’s words above, Laura tells us that:

In these mysterious moods I did not like her. I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. I had *no distinct thoughts* about her while such scenes lasted, but I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence. *This I know is paradox*, but I can make no other attempt to explain the feeling. (20; emphasis added)

Carmilla's ability to be an intelligible kind of person, both in its reception by another subject and in its discursive production, is demarcated by paradox and the inarticulable cracks within dualistic concepts. Laura cannot express these paradoxes with "distinct thoughts," yet is nevertheless conscious of their existence within and without Carmilla; discursion becomes secondary to intimate consciousness of a particular kind of embodiment and affect, and this unknowability can only be made knowable through the logic of paradox—it cannot be directly named, only defined by what it cannot logically be. So it is with the Eonist, who is a perverse innate germ yet crafted by environmental factors, an object of pity and derision and one whose fulfillment in the waking world is insanity—a "rapture of enormous humiliation" of the bio-essentialized mandates of the binary genders—Carmilla and the Eonist are only known to themselves and to others as unknowable paradox and dogged perversion that cannot exist yet lives and breathes and walks among the living. As an object crafted by the love, desire, fear, revulsion, and abhorrence bordering on hatred, whose destiny it is to become a receptacle for these affects, there is hardly a stronger thread that binds Carmilla's subjectivity to that of the Eonist as a kind of person to be. By the very admission of Carmilla and Laura her lover, Carmilla's being is ultimately failed by discursion and words; it is a paradox of affects and cultural systems assumed to function on exclusionary diametric poles. Despite this, she is ultimately assigned a place as the vampire—replete with laws, rules of being, and

general characteristics that easily demarcate the vampire, constructing a closet she should be in yet operates outside of. In this very construction, the stage is set for the behavior of Carmilla to be pathologized—and pathology requires correction. So, too, is the Eonist constructed along these very same circuits of power and discursion within Hacking's framework.

As Laura contributes to the legitimization of Carmilla's contradictory existence outside of binaries and outside of the grasp of language, she turns to contemplate Carmilla's gendered embodiment. Living within the cultural systems she does, she inevitably reproduces notions that push back against and delegitimize the space Carmilla has created for her right to existence. Laura, mulling over the strange exchanges with Carmilla like the one outlined above, tells us:

Respecting these very extraordinary manifestations I strove in vain to form any satisfactory theory—I could not refer them to affectation or trick. It was unmistakably the momentary breaking out of suppressed instinct and emotion. Was she, notwithstanding her mother's volunteered denial, subject to brief visitations of insanity; or was there here a disguise and a romance? I had read in old storybooks of such things. What if a boyish lover had found his way into the house, and sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade, with the assistance of a clever old adventuress. But there were many things against this hypothesis, highly interesting as it was to my vanity. I could boast of no little attentions such as masculine gallantry delights to offer. Between these passionate moments there were long intervals of commonplace, of gaiety, of brooding melancholy, during which, except that I detected her eyes so full of melancholy fire, following me, at times I might have been as nothing to her. Except in these brief periods of mysterious excitement her ways were girlish; and there was always a languor about her, *quite incompatible with a masculine system in a state of health.* (20-21; emphasis added)

This sizeable passage, entirely composed of internal dialogue through which Laura is attempting to understand herself, her attraction to Carmilla, and Carmilla's behavior and

embodiment, is unanimously written off by scholars. As Ardel Haefele-Thomas writes in *Queers Others in Victorian Gothic*, “Le Fanu puts an almost ridiculous question into Laura’s head.... Is Laura truly so naïve as to think that because her encounter is overtly sexual, her pursuer must be male? Laura’s musing... epitomizes the way that same-sex desire often gets mapped back onto the heterosexual paradigm” (105). Why must her question be naïve and not given serious consideration? To do so would destabilize the two characters as cis lesbians and place Carmilla’s gender and desires in the murk with her monstrosity. Curiously, the way Haefele-Thomas describes LeFanu’s maneuver as roping lesbianism back into the paradigm of the heterosexual *is* the way that transgender embodiment and desire was initially constructed. Simply put, the Eonist is merely a man who is *too* in love with women and wishes to emulate them in his monstrously rampant heterosexuality. Recall that Havelock Ellis described Eonism as “a modification of normal hetero-sexuality” and that the Eonist is simply a man who sympathizes with the object of his desires so much that he wishes to become her—here echoed fifty-six years before he wrote that in the conception of Carmilla as a male lover donning the skin of womanhood to pursue her beloved—a literary trope Laura is already familiar with as a reader. By the same maneuver in which Haefele-Thomas levies the charge of heteronormalizing lesbian sexuality at the text, the very *raison d’être* that 19th century sexologists proscribed to the Eonist are reconstructed.

Laura’s lengthy reflection upon Carmilla’s gendered body should not be dismissed out of hand as naivety to stabilize a focus on sexuality within the novella. Rather it should be viewed as a powerful moment in which genre literature and notions of

health and the proper state of human bodies collide in Hacking's framework to create a kind of person Laura can understand from a milieu of cultural systems. From the beginning, insanity and men masquerading in women's clothing are linked both by their physical proximity in the paragraph and the semi-colon linking them. Laura has read about transgender characters; even in the passing fanciful flight of cross-dressing for a particular agenda, Laura has been exposed to a popular conception of what a transgender embodiment might be—a form of masculine heterosexuality that is so enamored with a woman he would dress as one to be closer to the beloved. Though Laura quickly dismisses this notion as foolish (the waking realization of Eonist embodiment is insanity, after all), she nevertheless reinscribes the suspicion of Carmilla's monstrously-gendered body within the same paragraph. Consider Ellis' assertion that the Eonist is dogged by weak sexual impulses and physical languor; now consider Carmilla's rare fits of passion amidst a sea of brooding melancholia and languor with only her eyes to give away the promised return of those fits of masculine passion—"Except in these brief periods of mysterious excitement her ways were girlish," can only be read to mean that her fits of passion are a masculine passion, the weakened "primary" impulse occasionally showing itself; this is the "instinct" showing through that binds Carmilla's behavior and body to the valence of the bio-essentialized gender binary. Carmilla is quite girlish, except for all the times she is not, which is so often as to have an entire chapter devoted in a novella pressed for space to describing these exceptions. Laura's conclusion is not that Carmilla *cannot* have a masculine system, but rather that Carmilla *cannot* have a healthy masculine system. She suggests to us that Carmilla is an unhealthy masculine system—

no longer can she possibly be a boy who has put on a dress to woo Laura, as Laura suggests here that there is a sickness deeper than a passing transgression of the gender binary.

Carmilla's is ultimately a masculine system, but one that is suggested to be sick or unhealthy in some way. This is Ellis' "perverse innate germ" and a masculine system made sick with too much heterosexuality and sympathizing with the object of affection. This is a masculine system afflicted with languor and physical feebleness through which the more "virile" and "primary" part of heterosexual functioning, as Ellis calls it, shows itself from time to time, but is ultimately sublimated to a kind of doting, sensual, physical affection and companionship. I would like to suggest here that this overtly feminized sympathetic connection is, ultimately, the source of terror within Carmilla. If the Voluptuous Death is the logical end-point for the existence of the Eonist and the monstrous body, a broken and warped sympathy leads the monster to wish to share the Voluptuous Death with those who would otherwise not experience it—it is all the monster has to give. In the construction of the Eonist as a person, it is made clear that the "perverse innate germ" cannot be spread. Yet, several of Ellis' patients reference a novel titled *The Mayfair Mystery: 2835 Mayfair* in their Eonistic awakening, and one references being greatly tempted to go live with a full-time trans woman in London, something the patient only wishes she could do and sees her full possibility in this other woman; the fact that this living arrangement fails shatters her entire conception of herself and rearranges what is possible in the world (Ellis 55). There seems a lingering question and fear, in light of this, that pervades Ellis' text: where does inward willpower and

perversion end, and where does external corruption begin? Or are they even so distinct as to be made wholly separable? Here we see this fear of external corruption made fantastically manifest in the fear of the vampire: the you can be made just as corrupt and monstrous as the I, and the internal workings of the you will gladly accept this germ and let it take root if given the opportunity; the only thing that will stop the Voluptuous Death from visiting the you is to visit the Voluptuous Death upon the I first, halting the chance of corruption. When the end-point of the monstrously gendered body has already been discursively fabricated by structures of power, that end-point is all monstrously gendered bodies can ever meet with; it is a self-fulfilling prophecy of a sorts. When the Eonist and the monster are condemned before they are made to the Voluptuous Death, the Voluptuous Death is all they have and it is all the monster can offer to those it bears a simulacrum of love for. The Voluptuous Death is the heart of the control mechanism for both the monster and the Eonist while serving as the source of the transgender panic in Gothic horror; the Eonist has gained the means to spread its perverse innate germ and the hellish fate that awaits it, symbolizing in the generic conventions of Gothic horror its ability as a topos to dissolve gender normalcy if it is not contained.

What is the Voluptuous Death? After a long preamble on work already done by other sexologists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts on the phenomenon of the Eonist, Ellis introduces us to Eonists and his conception of them with the following anecdote:

Some years ago a man was found drowned off the Cornish coast dressed in women's clothes and with his hands fastened together. Among his effects at the hotel he was staying at were numerous refinements of the feminine toilette and feminine articles of dress. He was a lawyer, practicing as a solicitor near London, and regarded by his acquaintances (of whom one is known to me) as an ordinary

and normal man of quiet habits. There was no suggestion that his death was due to violence. It was evident that he had sought what was from the point of view of the Eonist (apparently with masochistic tendencies) the most voluptuous death possible. (28-29)

The most enduring work on transgender subjectivity until Ray Blanchard's own work begins with the grotesque spectacle of death and the humiliation of dying in the costume of the wrong gender. Within Ellis' anecdote, there is the quiet horror that something so perverse could happen to one so ordinary and petit bourgeois. That this would happen to somebody so "ordinary," "normal," and "quiet" is treated with a surrealness bordering on a bad dream culminating in the flourishing and pretty phrase "the most voluptuous death possible"; there seems to be no other way to describe this death than with drama and pizzazz, with a certain kind of relish and eroticism in its morbidity. Ellis implicitly suggests that there is something like *the* Eonist vantage point from which there is *the* Voluptuous Death. To have such requires axioms, of which Ellis seems to be suggesting three here: the Eonist and the Voluptuous Death are inherently masochistic to a degree¹; the Voluptuous Death is a natural end sought out in fits of masochism by the Eonist (the woman, supposedly, showed no signs of violence and Ellis believes she sought it of her own accord); finally, the Voluptuous Death is a rebellious act which claims, in a terrifying and titillating spectacle of the surface of aesthetics and flesh for the outside observer, a permanent fixture in the memory of death for the perversity of the monstrously gendered body. Even when normalcy returns and the body is buried, the stain of the memory of

¹ Ellis mentions Eonism in conjunction with masochism many times over leading up to this point (pages 8, 15, 21) and further recounts another masochistic Voluptuous Death of an Eonist on the same page as the one recounted above. Eonism is indelibly linked to death and masochism from the beginning of his account as if there is a pleasure to be found in dying an ideal Eonistic death, or that it is a function built into Eonism.

such a profane death remains, forever marking out the Eonist as an Eonist or the monster as a monster within the memories of those remaining, particularly those personally affected by the dead in question. The death is voluptuous for both the dead and the onlooker; the dead dies at the zenith of their monstrosity—in Ellis’ anecdote, the last memory of the woman is *as* a woman—and the onlooker has the spectacle of the monstrous, if only for the briefest glimpse, being recognized and upending the natural order before having the pleasure of watching the natural order reassert itself, often simultaneously to its momentary upending (one reads of such a death in a newspaper or, today, a website, and one has the pleasure of knowing before the narrative begins that normalcy has been restored by the very act of the rupture). Ellis himself comments upon the overwhelming popularity of this “psychic peculiarity” within the newspapers, further adding that it is perhaps the most well-known “sexual anomaly” (29). As Ellis maneuvers to liken the Voluptuous Death to a form of narcissism, this central mechanism for solidifying the self in damnation and grotesque spectacle is made salient (29). Just as these aberrant bodies rupture normalcy and bring about a momentary waking-world insanity, they seal their fate in doing so and die the Voluptuous Death, rendering their psychic turmoil and agony as merely spectacle and reification of the natural order of things, ensuring the undergirding and support of the bio-essentialist gender binary and its place in promoting the wellbeing of bourgeois society. To be an Eonist is to meet the Voluptuous death, and to be a monster is to meet the Voluptuous Death; there is no other place for these two subjectivities as they are constructed from their very beginnings

(literally in our assumptions as readers sitting down to partake in the Gothic genre and in Ellis' beginnings to his definitions of the Eonist) to die.

Carmilla must fulfill her duty in the mechanisms of Gothic technology and meet a Voluptuous Death. The second half of the novella contains a long and detailed description of the slow and masochistically embraced death of Laura at the hands of Carmilla, who can only show her love by spreading her perversity and turning Laura into a monster much like herself. Laura does not mind; welcomes it, in fact. As we travel through rolling, languid descriptions of Laura's waning strength and increasing love for Carmilla, we come to the ultimate erotic scene of the novel: Laura's father conceals himself away in Laura's bedroom at the behest of a doctor to voyeuristically spy on Carmilla's nocturnal visits to his daughter. He recounts:

I concealed myself in the dark dressing room, that opened upon the poor patient's room, in which a candle was burning, and watched there till she was fast asleep. I stood at the door, peeping through the small crevice, my sword laid on the table beside me, as my directions prescribed, until, a little after one, I saw a large black object, very ill-defined, crawl, as it seemed to me, over the foot of the bed, and swiftly spread itself up to the poor girl's throat, where it swelled, in a moment, into a great palpitating mass. For a few moments, I had stood petrified. I now sprang forward, with my sword in my hand. The black creature suddenly contracted towards the foot of the bed, glided over it, and, standing on the floor about a yard below the foot of the bed, with a glare of skulking ferocity and horror fixed on me, I saw Millarca.² (62-63)

Is this not the voyeur of the public, the readership of newspapers and the Gothic, intervening on the private affairs of the aberrant? He watches and waits, allows Carmilla to take Laura, and only then does he act: he is not there to stop the act, but rather to let it

² In perhaps the scene which so aggressively genders Carmilla as a male predator, she is simultaneously referred to by her old name; in the eyes of Laura's father, the monster's "true name," in light of which "Carmilla" is a flimsy, duplicitous excuse to ravage his daughter.

happen so that he might react accordingly in outrage and to visit righteous death upon the monster. As Carmilla's being becomes uncloaked in the murk of night, so her body becomes monstrous, masculine, and almost comically phallic. Laura's father cannot make out what is on the bed, but as soon as Carmilla comes into contact with Laura's body, she becomes bestial and the very image of a phallus: she swells, she palpitates, she enlarges into a great mass, and she penetrates Laura's breast; she becomes Halberstam's monster of skin that is "all body, no soul." This is the one scene we are given in which Carmilla's nightly visits are depicted by somebody other than Laura—by an outsider completely uninvolved in their affair and without the same sympathetic stance towards Carmilla. Where for Laura the encounters are strangely, terrifyingly, enjoyable and amorphous, for the outside spectator he sees Carmilla for what she truly is as she indulges in instinct: a phallic, masculine creature masquerading as a demure and petite woman. Here is the feminine demon made of masculine devices. Her weaker, albeit more primal and primary instinct, must come to the forefront inevitably, and Laura's father bears witness to this scene. By virtue of not interrupting it, we the readers alongside Laura's father are able to take part in the titillating and guttural grotesquery of a profanely gendered body and its sexuality. We are invited to contemplate, to revel in, if only for a moment, the corruption and pleasure such a godforsaken body might bring upon such a pure model of womanhood like Laura. It is, after all, by the grace of Laura's father standing petrified that we are able to witness the scene at all; fear and its paralysis serve as a vehicle for the eroticism of perversely gendered bodies for the reader. With the denouement of the transgender body of Carmilla comes the price of admission for such a spectacle: death at

the hands of spectators. By her very existence, and by following what Laura has admitted are her innate and inborn instincts, Carmilla has enacted the beginnings of her own Voluptuous Death by her final erotic encounter with Laura that is cut short when the spectator (the reader) has had too much sensuality and sin.

Carmilla's death follows shortly thereafter, in rather explicit detail by Laura's account. To step aside and pull from that colossus that is *Dracula* scholarship for a moment, I would like to discuss the death of another vampire and scholarship on her death to frame Carmilla's own and to buttress the concept of the Voluptuous Death. Lucy Westenra is a dear friend of the protagonist Mina Harker and the first to die through the conflict with Dracula. She is also the only character we see actively corrupted into a vampire. The scene in which she is staked and decapitated by a group of men and the passage's lurid, violent, near-erotic language is well-documented in scholarship (Senf, 167). Within this context, I would like to employ another scholar's attention to those moments between the voyeur's gratification in the monstrous body's eroticism and the voyeur's subsequent wrath brought down upon the aberrant. Eric Kwan-Wai Yu argues in "Productive Fear: Labor, Sexuality, and Mimicry in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" that "Fear, often aroused by the perception of sexual anarchy, demonic uncleanness, or disfiguring excess, is *productive* rather than paralyzing. It arouses in the bourgeois imperial subject a quasi-religious sense of 'calling,' an imperative to work assiduously together to exterminate the demonic Other" (149-150). This is precisely the function of Laura's father's voyeurism; to both at once gratify desires for "sexual anarchy" and "demonic uncleanness" and to muster the "quasi-religious sense of 'calling'" that swiftly leads to

the death of monsters at the end of Gothic narratives. The monster and the Eonist as subjects exist to allow the reader through the vehicle of protagonists to experience that same mix of revulsion and pleasure that Laura feels in Carmilla's presence throughout the novella. Unlike Laura, this co-mingling of two strong affective responses is to spur one to productive excision of the aberrance to reassert normalcy—Laura is wrong to not act on her fear and revulsion. Her father saves her with the correct response.

Within her own Voluptuous Death, Carmilla is forever stained as a phallic and masculine creature. Laura's father, spurred by what he has witnessed, gathers other upstanding men (including a retired military general and "two medical men") to quickly track down and eliminate the monster. Laura recounts this without aplomb; within a page, Carmilla is slaughtered, dying as suddenly as she entered into Laura's life (67). Haefele-Thomas, in *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic*, writes "The sight of Carmilla frightens the 'proper' gentlemen, and their fear instigates violence as they proceed to decapitate her and then burn her body. If we read Carmilla's mouth as representative of a distorted and conflated male and female genitalia, then her decapitation is a *double castration*" (106; emphasis added). It would be an effacement of the full weight of Carmilla's incongruence with the gender binary to not fully consider the implication of a woman vampire's beheading as a kind of castration, a double one at that which recalls the liminalities and in-betweenness that Dr. Hessalius is pre-occupied with; nor should we discount the tight linkage here between the fear, the paralysis, and the enactment of the Voluptuous Death upon a gender aberrant body. As we saw, it is Carmilla's enactment of eroticism through the oral and her fangs that transforms her into a monstrous phallic body. It is the head,

and by extension the mouth located upon it, that is the target in the killing of Carmilla.

The removal of her head is vital as prescribed by “ancient practice” (LeFanu 67). Laura writes in her recounting:

The body [of Carmilla], therefore, in accordance with the ancient practice, was raised, and a sharp stake driven through the heart of the vampire, who uttered a piercing shriek at the moment, 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. The body and head was next placed on a pile of wood, and reduced to ashes, which were thrown upon the river and borne away, and that territory has never since been plagued by the visits of a vampire. (67)

What we see in Laura’s recounting of “ancient practice” here is ritualistic death for one deemed irredeemable and unfit for proper society. Vampires must always die the same way much like Eonists must die the same way in kind, and the very ritual that defines their deaths functions on a twofold purpose: its enactment is the closing of a momentarily-allowed rupture with normalcy that acts as a shunt for anxieties and desires not allowed within the hegemonic laws and mores that structure daily living, and thus the death warrant is signed by their momentary allowance of monstrosity pre-figured in the very act of naming them; the manner of death for the condemned demarcates, emphasizes, and distorts the manner of their monstrosity. The head must be severed so the vampire’s “masculine devices” are rendered inert and nonthreatening; the heart must be staked to cease its stubborn beating after death; the body burned to ash because the vampire, especially in Carmilla’s case, is too corporeal of a monstrosity, too sensual and seducing with her beauty and guile. Likewise, the ritualistic mandates of the Voluptuous Death for the Eonist are similar: the Eonist must die in a way that makes them as an Eonist to their core; drowned in a river wearing a dress and wig with rented hotel room

filled with the damning evidence of Eonism; or, as Ellis notes in his footnotes, corseted and dead in the throes of self-pleasure (29); recorded as shocking revelation against the supposed normalcy of the Eonist's life and, much like the death of Gothic monsters, publicized for the grotesque spectacle of it all to the public as both entertainment and instruction. The ways in which these two, the Eonist and the monster, die always demarcate them as such—their memory in death cannot be redeemed from their aberrance because the circumstances of the death rely upon the aberrance. The Voluptuous Death fits the crime.

CONCLUSION: LIVING TO DIE

I had found out how completely I was able to live as a woman, how I enjoyed it, in an aesthetic sense, and how thoroughly I could submerge and even practically forget my physical sex in my imagination that I was a woman or, as I began to regard it, letting my real self live, so that instead of the conflict of two natures there was now peace and enjoyment. The next time I had another three months' 'life,' and in many ways this was the best of my experiences.

I am a bundle of contradictions, a sort of Miss Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

She understood when she said: 'What a tragedy your life is! How you must suffer! And I do.

— R.L., a case study by Havelock Ellis.

When a reader sits down to read 19th century Gothic fiction, they know that the monster will die. This fate is ordained from the first page. When Havelock Ellis begins his own conceptualization of what we call transgender people in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, he knows of no other place to start than the spectacle of transgender death broadcast in newspapers. From the very first, Ellis' Eonist is ordained for death, molded in death, and understandable only through this relationship to death. So too is Carmilla, and Gothic monstrosity in general. With the Gothic predating the formalization

the transgender person as a kind of person to be, the narratives that shape the pre-rendered cultural understanding of transgender identity are rooted in this Gothic spectacle of death that reproduces desire and revulsion upon the transgender body; we are only understood, regardless of whether it is with malignity or benignity, through the lenses of death, deformity, spectacle, and monstrosity that first appeared in the technology of Gothic subjectivity and its aberrant bodies. However, the popular spectacle of trans death and mockery of trans bodies did not simply spring out of nowhere in Ellis' time—this phenomenon did not occur overnight to make it the most well-known of sexual anomalies in the public eye. A long and sordid history of trans death as spectacle and righteous reinforcement of normalcy unites these two technologies, Gothic genre literature and the medical apparatus. Thus these two genres of literature become moving and shifting parts in Hacking's framework that seeks to pin down an ever-moving target, a kind of person. So it is that Carmilla decries that all is natural, if there be a god, and Ellis' patients tell him that they are what they are, despite physical appearances; Carmilla's logic is answered with dismissal and the brute force of a hatchet to the neck; Ellis' patients are answered with pathologization and proximity to insanity. Power needn't use logic, or even the veneer of logic, in either case. Power needs only to be exercised, and power promises death as it simultaneously discourses upon those beneath its heel. The Gothic promises the exercising of power and violence upon the gender aberrant body once the spectacle has been worn out.

While logic is ultimately thrust aside for the assertion of power in Gothic and medical literature, it is still nevertheless present, in a warped and twisted way. I have

talked of paradox and the being of the Eonist and the monster as a kind of crystallized paradox, and in the opening quotation to this essay, Carmilla employs a kind of tautology: nature is everything and everything is nature. These are two kinds of bad logic which Daniel Wright tackles in his book *Bad Logic*. He writes:

Rather than a way of avoiding the expression of desire, bad logic is a way of pursuing that expression along very particular lines and under the pressure of very particular social norms, with the feeling that something is at stake ethically in our ability to give form to a desire that seems resistant to such formalization, or that seems at least as if such formalization would sap it of its energy. (10)

Bad logic, tautology and paradox, are ways of communication within power structures for the otherwise unutterable; if they have been uttered as gibberish, they have at least been given some form, no matter how inchoate and illegitimate in the eyes of hegemonic power structures. Carmilla, in her rant about nature, is addressing Laura's father, the man destined to kill her. He has nothing to say, the tautology lingers in the air with no answer. His only answer is her death some pages later. Her paradox as feminine beauty with bestial masculine organs and desires is the darkness into which this tautology is dismissed: pay it no heed, for she is insane and a monster. Paradox is both her expression and reason to not be heeded. Bad logic can be seen here as the mechanism by which the aberrant, threatening to overflow and topple the hegemonic in its instability, is both expressed on its own terms, contained, and ultimately dismissed after being used as spectacle to reinforce the hegemonic. So it is with the Eonist, at once born bad yet raised bad, whose tautological claims of "I am a woman because I am a woman" are dismissed with the paradoxes of insanity, monstrosity, or else the Voluptuous Death that reveals the paradox of normalcy against the momentary break of Eonistic insanity.

There is perhaps a single line the queer Victorian aesthete Walter Pater wrote that matches so perfectly his own infamous reputation in the annals of history: “To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life” (Pater 152). Again, we are met with paradox: a flame cannot be hard, nor can it be so solid and immobile as to be “gem-like.” The Voluptuous Death that is demanded of all monsters and Eonists, that defines their existences from before their existence, in its efforts to contain what it momentarily allows to spill, transfixes figures like R.L., Carmilla, and Ellis’ unnamed dead trans women as hard and gem-like flaming stars in the night sky for us to gaze upon. In the very act of presenting these spectacles and solidifying their fates before the presentation begins, these monstrous figures, in all their warped glory and paradoxical words and terrifying bodies, are necessarily immortalized in the medium of writing. Where they are set to induce horror and control via affects of fear and revulsion, their spectacle of seduction and power can be just what is required for some to understand their own perverse innate germs. Carmilla through the century and a half since its publication has been repeatedly republished in private circulation queer publications. Susan Stryker summarizes this best in “My Words to Victor Frankenstein” when she writes:

The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born. In these circumstances, I find a deep affinity between myself as a transsexual woman and the monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. (238)

R.L. sees this, too, when she claims an affinity to Jekyll and Hyde. The presentation of these monsters, no matter how damning and horrific their ends are, no matter knowing that their bloody ends are sealed before we read the first page, will elicit sympathy and

identification from those which they represent within the mechanisms of power and Gothic technology. The Voluptuous Death, despite being a mechanism of control and at the root of the making up of the aberrant and the queer, nevertheless evokes identification from those it seeks to control.

Dustin Friedman in *Before Queer Theory* writes that Pater “showed art to be a realm where queers can resist a hostile social world by developing an autonomous sense of self, one that is inspired by their sexual difference and grounded in the ability to resist dominant power relations” (2). Far from an aesthete himself, and Carmilla far from successfully resisting the powers that kill her, Le Fanu has nevertheless crafted a transgender character that, in the zenith of her Voluptuous Death, becomes crystallized as Pater’s “hard, gem-like flame,” a kernel of what is possible strung up by the hegemonic as a warning, but one that can be tempting enough to those with perverse innate germs as proof that something else *is* possible, no matter how short-lived or destined for death it is. The Voluptuous Death that Ellis predicated his entire study of the transgender subject upon, even in the fatalistic doom of the woman involved, shows that one *can* be that way, if only for a short and glorious moment. Despite this warning, cases of Eonism, transsexualism, and then being transgender, bloomed to the numbers they are today—as Hacking writes, the cases of homosexuality ballooned rapidly with its invention, and simultaneously those diagnosed wrested the label away to exist on their own terms (*Historical Ontology* 168). The monsters, much like Frankenstein’s monster, always threaten to spill over the boundaries set for them. Likewise, Laura finds herself haunted by Carmilla’s hard, gem-like flame. The final paragraph of the novella states “To this

hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations (...); and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing room door” (70). The possibility of Carmilla’s queer body and aberrant sexuality have been shown to Laura, and despite the fact that Carmilla is ash to the wind, the hard, gem-like flame created by her Voluptuous Death, or perhaps Voluptuous Undeath, has permanently fixed this possibility of another world and another mode of embodiment within the fabric of the hegemonic that has killed her.

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