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REORIENTING THE FEMALE GOTHIC: CURIOSITY AND THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

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REORIENTING THE FEMALE GOTHIC:
CURIOSITY AND THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

BY
JENNA GUITAR

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION

OF

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the mode of the Female Gothic primarily by examining how texts utilize the role of curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge, paying close attention to how female characters employ these attributes. Existing criticism is vital to understanding the Female Gothic and in presenting the genealogy of feminist literary criticism, and yet I argue, this body of criticism often produces elements of essentialism. In an attempt to avoid and expose the biases that essentialism produces, I draw from Sara Ahmed's theory of queer phenomenology to investigate the connections between the way that women pursue and circulate knowledge through education and reading and writing practices in the Female Gothic. What women are allowed access to these practices, and what women are denied access? I argue that curiosity positions characters towards objects of knowledge in a positive and active way. I trace the trajectory of the Female Gothic beginning with Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. I also examine the following novels: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian*, Deborah Harkness's *A Discovery of Witches*, Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*, and Emil Ferris's *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*. I end the dissertation by examining the Female Gothic's impact on the pop cultural imagination by analyzing the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its surrounding transmedial texts, such as the comics published by Dark Horse and Boom, and the podcast *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*.

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INTRODUCTION

“Curiouser, and curiouser!” –Lewis Carroll

“Curiosity is the most fleeting of pleasures; the moment it is satisfied, it ceases to exist and it always proves very, very expensive.” –Angela Carter

“[Buffy attempts to find out the secret ingredient of Doublemeat burgers.]

Buffy: Sorry, I was just curious.

Manny the Manager: Curiosity killed the cat.

Buffy: [whispers] Theory number 5: cat burgers.” –Jane Espenson, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, S6 E12

Curiosity is disruptive, uncontrollable, unruly, impulsive, and meandering. Some of the oldest stories in the world serve as warnings or rebukes against the dangers of curiosity. Pandora’s curiosity unleashes countless ills upon society, while Eve’s curiosity causes the fall of humankind. And yet, curiosity is the impetus for the greatest discoveries in our world. If people did not have the drive, the desire to know, would we have ever evolved into the creatures we are now? In our present moment, when the answer to many questions is at the tip of our fingers in the shape of a smart phone, are we more curious than ever before or are we in the period of the “Great Stagnation” as Tyler Cowen a professor of economics at George Mason University in Virginia has called our contemporary moment. Cowen argues that it is harder now to raise the education level of the populace. Rather than just getting more people to school and university, the new challenge is finding ways of making more people hungry to learn, question, and create. Has our curiosity died in the gleam of a

smartphone? More people are attending university than ever before, but are we actually creating curious and inquisitive thinkers or slaves to a bureaucratic system? Nobel prize-winning Edmund Phelps the recipient of the 2006 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences believes that curiosity experiences stagnation due to the dead weight of state and corporate bureaucracy. How do we surmount this stagnant cultural curiosity? Screenwriting teacher Robert McKee says, “Curiosity is the intellectual need to answer questions and close open patterns. Story plays to this universal desire by doing the opposite, posing questions and opening situations.” Stories engage the curiosity, and when one story ends, the desire to encounter a new story from a different point of view is often stoked. Questions posed in stories leave people puzzling over them, in some cases for centuries, hence the world of literary studies, and in a non-academic setting, fandom communities. These two worlds do not have to be segregated, for example, the aca-fan (an academic fan) bridges this divide, but I am merely showing the different ways that stories incite curiosity in individuals, and in turn how this curiosity creates communal spaces where people come together to discuss stories. A story produces a desire to know more about the world created within the pages. I argue that the way to overcome the cultural stagnation that Cowen and Phelps argue we are experiencing is through an investment in storytelling. Stories work to push us to learn more about others and the world around us. They lead us into curiosity spirals, where the whole world seems like questions refracting back upon us in a multitudinous fashion. Story pushes us to learn about other ways of life and may distract us from the monotony of mindlessly scrolling through social media feeds. The love of stories creates academic disciplines and fandoms wherein communities are

created. In these communities, curiosity urges people to discuss and debate multiple possibilities of a word, a turn of phrase, or the actions of a character. Curiosity pushes us past stagnation and into an urge to discover, and stories help ignite this drive.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I investigate the way that curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge help to liberate women from patriarchal constraints of thinking. Curiosity in women is often denigrated. We need to look no further than the stories of Pandora and Eve mentioned above to see that women's curiosity has traditionally aligned with negative ramifications. The curiosity of women is frequently relegated to the realm of gossip or frivolity, but I argue for its ability to be an empowering agent in female character's journeys in the realm of the Female Gothic.

This dissertation begins with the assumption that, while existing criticism is vital to understanding the Female Gothic and in showing the genealogy of feminist literary criticism, it often produces elements of essentialism. In an attempt to avoid and expose the biases that essentialism produces, I draw from Sara Ahmed's theory of queer phenomenology to investigate the connections between the way that women pursue and circulate knowledge through education and reading and writing practices in the Female Gothic and how curiosity positions characters towards objects of knowledge in a positive and active way. Ahmed's theory addresses questions concerning the way that social relations are arranged spatially and the disruption that can occur by refusing to follow accepted paths. Texts are to be examined from both British and American literature as a means of interrogating the geographical progression of the mode as it grows and develops from its British beginnings into

contemporary American popular culture. Re-orienting the Female Gothic allows for a turning away from the essentializing paths taken by former scholars.

In 1976, Ellen Moers coined the term Female Gothic in order to successfully carve out space in the literary canon for women writers engaged with the Gothic mode. The term would grow in Gothic scholarship to encapsulate more than Moers's simple definition of the term: "the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (90). Moers's work created a space for women writers to be inducted into the literary canon, but also helped advance the academic considerations of the mode of the Gothic itself. However, since the 1990s the term Female Gothic is much contested as many critics argue that it limits our view of the literature. For Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, the term Female Gothic is essentializing and becomes too beholden to archetypes. Furthermore, they argue that the critical mass around the genre of Female Gothic has also tended to be bound to second wave feminists' political goals and particular psychoanalytic readings of texts (2000). While the term Female Gothic has and continues to be contested, many critics have offered other names for the mode such as "feminist Gothic" (Hoeveler, 1998), "lesbian Gothic" (Palmer, 1999), "women's Gothic" (Clery, 2000), and "postfeminist Gothic" (Brabon & Genz, 2007). Others such as Wallace and Smith (2009) argue that Female Gothic should be retained as it is vital to acknowledge the roles second-wave feminist critics played in bringing both women writers and the genre of the Gothic into the academic fold.

Another criticism of the collection of texts that tend to make up the Female Gothic is that they have often been analyzed through essentialized gendered lenses

that have reified gendered depictions of masculine aggression and female victimization (Hoeveler, 1998). Historically, the criticism surrounding the Female Gothic is interested in representative metaphors of women's experiences, examples of the domestic, anxieties about the boundaries of self, and critiques of capitalism in relation to gender. The prior scholarship on the Female Gothic serves as important scaffolding to my project as it helps enrich our understanding of women's access to knowledge, female victimization, oppressive patriarchal structures, and more, but I also want to push back on some of the more essentialized readings that are produced in the scholarship concerning the Female Gothic. I am retaining the term Female Gothic as a means by which to characterize a set of canonical texts, but also to examine texts outside of the eighteenth and nineteenth century that clearly show the influence of the Female Gothic. I am not interested in maintaining gender essentialism, but I am interested in continuing to investigate the impact and legacy of women writers on the Gothic. Gender is inextricably bound to this mode, and as such turning a blind eye to gendered issues would be folly.

The knowledge that women are permitted to possess in eighteenth and nineteenth century novels of the Female Gothic is highly monitored; any act of transgressive learning is shaped as disobedience and can be seen as an undisciplined act of reaching for forbidden knowledge, although I work to show how this is not always the case, especially in the case of Emily from Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. However, in subsequent twentieth century reworkings of the Female Gothic, the curiosity displayed by female characters no longer emphasizes her transgressive disobedience, but more so, the largely damaging effects of patriarchal control and the

harms that restricting knowledge from certain groups has upon society as a whole. By employing Sara Ahmed's theory of queer phenomenology that looks at the way we orient ourselves towards both physical and metaphysical objects, I tease out the way that contemporary Female Gothic reworks the representations of curiosity by both characters and authors in a self-reflexive manner, which ultimately produces a more complex view of the essentialized gendered assumptions that appear in the body of scholarship on the Female Gothic.

One of Ahmed's generative questions is that the "body gets directed in some ways more than others. We might be used to thinking of direction as simply which way we turn, or which way we are facing, at this or that moment in time. Direction then would be a rather casual matter. But what if direction, as the way we face as well as move, is organized rather than casual?" (15). Ahmed's use of the term "organized" focuses on the way that the state and other forms of community require bodies to go in a particular direction. Drawing from Judith Butler, who in turn draws from Louis Althusser's concept of interpellation, Ahmed is not just interested in the subjects who turn around when hailed by police in Althusser's famous example. When this event takes place, the person becomes a subject and is called into being. Butler reads this as "turning" upon hearing oneself as the subject of the address. While the physicality of the movement is not necessarily regarded by Althusser or Butler, Ahmed is interested in which way a person turns, putting physical and proximal questions into the act of the turn. Taking my cue from Ahmed's ideas about "organized" direction and the action of "turning" to objects, I trace the way that female characters' curiosity in the Gothic mode orient them to specific ways of pursuing knowledge. Does the

character's pursuit of knowledge cause them to turn and follow a different line of thinking?

Curiosity emerges in the Bluebeard myth and is refashioned in numerous Gothic texts. Curiosity becomes an operative term to consider the way that female characters in the novels are impelled towards certain modes of knowledge. Curiosity itself can be linked to associations of desire and thus can be used to chart new lines of desire for women in the gothic that have gone unnoticed. For example, curiosity itself was gendered well into the eighteenth century. Barbara Benedict asserts that while male curiosity is linked to active movement and the progression of knowledge, "Female curiosity was idle, ignorant, prurient, useless or even socially destructive" (118). However, I argue that the Gothic mode formulates women's curiosity as an active pursuit of truth and understanding. In Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily's curiosity impels her to uncover horrifying secrets and correct past wrongs, while also physically propelling her out of domestic confines and into a physical journey that allows her to experience different environments, and links her to the active movement associated with male curiosity.

The journeys embarked on by Gothic heroines, as well as the lines inscribed by those journeys, may be fruitfully investigated drawing from Ahmed's contemplation of the nature of lines and how we follow and create them. Lines are created by the repeated action of following the same path. In landscape architecture, lines that deviate from the planned path are called "desire lines," lines that, according to Ahmed "describe unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow" (19-20).

Deviating from the planned path helps to “generate alternative lines, which cross the ground in unexpected ways. Such lines are indeed traces of desire; where people have taken different routes to get to this point or to that point” (Ahmed 20). Examining how knowledge and curiosity circulate in the Female Gothic, I want to ask: How does the pursuit of knowledge in the Female Gothic retrace conventional lines or present new desire lines? By employing Ahmed’s theories as a method to examine the Female Gothic, I trace the re-orientations of subjectivity as seen through female characters’ relationship to curiosity, knowledge deployment, and the ways in which knowledge is circulated in a manner that has not yet been adequately studied in the existing scholarship.

Retaining the overarching term of Female Gothic allows me to examine texts within the defined mode, as well as the effects that these texts have had on subsequent forays in the ever-widening realm of the Gothic. This permits a close interrogation of gendered curiosity, acquisition and circulation of knowledge through reading and writing practices. How does the staging of reading and writing in the Female Gothic manifest and evolve throughout the tradition? Turning to the 21st century, how do contemporary works subvert the pursuit of knowledge found in earlier works of the mode? What are the different techniques that we can employ to interrogate curiosity? Moreover, both the Gothic mode and the writers therein are continually haunted by ghosts from earlier models of the Female Gothic. The newer flexible models of female agency represented in twenty-first century Gothic literature still, however, cannot rid themselves of the threat of phallogentricity haunting the margins of the mode. This study provides a survey of the literature often referred to under the umbrella term

Female Gothic, while also attempting to trace a new genealogy of the mode into the twenty-first century.

Much scholarly criticism concerning the formation of the mode of the Gothic consists of a gendered reading, separating the mode into two distinct gendered spheres: the male and the female Gothic (Moers, 1976, Fleenor, 1983, Miles, 1995, 2000, Becker, 1999, Clery, 2000, Heiland, 2004, Blackford, 2005, Brabon & Genz, 2007, Delucia, 2009, Bloom, 2010). For example, Robert Miles (1995, 2000) uses quintessential Gothic texts such as Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* and Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as prime exemplars of the gendered differences of Gothic texts that subsequently lead to divergent narrative stakes and narrative structures. Male Gothic is often aligned with horror elements, while the Female Gothic is often aligned with elements of terror (Miles, 2000). The Female Gothic, made famous by Radcliffe, included the generic traits of the explained supernatural phenomenon and a return to normalcy at the end, which often led to a marriage or some kind of reunion. Much of the scholarship on the Female Gothic has run parallel to second wave feminist efforts to recuperate texts by women writers into the canon of British and American literary works (Moers, 1976, Gilbert & Gubar, 1979). The "Male Gothic" (exemplified by Matthew Lewis) included tropes such as the supernatural phenomenon that remains supernatural and is never explained and generally includes more gore and violence. The "Male Gothic" often ends in horror and a lack of restoration at the end of the novel. The insistence on classifying many early 18th and 19th century Gothic texts as either male or female Gothic novels concretizes gendered readings of the Gothic and limits the potential of alternative readings.

However, with the rise of queer theory in the academy in the latter part of the twentieth century, the Gothic was freed in part from the constricting binary readings of the male and female Gothic. Hughes and Smith have argued that the Gothic is and has always been queer, though not only in the sexual sense. “The queerness of Gothic is such that its main function is to demonstrate the relationship between the marginal and the mainstream, between reciprocal states of queerness and non-queerness” (4). Queerness, in this case, unsettles the binaries of previous criticism of Gothic fiction and disrupts the idea of absolutes when it comes not only to gender but also to the way that characters may spatially be oriented. What does their representation of spatial orientation produce? By applying a queer phenomenological lens to Gothic texts that have previously been considered as Female Gothic, I plan to interrogate these texts and their relationships to each other to recognize new “desire lines” and new points of connection between the texts. In other words, what do we overlook when we reside within the familiar—in this case, the Female Gothic? What are the things that have been left out of analysis by thinking along the lines of feminist metaphors of victimization, erasure, and domestic spaces?

Furthermore, by employing the theoretical framework of Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology, what can be uncovered when well-worn narrative paths such as those present in the Female Gothic can be made to re-orient themselves? Bringing to those texts Ahmed’s productive questions concerning objects of perception and how our consciousness becomes turned towards objects and how these objects then make impressions upon us begins to relocate this body of work. “Orientations involve directions toward objects that affect what we do, and how we inhabit space” (Ahmed

28). How do the characters in the novels orient themselves towards reading, writing, deciphering, decoding, and circulating knowledge? Moreover, in self-reflexive versions of the genre, how does an author's genre consciousness orient her characters within the Gothic landscape? By re-orienting ourselves to the Female Gothic what other lines of engagement might be produced?

Central to my methodology are Ahmed's concepts surrounding queer phenomenology that I use to rework and re-orient the well-studied and contested mode of the "Female Gothic." Ahmed poses the question of "who faces the writing table? Does the writing table have a face, which points it toward some bodies rather than others?" (31). What characters in the Female Gothic are allowed to face the writing table? Being able to face the writing table means that one's attention is not on other objects or that when seated at the table, one's attention is not pulled away by other objects. How do other objects in the Gothic impede or allow female characters to turn to or to orient themselves to practices of reading and writing? How does curiosity work to direct the characters to these practices? How does curiosity begin to etch new desire lines onto the familiar mode of the female gothic? The character's relation to knowledge makes them active participants in the story with a sense of agency, as opposed to the victimized depictions of Female Gothic characters in past criticism.

The first chapter of this study titled "Mapping the Discourse of the 'Female Gothic'" begins by examining the analytic discourses of the Female Gothic. This literature review outlines the salient arguments that have constructed the body of criticism of the Female Gothic. The prime exemplar for this foundational examination is Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). This text has been selected as it

is a canonical touchstone text within Female Gothic criticism and helps to define the early foundations of the mode, while also pointing a way towards the rethinking about the way curiosity and education is structured. In order to complicate and subvert the gendered dimensions within the Gothic mode, the way curiosity emerges in female characters is carefully traced. Focusing on curiosity complicates previous gendered readings of the female Gothic that stigmatize curiosity and aligns it with gossip (Benedict, 2002). Mobilizing curiosity as an active position opens up new avenues of active desire lines for female characters that have not been fully explored by the existing scholarship on the female Gothic.

Chapter two titled “*Jane Eyre’s* Heirs and the Literary Genealogy of the ‘Female Gothic’” considers the relevance and importance of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and her key literary heirs within the realm of the Female Gothic. The traditional themes of confinement and forbidden patriarchal knowledge structures become staples of the scholarship surrounding the Female Gothic mode passed down from Brontë’s foundational text. The stories of confined women continue to catalyze other Gothic tales that proceed into the 20th century and beyond. *Jane Eyre’s* occupation as a governess also provides a point of inquiry into how knowledge is pursued and circulated. Furthermore, as Marie Mulvey-Roberts argues, *Jane Eyre* can be read as a Bluebeard story that evolves throughout the historical trajectory of the “Female Gothic.” The Bluebeard story is most interested in the access to forbidden knowledge and how one is oriented towards curiosity. Mulvey-Roberts writes of “how the reader is propelled through the narrative by the pain of suspense and the imperative to satisfy curiosity” (98, 2009). The reader becomes directly aligned with Bluebeard's wife who

must pursue knowledge at all costs despite the violent patriarchal threat of her husband. Mulvey-Roberts draws upon the connections of dangerous reading and sexuality as she traces other variations of the Bluebeard stories from *Jane Eyre* to *Rebecca*. The Bluebeard motif that surfaces in *Jane Eyre* becomes an inherited legacy for subsequent Gothic tales and illustrates the dangers of circulating certain types of knowledge. Instead of looking at this knowledge as dangerous, I examine how the character's curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge locate these women in an active position, wherein the Bluebeard character is either defeated or the woman joins the Bluebeard figure as either an equal partner, or a dominant partner.

This chapter also examines the literary genealogy that is produced by Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Ahmed's interrogations concerning queer genealogy aids in re-orienting the links between these texts. Ahmed's theorization of lines and alignments also shapes the way that these texts can be read. As Ahmed argues, when lines are transposed on top of one another, alignment occurs (66). However, if one line does not appear, it gives the general effect of being "wonky or even queer" (66). Focusing on the mechanizations of curiosity and the progression of what impels these female characters away or towards knowledge retraces the lines of the female Gothic in new ways. While earlier Gothic texts aligned knowledge with depictions of male gendered consciousness or as violent transgressions, the twentieth-century works begin to reshape the relationship between knowledge, curiosity and the inherent victimization of the female. Diane Long Hoeveler (1998) suggests that women in the Gothic move from victim as seen in early progenitors of the mode into the monstrous feminine that is displayed in the twentieth century. Two novels and one novella that show this shift

are Daphne DuMaurier's *Rebecca* (1938), Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), and Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), all of which can be seen as extending the Bluebeard motif from *Jane Eyre* and reshaping it along different lines to call attention to altered fears surrounding the loss of autonomy and the way in which curiosity impels these women down active paths of resistance against previously inscribed gender norms. While critics such as, Becker (1999), Blackford (2005), Bonikowski (2013), Brabon & Genz (2007), Clery (2000), Davison (2009) Delmotte (1990), Delucia (2009), Fleenor (1983), Gilbert & Gubar, (1979), Heiland (2004), Hoeveler (1998), Miles (1995), and Pyrhönen (2010) have recognized the literary genealogies present in these texts, they have been used to support the ideas of victimization and other passive tropes inherent in the mode of the female Gothic. Reorienting the discussion around a means of active curiosity for female characters allows for non-essentialist readings to emerge.

The third chapter (Reorienting the Female Gothic in 21st Century Literature) focuses on the self-reflexive nature of the Female Gothic in the 21st century. Much of the literature featured in this chapter is concerned with female characters that are scholars themselves who, while conducting research, find themselves enmeshed in Gothic stories of their own. The investigative impulse of the scholars to learn more about their familial legacies related to the occult orient them towards scholarly works. Such is the case with Diana Bishop, a historian of alchemy at Yale University in Deborah Harkness's *A Discovery of Witches* (2011) and Helen, an expert in Dracula lore in Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian* (2005). Both of the novels focus on the women reading manuscripts, researching in libraries and sitting at desks—recalling

Ahmed's queries of who is allowed to face the writing desk or table. The scholars' inquisitive natures urge them towards specific orientations of understanding the supernatural through scholarly discourse. These women are also allowed to orient themselves towards research and the writing desk in more direct manners than their literary predecessors.

Aside from the self-reflexive qualities of the new Gothic scholar heroine, the 21st century continues to re-negotiate the way knowledge is pursued and circulated in the Gothic. Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* (2005) begins with Shori, a powerful child vampire suffering from amnesia after a brutal attack on her family leaving her the lone survivor of her clan. Shori's curiosity about her past is more than a wish to fill in the gap of her knowledge, but also necessary for her survival as she is still being hunted by the perpetrators of the attack that destroyed her family and her memory. Without her family as support, Shori begins to build a new family. Community is essential for Shori's survival and also as a device to help her reclaim her memories. Elizabeth Lundberg argues that in the sex scenes between Shori and Wright that there is a "language of both freedom and obligation...the sex scene also highlights the novel's rhetoric of consent and control" (566, 2015). This focus on the rhetoric of sexuality within the novel becomes a site for knowledge resumption as Shori must relearn everything due to her memory loss. Analysis of Shori's symbionts (i.e., the humans that enter into a symbiotic relationship with Shori) help explore Ahmed's concept of orientation to otherness: "the otherness of things is what allows me to do things 'with them.' What is other than me is also what allows me to extend the reach of my body" (115). Later on in the novel, the reader learns that Shori is the work of multiple

science experiments. The Gothic heroine as a moral vampire and a more fully evolved being also complicates the previous incarnations of the monstrous feminine popularized in twentieth-century texts. Issues pertaining to colonialism and “othering” play a large part in the way knowledge is pursued as well.

Furthermore, the perception of self as monstrous but something to rejoice in is presented in Emil Ferris’s *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* (2017). Karen Reyes spends her time carefully chronicling and detailing everything that goes on in her neighborhood in ‘60s Chicago while she also tries to solve a murder mystery. In between Karen's sleuthing episodes, she also reads as many horror magazines as she can find. Importantly, Karen is depicted as a precocious werewolf as this is the way she sees herself, not as monstrous, but as something stronger and better than human. Being a monster is a chosen method of representation. Karen’s knowledge of the world around her comes from horror magazines, stories from her neighbors, and observations she records from around her neighborhood. The way Karen pursues and uncovers information positions her in a remarkable way. Karen sees things that others miss by looking underneath the facades of society. Importantly, Karen is also a child protagonist and the inclusion of this text adds to the conversation of not only women character’s orientations towards curiosity and knowledge revelation, but girls as well. Furthermore, this text is a work of graphic fiction and allows for a conversation about how the form of the female gothic has developed over time. The use of visual imagery and literal lines drawn on the paper also opens up Ahmed’s theorization of lines in a new and different domain.

Ferris's graphic novel *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* creates a literary bridge to other types of visual media. The last chapter "Buffy Slays the Female Gothic Tradition: Curiosity and the Pursuit of Knowledge in a Transmedia Landscape" encounters the influential televisual narrative *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) as well as the transmedia offerings, such as the comics produced by Dark Horse Comics (2007-2018) and fan podcasts, in particular *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* (2016-present) as a way to investigate curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge in a televisual format, as well as discuss curiosity related to fandom. Additionally, contemporary work on the Gothic is highly populated by studies concerning the intersection of the Gothic mode and television studies, and as such it would be remiss to not include an example of televisual Gothic (Tibbetts, 2011, Redding, 2011, Nelson, 2012, Piatti-Fernak & Brien, 2015, Spooner, 2017).

Buffy the Vampire Slayer illustrates the dynamics of the televisual Female Gothic, but also showcases the urge to extend the show's life through transmedia mechanisms, such as the comics and fan podcasts. Furthermore, *Buffy's* reboot in comic book form points towards the transmedia trend of the Gothic in the contemporary moment as it crosses mediums. Moreover, concerning the representation of curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* creates a material need for guidance from books as conduits into the supernatural realm. The knowledge that circulates between Buffy and her friends is also shown as unique when compared to government agencies (the Initiative) that combat supernatural forces in a much more uniform way that presses people into one way of thinking, and does not allow for individuality or creative thought. This may remind us of Ahmed's observations about

“organized direction.” Additionally, the line of slayers is a queer genealogy of women (playing on Ahmed’s theorizations of lines), where the history of the slayer is passed down through a line that does not rely on race, ethnicity, country of origin or any other normative demarcation of familial inheritance.

Curiosity’s power encompasses a broad range of perceived potential contributions to the human experience. Throughout history, curiosity has had a storied existence and has not always been praised for its usefulness. But ultimately, it works to discover new avenues of thought and can alter our perceptions of the known.

Michel Foucault states in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*:

Curiosity evokes ‘care’; it evokes the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one is never immobilized before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way; a passion for seizing what is happening now and what is disappearing; a lack of respect for traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental. (328)

And that is what this dissertation aims to do, look at the well-worn paths of the Female Gothic and find something new within its pages. It urges the reader to care for readings outside the normative discourse of woman as passive victim, and to rethink the Female Gothic we have come to know. We will travel the footpaths of Emily, Jane, Rebecca, Buffy, and others in our search to find the ways that curiosity subverts the traditional stroll through the Female Gothic. We will re-orient ourselves to the

common story told of victimization and gendered essentialism and find a world of curiosities to explore.

CHAPTER 1:

MAPPING THE DISCOURSE OF THE FEMALE GOTHIC

Ann Radcliffe's literary legacy is crucial to consider when mapping the trajectory of not only the Gothic mode, but a particular category of the gothic, the oft discussed and contested realm of the Female Gothic. Eugenia C. DeLamotte proclaims that "Radcliffe must be regarded as the center of the Gothic tradition" (10). Radcliffe's literary prowess shaped the parameters of the Gothic as well as contoured the criticism and the scholarship surrounding the Gothic mode. Radcliffe arrived on the literary scene in the late eighteenth century. Radcliffe's early literary works *Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) were plagued by criticisms of anachronisms, improbabilities, and ultimately received little critical attention (Rogers 8). It was not until the publication of *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) that Radcliffe began to receive critical attention from critics and peers alike even though she remained anonymous until the publication of the second edition of her novel in 1792. Next came Radcliffe's publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) that became even more successful and truly made Radcliffe quite famous. The public sphere were enraptured by her book, and the popularity of the novel garnered her an impressive sum of money for her next novel *The Italian* (1797), which made Radcliffe the top-paid professional writer of her time. Although one of her biographers Rictor Norton argues that Radcliffe "wrote for pleasure rather than profit. Virtually all women novelists from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen 'turned to the novel for money'... Ann Radcliffe, however, wrote for fame: she threw down a challenge with novels that achieved the standards of epic poetry hitherto reserved for men, and claimed for

herself the winner's prize" (3). At the height of her fame, Radcliffe disappeared from the literary scene. Her first biographer Thomas Noon Talfourd in *Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe* (1826) argued that she disappeared from the literary scene because she ultimately valued "personal character above literary fame" as many journalists of her time "attacked her as a sorceress responsible for corrupting the minds of her young readers" (Norton 4). Radcliffe's success in her own time would forever be interwoven with her gender. The demands upon morality and personal character caused Radcliffe to withdraw from the literary world. Radcliffe's gender would continue to be a point of focus as future literary critics, eager to recuperate and recover the work of one of the Gothic mode's founding woman writers, would argue that Radcliffe's literary works were the foundational texts of the Female Gothic.

In 1976, Ellen Moers coined the term "Female Gothic" to describe Radcliffe's unique style and set a precedent for the way in which scholars would identify and trace Radcliffe's subsequent influence upon the mode. The Female Gothic is recognizable by specific tropes such as the explained supernatural, labyrinthine passages and hallways in decaying castles, sublime landscapes, repressed family secrets, abuses of patriarchal power, domestic incarceration, threats of sexual violence, anxiety concerning absent or monstrous mothers or maternal figures, and the distress and victimization of the heroine. However, Moers simply defines the Female Gothic as "the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (90). Gender becomes the main point of focus for Moers and other second wave feminist critics (Julian Fleenor, Margaret Doody, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, & Leona Sherman) who begin to couch their analysis

and understanding of the mode in particular gendered arguments. The Female Gothic becomes a place where women writers are studied in relation to themes relating to domestic entrapment and anxieties stemming from female sexuality. For example, Moers analyzes Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by arguing that "the narrative as a whole is designed to accord with the rhythms of a woman's life" (134). Moers complains that previous scholars have paid too much attention to the mechanics of terror in the novel such as the "black veil, the burned manuscript, the mysterious nun, the ghostly musician, and the living corpse," all while ignoring the dimensions of gender (134).

Interestingly, Moers hinges her complaints concerning previous scholarship on the way they emphasize elements of terror—an element that Radcliffe, herself, saw as differentiating her from the male writers of the genre. The distinctions between horror and terror become a way in which to differentiate the Female Gothic from the ostensibly male Gothic that is exemplified by Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). Lewis, inspired by Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), writes his own Gothic novel that plays up the elements of horror. Lewis's novel serves as the impetus for Ann Radcliffe to draw a dividing line between horror and terror in the emerging mode of the Gothic. In her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826), Radcliffe utilizes Edmund Burke to distinguish between the two categories of horror and terror. She argues that terror is characterized by "obscurity" in its treatment of potentially horrible events; it is this indeterminacy that leads the reader toward the sublime. Horror, in contrast, "nearly annihilates" the reader's responsive capacity with its displays of atrocity (Radcliffe, 145-52). For Radcliffe, terror forms the basis of the

sublime. As Robert Miles points out “Radcliffe begins with what it is that induces horror or terror in the viewer...the difference turns on materiality. Terror is an affair of the mind, of the imagination; when the threat takes a concrete shape, it induces horror, or disgust” (93). It is believed that Radcliffe, appalled by the state of the genre, writes her novel *The Italian* (1797) in response to Lewis’s *The Monk*. Radcliffe’s response served as a corrective to some of the elements that she saw as undermining the integrity of the Gothic mode. The Male Gothic is pre-occupied with real supernatural events of horror, urging the reader to suspend their disbelief as ghosts, devils, and other supernatural entities are believed to be truly in existence.

Mapping the Female Gothic

Ellen Moers’s preliminary suggestion of the existence of the Female Gothic ushers in a body of criticism that defines the themes and tropes of women-authored Gothic texts, such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Julian Fleenor’s *The Female Gothic* (1983), Kate Ferguson Ellis’s *The Contested Castle* (1989), Eugenia DeLamotte’s *Perils of the Night* (1990), Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Feminism* (1998), Donna Heiland’s *Gothic and Gender* (2004), Andrew Smith’s and Diana Wallace’s *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (2009), and Avril Horner’s and Sue Zlosnik’s *Women and the Gothic* (2016) and many more. The discussion of these texts acts as a brief survey of the field and demonstrates the progression and preoccupations of the mode.

Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) published only three years after Moers’ work, builds upon the ideas that Moers had begun to sort out in *Literary Women* concerning the Female Gothic. Arguably, the most widely influential

study of the Female Gothic, Gilbert and Gubar employ psychoanalytic theory to explore the importance of physical space coupled with issues of female authorship. Ultimately, the way that physical space is portrayed in the Female Gothic illustrates heroines inhabiting constructions of confinement. Gilbert and Gubar focus on images of enclosure and escape, and how these images in the novels are also mirrored by the women writers themselves, stuck and enclosed by the paradigms of patriarchy. Women writers were both trapped in the physical sense of having to be the ladies of the home, thus enclosed in the architectural spaces of the male-dominated society, but also by male writers and their poetic traditions (Gilbert & Gubar, xi). Gilbert and Gubar go on to argue that “heroines who characteristically inhabit mysteriously intricate or uncomfortably stifling houses are often seen as captured, fettered, trapped, even buried alive...[the] imagery of enclosure reflects the woman writer’s own discomfort, her sense of powerlessness, her fear that she inhabits alien and incomprehensible places” (Gilbert & Gubar 83-4). Gilbert and Gubar’s work is predominantly concerned with expressing the inexpressible in female experience, and as Wallace and Smith argue offer a “universalising interpretation of women’s writing” (2).

Julian Fleenor’s edited collection *The Female Gothic* (1983) continues the task of defining and exploring the borders of the Female Gothic. Following in the footsteps of other prominent second-wave feminists such as Moers, Gilbert & Gubar, and Elaine Showalter, Fleenor adds to the project of creating a cohesive set of texts by women authors that utilizes unique tropes, metaphors, and relationships to create a stable body of work. The work done by these second wave feminist scholars “reclaimed a wealth

of textual material written by women and created a place for it within the canon” (Ledoux 2). Fleenor’s collection addresses issues related to the way that the Gothic and the female body as well as how sexuality relates. Fleenor makes the careful distinction that her collection aims to analyze female sexuality only as it is presented in the literary works themselves. She argues that “the expression of female sexuality is shaped by the encompassing patriarchal society and is defined in terms of vaginal sexuality, womb-like spaces, and procreation. Thus, the Female Gothic is conservative not revolutionary, acting always in reaction, tension, and dichotomy. It is not transcendent. At the center of the Female Gothic is the conflict over female identity...the female body itself becomes a literary metaphor” (Fleenor 24). Furthermore, Fleenor places much weight on the relationship of the mother as one of the defining aspects of the female experience. She argues that “this relationship defined and shapes the lives of women and the works that they write” (Fleenor 27). Additionally, Fleenor calls attention to the dichotomies that form the Female Gothic: “the patriarchal dichotomy between the supposed complementary female and male, the feminist dichotomy between woman’s prescribed role and her desire and hunger for change, and the dichotomies of good and evil projected by men upon women and consequently internalized by them” (28). Fleenor’s definitions and the ones found in the subsequent arguments by the authors in the collection provide a more nuanced exploration of the field of the Female Gothic.

The 1990s witnessed a turn in the discussion of the Female Gothic. There was a marked shift away from psychoanalytic interpretations to that of socio-cultural readings. Kate Ferguson Ellis’s *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novel and the*

Subversion of Domestic Ideology (1989) connected ideologies of gender and the domestic in relation to capitalism, using a blending of Marxist and feminist critique. Ellis states that her book is “Marxist in that it treats Gothic novels as barely diluted ideology, inventing, as Fredric Jameson has put it, imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to the unresolvable social contradictions raised by placing men and women in separate spheres. It is feminist in that it takes a position on this gender-based division” (xv). Importantly, Ellis considers both the male and the female Gothic, but “treats the masculine Gothic as a reaction to the feminine” (xvi). Ellis attempts to recuperate the marginalized feminine Gothic as the progenitor of the genre.

Eugenia DeLamotte’s *Perils of the Night: A Feminist Study of Nineteenth-Century Gothic* (1990) locates the center of the Female Gothic in anxieties concerning the boundaries of the self. DeLamotte argues that the self cannot be disconnected from the social realities of things such as capital, occupation, and social class. DeLamotte is interested in the way that these realities intersect and cause women to be marginalized and limited in both exterior and interior workings of the world. In other words, the limits women face both in society and psychologically.

The distinctions between the Male and Female Gothic began to grow beyond the identification of gender of the author. The simple correlation made by Moers between the gender of the author and the text’s plot is broken down by Alison Milbank’s *Daughters of the House: Modes of Gothic in Victorian Fiction* (1992). Hers is a hermeneutics study that complicates the “domestication of women in order to challenge some feminist critical assumptions, and to show that the conservative writer has a more complex agenda than is usually supposed” (Milbank 1). Millbank would

further her argument by discussing the way that male writers of the Gothic such as Sheridan Le Fanu and Wilkie Collins would essentially appropriate elements of the Female Gothic to critique the ideologies of capitalism and the relation to that of gender.

Anne Williams *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (1995) returns to a psychoanalytic reading of the Male and Female Gothic. She focuses her distinctions between the two modes in the fact that the Male Gothic uses multiple points of view, the use of the supernatural, they conclude in tragedy; “and they focus on horror and on female suffering—in the description of the last frequently crossing over into pornography” (Williams 106). This is contrasted against the Female Gothic in which the story is told through the point of view of the heroine, the supernatural is explained (à la Radcliffe), and the end of the story ends in a comedic manner, generally resulting in a joyful reunification of the romantic lovers who have been separated and terrorized throughout the novel. Williams aligns the plot of the Female Gothic with that of the Greek myth of Eros and Psyche rather than the Oedipal myth which undergirds the Male Gothic.

Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalisation of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (1998) works to illuminate the ways in which Female Gothic novels promote a feminist ideology based on the projection of professional femininity, yet also becomes the site of the origin of victim feminism. Hoeveler argues that the heroines of the Female Gothic masquerade as blameless victims of a fraudulent and tyrannical patriarchal society while employing masochistic strategies to triumph over that structure. Hoeveler considers how female writers

engage “the distinctly social and political realms of female-created economies, the ideological reconstruction of the body, the family and society at large” (xii).

Furthermore, Hoeveler defines Gothic Feminism as deliberate strategies of “female power through pretended and staged weakness” (7).

The work of these scholars of the Female Gothic became the foundation of the scholarship and helped to inaugurate a flourishing field of feminist criticism and literary studies. But more recent scholarship regarding the terrain of the Female Gothic has sought to contest many of the arguments made by the earlier vanguard. The name, Female Gothic, itself has become a point of some contention. The proliferation of other names for the Female Gothic has flurried since the 1990s due to post-structuralist’s misgivings and qualms surrounding identity categories. Some of the attempts to deconstruct the old model of the Female Gothic and provide a new terrain have included the “lesbian Gothic” (Palmer, 1999), “women’s Gothic” (Clery, 2000), and “postfeminist Gothic” (Brabon & Genz, 2007). While other critics such as Wallace and Smith (2009) argue that the “Female Gothic” should be retained as it is vital to acknowledge the roles second-wave feminist critics played in bringing both women writers and the genre of the Gothic into the academic fold.

Paulina Palmer’s *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions* (1999) discusses the way in which women writers have used the Gothic mode as a way to articulate lesbian subjectivities. Palmer’s concept of the lesbian Gothic destabilizes the normative categories of gender found in earlier scholarship on the Female Gothic. Palmer asserts that “Gothic and queer share a common emphasis on transgressive acts and subjectivities” (8). Palmer’s work helps to denaturalize some of the tenets of the

Female Gothic. Likewise, E.J. Clery's *Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (2000) expands the notion of the Female Gothic by troubling the paradigms and asking the questions of who gets left out of the critical accounts due to the constrictive nature of the Female Gothic's earlier definitions and parameters. Furthermore, Benjamin Brabon and Stephanie Genz argue in their edited collection *Postfeminist Gothic: Critical Interventions in Contemporary Culture* (2007) that the "original formulation of the Female Gothic has also come under attack for its blind spots regarding race and sexual orientation and its essentializing tendencies to equate the writer's biological sex with the text's gendered nature" (6). The turn in more recent scholarship "demands a self-criticism with respect to their own totalising gestures and assumptions" (Brabon & Genz 7). The current work of the Female Gothic is thus interested in following new lines of inquiry, while also being skeptical about the categories that have hardened in rigid and essentializing forms. Bearing this in mind, I retain the term Female Gothic merely as an organizing principle and to explore the instances that complicate and trouble the former discourse surrounding the Female Gothic. Much like Clery, I wish to examine the trails of inquiry that may have gotten left out of previous discourse.

Re-orienting the Female Gothic

In order to re-examine the Female Gothic, I draw on Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006). While drawing from the criticism surrounding the Female Gothic, it is equally important to consider the work that scholars have done to queer the Gothic. Hughes and Smith have argued that the Gothic is and has always been queer, though not only in the sexual sense. "The

queerness of Gothic is such that its main function is to demonstrate the relationship between the marginal and the mainstream, between reciprocal states of queerness and non-queerness” (4). Queerness, in this case, unsettles the binaries of previous criticism of Gothic fiction and disrupts the idea of absolutes when it comes not only to gender but also to the way that characters may spatially be oriented. What does their representation of spatial orientation produce? By applying a queer phenomenological lens to Gothic texts that have previously been considered as Female Gothic, I interrogate these texts and their relationships to each other to recognize new “desire lines” and new points of connection between the texts. In other words, what do we overlook when we reside within the familiar—in this case, the Female Gothic? What are the things that have been left out of analysis by focusing on the feminist metaphors of victimization, erasure, and domestic spaces?

By looking at Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* using questions prompted by Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology, what can be uncovered when well-worn narrative paths such as those present in this oft studied text are asked to re-orient themselves? Bringing to those texts Ahmed’s productive questions concerning objects of perception and how our consciousness becomes turned towards objects and how these objects then make impressions upon us will begin to relocate this body of work. Gendered consciousness and the ways that these patterns begin to present in Radcliffe’s novel can become complicated if we consider that “Orientations involve directions toward objects that affect what we do, and how we inhabit space” (Ahmed 28). The orientations of the Female Gothic has often been used in a manner to codify the actions of the female heroine in the Gothic. However, what other orientations and

spaces in the Female Gothic can be opened up and challenged by re-orienting the discourse?

One of the ways in which this re-orientation will occur will be by examining the manners and ways in which characters' consciousness is portrayed and to examine the manner in which these characters approach the consumption of knowledge. How are reading and writing practices and other forms of consciousness presented, and how does this begin to challenge the normative motivations of the previously described victimized female? Furthermore, focusing on curiosity complicates previous gendered readings of the female Gothic. Barbara Benedict asserts that Radcliffe's central trope is that of curiosity (229). Superstitious curiosities plague Emily's mind in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and are coded by Radcliffe as being dangerous if not sanctioned to self-discipline as shown through the figure of Signora Laurentini di Udolpho. But while Emily is meant to eschew certain curiosities especially those that play on her fancy, other curiosities such as those that motivate her investigations into Montoni, allow Emily to discover Montoni's misconduct, and subsequently acquire the property that is rightfully hers. This also leads to Emily's disentangling herself from the dangers imposed by Montoni. Thus, curiosity operates in a dual manner by "representing curiosity alternately as a threat to established institutions and as a promise of progress" (Benedict 229). It is also curiosity and investigation into Valencourt's supposed ill deeds that impel Emily to investigate and clear her mind of any damaging information concerning Valencourt's past indiscretions. It is proven that Valencourt is not a gambler, like Emily was led to believe and due to their like-mindedness they are unified in their happily ever after moment at the end of the novel

when everything is restored to rights. If not for Emily's curiosity, she would never have achieved the romantic felicity with Valencourt that ends the novel. Ultimately, Emily's curiosity splits into two categories. Superstitious curiosity paralyzes and immobilizes Emily, and is a detriment to her progress. While the curiosity associated with consuming knowledge and utilizing the education she receives from her father and her travels is critical for Emily's survival.

Gendered Minds, Education, and Curiosity

The Mysteries of Udolpho hinges on the mind of Emily St. Aubert. It is Emily's mind that guides the narrative of the text and it is Emily's mind that the reader is asked to indulge in readerly sympathy with. Radcliffe uses the representation of Emily's mind as a didactic model of how to properly restrain sensibility and impulsive emotions which are coded as feminine ways of thinking as she is asked instead to adopt the more masculine qualities of reason and rationality. Emily's mind serves twofold, as both a model of instruction and a warning to female minds—warning them of the dangers of excessive sensibility. It is through this sympathetic readership that we as readers are given instruction on how to think and at the same time, as we identify with Emily's mind, we become enmeshed in the pleasure of mutual sympathy. Furthermore, Emily is taught to repress her more female inclinations of the mind, such as fancy, and rely on a more stereotypical masculine mind. Her lack of female fancy and the repression of her female mind garners Emily praise throughout the novel and allows male characters in the novel as well to readily sympathize with her. While at first it would seem that Radcliffe ultimately champions a male consciousness and denigrates the female mind, we can see that Radcliffe never fully abandons either way

of thinking, but instead creates a tension between the two that is never fully settled.

David Sandner argues:

The Mysteries of Udolpho puts into play a number of paired opposites related to the supernatural and the natural—superstition and science, the sublime and the beautiful, horror and terror, passion and sense—but never just to banish one term to uncompromisingly embrace the other; rather, Radcliffe seeks to hold opposites in tension—elevating one term, but never letting go of either.

(90)

This prevalence of tensions between diametrically opposed items, I argue, pushes even further into the discourse of gendered minds. Emily is more a hybridization of both sexes in regards to her consciousness, but so is our male protagonist, Valancourt.

Valancourt's excessive emotions often get the best of him and his overabundance of sensibility at times aligns him with the stereotypical female gendered mind. These gender crossings in Valancourt's and Emily's states of mind can be seen as valorization and not a denigration of the female consciousness. Instead, it promotes a kind of parity between the two consciousnesses; one cannot exist without the other.

In order to understand the way that Radcliffe is thinking about and using sympathy it is helpful to consider Adam Smith's theories concerning sympathy. For Smith, sympathy is heavily reliant and dependent on the use of the imagination. He explains:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the

rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the *imagination* only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations [*italics mine*]. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination, we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body (Smith 11-12).

Therefore, the only way sympathy operates is by the use of our imagination. We can never actually feel what the other person feels, but must use our imaginations to offer up an idea about what it may feel like in their experience, but of course we have only our experience to base this on, therefore we have circuitously ended up back at imagination. The role of a reader is obviously one that is invested in the role of the imagination. Through reading, we are able to produce a sympathy with literary characters and we are able to live safely but vicariously through them. Since the role of sympathy is located in the imagination, it seems only natural that readers must use sympathy as way in which to invest themselves in the novel. Sympathetic readership is the way that fictional characters can instruct readers. It is through this ability to sympathize that the reader becomes a part of the narrative in some ways themselves, the mimetic response of reader and heroine is one way that sympathetic readership is enacted. Smith tells us:

Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator [in our case the spectator is the reader of Emily's trials and tribulations]. Our joy for the deliverance of those heroes of tragedy or romance who interest us, is as sincere as our grief for their distress, and our fellow-feeling with their misery is not more real than that with their happiness. We enter into their gratitude towards those faithful friends [here we can think of how grateful we feel to Annette, Ludovico and Du Pont, the great friends of our dear Emily] who did not desert them in their difficulties; and we heartily go along with their resentment against those perfidious traitors [And here we can think of the way the reader detests Montoni and repudiates his acts towards Emily] who injured, abandoned, or deceived them. In every passion of which the mind of man is susceptible, the emotions of the by-stander always correspond to what, by bringing the case home to himself, he imagines should be the sentiments of the sufferer. (13)

Smith's analogy of literary characters, or, as he calls them "heroes of tragedy and romance," help us to think about the sympathy that is tempered through the act of reading. Smith also broadens the way that we can think about sympathy by stating that:

Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever. (13)

Thus, it is not just with Emily's sorrow that we sympathize, but all of her moments of passion. Being able to sympathize with a myriad of Emily's emotions opens up the connection the reader shares with Emily. Furthermore, this echoed in early reviews of the novel as Moers states "no matter how often her [Radcliffe] story threatens to be about horrid deeds, her heroine stands in the foreground of her books, pure, tender-minded, elegant, and conscious of the etiquette each situation demands" (135).

Sensibility is privileged in Radcliffe's Emily, and yet at the same time her flights into fancy and imagination are what allow the reader to experience the specific terror of the Gothic that was to become Radcliffe's special brand. Therefore, Radcliffe produces a split in the character's psyche which allows the reader to witness noble actions of sensibility but also indulge in the imagination of fancy, and the tantalizing rewards that curiosity bestows. Emily's curiosity spurs on the actions of the novel, but the form of a Gothic novel itself plays upon a reader's curiosity. The mysteries of a Gothic novel compel a reader to continue consuming the novel in order to find out what it is that Emily sees behind the veil or what is the source of the mysterious music? The reader's experience of the novel is predicated on an urge of discovery and curiosity.

Importantly, Emily's mind is not the only model for sensibility and curiosity that we witness. Emily and her father's mind are bonded in the novel first, and later Emily and Valencourt will be shown to have similar minds. Pleasure is shown to be derived from being able to sympathize with another. The pleasure one derives from witnessing another person describe an emotion that sparks recognition in the self is immensely gratifying. As Smith states "But whatever may be the cause of sympathy, or however it may be excited, nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a

fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast” (17). The pleasures in having another understand your feelings about an event or object helps to alleviate feelings of isolation but also shows the connection of minds. It is also imperative that Radcliffe shows these sympathetic gestures happening between genders as this provides a unifying element into the equality of gendered minds. One of the first moments of shared pleasure in sympathy in the text occurs between Emily and St. Aubert:

‘The evening gloom of woods was always delightful to me,’ said St. Aubert, whose mind now experienced the sweet calm, which results from the consciousness of having done a beneficent action, and which disposes it to receive pleasure from every surrounding object. ‘I remember that in my youth this gloom used to call forth to my fancy a thousand fairy visions, and romantic images; and I own, I am not yet wholly insensible of that high enthusiasm, which wakes the poet’s dream: I can linger, with solemn steps, under the deep shades, send forward a transforming eye into the distant obscurity, and listen with thrilling delight to the mystic murmuring of the woods.’ ‘O my dear father,’ said Emily, while a sudden tear started to her eye, ‘how exactly you describe what I have felt so often, and which I thought nobody had ever felt but myself.’ (Radcliffe 15)

This moment of shared sympathy unites father and daughter in their pleasure of witnessing the sublimity of nature. It also allows St. Aubert to reveal his dalliances with fancy conjuring up images of fairies and romantic visions. St. Aubert attests to residing in a poet’s dream, a stream of reverie transmitted by the sublimity of nature. This also demonstrates that St. Aubert’s mind is able to cross over into the spheres of

mind most often aligned with the feminine mind, those of sentimentality and fancy. St. Aubert and Emily share in this moment of sympathy and play on the fairy tale feelings exhibited in the valley. St. Aubert encourages the imagination of his daughter in this moment and indulges her as she on the spot composes a poem about the fairy tale landscape of their surroundings. It is important to note that Emily's imagination takes shape in her writing. Emily is often drawn to her writing in moments of sublime inspiration. He indulges in these reveries of former fancy and is able to also share in mutual sympathy with his daughter as she joyously attests that she has always felt this way too. The mutual sympathy that is glimpsed in this moment also helps us begin to think of the convoluted and paradoxical ways that sympathy and gendered minds are operating in this text.

We are first introduced to St. Aubert's mind who is the good patriarch of the text. St. Aubert teaches Emily how to think and control her emotions. Radcliffe paints a picture of a man of upstanding morality and great mental acumen, as well as a man who is led by the emotion of tranquil happiness:

His heart was occupied; it had, what can be so rarely said, no wish for a happiness beyond what it experienced. The consciousness of acting right diffused a serenity over his manners, which nothing else could impart to a man of moral perceptions like his, and which refined his sense of every surrounding blessing. (Radcliffe 4)

St. Aubert presents therefore as the ideal consciousness and male. He is content with his life and is a doting family man at one with the sublimity of nature. He finds repose in nature, a devotion to discourse with his wife, and playing with his children:

Here under the ample shade of a plane-tree, that spread its majestic canopy towards the river, St. Aubert loved to sit in the fine evenings of summer, with his wife and children, watching, beneath its foliage, the setting-sun...Here, too, he loved to read, and to converse with Madame St. Aubert; or to play with his children...His heart was occupied; it has, what can be so rarely said, no wish for a happiness beyond what it experienced. The consciousness of acting right diffused a serenity over his manners, which nothing else could impart to a man of moral perceptions like his, and which refined his sense of every surrounding blessing. (Radcliffe 4)

St. Aubert's goodness and morality are foregrounded in the presentation of him. St. Aubert is thus portrayed as a guide and navigator through the education and instruction of strength and discipline of mind as he appears to have reached an enviable level of bliss and contented existence.

Alas, this mental state does not last long for Emily's role model of consciousness as it does not take much time for the novel to quickly plunge into the trauma of St. Aubert's mind: "the first interruptions to the happiness he had known since his retirement, were occasioned by the death of his two sons" (Radcliffe 5). The loss of St. Aubert's sons urges him to take special care and notice of his daughter and particularly in the cultivation of her mind. St. Aubert's lessons with Emily take on a gendered quality as the death of his sons clearly impels him to make a substitute son out of Emily. His focus on educating Emily's mind grows from his need to pass on his own cognitive skills at maintaining a clear and reasonable mind, all associations commonly yoked with the gendered male mind.

The readerly sympathy and connection with Emily's mind starts early in the novel as Emily is explicitly instructed in how to control one's mind and especially gird the mind against moments of excessive feeling. St. Aubert watches Emily carefully as she grows up and determines that Emily is too susceptible to the dangers of excessive emotions, she appears to be inclined to these excessive emotions and fancies naturally through merely being born female. The role of fancy is often in a denigrating manner associated with women. With the loss of St. Aubert's sons, the scrutiny of Emily's growth is focused on her mind as the way to provide her with future success in her life, but also for the futurity of his own family line.

One daughter was now his only surviving child; and, while he watched the unfolding of her infant character, with anxious fondness, he endeavoured, with unremitting effort, to counteract those traits in her disposition, which might hereafter lead her from happiness. She had discovered in her early years uncommon delicacy of mind, warm affections, and ready benevolence; but with these was observable a degree of susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace. As she advanced in youth, this sensibility gave a pensive tone to her spirits, and a softness to her manner, which added grace to beauty, and rendered her a very interesting object to persons of a congenial disposition. But St. Aubert had too much good sense to prefer a charm to a virtue; and had penetration enough to see, that this charm was too dangerous to its possessor to be allowed the character of a blessing. He endeavoured, therefore, to strengthen her mind; to enure her to habits of self-command; to teach her to reject the first impulse of her feelings, and to look, with cool examination,

upon the disappointments he sometimes threw in her way. While he instructed her to resist first impressions, and to acquire that steady dignity of mind, that can alone counterbalance the passions, and bear us, as far as is compatible with our nature, above the reach of circumstances, he taught himself a lesson of fortitude; for he was often obliged to witness, with seeming indifference, the tears and struggles which his caution occasioned her. (Radcliffe 5)

St. Aubert's training of Emily's mind is described as an "unremitting effort." Thus St. Aubert's education and evaluation of Emily's mind becomes his full time job in a sense, he has no other occupation as he has been retired in the country for some time and now puts forth all his effort and energy into shaping and strengthening Emily's susceptible female mind. St. Aubert's steady instruction and evaluation of Emily's mind also produces the way that the patriarchal figure (St. Aubert) is the one with the knowledge and foresight to be able to see how best to shape Emily's mind. St. Aubert is granted the authority in the text to be the mind instructor. It is through the counsel and advice of the father figure that Emily is shown how to best instruct her mind. St. Aubert also sees the problems inherent in Emily becoming an "interesting object" as opposed to a virtuous person. The objectification of Emily St. Aubert shows in the way that other people interact with her. St. Aubert can see how Emily can be viewed as an "interesting object" but then it is through St. Aubert's reading of Emily's mind (his "too much of good sense") that he decides that this "charm" is not really a "virtue." Therefore, Emily must control these seemingly feminine urges and "strengthen" her mind in the masculine sense, in order to not be merely an object. The strengthening then of one's mind is in rejecting "first impulses" and "first

impressions” we get the sense that for Emily to educate and control her mind is to go against the natural first impulses of her being. These natural moments are the feminine impulses of her mind that St. Aubert urges her to fortify her mind against.

Furthermore, the narrator continues to inform us of the ways in which St. Aubert shapes Emily’s mind by instruction in academic subjects. The education of a female mind was not as openly determined in the year 1584 when the novel takes place. The pursuit of Emily’s mind in the academic realm is coded as a male pursuit. While the issue of educating women was certainly not a new topic, especially in 1794 when Ann Radcliffe published *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, coming out two years after Mary Wollstonecraft’s famous *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), where Wollstonecraft famously rallies and advocates for the right of woman’s education, but even more importantly is the fact that Radcliffe’s novel is set nearly two hundred years earlier in time, in 1584. Again, a time when women were in fact educated, but education was still firmly in a patriarchal realm as some people argued that certain topics were essentially acceptable for men, but considered potentially damaging for women. St. Aubert does not take this approach at educating Emily; however, he continues his masculine mind molding by teaching Emily the importance and beneficence of many different topics: “St. Aubert cultivated her understanding with the most scrupulous care. He gave her a general view of the sciences [not deemed a suitable feminine exercise], and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English; chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets” (Radcliffe 6). Again, the emphasis on St. Aubert’s careful and exacting education shows in the way he “cultivates” Emily’s mind as

though she is a plant in a garden. It is St. Aubert's "scrupulous care" of Emily's education that will teach her how to control her mind and how to learn to use reason and shun excessive emotions. Adela Pinch sheds some insight into the careful education of Emily by informing us that "The gothic novel is the genre that is most devoted to exploring and adjudicating the proportions of emotional response...Disciplining and demystifying her character's terrors, Radcliffe's novels suggest that there are ultimately standards of suitable emotional response" (111). Pinch's insight about the nature of the Gothic novel itself helps us to further think about this text as a didactic form of emotional response. It is compelling to note that Emily receives an education on par with that of men of her time.

One of the hallmarks of the early Female Gothic was in the idea of didacticism. Ann Radcliffe herself valued propriety of moral character and left the literary world after her character was besmirched by critics. Radcliffe, appeals to the readers in her didactic move of teaching sensibility, as she also works to affright the readers with moments of intense terror and spur them on through engaging their curiosity; however, the lesson of modulation is never far away. As Emily is taught how to think and how to behave, the reader is also taught to emulate these same behaviors and thoughts. The reader is taught to sympathize with Emily, to share in her joys, sorrows and other passions, but also to learn with her and to be educated with her, to be formed with her—thus a readerly sympathy emerges. Tania Modleski argues that:

One of Ann Radcliffe's explicit purposes in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the prototype of the famed Gothic, was to warn women against indulging in paranoid fancies and to extort them to keep busy in their solitude, the breeding

ground for such fancies. Over and over again, Emily St. Aubert's superstitious fears are quieted as they are shown to have quite reasonable explanations (63). Radcliffe's motivation, therefore, is to show the fallacies of the mind that occur when one allows their mind to fall into the indulgent ground of fancy and superstition. Emily's mind has been educated by her father to not indulge in these whims, and we as readers also must try and fight the urge to fall into these traps of excessive imagination and fears. Whenever we as readers assume the supernatural about something that has occurred in the text we are shown that is in fact a natural occurrence. There are no ghosts, goblins, or even dead bodies, but instead wax figures and easily explainable moments of natural occurrences. The unexplainable is always explained, which becomes a hallmark of Radcliffian Gothic. The reader is somewhat admonished for their outlandish thinking when at the end all is rendered as natural. The explained supernatural, which becomes a signature of the Female Gothic, is also interestingly intertwined with the action of writing. This recalls the question that Ahmed poses: "who faces the writing table? Does the writing table have a face, which points it toward some bodies rather than others?" (31) What characters in the Female Gothic are allowed to face the writing table? Emily is consistently told to not fall into fancy but is then encouraged also to write by her father. Jointly, Emily is allowed to indulge in sensibility in the correct settings, those of the sublime landscapes described in detail by Radcliffe. Robert Miles reminds us that while "much has been made of her development of the explained supernatural...her most significant innovation was to expand a particular element of *Otranto* [Horace Walpole's novel often cited as the first Gothic novel], the heroine in flight from a patriarchal ogre in a European

setting...Radcliffe picks this up, but she also included a period of extended escape and flight, a device that allowed her to track her heroines; progress through the picturesque and sublime scenery of southern Europe” (46). Furthermore, Fred Botting reminds us that

Radcliffe’s heroines come from the sentimental genre of fiction in which fine feelings are signs of virtue and nobility. They have a tendency, however, to overindulge their emotions, partaking too heavily of the cult of sensibility which flowered in the eighteenth century. Rarefied abandonments to feeling leave heroes and heroines in tears at the slightest melancholy thought and fainting at the smallest shock. Like the extravagant and superstitious imaginings that are displayed throughout Radcliffe’s works, excessive sensibility is shown in order to indicate its dangerous evocation of passions that corrupt the heart. Powerful feelings are legitimately expressed in the responses to the magnificence of the scenery through which heroines pass. (65)

Excessive emotions are only appropriate if channeled through the proper outlet, that of the landscape. It is relevant to remember that Emily and her father share their first moment of sympathetic exchange while reveling in the outdoors. This moment of excessive emotion is allowed and in fact encouraged, while the other modes of emotion, such as those felt by the incidents that become the explained supernatural, are to be tempered. Emily reminds us that all things that seem spooky or that go bump in the night are actually really quite reasonably explainable:

‘I perceive,’ said Emily, smiling, ‘that all old mansions are haunted; I am lately come from a place of wonders; but unluckily, since I have left it, I have heard almost all of them explained.’

Blanche was silent; Dorothee looked grave, and sighed; and Emily felt herself still inclined to believe more of the wonderful, than she chose to acknowledge. Just then, she remembered the spectacle she had witnessed in a chamber of Udolpho, and, by an odd kind of coincidence, the alarming words, that had accidentally met her eye in the MS. Papers, which she had destroyed, in obedience to the command of her father; and she shuddered at the meaning they seemed to impart, almost as much as at the horrible appearance, disclosed by the black veil. (Radcliffe 491)

It is significant that Emily is talking to other female characters in this moment. It is these women and their willingness to indulge in fancy that makes Emily try to teach them to not trust in fancy. Emily attempts to give a didactic lesson to them, but at the same time, she cannot seem to help herself as she falls into the fancy and the curiosity of those spectacles she has yet to uncover. Curiosity consumes her, even while she is trying to teach against it. Emily is reminded of the mysteries that have not yet been able to be fully explained by reason. Almost guiltily, she returns to these two moments that have obviously been wreaking havoc on her fancy and thus choking out her reasonable mind. In this moment, as Emily attempts to dispel the lingering effects of supernatural fear, she is reminded of two events that have not been properly explained, and begins to fret again about these moments; however, at the end of the novel we are shown that these moments too are explainable moments and that nothing supernatural

has occurred during the entire course of the novel. The entire novel has been a way of teaching one not to give into the excesses of emotion and to trust the rational brain. The great mystery of the text of what is behind the veil is revealed to be merely a wax figure: “had she dared to look again, her delusion and her fears would have vanished together, and she would have perceived, that the figure before her was not human, but formed of wax” (Radcliffe 662). At the end all of the unexplained is explained and Emily’s lessons from her father are shown to prevail. It is not hard to see then the ways in which Emily is contained by reality, morality, and domesticity.

Early in the novel, St. Aubert teaches Emily to restrain her excess of emotions. The excess of emotions is often a denigrated feature in women and this excess is thus taught by St. Aubert to be something to repress. Emily’s ability to behave with the mind schooled in masculine thought must be taught how to repress effusions of emotion: “women traditionally considered the more delicate and susceptible sex, were thought particularly vulnerable to this kind of sensory overload” (Dobree 677). After Emily’s mother’s funeral St. Aubert teaches Emily about the danger inherent in an excess of emotions:

All excess is vicious; even that sorrow, which is amiable in its origin, becomes a selfish and unjust passion, if indulged at the expense of our duties—by our duties I mean what we owe to ourselves, as well as to others. The indulgence of excessive grief enervates the mind, and almost incapacitates it for again partaking of those various innocent enjoyments which a benevolent God designed to be the sun-shine of our lives. My dear Emily, recollect and practice the precepts I have so often given you, and which your own experience has so

often shewn you to be wise. Your sorrow is useless. Do not receive this as merely a commonplace remark, but let reason *therefore* restrain sorrow. I would not annihilate your feelings, my child, I would only teach you to command them (Radcliffe 20).

What should be a moment of shared sympathy between father and daughter after the end of a loved ones funeral, instead becomes a time to impart lessons about control and repression. This missed moment to sympathize curiously does not allow either person the shared ability to sympathize and connect, instead they are supposed to retreat further into themselves. St. Aubert wants Emily not to sorrow, but to have command over her feelings. St. Aubert continues, up until his dying breath, to educate and steel Emily's mind from the unwanted grievances of an excess of passion. Upon his deathbed, St. Aubert exhorts Emily with even more instructions about the proper way to use her mind:

Do not indulge in the pride of fine feeling, the romantic error of amiable minds. Those, who really possess sensibility, ought early to be taught, that it is a dangerous quality, which is continually extracting the excess of misery, or delight, from every surrounding circumstance. And, since, in our passage through this world, painful circumstances occur more frequently than pleasing ones, and since our sense of evil is, I fear, more acute than our sense of good, we become the victims of our feelings, unless we can in some degree command them. (Radcliffe 80)

St. Aubert's desperate last speech to his daughter warns her of the dangers not of the world, but how she will react to the dangers of the world. The world is painful, but the

way in which Emily can safeguard herself from these troubles is through not succumbing to her feelings and allowing her emotions to rule her. Donna Heiland remarks that “these pieces of advice [those that are delivered upon St. Aubert’s death bed] constitute St. Aubert’s efforts to protect his daughter, and together point to his clear understanding of what it takes for a woman to protect herself in late eighteenth-century society” (74). This need for protection is thus rooted in a woman’s ability to tame her emotions.

If Emily is the exemplar of emotional containment, Lady Laurentini, later known as mad Sister Agnes, becomes the figure to fear as she is led astray by her excess of emotion. The mystery of Lady Laurentini’s disappearance is related by the villainous Montoni:

‘Ye are to know, Signors that the Lady Laurentini had for some month’s shewn symptoms of a dejected mind, nay, of a disturbed imagination. Her mood was very unequal; sometimes she was sunk in calm melancholy, and, at others, as I have been told, she betrayed all the symptoms of frantic madness. It was one night in the month of October, after she had recovered from one of those fits of excess, and had sunk again into her usual melancholy, that she retired alone to her chamber, and forbade all interruption.’ (Radcliffe 290)

The focus of Montoni’s story about Laurentini is the focus of her troubled and excessive mind. The way Montoni frames Laurentini’s story by her emotions and seeming madness thrusts her in the very feminine role of a woman unable to control her emotions. Her madness and seemingly mysterious disappearance also serves as a catalyst to produce fear and anxiety in not only the listeners of Montoni’s tale, but in

Emily as well. Annette, the superstitious servant, and another example of someone who is moved by her passions as opposed to her reason, also tells Emily the story of Laurentini and through the telling of the tale is able to “infect” Emily’s mind with superstitions and terrors: “Emily, whom Annette had now infected with her own terrors listened attentively” (Radcliffe 239). The language of infection is interesting to consider as the mere telling of this tale allows Emily’s mind to become enmeshed in a sympathetic alliance with this poor madwoman. Her mysterious plight obviously troubles and moves Emily to a disturbed consciousness. One woman’s madness is able to infect the others merely through the art of storytelling. It is also through this form of storytelling that we are pushed back into time and into the past. Emily’s mind if “infected” with anything it is with the past. Brandy Lain Schillace argues that “Emily is equally endangered by mental disruption through the very reminiscence she clings to...the indulgence of memory frequently become dangerous employment in this gothic tale” (273). The past becomes a dangerous place for the female mind to go. Indulging in tales of Laurentini’s frightful past invokes images of infection and diseased minds. When Emily herself indulges in reminisces of her past and falls into pits of sorrow after her father’s death her mental state becomes more reflective of Montoni’s description of Laurentini’s mental state. In the period following her father’s death Emily has a harder time adhering to her father’s instruction and begins to slip into the land of excessive emotions:

The solitary life, which Emily had led of late, and the melancholy subjects, on which she had suffered her thoughts to dwell, had rendered her at times sensible to the ‘thick-coming fancies’ of a mind greatly enervated. It was

lamentable, that her excellent understanding should have yielded, even for a moment, to the reveries of superstition, or rather to those starts of imagination, which deceive the senses into what can be called less than momentary madness. Instances of this temporary failure of mind had more than once occurred since her return home particularly when, wandering through this lonely mansion in the evening twilight, she had been alarmed by appearances, which would have been unseen in her more cheerful days. To this infirm state of her nerves may be attributed what she imagined, when, her eyes glancing a second time on the arm-chair, which stood in an obscure part of the closet, the countenance of her dead father appeared there. (Radcliffe 102-3)

Emily in this moment forgets the education of her mind in the rational and quite literally begins to hallucinate superstitious images of ghostly apparitions, including the figure of her father. We are told that her forays into these moments of superstition are “lamentable” and instances of “momentary madness.” The fall of Emily into these instances of excessive feeling are then likened to that of Laurentini’s madness as well. The excessive nature of emotions, hence leads to the maddening and loss of capable thinking faculties.

The Bluebeard Connection

The nature of curiosity is complicated by an embedded allusion to the fairy tale “Bluebeard.” The feeling of curiosity is gendered as female in “Bluebeard” stories and often results in death as the wife of Bluebeard is unable to quell her curiosity. The Bluebeard story is occupied with teaching women how to behave acceptably in arranged marriages. Briefly, the story of Bluebeard pertains to a young wife who

marries the hideous Bluebeard, but tries to overlook his hideous blue beard in order to luxuriate in the riches of his large castle. Upon returning to his castle after his hasty marriage, Bluebeard is suddenly called away upon business and entrusts the keys of his castle into his new wife's care. The one caveat is that the wife must not enter the room in the tower. Bluebeard gives her the key to this room as well, but forbids her to enter this section of the house. Of course, as soon as Bluebeard leaves, his wife produces the key to the forbidden room and enters it only to find horrors. The horrors of Bluebeard's chamber include torture devices and the dead bodies of all his former wives. In her terror to escape the room, the wife of Bluebeard drops her keys in the blood that fills the room of Bluebeard's former wives. The wife's act of transgression stains the key and she knows that upon his return, Bluebeard will ask for his keys back and find that his wife has gravely trespassed. She knows she will be his next victim in Bluebeard's room of torture and death.

In most Bluebeard tales, the wife is saved by the help of her brothers who arrive just in time to dispatch Bluebeard. Charles Perrault's story ends in a surprising moral: "Curiosity, in spite of its many charms, Can bring with it serious regrets; You can see a thousand examples of it every day. Women succumb, but it's a fleeting pleasure; As soon as you satisfy it, it ceases to be. And it always proves very, very costly" (148). This odd moral seems to inculcate women's curiosity as the thing that needs to be overcome and denied in the telling of the Bluebeard story, not the husband's murderous plans. This moral of punishing the woman for her flights of fancy and her eager curiosity can be tracked to Emily's own excursions as she looks for her missing Aunt, Madame Cheron. Emily, perhaps thinking of the Bluebeard tales

herself, allows her imagination to overwhelm her as she searches for her aunt. One of the guards, Barnardine, directs Emily to the place where her aunt is supposed to reside.

Once inside Emily fears she is also being led to her moment of destruction:

The obscure and terrible place, to which he had conducted her, seemed to justify the thought [that this was the place of her destruction]; it was a place suited for murder, a receptacle for the dead, where a deed of horror might be committed, and no vestige appear to proclaim it. Emily was so overwhelmed with terror, that, for a moment, she was unable to determine what conduct to pursue. (345)

The place that Barnardine takes Emily, is essentially Bluebeard's forbidden chamber. The locale of the forbidden and terrifying place empties Emily of her ability to think as she is "overwhelmed with terror." Her curiosity to know where her aunt is located has thus put her in the role of Bluebeard's wife, who as Perrault's moral tells us should not succumb to the feelings of curiosity. Emily also knows that she should not fall into these moments of curious passions, because of her father's instruction, but still her curiosity overrides her reason. Upon entering the so-called Bluebeard's chamber Emily surveys the scene around her:

She perceived no furniture, except, indeed, an iron chair, fastened in the centre of the chamber, immediately over which, depending on a chain from the ceiling, hung an iron ring. Having gazed upon these, for some time, with wonder and horror, she next observed iron bars below, made for the purpose of confining the feet, and on the arms of the chair were rings of the same metal. As she continued to survey them, she concluded, that they were instruments of

torture, and it struck her, that some poor wretch had once been fastened in this chair, and had there been starved to death. She was chilled by the thought; but, what was her agony, when, in the next moment, it occurred to her, that her aunt might have been one of those victims, and that she herself might be next! An acute pain seized her head, she was scarcely able to hold the lamps, and, looking round for support, was seating herself, unconsciously, in the iron chair itself. (Radcliffe 348)

In this scene Emily allows her imagination to override her senses and is essentially outside of her rational mind. Her imagination conjures up the bodies of the poor souls who once resided in these torture chambers and does not allow Emily to retain her equilibrium. She becomes dizzy with the race of imaginary images that transport themselves across Emily's mind. These moments of imagination become too overwhelming for her and she feels "an acute pain" in her head. Emily is thus routinely represented as losing all sense when faced with an excess of imagination. Much like Bluebeard's wife, the curiosity that impels Emily, ultimately leads her down an even more dangerous path. A path where Emily's mind is at stake and she is unable to control her wild flights of fancy.

Finally, while Emily does sometimes indulge in her excessive emotions and give into her feminine attribute of lacking control of her emotions, she is able to garner sympathy from the evil and conniving Montoni because of her ability in most ways to attempt to restrain or tamp down her feminine feelings. Montoni commends Emily by stating:

I am not in the habit of flattering, and you will, therefore, receive, as sincere, the praise I bestow, when I say, that you possess an understanding superior to that of your sex; and that none of those contemptible foibles, that frequently mark the female character—such as avarice and the love of power, which latter makes women delight to contradict and tease, when they cannot conquer. If I understand your disposition and your mind, you hold in sovereign contempt these common failings of your sex. (Radcliffe 380)

Now, of course, Montoni is attempting to elevate Emily with his false flattery so that she will sign away her property to him, but it is interesting that his approach to this machination is through the debasement of the female sex, but elevates Emily above the usual judgments of her sex. Emily's mind is therefore praised in this case for not being feminine in nature. Interestingly enough Montoni and Emily share more than one may at first think. It is through their control and stoicism that we begin to see where an uneasy sympathy between the two lies: "Emily felt admiration, but not the admiration that leads to esteem; for it was mixed with a degree of fear she knew not exactly wherefore" (Radcliffe 122). Delucia posits that "part of Emily's admiration for Montoni stems from their shared stoicism, their ability to restrain emotion under extreme circumstances. The unnamed 'fear' that accompanies her admiration for Montoni may register a suspicion that they are more alike than it at first seems" (107). This interesting and perhaps conflicting image of the villain and the heroine being perhaps more closely linked introduces an interesting dynamic into the duality of their gendered minds.

A Reunion of Sympathetic Minds

While Emily may share a strange kind of sympathy with Montoni, she is obviously meant to share her mind and her life with Valancourt, the suitor that not only connects with Emily, but perhaps even more importantly becomes a stand in for her father's mind. Valancourt and St. Aubert enjoy each other's company and have much in common, therefore securing a kind of mutual sympathy. It is telling that the only man that Emily can love is one that was previously approved by her father, even though her father is now gone. It is his presence that lingers over Emily's ideas whether she is scared and mentally projects his ghostly appearance or whether she uses his former esteem of a person to enmesh them within her life.

He [St. Aubert] found great pleasure in conversing with Valancourt, and in listening to his ingenuous remarks. The fire and simplicity of his manners seemed to render him a characteristic figure in the scenes around them; and St. Aubert discovered in his sentiments the justness and the dignity of an elevated mind, unbiassed by intercourse with the world. He perceived, that his opinions were formed, rather than imbibed; were more the result of thought, than of learning. Of the world he seemed to know nothing; for he believed well of all mankind, and this opinion gave him the reflected image of his own heart. (Radcliffe 49).

It is interesting that what St. Aubert finds to be so attractive in this young suitor of his daughter is his naiveté with the world. The sympathetic link between St. Aubert's own feelings and Valancourt's creates the perfect link for Emily to allow her emotions to be funneled into this man. The shared minds of Valancourt and St. Aubert essentially

make Valancourt a substitute for the missing father of Emily. It is not a surprise that these minds then find each other even after much dispute and seemingly heart wrenching endings, but all's well at the end as these two lovers unite:

Having survived more threats than her father could have imagined possible, Emily has one more hurdle to navigate. She has long been courted by Valancourt, and while her father seemingly approved him as a mate, while her aunt even endorsed their engagement (though only because she wanted the social connection with his family), their marriage is delayed until the end of the novel. Their connection is initially severed by Montoni, but later denied by Emily as well, when she learns that Valancourt spent time in the gaming houses of Paris – and even found himself in debtor's prison – while she was at Udolpho. Such behavior grows from a sensibility more motivated by passion and greed than it ought to be, and only when he convinces Emily that he has repented as well as reformed – that he is more like her father than like – Montoni – does she agree to marry him. (Heiland 75)

Heiland's reading of the closing scenes are important to consider because it is ultimately the alignment of Valancourt with her father that creates in him the perfect match for Emily. There have been many impediments along the way, but now they are able to come together and unite:

O! how joyful it is tell of happiness, such as that of Valancourt and Emily; to relate, that, after suffering under the oppression of the vicious and the disdain of the weak, they were, at length, restored to each other—to the beloved landscapes of their native country,—to the securest felicity of this life, that of

aspiring to moral and laboring for intellectual improvement—to the pleasures of enlightened society, and to exercise of the benevolence, which had always animated their hearts; while the bowers of La Vallee became, once more, the retreat of goodness, wisdom and domestic blessedness. (Radcliffe 672)

The return of the lovers and the emphasis on their intellectual pursuits and the cultivation of their minds produce the understanding of the importance of the duality of the gendered mind for these two lovers.

Coda

Ann Radcliffe's depiction of gendered minds displays how Emily aligns with masculine thinking. Her curiosity displays a dualistic form of thinking, and while one form of curiosity is denigrated (the superstitious curiosity), her other form of curiosity which is aligned more with epistemic curiosity (or her desire to know) is key to her survival. Emily's agency in her own survival is clear if one regards her curiosity in a positive manner. This reading of Emily also subverts the common reading within Female Gothic criticism that focusses on the victimization of female characters. This is, of course, not to say that the victimization of female characters does not occur in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; however, by re-orienting the way we view Emily's education by her father and her ability to sympathize with male minds, a more complicated and nuanced depiction of the female mind emerges—one that can cross gender divides.

Radcliffe's work was critical in creating the mode of the Female Gothic. Her influence helps to pave the way in the future of the mode to more complicated depictions of female education, consumption of knowledge, and the way that curiosity

can play an active and empowering role in a character's evolution, while also pushing her to understand truths that are marginalized by male notions of knowledge.

Additionally, because of Emily's ability to traverse gendered thinking lines due to the education from her father, she is able to produce a sympathetic reading of a patriarchal tyrant's mind (Montoni) which she is able to use to her advantage. Radcliffe sets a precedent for women characters in the Female Gothic for their curiosity to not be read as a wholly negative attribute, but instead a positive impulse that helps women protect and save themselves from patriarchal tyrants.

CHAPTER 2:

JANE EYRE'S HEIRS AND THE LITERARY GENEALOGY OF THE FEMALE GOTHIC

The impact of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* on the study of the Female Gothic is notably one of the focal points for Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's landmark scholarly text, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979). Gilbert and Gubar spend much time accentuating the points of Jane's life that are concerned with confinement in relation to different physical structures. The confinement of Jane in different architectural spaces, as well as the confinement of other female characters (notably Bertha in the attic) helped Gilbert and Gubar to identify some of the main tenets of the Female Gothic, such as "enclosure in stultifying roles and houses...attempts to escape through flight, starvation...and madness" (341). While *Jane Eyre* commonly invests in the familiar Female Gothic themes that characterized Radcliffe's heroines—those of confinement, deprivation, and violence, in a Brontian feminist twist—Jane differs greatly from the Radcliffian female protagonists in the ways that her anger and passions are shown. Furthermore, Jane is able to escape the stultifying confines of her enclosures time after time. Brontë builds upon the foundation of the Radcliffian Gothic mode by having many scenes emphasize the fear of being haunted in order to address fear and isolation while also exploring elements of female curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge. Susan Wolstenholme argues that the "Gothic narrative teaches its reader specific modes of objectifying and interpreting 'woman,' while destabilizing the readings it invites" (59). Brontë, in many cases, will use the same motifs as

Radcliffe, and yet while Brontë's characters are "sometimes gazing at the very same figures, images, and set scenes that Radcliffe's narrators observed—the convent, nightmare, woman-as-spectacle—Brontë's first-person narrators focus attention on the doubleness of their 'vision,' as they objectify themselves as part of what-is-looked-at" (Wolstenholme 59-60). This doubling of vision and self-consciousness of Gothic motifs also allows Brontë the ability to question issues surrounding gendered depictions and modes of representation of curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge in the Female Gothic. Moreover, *Jane Eyre*'s narrative impact is felt through successive interpretations of the Female Gothic well into the twentieth century and is traced through subsequent Female Gothic offerings beginning with Daphne DuMaurier's *Rebecca* (1938), Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), and finally Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). These texts have been specially selected as they demonstrate the intertextual relationship of the Female Gothic and build upon the bones of Brontë's text. They all serve as reinterpretations of Brontë's novel to a degree, and are adaptations of the Bluebeard tale type as mediated through Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

Jane Eyre's impact on the Female Gothic is shown through the depictions and evolution of female characters in the novels that come after. Diane Long Hoeveler suggests in *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* that women in the Gothic move from victim as seen in early progenitors of the mode into the monstrous feminine that is displayed in the twentieth century. A crucial shift occurs in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* that allows the "othered" or marginalized figure in the Gothic novel to have a voice. This chapter examines the

intertextuality among Daphne DuMaurier's *Rebecca*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, emphasizing the evolution of curiosity and female character's pursuit of knowledge. These texts demonstrate what Julie Sanders calls the "filtration effect" wherein adaptations tend to adapt other adaptations and form a complex intertextual web (13). I argue that this grouping of texts utilizes and maximizes the Bluebeard motif from *Jane Eyre* and reshapes it along different lines to call attention to fears surrounding the loss of autonomy and the way in which curiosity impels these women down active paths of resistance against previously inscribed gender norms.

Jane Eyre's connection to the Bluebeard tale is a recognized detail in Brontë studies: Stephen Benson argues that *Jane Eyre* is a principal case of the synthesis of Gothic romance and fairy tales, particularly "Bluebeard" (233). John Sutherland observes that "the echoes of 'Bluebeard' in *Jane Eyre* are obvious" (69). Patricia Ingham discerns that "it becomes apparent that Rochester is the Bluebeard-sultan with Jane as the Scheherazade of this story" (141). And Victoria Anderson states that there is "no denying the close correlation between 'Bluebeard' and the general trajectory of the Gothic novel" (111). Heta Pyrhönen argues that "*Jane Eyre* provides a major reading of this tale ['Bluebeard'], one that has greatly influenced the work of subsequent female authors" (7). Pyrhönen's investigation into the lineage of *Jane Eyre*'s influence on successive Female Gothic writers explores divergences amongst the adaptations while also exploring structures of plot and mapping symbolic registers of hysteria (14-5). Pyrhönen's work maps out a compelling lineage of *Jane Eyre* but often focuses on the essentialist elements of the Female Gothic that have long stood as

hallmarks of the tradition, such as hysteria and victimization. This chapter elaborates on the ways these texts are connected through the way curiosity is employed by female characters, which I see as a more active trait than the tropes that have linked these Female Gothic texts together in the past.

Considering Ahmed's interrogations concerning queer genealogy aid in re-orienting the links between these texts. Ahmed's concept of "queer genealogy" argues that it is not about producing a new family tree, "which would turn queer connections into new lines, nor would it be about creating a line that connects two sides. A queer genealogy would take the very 'affects' of mixing, or coming into contact with things that reside on different lines, as opening up new kinds of connections" (154-5).

Ahmed is specifically talking here about the ethnic dispersion and the mixing of races within families. But by using Ahmed's configuration to apply to the symbolic familial structure of *Jane Eyre's* literary heirs, we can reorient ourselves away from the usual lines drawn by Female Gothic criticism, thereby tracing out different connections concerning these texts. For example, focusing on the utilization of curiosity allows us to follow different lines of inquiry to create new connections between these texts.

Ahmed's theorization of lines and alignments is crucial to consider when formulating a queer genealogy of these texts. For Ahmed, the normative axis which produces bodily horizons and spaces for actions is produced by the "repetition of bodily actions" over time (66). The vertical axis only seems straight when it is aligned with other lines. Ahmed uses the metaphor of a tracing paper to explain the effects of lines being drawn over lines: "when the lines on the tracing paper are aligned with the lines of the paper that has been traced, then the lines of the tracing paper disappear:

you can simply see one set of lines” (66). This effect creates alignment. Therefore, when a line is out of place or if one line does not appear, it gives the general effect of being “wonky or even queer” (66). By considering the “Bluebeard” tale type as an important originary line for the Female Gothic, it is conceptualized as a vertical axis in which all other iterations are traced on top of it. However, these texts do not create alignment. While some lines are traced, other lines drop off or are reconfigured altering the adaptation of the “Bluebeard” tale. How these collections of texts trace and retrace these narrative lines will illuminate how they diverge from the normative originary vertical axis line. This divergence will help to track how the mechanisms of curiosity and the progression of what impels these female characters away or towards knowledge evolves over time. The central feature of curiosity in the “Bluebeard” trope evolves, and every time the trope is repeated it produces a divergence from the previous iteration.

The Bluebeard Connection

Brontë utilizes specific tropes from the Bluebeard myth in the overarching plot of *Jane Eyre*. The fairy tale of Bluebeard recorded by Charles Perrault tells the tale of a young woman who discovers the mutilated bodies of her new husband’s former wives in his secret room that she has sworn she will not enter. In her fright, the new bride drops the key to the room in blood, which stains the key and tells of the wife’s transgression. The husband, upon finding out about the wife’s disobedience, begins to enact a ritual murder only to be interrupted by the bride’s brothers. Perrault’s moral to the story ends as a caution to women: “Curiosity, in spite of its many charms, can bring with it serious regrets; You can see a thousand examples of it every day, women

succumb, but it's a fleeting pleasure; as soon as you satisfy it, it ceases to be. And it always proves very, very costly" (Perrault 148). Perrault cautions his female readers explicitly concerning the dangerous consequences of curiosity and their thirst for knowledge. Maria Tatar explains that "the tale has been framed as a story about transgressive desire, as a text that enunciates the dire consequences of curiosity and disobedience" (139). Critics have interpreted the story as being about "a woman's marital disobedience of sexual infidelity rather than about her husband's murderous violence" focusing their attention on the symbolism of the bloody key (Tatar 141). Bruno Bettelheim argues that the bloody key becomes a sign of "marital infidelity" (302). While Carl-Heinz Mallett claims that it is a marker for the "irreversible loss of her virginity" (201). The fact that Bluebeard has a room full of corpses in various states of horrific dismemberment is willfully ignored in order to place blame on a woman's transgressive curiosity. The vilification of Bluebeard's wives instead of the unpacking of the horror of patriarchal marriage rituals, aligns the wife of Bluebeard with other curious women throughout literature, such as Pandora and Eve who were also punished for their drive for knowledge. Tatar argues that "Bluebeard's wife may suffer from an excess of transgressive curiosity, but that curiosity is clearly intellectual rather than sexual. Her curiosity turns her into an energetic investigator, determined to acquire knowledge of the secrets hidden behind the door of the castle's forbidden chamber" (141). Ultimately, her quest for knowledge saves her life as she is also smart enough to stall for time until her brothers arrive to dispatch her murderous tyrant of a husband. It is the agency of the wife's drive for knowledge and her quick wits in stalling that allow her to not only outwit Bluebeard but also become the sole heir to a

vast fortune and estate after her brothers easily eliminate him. As Tatar shows, many critics readily cast aspersions on the wife's curiosity, overlooking the ways in which her curiosity breaks the cycle of murder and mayhem in Bluebeard's forbidden chamber. The blueprint of the "Bluebeard" story becomes an important vehicle for the investigation of curiosity within the Female Gothic and specifically *Jane Eyre* and her literary heirs.

The similarities between the Bluebeard tale and *Jane Eyre* are easily registered: Rochester (an older man like Bluebeard) is searching for a new spouse; Rochester guards his secrets in a protective fashion; and most notably, he incarcerates his former wife in the attic. Furthermore, there is Jane's explicit comparison of Thornfield to Bluebeard's castle: "I lingered in the long passage to which this led, separating the front and back rooms of the third story – narrow, low and dim, with only one little window at the far end, and looking, with its two rows of small black doors all shut, like a corridor in some Bluebeard's castle" (Brontë 126). The spatial imagery and construction of labyrinthine passages adds to the confusion of navigating the patriarchal homestead.

The correlation between the Bluebeard tale and *Jane Eyre* is crucial to understanding the trajectory of the Female Gothic. Stephen Benson argues that "*Jane Eyre* is a prime example of the fusion of Gothic romance and the fairy tale, in particular 'Bluebeard'" (233). This fusion of the fairy tale motifs found within Bluebeard are also used as an explicit example of the punishments doled out to women who become too curious or behave in so-called "monstrous" ways. Anne Williams argues that Bluebeard distills all the central generic conventions of the Gothic: "a

vulnerable and curious heroine; a wealthy, enigmatic, and usually older man; and a mysterious house concealing the violent, implicitly sexual secrets of this man” (22). Not only do the conventions of the fairytale become easily boiled down into the broader strokes of the Gothic convention, but the way in which place is utilized also becomes indicative of the major themes that play out in the Bluebeard story. For example, Heta Pyrhönen observes that “like Bluebeard’s mansion...the Gothic house always reflects its male owner. Not only does the chamber mirror his guilty secret, but also the layout of house echoes his duplicity. The public spaces of his mansion proclaim his wealth and respectability, while the secret closet refers to the crimes he commits in private” (9). The relationship between space and the acquisition of knowledge through curiosity which now appears as curiosity about a man’s “private” domain, and thus about the very division between public and private, and who it benefits will be an important line to trace through the Female Gothic texts that utilize the Bluebeard tale as an important cornerstone of their narratives.

Additionally, another “Bluebeard” theme to trace is the treatment of the previous wife. Gilbert and Gubar focus on Bertha as Jane’s double, who as Rochester’s first wife is dealt the punishment of incarceration and finally self-inflicted death. Gilbert and Gubar argue that Brontë sends out an important warning that is also made explicitly clear: transgress normative patriarchal codes and have one’s autonomy removed.

Jane Eyre

The emphasis on space in the novel also directs our attention to the ways characters are oriented towards objects and other characters. What characters are

allowed to inhabit certain spaces? And while in these spaces what objects or people do female characters turn towards? Are they allowed to turn to practices of education and knowledge? Are they permitted to let their curiosity wander, or are they contained and shut up? It is useful to consider the way that Ahmed uses the verb “wander.” For Ahmed, “wander helps us track the significance of attention as a mode of turning toward. To wander can mean to ramble without certain course, to go aimlessly, to take one direction without intention or control, to stray from a path, or even to deviate in conduct or belief” (29). Thus, we can ask the question who is allowed to wander? Curiosity is conceived as a wandering of thought. Who is able to be curious and who is not?

Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is a Gothic tale that uses spatial imagery to call attention to particular tensions and anxieties in the text produced by being a woman in 19th century Northern England. Gilbert and Gubar argue that Brontë’s novel “explores the tension between parlor and attic, the psychic split between the lady who submits to male dicta and the lunatic who rebels” (86). The parlor is the public space where women who submit to patriarchal control are allowed to be shown off to an extent, and the attic becomes a place of confinement. These spaces are also racialized by the fact that Rochester’s first wife Bertha, the foreign “other,” is the one restrained in the attic, while Jane and Rochester’s ward Adele are seen fit to inhabit more public spaces like the parlour. It is also important to note that when women are not around, parlours go unused, as if there is nothing to display to the public’s eye. For when Jane reunites with Rochester at Ferndean, she notices that “the parlour looked gloomy: a neglected handful of fire burnt low in the grate” (Brontë 499). Without Jane or any other woman

around to populate the parlour with life, it appears gloomy and lifeless. The structure of the house and the spaces that are coded for purposes by specific genders recalls Bluebeard's house as the wife is allowed to wander freely in all the rooms except for the locked room at the top of the house.

Prior to Jane's reunion with Rochester at Ferndean and before Thornfield is set to blaze, Jane spends much of her time in the parlour at Thornfield with her pupil Adèle. Many lessons and conversations are had in the parlour, which again allow the parlour to be normalized into a public space of decorum, and a place where normative knowledge is dispensed. On the other hand, the attic is the space of confinement and a barrier of knowledge for Bertha who symbolizes the rebellious and racialized feminine spirit. Problematically, Bertha is characterized as "repressed, raging, and revengeful" (Wood 108). Bertha thus acts out the frustrated and repressed passions of the imprisoned woman who is confined against her will by patriarchal forces. By living in the attic, Bertha lacks any communication with the outside world other than by Grace Poole her caretaker. Bertha's curiosity about the world outside and her problematic vengeance urge her to escape her confines and appear as a ghostly visage to Jane at one point as she attempts to burn down Thornfield. Later, she succeeds at this goal. Bertha is not supposed to wander, and thus she is not allowed to be curious, but the pull to escape her confines urge her to escape. To confine a person, is to attempt to restrain their curiosity. Bertha's curiosity and wandering is coded as harmful, while Jane's wandering and curiosities are presented as knowledge seeking. The divide between the two can be seen as a racial one.

The qualities of Bertha's mental state are explicitly tied to her race and family line. Importantly, Anna Neill states that "After all, Bertha is not only transported, imprisoned, and physically restrained by her captor, she is also powerfully raced. As the product of a diseased line whose mental incapacity is tied to the torrid climate it has inhabited for so many generations, she becomes a subject, not just of her tyrant husband but of the technologies of imperial management" (8-9). Bertha is exposed as a moral and mental defective that has only grown worse because of the oppressive heat from her home in Jamaica. Rochester moves back to England with her in hopes of curing her madness. Rochester's urge is also a patriarchal mode of domination in an effort to corral the way that Bertha thinks. Her exposure to the outside world is withdrawn and her mind rots in the attic away from the public spaces of exchange of knowledge like the parlour which becomes a space off limits to Bertha.

The imperialism inherent in *Jane Eyre* also extends in some parts to Adèle who is remonstrated often for her French passion. However, where Rochester feels that Adèle can be taught and molded into a proper woman, Bertha's race and geographical upbringing have proven to make her a lost cause. Rochester reports that "Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard...Bertha, like a dutiful child, copied her parent in both points" (Brontë 337). Rochester's incrimination of Bertha's degeneracy points specifically to her bloodline as being deficient. Bertha has inherited these defects from her parents. Borrowing from Ahmed's conception of "inheritance"—"to receive and to possess," we can see Bertha's defects as that which she has "received" from her parents, but also as that by

which she is now possessed (126). In this respect, she is thus aligned with demonic possession, and as Jane hears her eerie laughter, she asks “is she possessed with a devil?” (Brontë 173). The possession of these traits and her behaviors are continuously aligned with the supernatural as the sounds Bertha makes are described as “goblin-laughter” and “unnatural sounds” (Brontë 173).

The characterization of Bertha as unnatural and demonic is a common way that those in colonial positions of power dehumanize the racial “other” as a means to make them seem strange and unfamiliar. Ahmed states that “this world, too, is ‘inherited’ as a dwelling: it is a world shaped by colonial histories, which affect not simply how maps are drawn, but the kinds of orientations we have towards objects and others. Race becomes, in this model, a question of what is within reach, what is available to perceive and to do ‘things’ with” (126). Bertha is raced by her connection to Jamaica, a British colony, and her racial otherness is solidified by the statement that her mother was a Creole. Rochester attempts to shape her behavior by orienting her into a place of confinement and deprivation, an approach that he does not share with Adèle, who he believes he can shape and mold by hiring Jane as her governess. Partially due to age, but mostly having to do with race, Adèle has a chance to be directed towards the “right” kind of imperial knowledge, whereas Bertha is chalked up to a lost cause because of her racial otherness.

Furthermore, as Bertha is “a type whose moral and mental fibre is slackened by excessive heat [which] may be corrected and improved by transplantation; where degeneration is apparently so advanced that even a change of situation cannot check it, it must be restrained, silenced, and subdued” (Neill 9). Rochester’s lack of control

over Bertha, causes him to remove her from open and public spaces, such as the parlour and forces her into the confines of the attic, as a way to attempt to contain and dehumanize her. Rochester's colonializing attitude towards Bertha is echoed by Jane as she describes Bertha's disturbing apparition as having "a discoloured face—it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments" (Brontë 327). Bertha's violence and savagery are linked to the color of her skin and therefore confirm the later remarks by Rochester that unlike Adèle, who can be trained, Bertha's madness is inherited and cannot be undone.

The racially charged attitudes directed towards Bertha operate in different manner when compared to Adèle. When Jane finds out that Adèle is the "illegitimate offspring of a French opera-girl" Jane tells Rochester that "Adèle is not answerable for either her mother's faults or yours [Rochester's]" (Brontë 170). Adèle's youth may also play a role in her ability to not be inculcated by her parent's actions, as inheritance through offspring is formed by producing what Ahmed calls a "good likeness" (127). Rochester attempts to shape and mold Adèle's likeness as a child into a respectable English woman by employing Jane as her governess. Adèle's pursuit of knowledge is directed by Jane through her education at a young age, and will allow Adèle to be shaped by the ideologies that Rochester adheres to, whereas Bertha is too far gone and thus must be concealed and confined.

Concealment works in multiple ways in the novel. Self-concealment can be a way of attempting to harness a sliver of autonomy over one's being. Jane at times conceals herself willingly, and when she does a unique space of female creativity and thought flourishes that is not afforded in either the spaces of the parlour or the attic,

which are under patriarchal control and surveillance. When we first meet Jane, she describes herself as concealed in “a small breakfast-room adjoined the drawing-room, I slipped in there. It contained a bookcase; I soon possessed myself of a volume, taking care that it should be one stored with pictures. I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement” (Brontë 10). This first concealment is important as Jane willingly removes herself from the public space of the drawing-room. Once out of the public space of the house, she is allowed to indulge in meditative thought. First, Jane does this by looking out the window onto the rainy day outside, but also by reading her picture book. Significantly, she also aligns herself with the racial “Other” in the simile of sitting “cross-legged, like a Turk.” Thus, Brontë sets up the parallel between confinement and the racial “Other” that will later be made more explicit in Bertha’s forced imprisonment. Jane must “other” herself in order to escape from the patriarchal spaces she is normally forced to inhabit. Jane’s imagination soars as she leafs through “Bewick’s History of British Birds” for “each picture told a story; mysterious often to [her] undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting” (Brontë 11). As Madeline Wood argues, “Here her enclosure engenders her creativity: these dreamy images are clearly the basis for the otherworldly paintings Rochester examines later. This episode enriches our understanding of the way in which enclosure operates in *Jane Eyre*: self-willed as well as enforced, potentially liberating as well as stultifying” (100). This first episode of concealment for Jane utilizes the relationship of space to illustrate that not only does Jane need to escape from the public space of the parlour to read and be

caught up in imagination, but also that she ensconces herself behind a red curtain. This foreshadows the “red room” incident whereupon enclosure becomes enforced. Being able to withdraw and read is also a luxury that will help Jane later in life as she is employed as a governess. This incident also points to Jane’s curiosity and eagerness to learn. Jane must escape spaces controlled by patriarchy in order to allow her curiosity to wander free.

Ultimately, John Reed infiltrates Jane's space. He is the avatar of patriarchal violation in Jane’s first childhood traumas. He violently upsets Jane’s reveries. John Reed also asserts his patriarchal dominance and ownership over all spaces as he reprimands Jane for reading “his” books and states that “all the house belongs to me” (Brontë 13). John Reed’s assault against Jane results in Jane’s unfair confinement to the “red room” that becomes a critical flashpoint for Jane in the rest of the novel. It is here that Jane experiences the paroxysms associated with Gothic terror. Gilbert and Gubar refer to the “red room” as a kind of “patriarchal death chamber” (340): “Mr. Reed had been dead nine years: it was in this chamber he breathed his last; here he lay in state” (Brontë 17). The room is “gothically haunted” as it represents the “spirit of a society in which Jane has no clear place” (Gilbert & Gubar 340). Without a father figure, Jane rests in a precarious position but due to her British whiteness not as precarious a position as Bertha. “Panicky, she stares into a ‘great looking glass,’ where her own image floats toward her, alien and disturbing...But a mirror, after all, is also a sort of chamber, a mysterious enclosure in which images of the self are trapped like ‘divers parchment.’ So the child Jane...correctly recognizes that she is doubly imprisoned” (Gilbert & Gubar 341). The curiosity that Jane experiences in the Red

Room is one manipulated by the threat of patriarchal control and ultimately confinement. This curiosity manifests terror and dreadful apparitions that cause Jane to fall ill.

Concealment also works in other ways in the novel as a tool to try to suppress particular passionate behaviors in women. Jane is imprisoned as a child in the Red Room early in the novel for her passionate outcry. Jane's concealment also appears to induce a kind of mental break due to the solitude of the room coupled with the fear of the dead (as the Red Room was the room where Mr. Reed had breathed his last breath). Although Jane is not racially othered like Bertha, she is othered in alternative ways such as class and the loss of her parents. Jane is able to recover and eventually, through her schooling at Lowood to grow and mature albeit through loss and grief, whereas Bertha's foreign otherness does not allow her these kinds of opportunities.

The "Red-Room" scene takes on special significance as it becomes a "paradigm of the larger drama that occupies the entire book: Jane's anomalous, orphaned position in society, her enclosure in stultifying roles and houses, and her attempts to escape through flight, starvation, and madness...Jane's pilgrimage consists of a series of experiences which are, in one way or another, variations on the central, red-room motif of enclosure and escape" (Gilbert & Gubar 341). The continuous return of the "red-room" episode threads the threat of enclosure throughout the novel.

Anxiety concerning particular spaces and feelings of claustrophobia has dominated the Gothic, and not just women writers at that. Architecture has long been used as a convenient literary trope for mirroring the mind. However, women writers, in particular, express a dual sense of entrapment for their characters as they reflect the

way that patriarchal culture suffocates and confines in both the physical structure of the house as well as mentally. Gilbert and Gubar state “We tend to think of *Jane Eyre* as moral gothic...the archetypal scenario for all those mildly thrilling romantic encounters between a scowling Byronic hero (who owns a gloomy mansion) and a trembling heroine (who can’t quite figure out the mansion’s floor plan)” (337). The significance of this passage stems from the fact that Gilbert and Gubar use the metaphor of the mansion to explain the relationship between Rochester and Jane. The relationship dynamics of this explanation situate Rochester as the architect of his home and Jane merely the outsider who cannot figure out the rules set by a patriarchal order. In fact, not only is Jane lost within the confines of Thornfield, but the unruly woman is also illustrated by Bertha who is quite literally confined and constrained in the attic after not living up to patriarchal standards.

In their elucidation of the phases that women must go through in her life, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that “Everywoman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome: oppression (at Gateshead), starvation (at Lowood), madness (at Thornfield), and coldness (at Marsh End).” (339). The importance of this statement resides in the fact that during each stage that “everywoman,” i.e., “Jane” (obviously this statement is a bit essentializing as Jane’s whiteness and class status, allows her many privileges that other women, especially women like Bertha, do not have access to) has to go through is situated in accordance with the space that she is currently occupying. It is symbolically significant that each of these homes represents a stage that Jane must overcome. She must orient herself within these structures, each time facing different threats that attempt to confine her in various ways.

By the end of the novel, Jane effectively is confined forever in the culmination of the romance that has played out between Jane and Rochester. Marriage to Rochester seems to remove any autonomy Jane once clung to: “I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest...because I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine” (Brontë 519). Jane’s life is no longer one of independence. Her marriage intertwines her life inextricably with that of Rochester’s and merges their identities into one.

Not only has Jane’s independent self-undergone erasure due to her marriage to Rochester, but her career has been demolished by her marriage. Jane has prided herself on Adèle’s education and has throughout the novel been proud to be her governess, however at the end of the novel Jane has excised any progressive career developments by becoming Rochester’s fulltime caretaker: “I meant to become her governess once more, but I soon found this impracticable; my time and cares were now required by another- my husband needed them all” (Brontë 518). Being a wife consumes all of Jane’s time and does not allow her time to have a career of her own.

Jane’s career driven self is ultimately squashed by her marriage to Rochester as is her burgeoning social life she begins to develop with her cousins in Moor House. This new social life quickly dissolves as her marriage to Rochester conceals her from the social sphere and subjugates her to the private or domestic sphere. Thornfield Hall is demolished by the fire Bertha sets and Rochester has set up residence in the distant Ferndean- a place that Rochester has earlier pronounced as a remote and cold place and a place that was deemed unacceptable to house even Bertha: “Ferndean Manor, even more retired and hidden than this, where I could have had lodged her safely

enough, had not a scruple about the unhealthiness of the situation, in the heart of the wood, made my conscience recoil from the arrangement” (Brontë 347). Yet, this is now the place that Rochester resides in and will ask to Jane to dwell in as well. As Jane approaches the manor the feeling of isolation permeates throughout her description of the property; “The manor-house of Ferndean was a building of considerable antiquity, moderate size, and no architectural pretensions, deep buried in a wood. I had heard of it before...He would have let the house, but could find no tenant, in consequence of its ineligible and insalubrious site” (Brontë 496). The deeply buried Ferndean isolates Jane from the rest of the world and makes her rely solely on Rochester for all of her social needs.

Jane isolates herself socially and gives up her autonomy in order to become everything to Rochester. “I will be your companion- to read to you, to walk with you, to sit with you, to wait on you, to be eyes and hands to you” (Brontë 502). Jane enumerates all the things of herself she will be for Rochester saving nothing to be hers alone. Isolated and away from the social world and ensconced in Ferndean, Jane gives up her place in the social sphere and instead devotes her life to an isolated private sphere of domesticity to her one patron- Rochester. Rochester values the maternal doting of Jane. Valuing the nursemaid characteristics of Jane relegates her ever further into the domestic sphere; therefore Rochester only values Jane’s domesticity and not her intellect. “You, perhaps, could make up your mind to be about my hand and chair- to wait on me as a kind little nurse (for you have an affectionate heart and a generous spirit, which prompt you to make sacrifices for those you pity), and that ought to suffice for me” (Brontë 502). Rochester imagines Jane perfectly happy playing the

part of his nursemaid forever. Jane's curiosity and thirst for knowledge seem to be stoppered by her relegation to the traditional domestic sphere. Jane, in the end, is essentially confined like Bertha in the exile that is Ferndean. Rochester as the Bluebeard character ultimately triumphs. The perceived romance of the story is actually quite perverse as the autonomy of Jane is essentially erased as she gives everything up to be the eyes for the blind Rochester. Jane states at the end of the novel: "I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth" (Brontë 519). Their two consciousness appear to meld into one: "We talk, I believe, all day long: to talk to each other is but a more animated and an audible thinking" (Brontë 519). Jane witnesses the cruel behaviors of Rochester as a Bluebeard figure and in the end forgives the transgressions to be locked up in his consciousness under the guise of romantic love.

Ultimately, Jane's curiosity and ability to wander in spaces and conceal herself voluntarily in the novel, allow her more access to knowledge. Jane is also able to discover secrets and other forms of knowledge that are meant to be concealed from her. She is able to run away from Thornfield when faced with the knowledge that Rochester already has a wife. Jane's mobility is one of the things that differentiate her from Bertha, who is forced to be locked up and contained. Bertha's curiosity is coded as dangerous and something that is eventually aligned with madness, because of her inherited racial "defects." Adèle works in the median between the two other women, because it is believed that through education, her fiery French attitude can be squelched. The rooms of the house that the women of the novel are allowed to occupy carry connotations with them of the knowledge that is allowed to be consumed. The

knowledge that is performed in the parlour is patriarchally sanctioned and public, whereas the attic hides and demonizes the thinking of Bertha in private. Bertha's mind is viewed as so dangerous, that not only must she be hidden from view, but she must also be restrained physically, which does not allow her to wander. In the instances when Bertha does escape her confines, her wandering is shown as violent and dangerous, whereas Jane's wandering often saves her or gives her access to knowledge that she desperately needs. Disappointingly, at the end of the novel, Jane sacrifices her autonomy in order to be Rochester's wife. Jane loses her mobility and her ability to even think for herself, as their minds coalesce into one. By the end of the novel, Jane has willingly confined herself to the remote Ferndean, and is content to surrender the liberty that her curiosity gives her in order to be locked up with Rochester as Bluebeard.

Rebecca

Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* retreads the "Bluebeard" narrative much like *Jane Eyre*. The "Bluebeard" figure Max de Winter marries a new young wife who remains nameless for the entirety of the novel. The lack of her name shows her consumption by patriarchal marriage standards. She is literally nameless until she marries Max, and then we can only infer that she is referred to by his surname. Max's previous wife, Rebecca, has died under mysterious circumstances, and her presence in Max's ancestral home of Manderlay lingers. Manderlay is maintained underneath the instruction of its previous mistress, Rebecca, as hardly anything has changed since her death. The nameless narrator becomes consumed with curiosity and a longing to know more about Rebecca and perhaps even to become her so as to be more desirable to her

husband. At one point in the novel, she dresses up in all of Rebecca's old things and makes a grand entrance startling Max and the other dinner guests. It is not until later, that the unnamed narrator discovers her husband's dark secrets concerning his extreme distaste and hatred for his first wife and his subsequent murder of her. It is then that the unnamed narrator no longer feels haunted by the menacing spirit of Rebecca, and happily stays married to Max, the Bluebeard figure. The end of the novel aligns with the ending of *Jane Eyre*, as both women elect to surrender autonomy in order to be consumed by the roles of wife to the Bluebeard character.

Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* inherits much from *Jane Eyre*, especially the way in which the female narrator is fixated on deprivation as a means of control. The nameless narrator is embarrassed by exhibitions of excessive femininity. She attempts to regulate and confine her own expressions of femininity within a system of deprivation. As Harriet Linkin argues, the unnamed narrator puts "her belief in a cultural narrative that promotes bourgeois femininity" (224). The unnamed narrator views bourgeois femininity to be tempered and subdued compared to other expressions of femininity. The excessive femininity found in Rebecca's character and others is interpreted as a monstrous quality that must be maintained by the patriarchal order, in much the same way that Bertha is contained in *Jane Eyre*. Max successfully contains the monstrous feminine in Rebecca by eliminating her and the narrator joins Max as a female enforcer of the patriarchy by helping cover up the murder. In a twist of the "Bluebeard" story, once the narrator has opened the forbidden door of knowledge she joins the Bluebeard character (Max) in his efforts to suppress the monstrous woman.

The narrator's preoccupation with excess begins in her dreamy remembrance of Manderlay, the estate where the narrator and her husband used to reside. The narrator describes the nature surrounding Manderlay as not only excessive but monstrous in its seemingly unnatural breeding: "The rhododendrons stood fifty feet high, twisted and entwined with bracken, and they entered into alien marriage with a host of nameless shrubs, poor, bastard things that clung about their roots as though conscious of their spurious origin" (DuMaurier 2). The rhododendrons described as twisted and entwined as they appear to prey upon the seemingly poor helpless shrubs, becomes the same victimized language that the narrator will later use when speaking of the manipulative nature of Rebecca. The space of the garden, traditionally a place aligned with feminine knowledge if we think back to the Garden of Eden, maintains a sinister appearance in the narrator's recollections. The terror of the flowers excessive proportions signals that the narrator does not trust women or feminine knowledge and views it as manipulative. She paints the victim in this image as the masculine shrubs (their masculinity aligning with the use of the word bastard).

As the narrator begins her story, all those who appear to oppose the narrator's sense of demure femininity are deemed as monstrous in some way or other: Mrs. Van Hopper, with her "small pig's eyes" (10), and Mrs. Danvers, with her "skull's face, parchment-white, set on a skeleton's frame" (du Maurier 67). The narrator begins her tale with the introduction of Mrs. Van Hopper, who is an antithetical image of how the narrator sees herself. The excessiveness of Mrs. Van Hopper is shown as revolting by the language she adopts when speaking of her: "her blouse a complement to her large bosom and swinging hips, her new hat pierced with a monster quill aslant upon her

head, exposing a wide expanse of forehead bare as a schoolboy's knee. One hand carried a gigantic bag" (du Maurier 9). The narrator continually emphasizes the largeness of Mrs. Van Hopper. The narrator is embarrassed by the excessiveness of Mrs. Van Hopper's feminine body: "I blushed for her while she stared" (du Maurier 11). Mrs. Van Hopper's excessive nature is viewed in a negative context by the narrator and by so denigrating excessive behavior; the narrator appears to be upholding the virtues of moderate behavior. Mrs. Van Hopper is seen delighting in the rich cuisine at dinner while the narrator has a plain cold meal: "we ate in silence, for Mrs. Van Hopper liked to concentrate on food, and I could tell by the way the sauce ran down her chin that her dish of ravioli pleased her. It was not a sight that engendered in me great appetite for my own cold choice" (du Maurier 10). Not only does the narrator find the sight of Mrs. Van Hopper eating to be a revolting spectacle in excessive indulgence, but she also positions herself as the good mannered, moderate girl who chooses the cold dish as opposed to the lavish warm dish of ravioli. She views herself as superior due to her ability to limit or deprive herself. The narrator finds value in being a contained individual. However, she is also able to deflect her curious urges onto her idea of the socially crass Mrs. Van Hopper. When a new guest arrives in the hotel dining room Mrs. Van Hopper reaches for her lorgnette. While the narrator is perhaps equally curious about the handsome newcomer, she displays embarrassment over Mrs. Van Hopper's obvious scrutiny: "I blushed for her while she stared, and the newcomer, unconscious of her interest, cast a wondering eye over the menu" (Du Maurier 11). The narrator's blushing for Mrs. Van Hopper betrays her own curiosity and desire to learn more about the newcomer, who will turn out to be Max de

Winter. Later the narrator states that Mrs. Van Hopper's "curiosity was a disease, almost a mania" (Du Maurier 12). The pathologizing of Mrs. Van Hopper works to obscure the narrator's true desire, which is to know. The narrator's urge for truth and answers causes her to create a value system in which all other characters become suspicious for what they do or do not know. Casting curiosity as a disease, shows that the narrator attempts to deprive herself not just of material comforts, but of mental ones as well.

The narrator begins to lay out her value system which has more to do with gaining the particular attention of Max. Already living in the world of wealth but feeling outside of it due to her subservient relationship with Mrs. Van Hopper forces the narrator to create her value system on manners. However, she is able to make herself seem superior to Mrs. Van Hopper's gauche ways. The narrator upon speaking with Max, quickly sets up a distinct divide between Mrs. Van Hopper and herself when speaking with Max: "'She's not really a friend', I told him, 'she's an employer.'" (du Maurier 23). The narrator wants to make sure that Max does not connect the excessive curiosity and embarrassing manners of Mrs. Van Hopper with her. In this way, the narrator is able to present herself as someone "young and inexperienced" which is the way she paints herself as appearing to others in the hotel including Max himself (DuMaurier 10). In this way, she also fashions herself as a person that is not curious, and will be happy to be manipulated by Max, and perhaps importantly, not ask too many questions about the disappearance of his first wife.

Mrs. Van Hopper also serves as a device to help drive the narrator into the hands of Max. The character is able to use her knowledge of Mrs. Van Hopper's antics

to manipulate Max into comparing the two's actions. As Linkin argues, "She [Mrs. Van Hopper] is repulsive in her consumption of rich, creamy food, and in her insatiable appetite for juicy gossip, which prompts her to pander a pin-up photo of her sunbathing daughter-in-law to Maxim" (227). The narrator on the other hand is shown (much like Jane in *Jane Eyre*) to be in more control due to her ability to deprive herself, especially of the lurid traits of femininity—those that Max, a man of containment, find to be distasteful. It is in this way that the narrator begins to interpret Max's conversations about flowers as obvious metaphors for womanhood. As Max tells the narrator about his home, Manderlay he speaks of the flowers with great detail. In the description of the flowers the narrator becomes interlinked with the primrose "a homely pleasant creature" and as Max continues his description of the primrose, it is shown that Max believes he can contain the primrose: "although a creature of the wilds it had a leaning towards civilization, and preened and smiled in a jam-jar in some cottage window without resentment" (du Maurier 31). Max also makes a point that "no wild flowers came in the house at Manderlay" (du Maurier 31). There is a certain level of approved femininity that Max will allow inside Manderlay and this excludes the unruly woman (that of his first wife, Rebecca) or other excessive women such as Mrs. Van Hopper that do not easily fit into the ordered structure that Max wishes to maintain within his home. The narrator uses this information to further gain Max's trust that she is not like a wild flower, she will not invade Manderlay, but will play the hapless innocent primrose, and allow Max the belief that he can civilize and contain her within the walls of Manderlay.

Before the narrator even arrives at Manderlay, the threat of Max's former wife Rebecca, hangs over the narrator's head. Rebecca, much like Mrs. Van Hopper threatens the narrator because of her excessive proportions. The immensity of Rebecca is first shown to the narrator through the book of poems in which she notices Rebecca's dedication to Max: "A little blob of ink marred the white page opposite, as though the writer, in impatience, had shaken her pen to make the ink flow freely. And then, as it bubbled through the nib, it came a little thick, so that the name Rebecca stood out black and strong, the tall and sloping R dwarfing the other letters" (du Maurier 33). Through Rebecca's writing the narrator feels dwarfed by her excessive dimensions. The giant R becomes an opposing figure to the narrator as it becomes to symbolize the monstrosity of Rebecca. Her larger than life presence even after death becomes unnerving to the narrator who attempts to eradicate the haunting effects of Rebecca by burning the dedication page: "The letter R was the last to go, it twisted in the flame, it curled outwards for a moment, becoming larger than ever. Then it crumpled too, the flame destroyed it" (du Maurier 58). The narrator attempts to destroy the imposing figure, but manages in making the R larger before it finally disappears. She increases the size of Rebecca only to finally dismantle the R into a pile of ashes. The narrator is pleased with herself at the thought that she has eradicated the haunting of Rebecca: "I went and washed my hands in the basin. I felt better, much better. I had the clean, new feeling that one has when the calendar is hung on the wall at the beginning of the year" (du Maurier 59). Once the narrator has asserted her superiority over the figure of Rebecca by burning her dedication page she begins to feel more in control. However, as Dorothy Dodge Robbins argues, "So

impactful is the R on the narrator's psyche, that the initial consumes her own given name, of which not a single letter is revealed" (69). It is true that the greatest mystery of the entire novel that is never solved is the name of the narrator. The lack of a name also allows her to be subsumed entirely into the definition of herself as Max de Winter's wife.

However, Rebecca is not that easily erased or contained even in death and upon arrival to Manderlay, the narrator feels burdened by the haunting presence of her. "We were amongst the rhododendrons... They startled me with their crimson faces, massed one upon the other in incredible profusion, showing no leaf, no twig, nothing but the slaughterous red, luscious and fantastic, unlike any rhododendron plant I had seen before" (du Maurier 66). The metaphoric monstrous rhododendrons serve as a constant reminder of Rebecca. They also illustrate that Rebecca's memory and mark on the land is unlike the previous conceptions the narrator has with expressions of femininity: "for to me a rhododendron was a homely, domestic thing, strictly conventional, mauve or pink in colour, standing one beside the other in a neat round bed. And these monsters, rearing to the sky, massed like a battalion, too beautiful I thought, too powerful, they were not plants at all" (du Maurier 66). The narrator's value system again becomes apparent in the way she classifies the rhododendrons. The view of femininity that the narrator is projecting is that of the contained and domestic woman who is unnerved by the sight of these unruly flowers as they go against her conservative notions of femininity. This recognizes the ways in which females can help support and uphold the patriarchy. Auba Llompart Pons argues that "du Maurier's portrayal of villainy in *Rebecca* is not directly related to gender, but

rather to the patriarchal abuses of power by those characters who find themselves in powerful positions, in terms not only of gender but also of class” (72). The narrator, herself, gains much in her marriage with Max, not only the impressive estate of Manderlay and all of the material worth that goes along with an estate of that size, but also the upward mobility of her class. After all, one must not forget that at the beginning of the novel, the narrator is a merely a companion to the seemingly grotesque Mrs. Van Hopper but one who is far above her in class standing. The narrator begins the novel wistfully longing for all that she has seen of the upper class, but as only an observer. Her intentions of not only marrying Max, but then continuing by his side even after she has learned that he is a murderer point to the powerful motivation of upward mobility.

Due to both the condemnations of Rebecca’s gender and the narrator’s desire to remain in the upper echelons of the wealthy, it is not surprising that the narrator sides with Max. The narrator views even the ghostly memories of Rebecca as dangerous. The need to contain the unruly woman dovetails with the narrator’s conservative social constructs that she upholds. According to Max, upon marriage Rebecca showed her true side: “Rebecca was incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency. She was not even normal...She was clever, of course...Damnably clever. No one would guess meeting her that she was not the kindest, most generous, most gifted person in the world. She knew exactly what to say to different people, how to match her mood to theirs” (du Maurier 275). Using her wits and powers of seduction Rebecca was able to manipulate Max into a marriage of convenience. Rebecca conceived to play her part and maintain a visually stunning picture of domestic bliss

while being allowed to enjoy her sexual affairs. The emphasis on normalcy and Rebecca's lack thereof aligns with patriarchal mechanisms of control. The fact that Rebecca thwarts these conventions makes her dangerous to Max's establishment. "She knew I would sacrifice pride, honor, personal feeling, every damned quality on earth, rather than stand before our little world after a week of marriage and have them know the things about her that she had told me then" (du Maurier 277). Rebecca, thus uses her understanding of the patriarchal codes in order to subvert them. She knows that she has power over Max due to his pre-occupations with reputation and his concern for how the world would view him for being a cuckold. Rebecca is able to manipulate the patriarchal code to suit her ends.

Rebecca's complexities are coded as dangerous and continue to grow as she wields power both sexually, but also in the domestic sphere. Manderlay thrives under Rebecca's hands: "The beauty of Manderlay that you see to-day, the Manderlay that people talk about and photograph and paint, it's all due to her, to Rebecca" (du Maurier 279). The power that Rebecca holds is far-reaching as she is able to navigate traditional male spaces of power, as well as maintain her feminine power of maintaining and even improving a domestic sphere. Max credits Rebecca for creating Manderlay's economic ascent. The estate reaches its height of economic capital, bringing in droves of people for tours underneath Rebecca's reign. Rebecca is able to maintain the façade of a happy marriage, just as she is able to maintain the outward appearance of Manderlay for quite some time. Max allows Rebecca her affairs as long as the outward image of the couple and Manderlay are sustained. However, Rebecca continuously tests the waters to see how far she can push Max. Rebecca begins to

bring lovers home to Manderlay, threatening the façade that Max so longs to maintain. Max threatens Rebecca as she begins to more flagrant with her affairs: “This is the end, do you understand? What you do in London does not concern me. You can live with Favell there, or with anyone you like. But not here. Not at Manderlay” (du Maurier 282). Rebecca’s actions begin to weigh upon Max and his desire to contain her becomes exacerbated. When Rebecca posits the notion that she may be pregnant, Max becomes afraid of propagating the monstrosity apparent in Rebecca that he shoots her in a wild attempt to finally contain her once and for all. Rebecca makes it clear that her illegitimate child would inherit Max’s family wealth, while she plays the part of the perfect mother: “I’ll be the perfect mother, Max, like I’ve been the perfect wife. And none of them will ever guess, none of them will never know” (du Maurier 284). Max’s fear is that the propagation of Rebecca’s line will mean the overtaking of his line and the swallowing up of his property as inheritance, since he will have no control over the fathering of the child. The doubt of the legitimacy of the child that would spring from Rebecca causes Max to fear for his familial line. The codes of patriarchy assert the need for an heir, but nothing would be more degrading for Max than having to support the child of a man who has cuckolded him.

Max, truly embodying the Bluebeard figure, withholds the knowledge of murdering Rebecca from his new wife. Max guards the knowledge of his murder and does not allow the narrator access until the body of Rebecca reemerges after a boat wreck causes her remains to be discovered. However, the narrator has an opposite reaction to the knowledge she gains once allowed access to the Bluebeard chamber of horror (in this case the inside of Rebecca’s boat). The reaction produced in the

narrator is one of joy and not fear that her husband is a murderer, and specifically joyful because Max has murdered Rebecca. For the narrator this means that Max never loved Rebecca: “He did not love Rebecca, he did not love Rebecca. Now, at the ringing of the telephone, these two selves merged and became one again. I was the self that I had always been, I was not changed” (du Maurier 289). The narrator has been fractured into two selves, the one who abhors Rebecca’s monstrosity and has wished to vanquish it (the narrator has shown her desire to be rid of Rebecca by burning the dedication page and smashing the cupid) and the self that has attempted to emulate Rebecca (when the narrator dresses up for the ball in the same costume as Rebecca the previous year) for fear that perhaps what Max desires in his new wife is a person willing to fill in the roles of the last. Hearing that Max despised Rebecca gives the narrator a sense of freedom from the haunting image of Rebecca: “My heart, for all its anxiety and doubt, was light and free. I knew then that I was no longer afraid of Rebecca. I did not hate her any more. Now that I knew her to have been evil and vicious and rotten I did not hate her any more” (du Maurier 289). The narrator rejoices as her value systems coalesce with Max’s. The narrator also feels superior to Rebecca as she sees that her conservative feminine ideals are what Max has indeed been wanting this whole time. Aligning with the Bluebeard character instead of the victims of Bluebeard, places the narrator in a distinctly different position. Instead of being frightened by the knowledge in the forbidden chamber, the narrator is enthralled and endeavors to help Max in continuing to suppress the truth about Rebecca: “I had listened to his story and part of me went with him like a shadow in his tracks. I too had killed Rebecca, I too had sunk the boat in the bay” (du Maurier 289). The narrator

inculcates herself in the destruction of Rebecca and happily joins Max in the chamber of knowledge.

The narrator becomes even more of an accomplice in the cover up of Rebecca's murder as the news that her body has been discovered results in an inquest. Having disclosed the true story to the narrator, Max implicates the narrator in his burden, but the narrator finds great pleasure in this role. During the inquest the narrator saves Max from losing his temper by pretending to faint: "They had to come of course, those black spots in front of my eyes, dancing, flickering, stabbing the hazy air" (du Maurier 316). The narrator has to make herself faint in order to relieve some of the pressure from Max. Max's temper will be his downfall and so the narrator must work in order to calm his temper with tricks of her own. In this case, the narrator plays on the fragility of femininity by pretending to faint from the excessive heat as a means to provide relief for Max.

Max and the narrator are inextricably linked in covering up the murder of Rebecca and thus share the forbidden chamber of knowledge together. Favell finds it hard to believe the inquest's results that Rebecca committed suicide. In his attempt to appeal the decision, he provides a note written to him from Rebecca on the day that she supposedly killed herself. As a result of Favell's new evidence the narrator and Max must continue to stick together in order to continue the suppression of Rebecca's murder. In order to safeguard against a possibly guilty Max fleeing the estate, both Max and the narrator are locked up together in their bedchamber overnight: "when Mrs. De Winter and I go to bed to-night will you come yourself and lock the door on the outside" (du Maurier 356-57)? The narrator and Max thus share the chamber of

knowledge and are both locked in together, another reversal from the “Bluebeard” tale. The narrator has accepted the knowledge and continues to work in favor of upholding the decision of Max to eliminate the excessive female. The two are perfectly content to be contained in their chamber together.

In tracing this lineage of the Bluebeard adaptation story, we find that the narrator like Jane happily ends confined with the Bluebeard character at the end of the novel. However, where Jane is shown at the end with Rochester due to a kind of romantic love (albeit one that severely limits her) where she has forgiven him for his lies concerning Bertha, the unnamed narrator positions herself to be with the Bluebeard character because she also appears to share misogynist ideals towards women and is happy to shield his crime from the rest of the world. The narrator masks her curiosity throughout the novel, as a way in which to get closer to Max. The focus here is on how the narrator rejects femininity and feminine thinking in order to perversely share a marriage with a murderer. The narrator happily subjects herself to submission, and does not view her interest in Rebecca as curiosity but instead rivalry. Even though the dinner party scene where she dresses up as Rebecca, points to a desire to be Rebecca.

We can return to Ahmed’s spatial interest in wandering. Much like Jane, the narrator is prohibited from wandering into two specific spaces, Rebecca’s bedroom, and the boathouse where she was murdered by Max. These spaces of prohibition attempt to keep knowledge out of the hands of the narrator. These secrets also create a curiosity and a desire to know within the narrator; although she would be loathe to admit it. The secrets Max (much like Rochester) keep prompts the narrator to seek the

knowledge that is being withheld. However, when Max confesses to the narrator and provides her with the knowledge she has been seeking, the power dynamics switch, and now the narrator holds more power than Max. His confession allows her to follow him in his actions: "I had listened to his story, and part of me went with him like a shadow in his tracks. I too had killed Rebecca, I too had sunk the boat there in the bay" (du Maurier 297). Max's confession allows the narrator to wander along his journey, tracing his steps, and enacting his actions, and ultimately reveling in his movements. Instead of running away like Jane, the narrator cozies up with Bluebeard immediately and becomes more powerful than he because of the knowledge of his confession.

Wide Sargasso Sea

In the lineage of Female Gothic texts that spring from *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys' inspired prequel plumbs the depths of "Bertha's" (in this text she is primarily known as Antoinette Cosway) past. The reimagining of the characters from Brontë's novel allows for a different consciousness to be explored as compared to the characters that Brontë created. The unnamed male protagonist in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* is recognized as a re-representation of Mr. Rochester from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Rhys' re-appropriation of the Rochester character allows for the character to be seen as caught between the patriarchal and confining world of England as seen in *Jane Eyre*'s depiction of Mr. Rochester and the colonizing image of the intoxicating and excessive foreign world of Antoinette's Caribbean. Rhys not only gives a voice to the madwoman in the attic, but she gives a voice to Rochester as well. She exposes the fears Rochester holds of "going native" or in other words acting against the patriarchal

and hegemonic codes of his society. Rochester refuses to transgress English social values for too long and after experiencing the thrills of “going native” and indulging in his desire, he must once again confine himself to the hegemonic sphere. Rochester’s return to British patriarchal values represents his own desire to be repressed and thus he becomes inextricably tied up in the double bind of oppressor and oppressed.

Rochester begins his descent into the so-called wild regions of the world by physically relocating himself from England to the Caribbean. Patriarchal codes of inheritance are not in Rochester’s favor as he is the second son. In order to gain financial security, Rochester must leave the confines of England and travel to an exotic locale in order to find a bride with an impressive estate. Rochester’s white, British hegemonic self is characterized as very “other” in the vast and lush landscape of the Caribbean. He does not fit into the bright surroundings and finds the Caribbean culture overwhelming and disconcerting: “Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near” (Rhys 63). Rochester cringes at the excess found in the colors and size of the landscape. The practical and staunch Englishman blanches at the excess, because the hegemonic forces of English patriarchy privilege containment and moderation in all things. The bright vivid colors of the island itself, provide a dazzling contrast to the grey land of England that Rochester is accustomed to. Rochester constantly compares the scenery and culture to that of his ethnocentric view of England. The atmosphere begins to affect not just Rochester’s aesthetic inclinations, but also his mental capabilities. Upon his arrival, Rochester falls ill with fever: “I was married a month after I arrived in Jamaica and for

nearly three weeks of that time I was in bed with fever” (Rhys 61). The fever adds to the disorientation of the Englishman in the exoticized environment that is the Caribbean. By turning to Ahmed’s conceptualization of the term, disorientation will help to unpack Rochester’s actions. Ahmed argues that disorientation occurs when “the proximity of such bodies [minorities and racialized others] makes familiar spaces seem strange” (135). Proximity to these othered bodies makes things appear “no longer in line” and thus disrupts a person’s normative worldview (135). The illness acts as a symbol of Rochester’s inability to adapt to a foreign setting and serves as a pathologizing of his disorientation. Rochester confines himself to his bed in order to recover from his illness, but this also serves as a convenient way in which Rochester can restrain himself from the native influences that tantalize him. This self-imposed confinement to rid himself of temptation will end up being the same kind of confinement he forces on Antoinette once they move to Thornfield, his English estate.

After Rochester regains his health, he sets off to his new bride’s residence. Antoinette’s home for Rochester is merely a poor “imitation of an English summer house” (Rhys 65). Rochester compares the foreign and exotic to the only thing he knows—that of the hegemonic ideals of England. Everything else that Rochester perceives is merely an “imitation” of his precious England and a poor one at that. The surrounding landscape and the furthering of Rochester’s introduction into the foreign land of the Caribbean, leads Rochester’s ordered British mind into confusion. Rochester is unable to maintain his coherence of thought as he is sucked into the whirling chaos of the foreign land: “As for my confused impressions they will never be written. There are blanks in my mind that cannot be filled up” (69). The blanks in

Rochester's mind signify that there are things that his colonizing brain does not want to remember. Rochester is attempting to suppress moments of unrepressed and uncontrolled moments of frenzy and desire in which he gives into the excesses of the culture around him. In addition, these lapses in memory show Rochester's unreliability as a narrator of his own story. The more Rochester submerges himself into Antoinette's world far from the hegemonic eyes of London, the more Rochester begins to lose his submission to the hierarchical laws of patriarchy.

Rochester allows his desire to take control of his self, he becomes an antithesis to the ordered and moderate Englishman he was upon arrival. The oppressor begins to take on stereotypical characteristics of the oppressed. The sexual relationship that begins to develop between Rochester and Antoinette becomes excessive and deviant compared to patriarchal heteronormative standards. Rochester begins to find perverse desire in sexual relations between him and his wife; his developing nature reflects an unrestrained passion. Rochester refers to his desire as turning him into an "other": "One afternoon the sight of a dress which she'd left lying on her bedroom floor made me breathless and savage with desire" (Rhys 85). Rochester very specifically uses the word "savage" in conjunction with his description of his desire for his wife. The kind of passionate sexual desire that he shares with his wife is not the acceptable form of British mannered sexual activity: those that prescribe sexual activity for matters of procreation not recreation. The ecstasy and passions that Rochester feels are a way of releasing his sexuality in an uninhibited way. Free of the disciplining forces of the hegemony, Rochester begins to feel and embrace his sexuality and desire. The fact that he does not love his wife, does not waylay his sexual and amorous feelings for her, but

instead highlights the discrepancy between the values of the so-called civilized life of England to the wild sexually free world of the Caribbean. Rochester's English propriety assures him that he "did not love her. I was thirsty for her, but that is not love. I felt very little tenderness for her, she was a stranger to me, a stranger who did not think or feel as I did" (Rhys 85). Rochester's lack of love but increasing desire for Antoinette deftly highlights Rochester's further descent into the intoxicating freedom of the exoticized foreign land. The deeper into the depths of the Caribbean Rochester goes, the more sexually liberated he becomes. Rochester is able to project what he does not want to acknowledge in himself onto the exoticized "Other."

Rochester's moment of complete immersion into the Caribbean culture happens when he allows himself to have an affair with Amélie. The affair serves as a turning point in the novel for once Rochester has satiated his carnal desire with the racial "other" he becomes the staunch Englishman again. Rochester throws sensibility to the wind and commits his transgression in close proximity to his wife: "I pulled her down beside me and we were both laughing...Nor was I anxious to know what was happening behind the thin partition which divided us from my wife's bedroom" (Rhys 127). Rochester loosens his hold on his inhibitions and indulges in deviant sexual activity, not only by having an affair, but having an affair with one of the racial "others" of the foreign land, Amélie. In the intoxicating spell of night, Rochester's desires are loosed, but in the morning the consequences of his actions become apparent. The harsh light of day does not allow Rochester to continue his descent into potential liberation from patriarchal values, but instead highlights his transgression and forces him back into the patriarchal code: "In the morning, of course, I felt

differently...her skin was darker, her lips thicker than I had thought...I had no wish to touch her and she knew it” (Rhys 127). In the morning Rochester sees Amélie through the lens of the colonizer and sees her as grotesque. Pyhrönen argues that for Rochester “all women are one and the same mad Bertha, whose cunning, deceit, and murderous impulses require constant vigilance from Rochester. Such vigilance is best kept in a secluded place” (96). The revulsion that Rochester feels for his own indiscretion becomes the catalyst for the way he will punish Antoinette for the harm that he himself instills on her.

In order to repress his desire for the unruly women in his life, Rochester must return to England. The fear of going native creates an anxiety in Rochester that he dispels by placing the fear of uncontrolled passions onto Antoinette. It is through containing Antoinette’s otherness and the forced repression of her desires that Rochester thus becomes the enforcer of patriarchal codes of conduct again. However, by oppressing Antoinette’s desire, he thus in turn limits himself to the codes of patriarchy. He is forced to live with the shame of his transgressions quite literally haunting him as Antoinette becomes a ghost figure locked up in the attic of Thornfield Hall. Most things that are repressed find a way of surfacing and it is only a matter of time until Rochester’s deepest and darkest desires will manifest again. Until then, Rochester is caught in the cyclical nature of oppressor and oppressed.

In this encounter, Rochester is again cast as the Bluebeard character. Antoinette’s stepfather betroths her to Rochester, a seemingly respected man, but who quickly becomes monstrous. Rochester not only robs Antoinette of her material wealth, he also manipulates her emotions and does her bodily and psychic harm by

imprisoning her in his mansion after committing acts of adultery. Antoinette's confinement in Thornfield at the end of the novel is prefigured in the burned ruins of estate houses that litter the Caribbean landscape early in the text, including her childhood home that is set on fire as she and her family barely manage to escape. The imagery of escape through fire is revived in the final act of the novel as the burned ruins set up a parallel for the fire that Antoinette will set at the end of the novel at Thornfield, which will provide her with her final release from her bondage.

Rhys' adaptation of *Jane Eyre* gives voice to both Bertha (Antoinette) and Rochester. The perspectives of both characters, allows the reader's insight into the actions of both characters. Antoinette is caught in an act of repetitive trauma. The line that Antoinette traces over and over is the same path of destructive marriage as her mother lived through. She is caught in the same cyclical traumatic path as her mother, and we can see this as reflective of many women trapped under imperialist and patriarchal rule. When compared to Brontë's novel, Bertha is conceived as merely a monster and is never given a voice. Her actions are mediated through Jane's consciousness and Rochester is the only one to tell her story to Jane. Rhys gives voice to Bertha, but her fate ultimately remains the same at the end of both novels, as this is the tragic story that Rhys has inherited from Brontë. Rhys also allows the reader access to Rochester's voice which provides insights into how the colonizer is able to justify his cruel actions. Trevor Hope argues that "*Wide Sargasso Sea*, revisits and re-inhabits the architecture of an earlier text, *Jane Eyre*, so as to emphasize its internal heterogeneity" (52). As Hope states, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is in direct response to the imperialism that runs through Brontë's text. By tracing the narrative lines of *Wide*

Sargasso Sea over the *Jane Eyre* story, the reader is provided with important context that is missing from Brontë's narrative, specifically the access to Bertha's voice. This allows the reader to destabilize the notions of imperialistic normativity that are presented in Brontë's novel. Rhys' novel inherits Brontë's text, but instead of reproducing the same story and following the same lines of thought; Rhys charts a new course that sheds light on the colonialist discourse in Brontë's text.

When it comes to lines of inheritance, Ahmed argues that particular lines of inheritance show the repetition of particular acts. However, we do not always reproduce what we inherit. "Some lines might be marks of the refusal to reproduce: the lines of rebellion and resistance that gather over time to create new impressions on the skin surface or on the skin of the social" (Ahmed 18). If we apply Ahmed's formulation to Rhys's text, we see that she has inherited storylines from Brontë, but creates new impressions of the story by giving us views into the interiority of both Bertha and Rochester, which reveals a critique of imperialism.

"The Bloody Chamber"

Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber," a feminist retelling of the Bluebeard fairytale, retreads familiar ground but offers up new pathways. Carter makes significant changes to the tale of "Bluebeard" that mostly closely aligns with Perrault's version of the tale. In Perrault's version, the young wife is saved by her brothers, whereas in Carter's retelling, the wife is saved at the end by her fierce mother: "You never saw such a wild thing as my mother...On her eighteenth birthday, my mother disposed of a man-eating tiger that had ravaged the villages in the north of Hanoi. Now, without a moment's hesitation, she raised my father's gun, took aim and

put a single, irreproachable bullet through my husband's head" (39-40). Not only does the mother become the hero of the piece, something that is rarely seen in fairy tales—subverting conventions of the wicked stepmother and other such monstrous woman archetypes, but she is shown to have always had strength, even as a young woman protecting her village from killer tigers. The mother also possesses the superpower of preternatural mother's intuition about the mental state of her daughter based off a seemingly innocuous phone call exchange earlier in the story. The daughter calls her mother crying but attempts to mask her unhappiness by saying she is crying over the beauty of golden bath taps that are fashioned to look like dolphins.

Another major change in the narrative is the way that Bluebeard's temptation is handled. Instead of seeing the young bride's entry into the forbidden chamber as an act of risky feminine curiosity, Carter instead places the blame on the machinations of the Bluebeard character—the Marquis. The manipulative nature of the Marquis is shown as the narrator recognizes her defeat:

I knew I had behaved exactly according to his desires; had he not bought me so that I should do so? I had been tricked into my own betrayal to that illimitable darkness whose source I had been compelled to seek in his absence and, now that I had met that shadowed reality of his that came to life only in the presence of its own atrocities, I must pay the price of my new knowledge. The secret of Pandora's box; but he had given me the box, himself, knowing I must learn the secret. I had played a game in which every move was governed by a destiny as oppressive and omnipotent as himself, since that destiny was himself; and I had lost. (Carter 34)

The curiosity of the young woman is not something that ought to be punished in a blistering moral fashion. Instead, the fact that curiosity exists in a person and is able to be manipulated by a cunning sociopath says more about the manipulator than the manipulated. This moment instead of presenting the dangers of female curiosity, illustrates the “act of transgression as conditioned by the sadistic and dominating desire of man” (Sivyer 2). Furthermore, the urge to fight back against this monstrous man is evident when she attempts to seduce her husband prior to his discovery of her transgression: “If he had come to me in bed, I would have strangled him, then” (Carter 35). The agency granted to the young woman is far greater than her predecessors. In the past, the victims of Bluebeard do not even attempt to fight back, resigned to their fate, they attempt to stall or flee, but to physically fight back does not cross their minds. While the young woman is not able to put her plan into motion, the insight into her mind demonstrates her urge to fight back and save herself. Thwarted by her attempts at seduction and distraction, she is forced to relinquish the bloody keys.

The story also ends on a different note than other retellings of the “Bluebeard” tale. As the mother is able to easily dispatch of the villainous Marquis, it allows the young woman to continue her romance with the blind piano tuner. The healthy relationship between the two blossoms and her mother remains close to the couple. The young woman does not have to remain in isolation in the way that Jane does at Ferndean, or the unnamed narrator in *Rebecca* who will always be on the run as they cover for Max’s crime, or spend the end of her days confined to an attic like Bertha. Instead, the young woman is surrounded by her mother and her lover and is opening up a music school. The large amounts of wealth inherited from the Marquis are given

away mostly to charity. The happy and healthy ending of Carter's revisioning of the Bluebeard tale is a first and counteracts the beginning of the tale when the young wife is marrying the Marquis mainly for money. Over the course of the story, the young bride is painfully aware of the material need for the marriage, but by the end she is happy to give most of her capital away to live a quiet life with her mother and blind piano tuner.

The impact and influence of "Bluebeard" over the Female Gothic is evident. Griselda Pollock questions if the staying power of "Bluebeard" in the cultural imagination has to do with the explanation of the "tale's representation of masculinity as the psychological puzzle of desire linked to violence. Or does the tale fascinate us thanks to its representation of curious femininity as a necessary byproduct of patriarchal culture?" (xxviii). Women's curiosity as a byproduct of patriarchy proves evident, as much information is left out of women's grasps. Women are consistently given half-truths or full on omissions of the Bluebeard figures deeds. These blanks in knowledge must be filled in, and this is where curiosity often comes in. Curiosity is the urge to know, and if women are consistently kept from knowing, it is only logical that curiosity would flourish. Curiosity also must be coded as dangerous for women in a patriarchal world though, because the curiosity of these women often lead to a sense of freedom. Jane is able to run away and of her own volition return to Rochester on seemingly more equitable grounds, although I do quibble with the complete formulation of the equity of their relationship at the end of the novel. They are certainly more equally paired than when Jane was kept in the dark about Rochester's secrets. For the unnamed narrator in *Rebecca*, she is able to finally to be her true self

after she realizes that Max loathed Rebecca. Instead of trying to morph herself into the imposing figure of Rebecca that has haunted her every move, the unnamed narrator revels in her ability to lock herself up with her Bluebeard in his chamber. She also gains power over Max, as she holds his confession in her mind. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette is given voice and finally freedom, albeit a freedom through death and destruction at the end of the novel. And finally, the young woman in “The Bloody Chamber” proceeds to experience the most good will after her curiosities are satisfied. She is able to be reunited with her mother and marry the man she actually desires. The limitations of the success for these women is certainly contained by a patriarchal framework of oppression, but as the texts progress in chronological time, we see that curiosity becomes a greater key to freedom and instigator of agency impelling the young women into new situations armed with knowledge of their oppressor. Pyrhönen argues “Over the years the adaptations, however, have begun to shift the focus from the successor to the predecessor. Bluebeard’s first wife, portrayed by Bertha in *Jane Eyre*, has gradually emerged as the true heroine: she has been wronged and abused, but has remained courageous and unyielding” (241). The monstrous woman as she is first conceived in *Jane Eyre* begins to acquire depth, sympathy, and ultimately align our perspectives with the formerly “othered” in the Female Gothic in new and encouraging ways.

CHAPTER 3:

REORIENTING THE FEMALE GOTHIC IN 21ST CENTURY LITERATURE

The twenty-first century Female Gothic revisits Gothic tropes concerning Empire, such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and reorients these formulations to offer alternative histories of cultures that have been historically repressed. Curiosity serves as the impetus for the characters in twenty-first century Female Gothic to explore non-normative histories. The inherited tradition of the Female Gothic is keenly felt in contemporary works in terms of both intertextual dependence and in creating a space for revisions of the traditional stereotypes often found in earlier iterations of the Female Gothic. This chapter focuses on epistemic curiosity that manifests in the depictions of scholars in Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian* (2005) and Deborah Harkness's *A Discovery of Witches* (2011), as well as scientific curiosity in Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* (2005), and adolescent curiosity in Emil Ferris's *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* (2016). These seemingly disparate texts are yoked together to show the diverse ways that the twenty-first century Female Gothic conceptualizes curiosity, and works to restructure the colonial fears of the "Other" that are presented in earlier works of the Gothic.

The first section of this chapter investigates literature that is concerned with female scholar-protagonists who, while conducting research, become enmeshed in Gothic stories of their own. The investigative impulse of the scholars to learn more about their occult familial legacies orient them towards scholarly works. Such is the case with Diana Bishop, a historian of alchemy at Yale University in Deborah Harkness's *A Discovery of Witches* (2011) and Helen, an expert in *Dracula* lore in

Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian* (2005). Both novels focus on women reading manuscripts in archives, researching in libraries and sitting at desks—recalling S. Ahmed's queries of who is allowed to face the writing desk or table. The scholars' inquisitive natures urge them towards specific orientations as they seek understanding of the supernatural through scholarly discourse. This investigative impulse is also found in Butler's novel, as its protagonist Shori, suffering from amnesia after a vicious attack on her family, must rediscover her origins. Additionally, Karen Reyes, the young narrator of Ferris's *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*, draws herself as a werewolf detective in order to solve the grisly murder that occurred on her block in Chicago.

Contemporary Female Gothic is, unsurprisingly, influenced by detective and crime fiction.¹ J. Halberstam attests that “there are many congruities between Gothic fiction and detective fiction but in the Gothic, crime is embodied within a specifically deviant form—the monster—that announces itself (de-monstrates) as the place of corruption” (2). As Halberstam points out, the Gothic has often coded the deviant “Other” in a monstrous form. The twenty-first century Female Gothic tends to use the role of the monster in a recuperative way, as it seeks to reinvestigate the ways in which we have historically coded others as monstrous. In the twentieth century the sympathetic monster was given a voice and an interiority. Having been imbued with greater emotional depths, these sympathetic monsters are not simply villainized in a two-dimensional form, as seen in some earlier Gothic works, like Stoker's *Dracula*, but instead are shown to not be monstrous at all, just simply different and the viewer is invited to identify with them. However, the twenty-first century Female Gothic is

¹ Edgar Allan Poe, progenitor of many early Gothic conventions in American literature, is also cited as the originator of the detective tale.

more interested in the assimilative monster. Catherine Spooner defines the assimilative monster as one “who is no longer a sympathetic outsider but who is, or at least attempts to be, one of us” (*Post-Millennial Gothic* 85). The role of difference no longer creates the fear that is felt in earlier Gothic works, but instead the terror comes from those that attempt and enforce assimilation, resisting change and progress. All of the narrators of the following pieces are related somehow to monsters or are indeed supernatural characters themselves. Helen and her daughter (who we later find out is the main narrator of the tale) of *The Historian* are hereditarily linked to Dracula, whereas Diana Bishop in *A Discovery of Witches* is a powerful witch even though she attempts to suppress the magic within her after her parent’s demise. *Fledgling’s* Shori is a genetically modified and superior Ina (or vampire) in comparison to the rest of her clan, and *My Favorite Thing is Monsters’* Karen Reyes is a human girl, but chooses to render herself as a werewolf because in her monstrous form she feels safer in her world.

Additionally, the role of investigation is particularly critical in the twenty-first century Gothic. The search or quest for knowledge is the impetus for all of the characters in the four novels examined in this chapter. This urge to know more and a drive to uncover the truth becomes a motivating factor in contemporary Gothic, and oftentimes this quest for answers begins with a backward gaze and an orientation of looking back towards the past in order to find answers. These four novels illustrate the various facets of curiosity in the twenty-first century and point to a shift in the Female Gothic.

Both Kostova's *The Historian* and Harkness' *Discovery of Witches* revolve around academics and their search for the truth concerning supernatural oddities in their worlds. Kostova's Helen is a doctoral student in anthropology, while Harkness's Dr. Diana Bishop is a tenured professor of history researching alchemy texts at Oxford. Both Helen and Diana's professional curiosities and research skills lead them to pursue answers to supernatural questions in conventional scholarly research. Helen desires to learn as much as she can about Dracula's legacy, while Diana is drawn to alchemical research as a way to distance herself from magic until her discovery of a magical tome embroils her in a mystical quest. Each novel begins with the revelation of a mysterious book. In *The Historian*, a mysterious book appears in Paul's library carrel. Paul is the voice of one of the narratives in the novel that weaves in three separate oral accounts in addition to epistolary evidence. The discovery of the book begins a search for the tomb of Dracula, and sends Paul in search of his missing advisor, Rossi (Helen's father). In Harkness's *Discovery of Witches*, Diana recalls *Ashmole 782* from the stacks at the Bodleian Library as part of her research project on alchemy. Diana discovers that the text is a palimpsest that contains the secrets of the origins of supernatural creatures; thus in an attempt to keep herself distant from the supernatural world and suppress her own talents as a witch, she returns the text promptly. Other supernatural creatures are keen to get their hands on this elusive text, and to understand how effortlessly Diana recalled the text that has been hidden for centuries and masked under spells to obscure its location. Diana's summoning of the text precipitates her journey of discovery. Both of the novels are concerned with the investigation into the past, in order to discover information about the present.

Epistemic curiosity motivates these narratives to learn more about their present situations by delving into the past.

In addition to scholarly epistemic curiosity, the twenty-first century Female Gothic expands the examination of curiosity through scientific discourses and examinations of adolescent curiosity within Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* and Emil Ferris' *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*. Butler's *Fledgling* utilizes Afrofuturism as an epistemology that both scrutinizes and critiques current and past problems faced by people of color. Importantly, Afrofuturism uses fantasy and science fiction tropes to project concerns and reinterpret future possibilities in a different manner than the primarily white male voice that continues to hold sway over fantasy and science fiction. The Female Gothic is kin to fantasy and the modes often overlap and fuse. In this case, Butler utilizes previous Gothic structures in the figure of the vampire to present a revised vision of vampirism that produces a future where race becomes intricately entwined with vampirism. Furthermore, Butler utilizes scientific curiosity and exploration in her novel by having the Ina scientists create a new race of Ina who are stronger in particular due to the high melanin levels in their skin. Shori's strength resides in her blackness, but at the same time, it is also what marks her as dangerous to the Ina who are afraid of progress and change, and see her as a dilution of pure Ina. The scientific experimentations are successful with Shori and make her a curiosity amongst her own people. Butler's Ina are not expressions of societal fears, such as the racially other, instead the monstrosity is displaced onto the social ills themselves. The fear of miscegenation causes some Ina to be violently opposed to the genetic experimentation, as they have learned this racist rhetoric from their human symbionts.

Butler shifts the focus of the monster from that of an individual enacting predatory crimes, to that of a community producing actions based on deep-rooted societal ills.

Curiosity and adolescence collide in the graphic novel *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* as the noir Gothic presents the mysterious murder of a Jewish woman (Anka Silverberg) and Holocaust survivor investigated by the adolescent Karen Reyes, who depicts herself as a werewolf detective. Young Karen Reyes portrays herself in her drawings in a monstrous form as she yearns to be a monster as opposed to a normal little girl. Her feeling of difference is also connected to the queer identity that Karen is not yet able to fully articulate. Karen's fascination with horror magazines and comic books impels her to cast herself and other outsiders around her as types of monsters creating a Gothic version of 1960's Chicago. Karen's curiosity to uncover the murder of her neighbor, as well as untangle other mysteries in her neighborhood move beyond diversive curiosity² illustrating a deeply inquisitive curiosity that also manifests as a way in which Karen learns to survive in her neighborhood that is full of horrors, that contains both real frights and haunting revenants from the past.

As we trace the Female Gothic through the twenty-first century there are a number of things that distinguish contemporary Female Gothic from its predecessors. According to Catherine Spooner three factors that signal this shift are "a new self-consciousness about [the Gothic's] own nature; it has reached new levels of mass production, distribution, and audience awareness, enabled by global consumer culture; and it has crossed disciplinary boundaries to be absorbed into all forms of media" (*Contemporary Gothic* 23). The popularity of the Gothic in the twenty-first century is

² Diversive curiosity is only interested in the newest or next great thing. Diversive curiosity cannot be sustained for long periods of time (Leslie 12).

unparalleled. The Gothic has crossed the boundary of literature and has infiltrated the fashion industry, music, video games, and other forms of media, all while often remaining attached to original Gothic texts through intertextuality. For example, *The Historian* would not be able to exist without Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Originary Gothic tales are embedded in much of current popular Gothic fiction. The need to retell and update these stories suggests that the public's curiosity about these supernatural tales is far from dampened. The wide popularity of the Gothic speaks to a shift in politics. Spooner notes that the Gothic is "championed by feminists and queer theorists for its level of attention to women and non-heteronormative sexualities; the reading material of the masses; the space in which the burdens of colonial guilt could be explored" (*Contemporary Gothic* 24-5). The ability for the Gothic to address these issues also speaks to the way in which the Gothic persists. The Gothic is able to persist in the twenty-first century through its ability to metaphorically express cultural and social anxiety, which is something that the Gothic has always been particularly adept at doing. As these stories are retold and refocused, we find that the metaphors of fear and anxiety shift and produce new narratives from familiar threads. Robert Mighall reminds us that "The Gothic is a process, not an essence; a rhetoric rather than a store of universal symbols...That which is Gothicized depends on history and the stories it needs to tell itself" (xxv). Thus, the Gothic is reliant on always a backward gaze, and then a turn to face towards the front to re-orient one towards the future.

“Remember my friend, that knowledge is stronger than memory, and we should not trust the weaker” *Dracula’s* Thrall over Twenty-First Century Literature

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) is a crucial Gothic text and importantly serves as a touchstone text in some way or another to the twenty-first century texts that will be examined in this chapter. To understand the way in which the twenty-first century Female Gothic has revised and recontextualized central themes and ideas concerning curiosity it is essential to revisit *Dracula* and to trace the trail of the vampire.

Cultural context is particularly important when reviewing Stoker’s *Dracula*, especially when considering the ways that the vampire is used as a figure to represent alterity. The context for *Dracula* “includes the decline of Britain as a world power at the close of the nineteenth century; or rather, the way the perception of that decline was articulated by contemporary writers” (Arata 161). Stephen D. Arata quickly glosses many of the cultural anxieties represented in fin de siècle literature of the time: “The decay of British global influence, the loss of overseas markets for British goods, the economic and political rise of Germany and the United States, the increasing unrest in British colonies and possessions, the growing domestic uneasiness over the morality of imperialism—all combined to erode Victorian confidence in the inevitability of British progress and hegemony” (162). This growing “uneasiness of morality” as Arata calls it begins to become a reflection of the colonizer’s cultural guilt and fear of retaliation by a brutal and monstrous “Other,” which in this case is embodied by *Dracula* himself. The characterization of monstrous bodies as metaphors that equate to fears and anxieties of the times is a trend in much of Gothic literature that begins to be subverted in the late twentieth century with the rise of the sympathetic vampire in

works such as Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* and becomes even more explicit in twenty-first century iterations of the Gothic.

Dracula becomes marked as "Other" not only due to his geographic location in Eastern Europe but also from the description of his body. Jonathan Harker performs a rudimentary form of physiognomy as he attempts to understand his newest client:

His face was a strong—a very strong—aquiline, with the high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with a lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor. (Stoker 23-4)

Harker's intense scrutiny of the Count's physical features puts Dracula's foreignness and monstrosity on display and hardly dismissible as it appears on the visual surface of his body. Later on in the novel, Dracula's rampant sexuality and his affinity for the lunatic Renfield, will produce, as J. Halberstam argues, "a composite of otherness that manifests as the horror essential to dark, foreign, and perverse bodies" (90). Dracula's monstrosity is located in his body and is thus tied to political concerns of alterity and the pollution that racial others could spread to the idealized depiction of a homogenous population of western Europe.

Moreover, aside from the monstrous body of Dracula, the geographical placement of Dracula in Eastern Europe is depicted as primitive and governed by superstitions, as opposed to the logical and rational minded Jonathan Harker, meant to represent the levelheaded British middle-class man. Harker is the only one given a voice to describe Transylvania. He sees the citizens as idolatrous and dismisses their religion as superstitious. For example, Harker provides an account with the innkeeper's wife. She begs Harker not to go to Dracula's castle and in her excitement mixes her languages: "She was in such an excited state that she seemed to have lost her grip of what German she knew, and mixed it all up with some other language which I did not know at all" (Stoker 12). Harker writes the woman off as hysterical and does not heed her warnings, furthermore he continues: "She then rose and dried her eyes, and taking a crucifix from her neck offered it to me. I did not know what to do, for, as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous" (Stoker 13). Harker concludes that her religion and culture are superstitious in nature and less than rational. Harker regards her in a removed anthropological manner by essentially studying her as a subject of curiosity. Furthermore, as Harker is about to depart the inn and head to the Count's castle, he is surrounded by the townspeople who represent a diverse grouping of people speaking in a tangle of languages: "I could hear a lot of words often repeated, queer words, for there were many nationalities in the crowd; so I quietly got my polyglot dictionary from the bag and looked them out. I must say they were not cheering to me, for amongst them were 'Ordog'-Satan, 'pokol'-hell, 'stergoica'-witch" and so on" (Stoker 13). Harker thus represents the east as a mixture of "many nationalities." This mass of

people thus come to represent a primitive and superstitious community where language is cacophonous and often undecipherable aside from a word or phrase here or there. Harker attempts to use the symbol of his western rationality, his dictionary, to decipher the language but this only allows partial access. The crossings of cultural boundaries are thus shown to be a difficult and messy venture. Dracula himself embodies a dangerous foreign entity that can cross these boundary divides with relative ease. Halberstam states “he [Dracula] is the boundary, he is the one who crosses (Trans-sylvania = across the woods), and the one who knows the other side” (89). The threat that Dracula poses is that he is able to easily cross these worlds, unlike Harker who fumbles along. Dracula is represented as seamlessly taking on other identities, destabilizing the ideologies of nationhood held by British bourgeois society. Dracula’s permeability of boundaries gestures towards the panic of a culture afraid of invasion by an outside force.

Contextually, it is essential that Stoker uses Transylvania in particular as the representation of the foreign “Other” because as Arata notes: “Transylvania was known primarily as part of the vexed ‘Eastern Question’ that so obsessed British foreign policy in the 1880s and ‘90s. The region was first and foremost the site, not of superstition and Gothic romance, but of political turbulence and racial strife: (165). By placing Dracula, not only in the east but also in a place with a storied history of invasion and conquests, Stoker sets the ground for the fear and anxiety of what Arata calls “reverse colonization” that will permeate the novel. Dracula himself paints the description of his homeland as a site of consistent invasion and mixing of races:

We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship. Here, in the whirlpool of European races, the Ugric tribe bore down from Iceland the fighting spirit which Thor and Wodin gave them which their Berserkers displayed to such fell intent on the seaboard of Europe, ay, and of Asia and Africa too, till the peoples thought that the werewolves themselves had come...Is it a wonder that we were a conquering race. (33-4)

This whirlpool of races does not reflect a utopic multi-culturalism, instead, Stoker's vision is one marked by violence and degeneracy. This is what constitutes Eastern Europe and what threatens the homogenized culture of Victorian Britain. As Arata will remark, "Vampires are generated by racial enervation and the decline of empire" (166). Vampires walk in the aftermath of this decline, and thus Stoker makes vampires "bear the weight of the culture's fears over its declining status" (166). This is another way to say that colonizer's fears are thus put onto the fear of the racial "Other" and the potential for pollution and degeneracy that happens to a nation in decline.

One of the original ways that this "Othering" is symbolized and put into motion is the Gothic tradition's obsession with blood and thus bloodlines. Stoker's predecessors in the Gothic tradition were interested in exploring the degeneracy of aristocratic lines notably in Walpole's original Gothic tale *The Castle of Otranto*. Elizabeth MacAndrew argues that Walpole's novel focuses on the ways that "successive generations of Manfred's line have become increasingly degenerate under the distorting pressure of evil, so the descendants of Alfonso have grown increasingly

noble through suffering” (17). Thus if early Gothic works are fixated on a kind of bad blood concerning inheritance and the usurpation of familial lines in the early works of the Gothic, Halberstam argues that the Gothic of the late nineteenth century experiences a shift from “the threat of the aristocrat into the threat of the degenerate foreigner...the bad blood of family, in other words, is replaced by the bad blood of race” (95). *Dracula* becomes a prime exemplar of this transition in the Gothic.

Gothic monsters for Halberstam are also “always an aggregate of race, class, and gender” (87). *Dracula* as previously explored is clearly marked as a racialized “Other” in Stoker’s text. *Dracula* is the menace of the east that Harker unwittingly enables to infiltrate the English homeland by serving as his solicitor and securing multiple properties for him. *Dracula*’s movement into English society and his ability to “pass” is one threatening image. Through careful studying and information provided by Harker himself, *Dracula* is successfully able to “pass” as an Englishman. His passing becomes a site of disquiet as Arata tells us that “we have only to remember that in Victorian texts non-Western ‘natives’ are seldom...permitted to ‘pass’ successfully” (171). A large part of the terror that *Dracula* inspires originates in his ability to blend in and pass as one of the crowd. Moreover, it is also the fear of miscegenation and *Dracula*’s excessive virility that threatens the British homeland that also becomes a source of anxiety in the novel. Harker expresses this fear of what Arata calls “reverse colonization” when he discovers *Dracula* in his coffin while in Transylvania:

There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half-renewed...It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood; he lay

like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion...This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. (Stoker 53-4)

Harker's fear "envisions semi-demons spreading through the realm, colonizing bodies and land indiscriminately" (Arata 166). Once Dracula arrives on the shores of England, he proceeds to do just what Harker fears as he first turns Lucy and attempts to turn Mina into one of his kind by polluting them with his blood. Dracula's fecundity thus threatens to overwhelm the British men and as Arata points out, "Harker and Dracula, in fact, switch places during the novel; Harker becomes tired and white-haired as the action proceeds, while Dracula, whose white hair grows progressively darker, becomes more vigorous" (167). Thus as Dracula feeds upon the residents of England the racial "Other" grows in health and virility. The images of a rapacious foreign "Other" are often used as a troubling metaphor in both Gothic novels and racist propaganda.

Dracula's potency is not easily diminished either as it takes all the men in the novel to effectively "sterilize" Dracula in the end. Fred Botting argues that the men of the novel "reinvigorate their cultural identity and primal masculinity in the sacred values that are reinvoked against the sublimity of the vampire threat. In the face of the voluptuous and violent sexuality loosed by the decadently licentious vampire, a vigorous sense of patriarchal, bourgeois and family values is restored" (149). However, the men are only able to fashion their identity in direct contrast to the racial "Other." Dracula's otherness allows the men to uphold their ideological notions of

masculinity and rationality even when they increasingly become more barbaric in their actions, simply because “the horror embodied by Dracula reawakens the primitive and powerful emotions of his opponents” (Botting 154). For example, all the men take part in the graphic scene of Lucy’s death: “The Professor and I sawed the top off the stake, leaving the point of it in the body. Then we cut off the head and filled the mouth with garlic” (193). The so-called rational men thus enact the violently and seemingly unhinged graphic scene, but only as a response to the actions of the “Other.” This makes it seem as though the threat of otherness can permit seemingly fine upstanding men to act like virulent monsters without actually becoming monsters.

The discourse of the racial “Other” in Stoker’s *Dracula* illustrates well the threat or fear of “reverse colonialization” as Stephen Arata has argued. The use of voice in the novel points to what characters are allowed the agency to speak on the events of the novel. *Dracula* is an epistolary novel comprised of a conglomeration of character voices pieced together to create the Gothic narrative, but primarily the story is told through the voices of Jonathan Harker, Dr. Seward, Mina, and Lucy. The voices who are not allowed entrance into the narrative are Van Helsing, Lord Godalming, Quincey Morris, Renfield, and of course Dracula himself. As Halberstam notes “three of these men, of course, are foreigners: Van Helsing is Dutch, Quincey Morris is American, and Dracula is East European” (90). Lord Godalming is of a higher aristocratic class, while Renfield’s otherness lies in his insanity; thus, any voice that is not part of “middle-class hegemony” is not allowed into the narrative. Therefore, the authorial voice is that of the bourgeois white man and all others are deemed either monstrous or on the periphery. This is something that is revised in the 21st century

Gothic tales, where the Other is not only given a voice, but also given agency over the story.

Importantly, *Dracula* serves as one of the important early Gothic texts that aids in shaping and corralling the Gothic into what it is today. While *Dracula* does not fall under the category of the Female Gothic per se, the issues of alterity and the demonization of racial others and women, especially women who are sexual such as Lucy show the conservative operatives that corresponded to the creation of early renditions of Gothic monsters. These monsters were set up against the enlightened patriarchal voices of the white hegemony. *Dracula* becomes an influential tale, not just in the mythos of the vampire legacy but the subsequent Gothic literature that comes after as so many of these stories work against the grain or work to subvert what *Dracula* did in the first place. Importantly, the anxieties represented in *Dracula* shows what happens when curiosity about otherness is viewed as threatening.

Dracula sets up the formulation of the monster as racial “Other.” The figure of the vampire is one that exists in a solitary and predatory fashion. Stoker’s influential text serves as a template for many vampire stories. The thrall of *Dracula* is hard to shake, however, the twenty-first century vampires, move away from the image of a solitary predator, and begin to open up new lines of connection to other species, people, and creatures. The vampires in these twenty-first century texts are found to be a part of communities, and instead of being feared for their otherness, they are often shown as combatting fears of alterity through their communal connections with others.

Epistemic Curiosity in *The Historian* and *A Discovery of Witches*

The depiction of scholarly curiosity in fictional worlds is often that of intellectual minds attempting to unravel a quizzical puzzle or being on the cusp of making a profound discovery. Popular culture representations of researchers in both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are often shown as a kind of detective or seeker of truth. This depiction of scholarly endeavors tends to be the template used in a spate of recent Gothic tales including *The Historian* and *A Discovery of Witches* that use scholarly investigations as the impetus of a Gothic journey through history to uncover facts about supernatural beings. Importantly, the curiosity that is presented in these texts is indicative of an epistemic curiosity that illustrates the complexity of curiosity in our twenty-first century world.

Epistemic curiosity is indicative of a search for knowledge that goes deeper into the understanding of a topic of interest. In the 1950's British Canadian psychologist, Daniel Berlyne charted curiosity along two main axes: epistemic and diversive. Diversive curiosity is usually aligned with children and their urge to try everything novel. A child who reaches for everything, but quickly discards one shiny toy to examine the next is practicing diversive curiosity. In adults, diversive curiosity tends to manifest as a restless curiosity that moves people from one desire to the next, wherein they never feel entirely satisfied. We might imagine the way adults mindlessly scroll through their social media apps, finding only fleeting interest in a post before quickly scrolling to the next image or text. Epistemic curiosity is when diversive curiosity becomes transformed into a quest for knowledge and understanding. It is a deeper and more disciplined form of curiosity (Leslie xx).

Epistemic curiosity is the motivating force for most academic research. It is the curiosity that produces deep and sustained thinking. Both Helen and Diana will rely on epistemic curiosity to help them unravel the truth to the mysteries in their lives. Their disciplined epistemic curiosity will open new ways of knowing about the so-called monsters that they research. As Helen and Diana, are both involved in vampiric mysteries, their curiosity helps to point them towards powerful demonstrations of knowledge that help to rewrite the traditional trail of the vampire.

In Kostova's *The Historian*, there are several researchers in the overlapping narratives of the novel. Paul, a doctoral student in the midst of writing his dissertation, his advisor Professor Rossi, and Rossi's daughter Helen, and later unnamed granddaughter all become involved in the search for information about Vlad the Impaler and his connection to the Dracula mythos. Paul is working at his carrel in the library one day and realizes that someone has left an odd book with a dragon on the cover and the word Drakulya. The book causes his spine to tingle, and perhaps more importantly draws him into the text driven by an epistemic curiosity to learn more about this odd text. Paul recalls Bram Stoker's novel, and Bela Lugosi's performance, and then remembers some of his history, and that Dracula actually "came from the Latin root for *dragon* or *devil*, the honorary title of Vlad Tepes the Impaler of Wallachia, a feudal lord in the Carpathians" (Kostova 11). Paul's mind begins turning, and he begins to abandon his graduate project on trade in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, and becomes immersed in researching more about Vlad and Wallachia. He brings the strange book and the beginnings of his research to his advisor Rossi, only to discover that Rossi knows much about the history of Vlad, and to Paul's

surprise ends their meeting with the news that Dracula aka Vlad Tepes is still alive. Not long after this admission, Rossi disappears.

Helen becomes embroiled in Paul's search for Rossi, her father. In the beginning, Helen's aim is to be the first to publish and to "know more than anyone in the world about the legend of Dracula" (Kostova 142). Paul soon discovers that Helen's real drive is to learn more about her father, Rossi, a man she has never met. Rossi and Dracula's lives are intertwined and thus the more Helen learns about her past via her father's letters and research, the more she realizes she is in search of truths about her own origins and bloodline. Much of the mystery involves Helen and Paul employed in scholarly activity, such as archival searching, analysis of primary sources and other texts, interviews, and checking or cross-referencing sources (Kostova 116). Furthermore, research in the novel encompasses a robust need to fulfill curiosity: "I craved answers" (Kostova 118). Helen craves answers for more information about her father, and thus her own inheritance. Epistemic curiosity pushes her along the trajectory of devouring every piece of epistolary evidence she can find. The need to satiate this kind of craving for knowledge is only accomplished through the deep research that the characters enact. The trio of researchers (Helen, Paul, and Rossi) are on a quest for knowledge and understanding, and while this quest nourishes their minds and scholarly interests, it is not without risks.

The closer a researcher comes to uncovering Dracula's tomb, the more death looms as a spectacular threat. After Paul stumbles upon a librarian's corpse with the telltale signs of a vampire bite, he reassesses the information he has collected concerning Dracula. "Dracula, if he were at large, seemed to have a predilection not

only for the best of the academic world...but also for librarians, archivists. No—I sat up straight, suddenly seeing the pattern—he had a predilection for those who handled archives that had something to do with his legend” (Kostova 118). Here, the supernatural threat has, as Frances Kelly argues, “penetrated to the cloistered heart of the university, the archive” (525). Rossi details that upon finding a map of significance, it is apprehended by a mysterious figure. The trail of research is dangerous and the act of researching itself in the novel comes with a risk of bodily harm. While research is esteemed in the novel, it is also depicted as ghoulish; as the bloody historical research that is turned up showcases “a splash of blood whose agony didn’t fade overnight, or over centuries” (Kostova 55). Research is also not shown to be good or bad but simply necessary. Rossi states “Scholarship must go on. For good or for evil, but inevitably, in every field” (Kostova 33). This perpetuation of scholarship does not require morality but instead a continued forward motion. Furthermore, Rossi tells Paul that “anyone who pokes around in history long enough may well go mad” (Kostova 28). Research and scholarship can be seen in the novel as a form of vampirism itself. The living on of research through generations is also shown in the way the narrative conceives of its multi-generational narrators. The story of Vlad Tepes (Dracula) and the research concerning him is passed down not only through scholarly archives but also through storytelling and memories cultivated by Rossi and passed down to subsequent generations. This generational telling illustrates an inheritance of knowledge to some degree, but also a point of danger as the dragon book brings hardships and curses to the family. The more one knows about Dracula’s past, the more that person is endangered.

While the information at hand may be dangerous at times, it is also based on the way in which curiosity is often relational. Curiosity is dependent on what others know and the urge to then know what they know. The storytelling framework of *The Historian* illustrates this as the narrator of the tale (Rossi's unnamed granddaughter) is hearing the story from her father (who we later learn is Paul). The curiosity of the unnamed narrator pushes her to learn as much as she can from her father. There is effort in the telling of this story though: "There would be more discussions of Dracula on that journey. I was soon to learn the pattern of my father's fear: he could tell me this story only in short bursts, reeling it out not for dramatic effect but to preserve something—his strength? His sanity?" (Kostova 21). The daughter longs to hear more of the story and learn everything that her father knows, while also being aware of the toll it takes on his health. However, becoming enraptured with her father's story pushes the young girl to begin researching on her own. The drive for more knowledge on this topic pushes her into the archives. "Because I felt constraint with my father, I decided to do a little exploring by myself, and one day after school I went alone to the university library" (Kostova 36). The research in the archive opens up more questions for the girl and leaves her with the haunting images of the atrocities committed throughout time by Vlad Tepes (Dracula): "Only history itself can convince you of such a truth. And once you've seen the truth—really seen it—you can't look away" (Kostova 37). Being face to face with the research concretizes the stories told from her father in a specifically unique fashion. Archival research presents the truth in a way that is different and more real than the stories told from her father's point of view. This research feeds epistemic curiosity. This relates back to the reverse colonialism

inherent in *Dracula*. As each scholar uncovers more about their history, they realize that they are closer and closer to uncovering their own history of aggression, as it turns out that the Rossi's are related to Vlad Tepes. The monstrous other, is actually the enemy within.

The important relationship between knowledge and understanding is stressed in many ways in Kostova's *The Historian*. Dracula's first encounter with characters in the novel is not that of a bite but instead he leaves them with the ominous dragon book. These texts are ancient, produced by hand, and are empty of any text or drawings save the image of the green dragon in the center of the book. Once the books have been delivered, they cannot be given away. Every time a character attempts to give away his book or dispose of it by other means, it magically reappears. John Hoglund argues that "the menacing nature of the book is an obvious threat, a warning, while the uncertain origin and the blank pages encourage the receiver to start his or her historical research, to locate its origin and fill the blank pages" (9). The curiosity of the book itself and the urge to fill the pages with research urge all characters who receive the book to set off on research trips to learn more. The ability to write and recover history is what pushes Dracula forward and urges him to prey upon scholars in particular. Dracula offers Rossi free reign of his library: "You have the free run of what is certainly the finest archive of its kind on the face of the earth. Rare works are open to you that, indeed, cannot now be seen anywhere else" (Kostova 585). The temptation that Dracula provides to Rossi is that of knowledge and the ability to satiate epistemic curiosity. Moreover, Dracula knows that history is malleable and the writing of history is a very unique and human quality. It is the way that Rossi produces

scholarship that has garnered Dracula's attention: "You are a man of unparalleled sense and imagination, of keen accuracy and profound judgment. I have much to learn from your methods of research, your synthesis of sources, your imagination. For all these qualities, as well as the great scholarship they feed, I have brought you here, to my treasure-house" (Kostova 586). Dracula's treasure house is a library full of more works of literature found in any other part of the world. Dracula has been able to secure copies of texts that do not exist in the human realm. Dracula's plans for Rossi are to use his scholarly tools, not to merely feed on the man in the usual vampiric sense, but to feed on his scholarly skills and aptitude. Dracula essentially wants Rossi to serve as his historian. Dracula tasks Rossi with cataloging his immense library. Rossi will be the best person for the job because of Rossi's determination and boundless curiosity that has caught Dracula's attention in the first place, and it is because of Rossi's unwillingness to halt his investigation of Dracula that has made him a target of Dracula, thus showing the dangers inherent in research and curiosity inherent in this novel. Importantly, "the threat and allure of Kostova's Dracula is epistemological rather than ontological, although the two aspects are always interrelated" (Hoglund 10). Kostova's Dracula leaves behind books as opposed to a trail of corpses. These dragon books help him to locate potential historians who could help catalog his immense library. This intimates a crucial relationship between the past, present, and future. Dracula is able to see the way that knowledge can be used to manipulate narratives of his life and narratives of the world writ large. His urge to control the narrative of not only his life but the history of the world is not through mere violence of the corporeal, but a more insidious violence of the archives and a

rearranging of history in order to build a future that suits Dracula's motivations for a different world. The real menace Dracula poses is not directly related to his vampirism, but to his aforementioned understanding and ability to manipulate and change history. Dracula's power resides as much in his knowledge of history as in his corporeal form, and it is through this manipulation of knowledge that Dracula may be able to further his own form of societal transformation. We are meant to believe this evolution of history will continue as the unnamed narrator finds herself at the end of the novel in a library as she takes a break from her academic conference on medieval artifacts. Amidst the stacks, she loses herself, and as she is leaving, a librarian hands her some of her belongings that she had accidentally left behind:

The notebook was mine, certainly, although I thought I'd packed it safely in my briefcase before leaving. The book was—I can't say now what I actually thought it was, in that first moment, only that the cover was a rubbed old velvet, very, very old, and that it was both familiar and unfamiliar under my hand. The parchment inside had none of the freshness of the pamphlet I'd examined in the library—despite the emptiness of its pages, it reeked of centuries of handling. (Kostova 637)

The appearance of the book at the end of the novel in the hands of Rossi's granddaughter, signals that the project will continue for subsequent generations.

Kostova's *Dracula* plays on the fears not of transforming individuals into creatures of the night but his ability to alter cultural and historical memory. The giant library that Dracula amasses has the power to change the trajectory of the world. Dracula's trail of books, as opposed, to corpses points to the way that knowledge

becomes more threatening in Kostova's depiction of vampires than violence. It is not the racial "other" found within Kostova's *Dracula* (in fact the frequent travels of the characters throughout the book, and their experience of multiple cultures and the help they always find along the way, actually speaks more to harmony of community that transcends borders), but the fear of centuries worth of texts on imperial expansion and tyrannical control falling into the wrong hands. The most dangerous thing about Kostova's *Dracula*, is his book collection.

Deborah Harkness's first book in her *All Souls Trilogy* *A Discovery of Witches* continues the trend of the scholarly investigations into the occult being at the front and center of the text. Diana Bishop has attempted to keep magic outside of her life after her parent's death. Diana researches alchemy and has become a successful academic, teaching at Yale and performing research at Oxford. Bishop states that she has renounced her family's heritage and has "created a life that depended on reason and scholarly abilities, not inexplicable hunches and spells" (Harkness 3). Diana has created a binary within her schema of the world between the rational and explained versus the supernatural or what she considers superstitious. Her emphasis on scholarly research is that her findings can be "published, substantiated with extensive analysis and footnotes, and presented to human colleagues, leaving no room for mysteries and no place in my work for what could be known only through a witch's sixth sense" (Harkness 3). The push to stay grounded in the research that is not linked to the supernatural makes Diana hesitate when she encounters the rare book *Ashmole 782*. Diana's powers feel something bubbling under the surface of the seemingly non-descript book. However, her diversive curiosity is excited by the look and feel of the

text in her hands. “My fingers itched to open it and learn more. Yet an even stronger impulse held me back: Was my curiosity intellectual, related to my scholarship? Or did it have to do with my family’s connection to witchcraft?” (Harkness 4). The magic that Diana feels emanating from the text alerts her to the fact that there is something mystical, and yet she is drawn to the text due to her scholarly and hence epistemic curiosity. Diana delegates her curiosity to two distinct binary distinctions: one that is scholarly and one that is supernatural. She attempts to keep these curiosities siloed. At this time in the novel, Diana cannot understand how these two worlds can merge and intermingle. She staunchly attempts to keep these worlds separated until she learns that she is personally attached to this mystical text. Diana sends *Ashmole 782* away and rues the fact that she allowed her magic to interfere with her reason.

Later in the novel, Diana learns that she is the only witch that may summon the text. Diana’s innocent recalling of the text from the library, produces the text, but if others were to recall the text, the librarians would tell them that the book was missing. Her powers are particularly in tune with the text and it has been foretold that she will be the only one to open the tome that contains all the secrets of how to create life within its pages. The secrets to life in this world are not only constrained to human beings. In this world, humans co-exist alongside witches, daemons, vampires, and other creatures. *Ashmole 782* is special in that the information that is nestled within its bindings holds the keys to many generations worth of answers. Matthew Clairmont, a vampire who is also a biochemist, has spent years in search of *Ashmole 782* and the secrets of life that the book contains. Matthew’s research in biochemistry has done much to assess the lives of the magical beings in the world. In recent years, Matthew

has noticed a decline in the supernatural population. Matthew is afraid that these ancient races are rapidly dying out and needs *Ashmole 782* to help him solve this puzzling conundrum.

Matthew begins to follow Diana around and attempts to understand how she discovered the sacred text so easily. As Matthew is searching Diana's quarters for the mysterious book, he pauses over her scholarship and muses: "He suspected she used magic in her scholarship, too. Many of the men she wrote about had been friends of his—Cornelius Drebbel, Andreas Libavius, Isaac Newton. She'd captured their quirks and obsessions perfectly. Without magic how could a modern woman understand men who had lived so long ago?" (Harkness 29). Matthew is later shocked to realize that Diana has restrained herself from using magic in almost all aspects of her life since her parent's death. Diana is ignorant to most of the magic that she can produce; until a blood test performed by Matthew reports that, she has multiple magical abilities. Matthew's research and scholarship has consistently worked together with science and magic uniting the two, unlike Diana's compartmentalization. Diana restrains herself as part of the grieving process to deal with the violent and sudden loss of her parents, both witches themselves. Diana thinks that if she can stymie her natural magical inclinations, she can be safe from the supernatural horrors that killed her parents.

Through researching the elusive text and attempting to find the missing pages of the manuscript, Diana and Matthew begin to fall in love. Diana learns that the Congregation (a panel that consists of vampires, daemons, and witches that create rules and laws specifically for creatures) has outlawed the romantic relations between different creatures. The anti-miscegenation laws of the Congregation are challenged

when through using the information found within *Ashmole 782* coupled with evolutionary science that Matthew practices it is surmised that “cross-species breeding is the next evolutionary step” (Harkness 473). Matthew and Diana are compatible to create a “genetic supercombination” (Harkness 473). The possibility of this evolution causes a rift in the creature world and puts Matthew and Diana at odds with many other creatures including the Congregation. The fear of change and the altering of the genetic future create danger that sends the two back in time in order to have more time to research. The impetus for the two to “timewalk” (to time travel) through history is to try to locate the missing pages of *Ashmole 782*, as well as gain more time to study the evidence of this apparent scientific breakthrough. The emphasis though on all of this is to procure more time to study and research without the Congregation and others attacking Diana and Matthew. Therefore, the importance of scholarly research is what sets in motion the final actions of the first book of the trilogy. One of the major tenets of epistemic curiosity is to learn more about what one does not understand, but something that one is already familiar with. It is hard to become curious about something that one does not even know exists. This becomes an important distinction for George Lowenstein, a psychologist from Carnegie Mellon University, who argues, “Curiosity is a response to an information gap. We feel curious where there is a gap between what we know and what we want to know. It’s not only incongruity that evokes our desire to know; it’s the absence of information” (Leslie 34). The information gap is the partial information of *Ashmole 782* (due to the missing pages) and the unprecedented new information that creatures can interbreed. This information or gaps in the already known information spur on Diana and Matthew’s research

mission. Curiosity becomes more intense the more we come to know about something. The more Diana and Matthew learn about the evolution of the species and how they might be uniquely suited to bring about this evolutionary change, the more they need to know about what they do not know. Curiosity rises in tandem with the knowledge they receive. Instead of being satiated, every time Diana and Matthew find a new page from *Ashmole 782*, the thirstier they become for more knowledge. The mixing of supernatural races is key to keeping the community alive. The Congregation serves as the institution fearful of miscegenation and a changing diverse gene pool in the supernatural world.

Both novels *The Historian* and *A Discovery of Witches* invest in the epistemic curiosity of their protagonists. The scholarly journey itself is the prime motivator in each of these novels and constitutes a re-orienting of the Female Gothic. If prior iterations of the Female Gothic have as Diane Long Hoeveler contends had their female protagonists “masquerade as blameless victims of a corrupt and oppressive patriarchal society while utilizing passive-aggressive and masochistic strategies to triumph over that system” culminating in an ideology of “female power through pretended and staged weakness” then the scholarly women protagonists upset this ideology (7). Diana and Helen as well as her daughter, the unnamed narrator of *The Historian*, use their academic skills of research as an indispensable tool in their fight against oppressive structures. The oppressive structures of the Congregation and their attachment to the past is only contested through Diana’s ability to call on the secret text *Ashmole 782* and also through the research skills she has amassed as a successful academic. Likewise, Helen and her daughter work to defeat the menacing patriarch of

not only their family but of the world in their hunt for Dracula and to keep the tomes of his library out of unsafe hands. Again, it is their ability to practice strong research that makes them formidable opponents against Dracula as they attempt to bring the truth of his life, not the histories and falsities that he wants historians to spin about his life in order to obscure his identity and allow him to continue to hide in the shadows, manipulating history and the present through his library. These strong women do not assert their power through “pretended and staged weakness” instead; their powers are oriented around the power of writing and academic investment. This re-orientates the female scholar as an active agent who follows the lines of scholarly engagement. Sara Ahmed argues that “lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought...are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition” (16). The lines of thought that are forged in scholarly writing utilize the works that have been written before. The lines direct us down towards familiar paths but can also lead to new lines and inquiries. Furthermore, Ahmed clarifies that “following a line is not disinterested: to follow a line takes time, energy, and resources” (17). The scholars in these novels follow the lines of research not as passive victims blindly following a clear path, but as intrepid investigators searching for the lines of thought that have been obscured or fragmented by time. Their research is also a social investment, as their research works to save others and debunk old beliefs. The social element shows the importance of the women in connection with their communities and in the ways that they are able to generate alternative lines of thinking. The women tend to deviate from older

interpretations in order to create new knowledge and challenge old belief systems. Helen leaves Paul and her daughter to pursue Dracula across the centuries in her research in the archives in hopes of finding his new tomb and eliminating him: “I was thorough. I found him everywhere I went—in Rome in the 1620s, in Florence under the Medici, in Madrid, in Paris during the Revolution” (Kostova 630). Helen’s archival research produces a pattern of Dracula’s movements and following Dracula’s lines throughout history, uncovering the patterns of violence that Dracula has strewn across the centuries. Helen’s research produces new historical understandings of past events and illuminates the insidious actions of Dracula. Diana follows new lines as she allows the vampires to experiment with her blood and see if that opens new lines of life for supernatural creatures: “you told me witches are dying out. I’m the last Bishop. Maybe my blood will help you figure out why” (163). Diana’s giving of her witch blood to a vampire, allows for experimentations that consist of the mixing of blood between creatures. It is through these experiments, that Diana and Matthew learn that interracial mixing between supernatural creatures will help their races survive in this moment of mass extinction. Diana opens up new possible lines of life through the act giving of her blood, following a line that most witches would eschew due to the segregated nature of the supernatural creature world.

Scientific Curiosity in Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling*

Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling* follows Shori, a dark-skinned Ina (Butler's term for vampire), who survives a brutal attack on her family. It is Shori’s genetically modified body that allows her to survive the attack against her family. However, Shori survives the attack with a case of amnesia. She learns that she is integrated with human DNA,

and so she has been “born with better-than-usual protection from the sun and more daytime alertness” (Butler 77). These human attributes mixed with her vampiric or Ina nature marks Shori as both monstrous, but also more powerful. It is *because* of Shori’s mixed blood that she survives the attack against her family and is thus proven stronger than either human or Ina. The villains in the novel are conservatively entrenched in the old ways of the Inas and refuse scientific advancement even though it means a betterment for the race of Ina. They only denigrate Shori’s hybridity and see it as a threat to their way of life. As the trial at the end of the novel shows, these conservative Ina are also in the minority, while the majority of other Ina marvel at Shori’s power and abilities and are stunned by how these genetic modifications may enhance the Ina’s way of life.

Butler’s creation myth for her race of Ina diverges from popular constructions of vampire lore by incorporating scientific curiosity. Human and vampire relations have often played out as parasitical and thus been efficiently used as a symbolic discourse to convey the fear of infection and pollution of the bloodline, most notably in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* as discussed in-depth earlier. However, Butler’s Ina form close relationships with select humans who become their symbionts. The relationship becomes mutually beneficial for both human and Ina. Shori, as well as all Ina, connect with their humans in a communal way that is necessitated by touch—not always sexual but sometimes just as intimate. Symbionts protect Ina during daylight hours, while the Ina also protects their humans. The codes of protection become familial, and a kind of close-knit community is created between Ina and humans. This symbiotic relationship is quite different from the parasitical relationships in previous vampire

lore. Importantly, vampires can be seen as “boundary creatures whose bodies reflect and produce cultural identity” (Goddu 127). Thus, vampiric figures work to function in complex sites that can “contest, reiterate, produce, and transform the cultural anxieties and fears of their age” (Young 211). Butler’s Ina becomes an articulation of the specific scientific concerns about genetic modifications in contemporary American society.

Thus, Butler’s Ina mythology is structured much differently than that of Bram Stoker’s vision of the vampire in *Dracula* as a creature created through constant slaughter and invasion; the Ina is viewed as a race that evolves and grows alongside humans. Due to Shori’s amnesia, she must be retaught the origin myth of her people. Shori’s curiosity stems from a need to know where she comes from. She is told the history of the Ina was written down on clay tablets thousands of years ago and circulated longer before that in oral tradition. This sounds, of course, very familiar to indigenous history. Shori is told that “We [the Ina] had already joined with humans ten thousand years ago, taking their blood and safeguarding the ones who accepted us from most physical harm” (Butler 188). However, the Ina are not immortal like other iterations of vampires and are subject to the ravages of illness and disease and finally after years of evolving become immune to the disease: “Then, gradually, we began to heal. Perhaps we had simply undergone a kind of microbial winnowing. The illness killed most of us. Those left were resistant to it, as were their children” (Butler 189). The natural process of evolution experienced by the Ina is a very Darwinian model of survival of the fittest. This microbial winnowing leaves only the Ina with the strongest immune systems left standing. Additionally, the Ina’s relationship with evolution

reshapes vampire lore and makes the Ina appear closer to humans as they too are enmeshed in the science and biology of the Earth.

Shori's amnesia works narratively to help the reader understand this world as Shori must relearn everything in her world. The curiosity of learning impels both Shori along her path in the story, and works at casting that same curious spell over the reader. However, the amnesia also works as a way in which to connect to past historical trauma. Curiosity about the past is often based on the urges to not repeat past mistakes although there are those that dismiss historical pasts. Hershini Bhana Young makes the argument that "a commonplace argument against reparations claims that there is no need to redress slavery as it lies behind us and we are more 'evolved' than our ancestors who were products of their racist times. Reinforcing this notion that the past is over is the fact that those filing the claims can no longer directly *remember* the privileges and injuries of slavery" (214). The push to remember and the curious urge to recover the details of not only Shori's past but also the past of her people makes remembering historical trauma crucial. While Shori is unable to remember anything about her attackers, there is still a need to redress the brutal violence that was enacted. Butler's novel works to show that the hatred and racist violence has persisted since the eighteenth century. Racial tensions are defamiliarized as the previously homogenous Ina society is introduced to racial difference for the first time through genetic experiments with human DNA.

The next step in evolution for the Ina requires human DNA. Scientific curiosity and the urge to continue improving their race, shape the Ina's evolutionary experiments with DNA. Shori is unique due to the human DNA she has inside her, but

this is also, what marks her as “Other” in both the Ina and human world. Shori is injected with DNA rich with melanin from a black human mother, and this makes her skin appear darker, but also allows her special privileges such as being able to withstand long periods of time in the sun: “better-than-usual protection from the sun and more daytime alertness” (Butler 83). In the trial that takes place at the end of the novel, Preston stands up in defense of Shori against others who see her as a contamination or degeneration of the Ina race stating that: “Shori Matthews is as Ina as the rest of us. In addition, she carries the potentially life-saving human DNA that has darkened her skin and given her something we’ve sought for generations: the ability to walk in sunlight, to stay awake and alert during the day” (Butler 272). Shori’s darkened skin thus marks her as an outsider from other Inas but also as superior as she alone can survive sunlight and stay awake, but also causes others to question whether she is actually Ina or something else altogether. Shori’s opponents try to devalue her by making her feel less than by calling her things like “dirty little nigger bitch...goddamn mongrel cub...Ina mixed with some human or maybe human mixed with a little Ina. That’s not supposed to happen. Not ever” (Butler 179). Shori’s foes mimic human racist rhetoric and resort to brutal violence to try in a desperate attempt to remain homogenous. Clearly, not all Inas are on board for the evolutionary science that has created Shori’s superior genetic makeup. The extra melanin in her skin gives Shori the appearance of a black human girl. Shori’s black skin affronts Katherine Dahlman and her followers. At the court case, Katherine rails against the evolutionary changes by shouting: “You want your sons to mate with this person. You want them to get black, human children from her. Here in the United States, even most

humans will look down on them. When I came to this country, such people were kept as property, as slaves” (Butler 272). Katherine’s diatribe indicates that she fallen in line with racial prejudices espoused by humans. After this outburst, the council confers to see whether Katherine is fit to remain serving on the board. The majority of the council agrees that Katherine should be dismissed. Importantly, one of the council members, Alice Rappaport, votes to dismiss Katherine due to her witnessing of the racial prejudices amongst humans: “Over the centuries, I’ve seen too much racial prejudice among humans. It isn’t a weed we need growing among us” (Butler 274). As Ali Brox argues, “Butler’s vampires do not embody the fears and anxieties of the society they infiltrate; rather, Butler shifts the monstrosity from the figure to the social ills themselves...The Ina who attack Shori and her family are not monstrous because they are vampires, but they are monstrous because of their anti-human and racist rhetoric” (396). Ultimately, Katherine is in the minority, and is removed from the council and then later found guilty of the crimes of murder against Shori’s family and symbionts and is ultimately executed. The Ina are not interested in individual vendettas but instead are interested in the importance of communal harmony. Katherine’s stagnation and refusal to evolve is her ultimate downfall. Katherine refuses to be curious about the future of Ina and genetic experiments. Katherine’s lack of curiosity and refusal to evolve becomes her undoing. Butler argues that Katherine’s antiquated ideology is not the future and ends in annihilation. Ultimately, the Ina have been able to survive and evolve through their co-dependence and symbiosis with humans. For Butler’s Ina to continue thriving and evolving, scientific curiosity is the trajectory of their futurity. Furthermore by employing a black feminist Afrofuturist

epistemology, Butler “transgressively revises the contemporary vampire genre by reconfiguring the trope of the vampire from enchanted icon of whiteness to consider how race, sexuality, and intimacy can function in potentially progressive ways” (Morris 146). The reconfiguration re-orientates the Female Gothic to possibilities beyond the victimization narrative, while also locating power in race and sexuality, something that has been annexed to attics and madness in previous iterations of the Female Gothic.

Adolescent Curiosity in Noir Gothic

Emil Ferris’s *My Favorite Thing is Monsters* is a phantasmagoric graphic novel drawn entirely on lined notepaper with ballpoint pens and markers utilizing a crosshatch style. The unique style and visual dimensions of the text provide an opportunity to consider the reader's orientation to space within the Female Gothic. The story behind Emil Ferris's creation of her text is one that blossomed under forced confinement (in a different manner than Brontë’s writerly conditions springing from a place of confinement by patriarchal interdictions). Ferris's confinement was due to a literal paralysis of the body. Emil Ferris used the creation of her graphic novel as a form of rehabilitation after being infected with the West Nile virus that left her paralyzed from the waist down and limits the movement in her right hand. Before her medical emergency, Ferris had worked as a freelance illustrator. Ferris used her physical confinement as an opportunity to relearn herself how to draw. The result is her astonishing Gothic tale—an extraordinary visual masterpiece. Partly based on Ferris’s childhood of growing up in 1960s Chicago, the graphic novel details the coming of age story of Karen Reyes. The graphic novel is a Gothic pastiche full of

family trauma (a sick mother dying of cancer and Karen's older troubled brother Deeze) and the mysterious murder of a neighbor, Anka Silverberg, interspersed with images of Karen's favorite horror magazines.

The physical space of the novel itself is one that does not conform to normative reading patterns, Ferris's text demands to be read vertically, sideways and upside down. Ferris's text upsets what S. Ahmed calls the "normative dimensions" (66). These dimensions are lines that can be:

Redescribed in terms of the straight body, a body that appears 'in line.' Things seem 'straight' (on the vertical axis) when they are 'in line,' which means when they are aligned with other lines...The vertical is hence normative; it is shaped by the repetition of bodily and social actions over time...Importantly, when one thing is 'out of line,' then it is not just that thing that appears oblique but the world itself might appear on a slant, which disorientates the picture and even unseats the body. (S. Ahmed 66-7)

Ferris's text itself urges the readers to reorient themselves to the process of reading by engaging with the book in an uncommon way. The spatial dimensions of the text encourage readers to approach it "slantwise" as one must constantly reorient one's self to the images of the text. Furthermore, Ferris eschews the normative conventions of a traditional comic structure by not employing panels in her text. The images and text are not confined by normative comic conventions and instead refuse to be restricted as they explode off the page at times.

Karen revels in her "otherness" portraying herself as werewolf cub in her drawings as she investigates the murder of her next-door neighbor. Karen represents

herself as werewolf not because she feels monstrous in a shameful way, but because she revels in monstrosity and her misfit status. Monsters hold a keen fascination for Karen. She sees monsters in a dualistic manner:

The bad monsters want the world to look the way they want it to. They need people to be afraid... They don't live in their lair and mostly mind their own biz... I guess that's the difference... A good monster sometimes gives somebody a fright because they're weird looking and fangy... A fact that is beyond their control... But bad monsters are all about control... They want the whole world to be scared so that bad monsters can call the shots. (Ferris)³

Karen's musings on monsters also demonstrates the shift in the monster imaginary of the twenty-first century Gothic works. No longer do monsters have to be confined to the attic, suppressed and repressed by patriarchal control. Ferris's monsters have depth and dimension and occupy all manner of spaces. Karen freely walks the streets of Chicago befriending many so-called "misfits," but as opposed to earlier Gothic novels where monsters had to be kept in the dark recesses of repressive spaces; here Ferris brings them into the light. For example, Karen sees beyond Franklin's facial deformities (a black boy whose scarred face causes Karen to draw him in her sketchbook as Victor's creature from *Frankenstein*): "Franklin really did look like he'd been cut into pieces and if all the pieces fell away, I got the idea that what was inside of him was a big ball of bright light" (Ferris). Karen reads the interior spaces of monsters and provides an alternative to the way people tend to orient themselves toward difference. Significantly, Karen locates herself as an "aberration." A word that carries a particular valence for S. Ahmed: "An aberration can refer to the act of

³ Ferris's book does not employ page numbers.

wandering from the usual way of normal course” (70). Ahmed will continue this line of thinking by articulating that queer desire has been viewed as an aberration because it does not follow the “straight” line of heterosexual desire. Moreover, while part of Karen’s story is partially about understanding and navigating her desire for other women, it is more broadly about the way Karen seems to always refuse the “normal course.” Furthermore, Maaheen Ahmed argues that “Franklin-Frankenstein’s monster not only captures the irreparable brokenness of an othered human but also evokes the issue of animation, of giving life, which occupies a central role with the death of Karen’s mother and the impossibility of bringing her back to life” (171). This reanimation of Franklin and creating him in an image of a monster shows Karen’s creative drive but also shows how she is mediating her mother’s death. While she is unable to bring her mother back from the dead, she is able to metaphorically heal damaged others in her neighborhood with her curiosity about their life and her connection to art particularly that of monster art. Karen’s abundant curiosity about those that fill her neighborhood and her fascination with reading monster books pushes Karen to create a new persona for the misfits wherein they inhabit space in her imagination. The intersplicing of the magazine covers illustrate a young girl’s fascination and curiosity with the world around her, but also suggests that the everyday terrors experienced by folks in Karen’s urban neighborhood are akin to the supernatural and fantastical horrors that appear in her horror magazines. Furthermore, as shown with Karen’s own interpretation of herself as a werewolf and her reimagining of Franklin as Frankenstein’s creature shows that her creations of monsters are individuals that are rarely harmful. The really horrific people of the

novel, for example, the Nazi soldiers and other oppressors within Anka's harrowing story as relayed by Karen are all drawn in human form suggesting that it is human beings as opposed to monsters that commit the real atrocities and cause the most harm.

The construction of Gothic monsters particularly in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which Franklin is based, undergirds Ferris's articulation that human beings are the true monsters. J. Halberstam argues, "Shelley's novel suggests that it is people (or at least bodies) who terrify people, not ghosts or gods, devils or monks, windswept castles or labyrinthine monasteries. The architecture of fear in this story is replaced by physiognomy, the landscape of fear is replaced by sutured skin" (28-9). Ferris's use of intertextuality helps to create a vision of monstrous bodies juxtaposed against seemingly normative human bodies. The fear of the other is crystallized in the way that the social outcasts perform as monsters within Karen's diary pages. Likewise, the fear of otherness in regards to sexuality is also given a monstrous makeover as Missy (the girl that Karen is attracted to) morphs into a vampire when the two are alone and sharing private moments together away from the prying eyes of Missy's mother. Missy states in her vampire form "The times when I'm with you are the only ones when I'm...myself" (Ferris). The monster body becomes the body of true self. Halberstam tells us "the monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities and so we need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities" (27). Ferris's text presents us with this celebration.

My Favorite Thing is Monsters is set up to look like Karen's diary. The lined pages and the random doodles, as well as the more elaborate horror posters that are

interspersed throughout these pages give off this effect. The stories that Karen records in her diary are in part her story but also interweave the story of her deceased neighbor Anka's Holocaust story. The form of a diary then allows for a re-orientation—a kind of looking back, which S. Ahmed argues, “still involves facing” and by facing backward at our imperfect past “an openness to the future” presents itself (178). Anka's story about her past becomes Karen's future as she spends time sleuthing in her attempt to solve her murder. Nevertheless, Karen's curiosity is diffusive and the offshoots of her imagination provide an insight into the workings of a precocious young girl coming of age amidst tremendous trauma (losing her mother to cancer and losing her neighbor to murder). Ferris's text can show us that “what is behind us is also what allows other ways of gathering in time and space, of making lines that do not reproduce what we follow but instead create wrinkles in the earth” (S. Ahmed 179). Not all lines of inquiry are followed in Karen's journal that tracks her perambulations across Chicago in the search for truth and companionship. Not every line is fully constituted but instead shows us multitudinous paths curiosity takes in a young person's life.

S. Ahmed states that “a queer phenomenology would involve an orientation toward queer, a way of inhabiting the world by giving ‘support’ to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place” (179). We can envision Karen as acting out this orientation as the precocious werewolf girl who walks the streets of Chicago, eager to befriend and support the oblique and the strange.

Imperialist policies work along a nexus of so-called discovery and invasion. The fear of imperialism reversing onto the people of the British Empire is brought to

life in the form of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, a vampire who feeds off white and wealthy bourgeoisie women, slowly turning them into creatures like himself. The mixing of Dracula's eastern blood into the likes of first Lucy and then Mina, create panic for the men of the novel, as they are afraid to see their women transformed by a "monster" of the east. This fear of racial pollution manifests in Lucy's monstrous transformation into the "bloofer lady," a fiend with blood down the front of her white garments, as she entices small children into her deathly vampiric embrace. This imperialistic Gothic novel and the fear of reverse colonization sets up monstrous bodies as those that are perverse and are to be feared for the damage they can do to society.

The twenty-first century novels retrace the lines of previous imperialist texts, like *Dracula*, and instead of finding fear of the monstrous "Other" repellent, these "Others" produce alternative lines of knowledge that create new lifelines. The "others" here are all seen as giving life, not taking it away. Helen attempts to protect the life of those she loves by keeping Dracula's library out of the hands of those that would repeat his imperialistic inclinations. Diana mixes her witch's blood with that of a vampire to show the life that can be created by the intermixing of different species in order to stop a mass extinction from occurring. Similarly, Shori is made stronger and more resilient due to the experimentation of her genome and the mixing of human and Ina blood. While Karen transforms her Chicago neighborhood into monsters in her journaling imaginary in order to make a confusing world more accessible to a young girl grappling with her own queer identity. Monsters are relatable and understandable to Karen, and help her grapple with issues of identity. These four texts show the shift from the Imperial Gothic to a Female Gothic that is more afraid of the institutions that

demand a kind of stagnancy, and are afraid and fearful of change. Curiosity of all kinds (epistemic, scientific, and that of an adolescent girl that toggles between epistemic and diversive) open up new lines of inquiry and project paths that show imperialism is the true Gothic horror.

CHAPTER 4:

BUFFY SLAYS THE FEMALE GOTHIC TRADITION: CURIOSITY AND THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE IN A TRANSMEDIA LANDSCAPE

This final chapter is interested in televisual narratives, their depictions of curiosity, and the pursuit of knowledge specifically in the show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (BTVS) (1997-2003) and the transmedia associated with the show in the form of comic books and the podcast *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*. Transmedia is a term that simply means “across media.” Henry Jenkins uses the term to discuss the way that transmedia storytelling “describes one logic for thinking about the flow of content across media” (2011). This chapter will trace the way that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* repositions the Female Gothic in a variety of media outlets. The transmedia elements of the Buffyverse show varying levels of how curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge help to impel female protagonists in BTVS towards a more active goal. Additionally, this chapter explores the Buffyverse fandom through rewatch podcast *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* and how this podcast impels political action and change for its listeners. The continuation of the Buffyverse story in different mediums, points to the evolution of the Female Gothic in the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

It is essential to address television in a literary analysis of the Female Gothic as televisual media is of increasing concern within contemporary scholarship on the Gothic (Tibbetts, 2011, Redding, 2011, Nelson, 2012, Piatti-Fernak & Brien, 2015, Spooner, 2017). The Gothic has always been an integral part of the televisual landscape stretching back to the days of shows like *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971) for example. The first Golden Age of television occurred in the early 1950’s but the

phrase has often been echoed in scholarship discussing the rise of prestige television in the '90s and early aughts before streaming services changed the landscape of television forever. This period is sometimes--a bit confusingly--referred to as the Golden Age of television or the "New Golden Age." While many prestige shows of the "Golden Age" of television included shows such as *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) and *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) which centered around an anti-hero (essentially bad men doing horrible things), *BTVS* is often mentioned in the same breath as these other male centered "prestige" shows. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* influence on television and the inherent literariness of television is not to be underestimated. However, for all of *BTVS's* merits, it still produces problematic depictions of people of color, and those that differ from a middle class socio-economic status. The transmedia texts that orbit the original show prove to be more aware of the importance of intersectional feminism and attempt to make the Buffyverse more diverse. This chapter will chart how the pursuit of knowledge and curiosity is framed within the original show privileging Buffy's white and middle class background especially in comparison to her doubles found in the two other slayers in the series Kendra and Faith, while also examining the transmedia texts that come after the original airing of the show that strive to build a more inclusive Buffyverse.

On March 10, 1997, *BTVS* premiered as a mid-season replacement show on an at-the-time-little-known network called the WB. The show is a continuation of the 1992 film of the same name, written by Joss Whedon. Whedon, unhappy with the final product of the film, hoped to shape the television show into the creative vision he had initially conceived. The show quickly surpassed the notoriety of the original film and

garnered a passionate cult following and went on to become highly successful and critically lauded for seven seasons. However, since the cancellation of the show, it has continued to live on through various mediums and has persistently resonated with new audiences. Part of the continued attraction to the show is the way *BTVS* offers empowering feminist narratives to people who feel different, however as mentioned above, issues surrounding racial othering and class disparity still persist in the show. *BTVS*'s feminism is rarely intersectional. *BTVS*'s tendency to present characters of color as "Others" is well known in the field of *Buffy* studies. Patricia Pender states, "*Buffy*'s racial politics are inarguably more conservative than its gender or sexual politics" (171). Naomi Alderman and Annette Seidel-Arpaci argue that despite *Buffy*'s "impressive grappling with all sorts of 'difference' and 'otherness'...we will find a lingering preference against the 'non-white' or 'non-Christian' which subtly undermines the show's message of individual empowerment." While focusing on how the show deals with the pursuit of knowledge and curiosity, I will trace who is allowed access to knowledge and whose access is barred.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer as Female Gothic

BTVS centers on the world of a teenage girl (Buffy) who has to hide her true self (the fact that she is a vampire slayer), problems arising from closeting one's identity and other queer issues have resonated within the show, as well as the more overt feminist themes the show encapsulates has garnered much critical attention. Moreover, the show employs Gothic tropes and revises them to project current cultural fears. *BTVS* has storylines that involve Gothic mainstays such as a *Frankenstein* story line that involves the creation of a patchwork creature that fuses together both demon,

human, and cyborg parts. The creature's name is Adam and after murdering his creator in his first breath spends the rest of the season in existential turmoil attempting to figure out what he is and what his purpose is. Adam is reflective of the fear of technological advancements, and how technology may play a part in reproductive futurity, as well as fears of creating a "superior race."

Dracula also makes an appearance in *BTVS* (although his character will develop more in the comics, which work as a continuation of the show). Dracula maintains many of the eccentricities observed in Stoker's novel (employing a fly eating minion, his vampire brides, being able to transfigure his shape into a bat, a wolf, or merely mist, among other recognizable traits from the original novel) but his main impetus in the episode is to illustrate to Buffy that she does not yet know the extent of her power. Buffy recognizes that she has not delved deeply enough into the source of her power and Dracula's comments stoke her curiosity to train more and understand the history and lineage of slayers that have come before her.

Other familiar Gothic tropes or retellings of famous Gothic stories continue to be a lynchpin in the series. Catherine Siemann tells us that "Critics writing on the Gothic have carefully developed the equations between the underlying cultural anxieties and their Gothic manifestations" (127). Famous Gothic texts including Stoker's *Dracula* and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* among other late nineteenth century texts were preoccupied with using supernatural metaphors as a way to explore contemporary anxieties about a whole host of topics from sexuality and religion to science and imperialism. These fin de siècle texts are often grouped around this fear of the turn of the century and what the future will bring. *BTVS* appears at the

turn of another century and the show continues the conceit of using the supernatural to underscore anxieties particularly surrounding issues of sexuality, power, and knowledge.

BTVS is an exemplar of contemporary Female Gothic as mediated through television and seen by many critics as an influential text of the genre. The connection between Gothic television and the texts of the Female Gothic that came before rests on the serial nature of Gothic texts in general. Just as Gothic tales used to be produced in serialized narratives, so too are television series structured in this manner. One of the main facets of the Female Gothic has been the emphasis on the victimization of the female protagonist. This has historically been a tenant in the Female Gothic television productions of the past as well. Critics such as Helen Wheatley, have discussed the way that Female Gothic television played upon the role of women in domestic settings, and was keenly interested in appealing to the monetary way women were consumers of Gothic media. The consumption of Gothic novels, and then of Gothic television, allowed producers to tap into this ready-made market. However, many of the early Gothic television series in the 1940s and 50s (many produced for BBC as adaptations of well-known Gothic texts, such as *Rebecca* which saw three different televisual adaptations in the span of ten years, 1947, 1954, and 1956) played upon the same confinement tropes of the text based Female Gothic. Wheatley argues “that these programmes [BBC Gothic adaptations] play upon certain anxieties focused on and experienced by women in the marital home through an investigation of the threatening, cage-like, labyrinthine and, ultimately, un-homely domestic spaces of the female Gothic television adaptation” (156). While the story line of a typical Female

Gothic novel centers on a female protagonist, it is still often about the ways in which she encounters dangerous situations and finds herself in peril, often to be rescued by some sort of male figure and generally one of the romantic nature. Joss Whedon (the creator of *BTVS*) purposefully subverts this trope. More directly, Whedon states that he was tired of seeing the “the little blonde girl who goes into a dark alley and gets killed” and wanted to “create someone who was a hero where she had always been a victim” instead. He proclaims that “The very first mission statement of the show was the joy of female power: having it, using it, sharing it” (Gottlieb). Whedon’s vision recognized the victimized heroine of Gothic novels and horror films, but worked to create a more active and empowering storyline for this type of character.

Setting the stage narratively, the focus of the first three seasons of *BTVS* is that high school is hell both literally and figuratively, as Sunnydale High sits atop the mouth of hell. The horrors of adolescence manifest as literal demons and monsters. The proceeding seasons demonstrate that these horrors are not just confined to the halls of high school, but the anxieties and pressures of adulthood become demons that we all must learn to fight. Whether it is the horror of dealing with the death of a parent or the unglamorous life of low wage employment or the loss of autonomy, *BTVS* plays upon adult anxieties as well. While mostly employing various Gothic techniques and constructions of monstrosity to play out the narrative metaphors for life’s issues, the show also portrays alarmingly realistic depictions of gun violence, death from illness, and rape.

Enter All Ye Who Seek Knowledge

A major theme in *BTVS* is the pursuit of knowledge, which relates to curiosity. Curiosity often fuels our pursuits of knowledge. The Sunnydale High School itself has the phrase “enter all ye who seek knowledge” written in Latin on the outside of the school. Not only does this phrase serve as a useful tool to allow vampires to enter the grounds as an invitation for those who seek knowledge, but also positions knowledge as an important theme in the show.

The first three seasons of the show are primarily set at Sunnydale High School where Buffy and her friends are students. Buffy’s watcher Rupert Giles is the school librarian and because of his position within the school, the library becomes the main headquarters where Buffy and her friends (affectionately nicknamed the Scoobies or the Scooby Gang) gather to research the forces of darkness in order to stop their misdeeds and save the world from near apocalypse time and time again. The act of research is shown to be an integral part of Buffy’s slaying. She cannot merely wield weapons with her super strength and perform impressive acrobatics in order to slay the enemy, it is information gleaned through the pursuit of knowledge coupled with Buffy’s strength that is needed to stop the evil acts. This knowledge is gathered through careful and meticulous research, and it is the research that is often the thing that helps to stop mystical rituals, or guides the way to reverse a spell gone awry. Moreover, research explains a demon’s weakness and informs Buffy of how she can effectively eliminate the evil. In essence, research allows Buffy to go into combat with a plan and a knowledge of her enemy, as opposed to running madly into the fray.

Overall, without research, Buffy would often be at a loss as to how to stop evil from running rampant through Sunnydale.

Giles, as a watcher and a librarian, has been schooled and trained in research. His labor and knowledge is crucial in aiding the slayer in her fight against the forces of evil. However, the series does not rely merely on Giles' innate knowledge, but his ability to share that knowledge and teach his research skills to other members of the Scoobies. He teaches Willow, Xander, and eventually other tertiary characters such as Cordelia and Oz how to research and what books to consult in order to help Buffy.

The answers to questions are rarely immediately available; instead, much time is devoted to these research elements. For example, in the season one episode "Angel," as Giles demonstrates his knowledge, Willow asks "How is it you always know the stuff? You always know what's going on. I never know what's going on." Giles replies "Well, you weren't here from midnight until six researching it" (Greenwalt, 1997). The intellectual rigor and labor of deep research is not only explored through dusty tomes and card catalogs but other interventions as well. Giles and his traditional learnedness from books are juxtaposed against Jenny Calendar's technopagan acumen. Jenny, a computer teacher at the school, begins a project to scan all of the books in the library much to Giles' dismay. Both Jenny and Willow have tech savvy skills albeit in a world of '90s computer software and internet (many a floppy disk become crucial plot points at one time or another), and while Giles is initially resistant to the technological advancements, he states, "The knowledge gained from a computer is a – it, uh, it has no no texture, no-no context. It's-it's there and then it's gone. It it's to last, then-then the getting of knowledge should be, uh,

tangible, it should be, um, smelly” (Season 1, episode 8 “I Robot You Jane” by Ashely Gable & Thomas A. Swyden). Giles’ emphasis on the tactile nature of knowledge highlights a bias for the physical aspect of knowledge. Giles employs all his senses including smell when he engages in research. This also points to a privileged position, as not all people have access to large library collections of the occult, such as Giles has. Jenny’s desire to scan the books would also make them more easily accessible to people all over the globe, of course not having a computer would still be an impediment to being able to pursue this knowledge. Giles eventually sees the usefulness in this form of knowledge processing, but remains a bit wary of technology.

Furthermore, knowledge is often gleaned from interactions with people in specific social situations. Buffy often visits a dive bar called Willy’s Place that caters to a demon clientele, where she can expect information from the owner, aptly named Willy the Snitch. This kind of “street” information is also supplied from Spike (a vampire) later on in the series after he has been rendered harmless by a government experiment that has implanted a chip into his brain that does not allow him to hurt any living creature. Spike often becomes a source of information for Buffy about the goings on of the demon world, but usually not without a bribe of pig’s blood and money first. The knowledge that circulates between Buffy and her friends is shown as unique when compared to government agencies (the Initiative) that combat supernatural forces in a much more bureaucratic and generally ineffectual manner.

Into Every Generation a Slayer is Born

In the lore of *BTVS*, one slayer is called when another slayer dies, for there is only one slayer in the world at a time. Additionally, the line of slayers is a queer

genealogy of women (playing on Ahmed's theorizations of lines), where the history of the slayer is passed down through a line that does not rely on race, ethnicity, country of origin or any other normative demarcation of familial inheritance. Buffy disrupts the sequential lineage by being revived after drowning by CPR. Buffy's momentary death activates the calling of another slayer. For the first time, there are two slayers in the world at a time. Once a slayer is activated, she gains special skills such as strength, speed, and impressive senses including prophetic dreams. However, these preternatural skills alone are not enough to defeat the evil of the world. The slayer must learn and educate herself.

The role of the watcher is to help the slayer educate herself in various lore and support her through her physical combat training process. In essence as Zoe-Jane Playden says "Slayers are both born and made" (122). Giles's training approach is quickly altered once he meets Buffy and realizes she may not be the kind of pupil he himself had trained for. Buffy's southern California attitude and urge to do "normal" girl things like shopping and trying out for the cheerleading squad at first affront Giles' British sensibilities. However, once Giles gets a chance to know Buffy and understand her quirks and idiosyncrasies, Giles is able to develop a different kind of curriculum for her. Buffy's training is much more like that of an education as opposed to a training. Playden argues that training is focused on a "transmission of skills, from an authority to a passive recipient, where the authority knows why the work has to be performed and the recipient simply does it" (125). This implies a type of passive relationship. There is no searching for higher meaning or critical thinking necessarily attached to rote training. Therefore, to call Buffy's sessions training is an unfortunate

word choice. It is more that Buffy is receiving a fully enriched and multi-faceted education. Giles does not merely tell Buffy what she must do, in fact Buffy being as headstrong as she is, is rarely told to do anything, but instead engages in colloquy with Giles transforming her understanding of the world around her. Buffy does not need extensive training when it comes to weapons and fighting, her preternatural strength and coordination tend to do the trick, but what she does need is the human connection and relationships that Giles and her other friends provide her.

Buffy constructs a community around her world of slaying, which makes her a particularly unique slayer. The human connection she receives from Giles and her friends tethers her to the world in a unique and communal way. Most of the slayers in the past have lived virtually in isolation and are restricted from the outside world, holding their sacred duty above all else. Buffy rejects this monastic lifestyle and attempts to have a “normal” life while balancing her slayer duties. By having a network of friends and mentors, Buffy is able to be more successful than any slayer in the past. This shows that Buffy’s education is crucial to her survival, but it also marks her as unique from the line of slayers that came before her.

Two Slayers, No Waiting: Kendra and Faith as the “Other” Slayers

The other slayers (Kendra and Faith) that are introduced throughout the series become doubles to Buffy. Juliann E. Fleenor writes that doubles are often used within the Female Gothic to mirror the journey of the heroine as she “attempts to establish her identity” (16). These other slayers produce a vision of what Buffy could have been without the support of her watcher and friends. Kendra is a slayer that has only been trained and not educated in the communal way that Buffy has. Removed from her

family at a young age, she has lived the kind of solitary life that Buffy has staunchly avoided. Kendra is well trained but ultimately too rigid and by the book. Her inability to think outside of the box and be as creative as Buffy ultimately leads to her demise. She is mesmerized by the vampire Drusilla and quickly meets her end after falling for Drusilla's mind games. Kendra's isolation from the world makes her less able to creatively find alternative solutions that are not necessarily ones learned in training. While *BTVS* has been critically lauded for many things, the handling of race has been a limitation of the show. Kendra as a woman of color is dispensed early and easily in the show. The character of Kendra follows the trope of the woman of color in horror films quickly meeting her end in a gruesome manner. Her character falls prey to many other cringe worthy '90s tropes, as she often plays the part of the racial other that does not understand the ways of the "civilized" world. For example, she is shown riding a plane in the cargo section instead of properly buying a ticket. She proclaims to have only one shirt after being angered at a demon for ripping it, and speaks with a cartoonishly vague Caribbean accent. Following common tropes of the racialized other, Kendra will have no redemption story and her death serves only to call the next slayer.

The second slayer that is introduced is Faith Lehane. Faith is the polar opposite of Kendra's hard work ethic and discipline. Faith has been on the lam ever since a particularly old and powerful vampire murdered her watcher. We are not provided much information concerning Faith's background, but she is characterized to be from a working class family in Boston, and to have lived a hard life with potential signs of abuse in her past. Faith comes from Boston to Sunnydale after the death of her

watcher. Lacking any kind of parental supervision and appearing to not have any close friends or family ties, Faith becomes a volatile slayer. Faith views her superpowers as something that makes her better than others. The kind of power trip Faith goes on leaves her vulnerable to corruption. Faith also appears to have not finished schooling and does not join Buffy at Sunnydale High. Faith often shirks slayer training and education and instead prefers to play by her own rules. After Faith accidentally murders a man, her psyche is put in jeopardy and the guilt from the murder spins Faith into a downward spiral. Faith's "want, take, have" mentality becomes an interesting narcotic for Buffy at first. Buffy starts off enjoying playing the game by Faith's rules, particularly in the season two episode "Bad Girls," but Buffy's inner sense of morality nurtured by her middle class milieu do not allow her to stray into the chaotic and anarchic world that Faith devolves into for long.

After Faith accidentally murders a man in the midst of skirmish, she breaks from the Scooby gang. Faith ends up crossing sides and takes up with the mayor of Sunnydale. The mayor of Sunnydale has insidious plans for the town of Sunnydale. Most institutions are coded as if not outright evil; morally corrupt in the world of Sunnydale. The mayor treats Faith as the daughter he never had and finds it useful to employ a slayer on his staff. The mayor's treatment towards Faith, however, is not one of education but rather one of compensation. The mayor does not help Faith get over her guilt but instead uses her volatile emotions to turn her into an assassin for his needs. He also plays on her vulnerability by purchasing her a new apartment filled with beautiful things. The mayor shows his love through material items and it becomes a relationship of reciprocity. Faith is not allowed to grow and learn in her

time with the Mayor. Her education is cut short by the sudden death of her first watcher and her subsequent urge to prioritize her own fun above her sacred calling is never allowed to outgrow the adolescent head rush of suddenly having superpowers. Faith's arc is ultimately one of redemption though. After paying for her crimes in literal (she is incarcerated for several seasons) and figurative fashion, Faith is able to educate herself in prison and becomes more self-aware and able to deal with the madness of the outside world. Faith is able to rehabilitate herself only after experiencing life in Buffy's body. After the body switch, Faith's understanding of the world begins to be reshaped, quite literally by taking a walk in somebody else's shoes, alters Faith's perceptions. She is able to educate herself through her experience of living within Buffy's body and her relationship with others. Being in Buffy's body helps her to assimilate to the middle class view of morality held by Buffy.

It is important to note that Buffy's white middle class body is the one that holds the major morality and the most education. Faith's ultimate redemption is further compounded by her own whiteness as well. Rhonda Wilcox compares Kendra's fate to Faith's arguing that "class difference can be redeemed, but that the 'wrong' race can stop a woman from attaining any empowerment" (21). Ultimately, Buffy's privilege frames the way that she pursues knowledge. Buffy is able to rely on a vast support network who aid her in her battles, both through the use of research, but also with emotional support. After all, it is easier to be the star pupil or in this case star slayer when one is supported by not only racial and economic privilege, but also the support and network of systemic institutional privilege.

The Buffyverse & Transmedia

How does a show from over twenty years ago remain relevant in contemporary conversation? Transmedia texts that surround *BTVS*, such as the comic books, and podcasts dedicated to the show keep it in the popular cultural conversation. The sheer quality of the show has undoubtedly been one of the reasons that *BTVS* has remained so relevant. Dorothy Swanson, founder of the Viewers for Quality Television, (Viewers for Quality Television is a now defunct non-profit organization that operated from 1984-2000 whose goal was to rescue critically acclaimed shows that were in danger of being cancelled and which *BTVS* won the Founder's Award in 2000) states that: "A quality series enlightens, challenges, involves, and confronts. It dares to take risks; it is honest and illuminating, it appeals to the intellect and touches the emotions. It requires concentration and attention, and it provokes thought" (Wilcox & Lavery, 2002, p. xx). *BTVS* has proven to be this kind of show with numerous scholarly books written on the show (Kaveney, 2001, Wilcox & Lavery 2002, Battis, 2005, Wilcox, 2005, Levine & Parks, 2007, Dial-Driver, Emmons-Featherston, Ford, & Taylor, 2009, Diaz, 2009, Durand, 2009, Edwards, Rambo, & South, 2009, Kreider & Winchell, 2010, Waggoner, 2010, Leonard, 2011, Frankel, 2014, Pateman, 2015, Iatropoulos, 2016) while also having a scholarly conference and journal *Slayage: The Journal of Whedon Studies* dedicated to continuing to analyze and unpack the show. *BTVS* studies remain a staple in popular culture, as well as in feminist and queer studies, demonstrating the show's tremendous staying power in not only fandom circles, but scholarly ones as well.

The feminist and queer ideologies presented by the show remain contested issues and perhaps even more so under the current Trump administration that seeks to undermine the critical strides that feminist and queer activists have made in the past decade. Part of the show's staying power is its continued political relevance, as well as its continuation in both comic book form and fan podcasts. I will be examining and analyzing one fan podcast in particular, *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, hosted by Jenny Owen Youngs and Kristin Russo. I have chosen this podcast as a point of analysis because it reads *BTVS* through a queer lens, while also aligning the show with current political questions and movements. The form of a fan podcast also introduces ideas of the way that knowledge is circulating in the contemporary moment. Rewatch podcasts have become particularly popular in the last few years (there are many listicles proclaiming which rewatch podcast series are the best, solidifying the relatively new medium as a mainstay in popular culture). I speculate that the needs to rewatch and begin discussions anew about shows off the air for several years demonstrates an urge and drive to continue to analyze these shows in light of current political concerns. The act of rewatching a show creates a re-orientation of the viewer. The politics of our current time often reflect the way a person views an older piece of media. Age and growth also change the way we view characters, and align us with characters we may not have understood in the past. A nostalgic curiosity pushes viewers to interact with the shows of their youth again. Part of this nostalgic curiosity may be to see how well a show has aged, or it might also be part of seeing how the viewer has aged, and if the pleasure once had in one's youth are still vibrant, or if those desires have dissipated. This rewatch phenomenon can partly be explained by the curiosity to re-engage with

television from our pasts. Rewatch podcasts tend to discuss the ways in which certain choices on a show appear problematic when considered with present cultural and political ideologies. The curiosity to investigate anew a show that has been off the air can be for a myriad of reasons but importantly points to the urge to reinvest in these stories “once more with feeling.”

The continuation of *BTVS* in comic book form and fan podcasts speaks to the importance of transmedia storytelling in the Buffyverse. Transmedia storytelling, according to Henry Jenkins, “unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (97-8). The continuation of *BTVS* across media platforms speaks to the fan’s desire for more content. The fan’s urge to consume more content is quite vampiric as the new content continues to revive the series, much as vampires have the power to resurrect the dead. In the case of the comics, the text from Dark Horse Comics (2007-2018) progresses the storyline from where the show ended, and a new comic series released by Boom Comics (2019-present) reboots the show and is considered canon as it is produced by Joss Whedon and other folks who were involved in the television show. Fan podcasts revive the show itself; urging listeners to rewatch the show or view it for the first time, as they follow the hosts of the podcast deconstruct each episode one by one. Fan podcasts are run by individuals, and are often independent projects that are not necessarily run by corporate organizations. Transmedia storytelling helps to create new fans and stoke old fan’s enthusiasm by continuing conversations around both old and new content alike.

The honesty and self-awareness of *BTVS* continues to resonate with new audiences. Stars of the show, such as Anthony Stewart Head who plays Buffy's paternal mentor and watcher Rupert Giles, state that the fans of the show who stop him in public are in many cases quite young. This points to the fact that not only is the show held in high regard from fans who watched the show as it aired in the '90s and the early aughts but that new fans are being drawn to the series. Moreover, many of the same issues that were being addressed by the show in the '90s are still crucially relevant in new viewer's lives, for example the issue of gun control. In an eerie and uncanny fashion, the original season 3 episode of *BTVS* "Earshot," an episode that deals with a shooter on school grounds, was delayed from its initial airing due to the Columbine High School shooting that occurred on April 20, 1999. In 2018, the *Buffering* podcast coincidentally aired their episode of "Earshot" on the same day as the school shooting in Parkland, Florida on February 14, 2018. Almost, twenty years apart these events create a chillingly uncanny moment that reminds and reinforces the idea that *BTVS* still matters as the issues and horrors of growing up twined with the political issues of our time still exist and resonate with contemporary audiences. This is also coupled with the fact that *BTVS* never really went away in the first place.

While the show was canceled in 2003, *BTVS* continues to live on to this day in various mediums. Seasons Eight, Nine, Ten, Eleven, and Twelve continue in comic book form from Dark Horse and are subsequently considered canon by creator Joss Whedon, who has said, "Canon is key, as is continuity. If you are a massive nerd, which I am, I believe there is a demarcation between the creation and the ancillary creations by different people. I'm all for that stuff, just like fanfic, but I like to know

that there's an absolutely official story-so-far, especially when something changes mediums, which my stuff seems to do a lot" (Dowdell, 2016). The continuation of the series in comic book form was a somewhat unprecedented maneuver. In 2007, four years after the cancellation of the show, Dark Horse began publishing *BTVS* Season Eight with Whedon acting as both "executive producer" for the series and writer for several story arcs. The very fact that this was established as a canonical continuation of the television series was quite ground breaking. The shifting of mediums points to the paratextual importance of the continuation of cancelled shows. Jonathan Gray argues that:

Paratexts are not simply add-ons, spin-offs, and also-rans: they create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with the meanings we associate with them... a program is but one part of a text, the text always being a contingent entity, either in the process of forming or transforming or vulnerable to further formation or transformation. (6-7)

BTVS's paratextual elements help to exemplify the change in viewer habits. Viewers in the twenty-first century are used to consuming media in multiple platforms and through a myriad of sources. Mark Duffett argues that audiences and fans of shows now may "meander across the surface of different media in their quest for meaning" (215). The paratextual elements allow fans of *BTVS* also to occupy different readerly positions. Watching the show is a much different experience than reading comics. Likewise, writers are more constrained by television budgets and special effects, while comics allow for larger scale world building albeit two dimensionally.

The continuation of the show into comic book form allows the Buffyverse to quite literally expand from the show's primary location of Sunnydale, California, to a more global stage. Joss Whedon and his team of writers, unfettered from budgetary and network restrictions raise the magnitude of the Buffyverse. Special effects and fight scenes, as well as magical spells, can be played out on a massive scale, and speaking of larger scales, characters are allowed to undergo a metamorphosis that would have been impossible under the constrained budget of television and special effects of the time, such as making the character of Dawn a giant. Other spectacle-driven allowances are afforded as well; Buffy's headquarters is now a castle in Scotland. The Scooby gang easily travels to locales all over the globe.

The global scale of the comics also allows a more racially and culturally diverse representation of characters. The lack of racial diversity is one of the original show's weakest spots along with its treatment of these characters as discussed earlier in regards to Kendra's character. The awareness of this downfall and the urge to rectify it, demonstrate the political consciousness within the trajectory of the Buffyverse. Ultimately, characters of color in the television series are severely underutilized and often suffer sudden deaths before their characters are given a chance to be fully fleshed out. The comics allow for the globetrotting Scoobies to interact with people from many different cultures and races. For example, Satsu (a slayer from Japan) is in charge of the team in Tokyo placing her in a leadership position within the global network of slayers. In the Boom Comics reboot, the character of Robin Wood is introduced at the beginning of the series. Robin (a person of color) is not introduced

until the last season of the show *BTVS*. The inclusion of Robin right from the start has allowed for a more nuanced and fully fleshed out depiction of his character.

Non-normative Desire & Queer Sexuality in the Buffyverse

Unconstrained by the limitations of network television, the comics are able to explore more in-depth, non-normative desire and queer sexuality. Already groundbreaking and often cited as the first network television show to offer a fully realized depiction of a lesbian romance between Willow and Tara; *BTVS* was a progressive show of its time concerning the representation of non-normative desire. Furthermore, the depiction of sadomasochism (S/M) displayed in the depiction of Spike and Buffy's relationship, particularly in season six, produces compelling discourse. In the beginning of season six, Buffy is dead after saving the world from an old God determined to return to her dimension. However, Buffy's friends cannot fathom a world without her and set about enacting a spell to bring Buffy back. The spell works and Buffy is resurrected. While Buffy comes back to continue her stewardship of Sunnydale and saving people from demons, vampires, and a host of other nasty things, she doesn't feel quite like herself. She is experiencing a post-resurrection depression. Later on in the season, it is revealed that Buffy feels this way because her friends ripped her from heaven and living back on Earth feels like hell. Buffy finds solace in her burgeoning sexual relationship with Spike.

Buffy and Spike's relationship through season six is a rocky and tumultuous one, which hinges on sadomasochistic desire. Sadomasochism is a marginalized and misunderstood lifestyle that focuses on aspects of play, which is at times sexual in nature. However, play is a complex term in the S/M community and the term

“references recreation and leisure and evokes a romantic sense of innocence and freedom from encumbrances” (Newmahr 8). Moreover, “S/M is more easily understood as an all-encompassing lifestyle that represents liberation from the oppressive plight of the everyman and nurtures identities of marginality” (Newmahr 9). Buffy and Spike enact various forms of sexual S/M play as Buffy allows herself to enact desires she has previously denied herself, as a way in which to experience the world anew after her resurrection. She constantly worries that her secret sexual escapades with Spike will be found out by her friends, at which point she will face ridicule. Forms of desire perceived as perverse are generally marginalized or indicative of a severe character flaw because ultimately this non-normative desire threatens the hegemonic way in which society chooses to view desire. The character of Buffy may fear ridicule, but *BTVS* appeals to the fan’s acceptance of diverse forms of desire, while using Buffy and Spike’s unusual sexual relationship to form a space where non-normative desire is no longer denigrated, but instead invited to be explored alongside any other normative depiction of desire. The representation of non-normative desire can be seen as an empowering agent to marginalized groups. The show’s exploration of sexual curiosity importantly opens up exploration for non-normative possibilities.

The show’s ability to deconstruct heteronormative desire allows non-normative desire to flourish when it is not under the restraints of a patriarchal preoccupation of how desire should operate. *BTVS* is undermining traditional conceptions of desire and opening up a place where curiosity about non-normative desire is not punished but instead explored in and not shamed by having two of the lead characters play out these

sexual acts. In season six, Buffy and Spike are positioned as individuals unable to fit into the mainstream; instead, they assume the position of marginalized outsider figures, who do not fit into the constructs of society. Spike, by this point in the show, has effectively been neutered by the government initiative. They have placed a chip in Spike's brain that does not allow him to hurt humans, but the chip still allows violence against demons. His life as a vampire is now perverse as he fights against his own kind and alongside Buffy. On the other hand, Buffy has consistently felt like an outsider as the slayer, an identity that requires secrecy and a kind of closeting. Buffy often daydreams about how wonderful it would be to have a normal life, but when faced with normalcy (minimum wage jobs, problems with the plumbing, bills, housing repairs, etc.) that season six presents to her, she longs for a break from the monotony of "normal" life, the very thing she has longed for in all previous seasons. Anne Billson adds that "Buffy had already survived death; now, Season Six featured life as the Big Bad" (112). The greatest fights Buffy encounters this season are internal struggles. Buffy has fought with the forces of darkness her whole life, but it is not until this season that she is asked to battle her own personal demons. One of the biggest obstacles that Buffy must overcome is her guilt with what she views as her perverse desire concerning Spike. The guilt Buffy feels is put upon her by a heteronormative world that demands desire follow a specific hegemonic pattern. Michel Foucault discusses in *The History of Sexuality* how in the creation of sexuality "perverse pleasure" needed to be "assigned a role of normalization or pathologization with respect to all behavior; and finally, a corrective technology was sought for these anomalies" (105). The process of normalizing perverse pleasure creates guilt by those

members who derive pleasure from the perverse but have been taught that pleasure is something that needs to be corrected. After all, we think of the term perverse as meaning doing something against one's better interests, but when Buffy states that "last night was the most perverse degrading moment of my life" (Noxon, 2001), the viewer has to wonder whether we agree with such a statement. It is after all through her relationship with Spike that Buffy discovers many things about herself and begins her recovery from her post-resurrection depression. Desire renews her, gives her life again, Willow may have brought Buffy back from the dead, but it is Buffy's perverse sexual desire that truly brings Buffy back to life. Even more than that, it is important to consider Buffy's curiosity about exploring parts of herself that she has not allowed herself to feel. Buffy's exploration with kink in season six is also a way of orientating herself around ideas of "not me." Ahmed explains that ideas of "otherness":

...of things is what allows me to do things 'with' them. What is other than me is also what allows me to extend the reach of my body. Rather than othering being simply a form of negation, it can also be described *as a form of extension*. The body extends its reach by taking in that which is 'not' it, where the 'not' involves the acquisition of new capacities and directions—becoming, in other words, 'not' simply what I am 'not' but what I can 'have' and 'do.' The 'not me' is incorporated into the body, extending its reach. (115)

Buffy importantly refers to Spike as a "thing" and is able to engage in this kind of activity at first because she thinks of him as "below her." However, it is through her actions with Spike and her discovery of pleasure in her sexuality, as well as her physical strength that she is able to shake off her post-resurrection depression.

Importantly, Buffy is able to learn about herself and her sexual desires through her actions with Spike. The consumption of knowledge is not always literary as in the Scooby gang sitting around the library, but instead some knowledge is learned through the body. Buffy as a Female Gothic heroine is able to learn about her body in ways that previous Female Gothic archetypes were forbidden from or punished for.

Buffy's non-normative desire in season six, is not the only time that kink desire is presented as standard fare. Any relationship with a vampire is after all heavily saturated in necrophilic subtext. Terry L. Spaise argues that:

The act of necrophilia, though rare in reality, has always been linked in literature with vampirism. The embrace and bite are a parody of the sexual act, particularly because they are traditionally performed by a male character on a female victim who is passive and seems to welcome his touch. As a result of the pain of the bite and the loss of blood, she even experiences a pseudo-orgasm, which Buffy herself illustrates when she cures a poisoned Angel by letting him feed on her in "Graduation Day, Pt. II." (745)

Thus, Buffy's relationships with the male vampires in her life that may set a heteronormative precedent at first, but can ultimately be read in a queer manner.

While much of the queerness in Buffy may stem from the subtext in the television show, the comics unconstrained by network stipulations delve more explicitly into Buffy's desires and sexuality. In one panel, from season eight Buffy is shown fully clothed wrapped in chains with her two (un)dead lovers Angel and Spike, naked on either side of her. The visualization of Buffy's erotic fantasy shows her desiring a ménage a trois and perhaps even double penetration. The look on Buffy's

face, as well as the positioning of her body, makes it clear that Buffy is in control of this fantasy. The bodies of Angel and Spike are exposed and vulnerable contrasted against the clothed Buffy, as she also seems to be guiding the movements of Angel and Spike's bodies. Later in the season eight arc, Buffy explores her bisexual desire as she engages in an affair with Satsu, a fellow slayer, thus queering Buffy's sexuality and allowing us access into Buffy's bisexual desire that is never explored beyond subtext on the television show most notably in season three with Faith Lehane. The queer subtext between Faith and Buffy is something that Whedon decried, when fans began to invest heavily in the homoerotic content of the girl's relationship on early message boards. After investing more time into delving into fan's theories concerning the homoerotic subtext of Buffy and Faith, Whedon had to concede that indeed the subtext was there. Whedon, thus, coined the term "BYOsubtext" and admitted that fan interpretations of the subtext of his work were, while being subjective, still plausible and at times quite undeniable (Bianculli, 2009). While Buffy's relationship with Satsu does not last long, the exploration of Buffy's queer desire seems to be an express love letter to the queer fans that always hoped to have Buffy's bisexuality examined more thoroughly. The comics have opened up queer visual spaces that allow for a more nuanced exploration of female desire. While the comics have provided a queered visual space to extend the narrative from the television series, the life of the show has also continued and evolved in other paratexts, such as with fandom podcasting.

How to Smash the Demon Lizard Patriarchy and Other Lessons that *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* Teaches Us

Podcasting came of age in 2005, the year in which the medium skyrocketed in popularity and “podcast” was chosen as the *New Oxford American Dictionary's* Word of the Year. According to studies from the Pew Research Center, podcast listening has been growing considerably over recent years, and the number of American podcast listeners nearly doubled between 2008 and 2015 from 18% to 33% and has increased its number of listeners significantly every subsequent year. 2019 saw the largest amount of podcast listeners to date with 51% of the American population listening to podcasts. Market research has discovered that podcast fans tend to be highly dedicated “super listeners,” consuming more audio by time than listeners of AM/FM radio, streaming music, or any other form of audio. The success of *Serial* in the fall of 2014—the program that spurred nearly 77 million downloads within its first seven months of release—helped to thrust podcasting into the limelight. Suddenly, media critics were declaring it “the golden age of podcasts” (Bottomley, 2015). While media personalities and Hollywood stars are now making podcasts, many podcasts are still mostly amateur productions originating outside traditional media industries. Podcasts open up a unique space for fans to gather digitally and talk about shows, even ones that have been off the air for some time now, renewing interest in long-cancelled shows. These podcasts in effect are reviving shows and giving them a second life playing on viewer’s curiosity to relive shows and analyze them by today’s standards.

Buffering the Vampire Slayer is a current weekly podcast in which the hosts Jenny Owen Youngs (professional musician and recreational Whedonverse

aficionado) and Kristin Russo (professional writer and self-pronounced former goth teen, who is also a queer advocate and activist who runs the online advocacy and support groups for “Everyone is Gay” and “My Kid is Gay”) discuss *BTVS*, one episode at a time. Every installment of the podcast also includes a new original song recapping each *BTVS* episode. The podcast has received favorable attention and has been listed on *Entertainment Weekly*’s “Must List,” as well as *Time*’s and *Esquire*’s lists of top podcasts of 2018, *BBC America*’s 10 Most Buzzworthy Podcasts of 2018, and *Paste Magazine*’s Top 30 Podcasts of the Decade.

Youngs and Russo lovingly critique the show but also do not hold back when problematic issues arise, i.e., anytime Xander opens his mouth. Xander can be seen as symbolically embodying the problematics of patriarchal boyhood on into manhood. His comments frequently represent offensive misogynistic policing of women’s bodies and sexuality. While he is coded as the “good guy,” he still expresses problematic views stemming from toxic masculinity. Additionally, the podcasters also take on the cultural insensitivities spectacle during the episode entitled “Inca Mummy Girl,” where cultural appropriation is on full display at the Bronze. “Inca Mummy Girl” (S2 E4) concerns the cultural exchange event at Sunnydale High. Buffy houses an exchange student from Peru—Ampata. Ampata is actually a mummy brought back to life who must sustain herself with the life force of other humans. The episode ends with a dance at the Bronze where the students are dressed in highly culturally insensitive costumes. The dance and furthermore the episode as a whole is full of problematic stereotypes that are thoughtfully unpacked by the podcasters. Youngs and Russo use these problematic moments in the show to educate new and old viewers as

to why cultural stereotypes and negative representation is harmful. In another culturally problematic episode “Pangs”, a spirit from the Chumash tribe is unleashed onto Sunnydale in a cringe worthy Thanksgiving episode. The commentary the show makes about indigenous people feels pandering at best—Willow corrects Giles that “we don’t call them Indians anymore, we call them Native Americans” and deeply problematic at its worst. The Chumash spirit Hus is an angry spirit working to murder his oppressors (first the anthropology professor who unearths the hidden mission where Hus and his people were exposed to disease and died, next a priest whose church has historical ties to the mission, and finally he attempts to kill Buffy, because as the most physically strong of her people, Hus regards her as the warrior of her people). Buffy experiences guilt about what to do regarding the spirit, but ultimately slays him and the other spirits that Hus resurrects. All this occurs while Buffy is manically trying to prepare her first Thanksgiving dinner on her own (she is a freshman in college at the time). Youngs and Russo invite Coya White Hat-Artichoker a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, a two-spirit, queer, feminist activist, and a huge Buffy fan to come on the episode and discuss “Pangs.” Coya White Hat-Artichoker discusses the very real atrocities enacted against the Chumash people in California, and provides important historical context that the show glosses over. Additionally, the podcast typically ends each episode in an original song recapping the pivotal emotional moments of the show mostly from Buffy’s point of view. In the episode of “Pangs,” Youngs and Russo forego a song and instead released a poem written by Coya White Hat-Artichoker:

“Pangs”

Why are you here?

I am vengeance

Spirits come back from the other side having never gone home

Manifest

A people’s rage

A genocide gone by remains unnamed

We can only be violent ghosts of the past, but we know blood memory, we know you

teach lies about our people

California gold coast cost native lives

Asking us to feel sympathy for the infected boy man, a researcher down, for those

who hold histories of destruction,

California’s missions dark secrets

Our ancestors still watch, still carry this pain

Hus is our grandfathers come to protect

A cry for justice let it begin.

“We don’t say Indian anymore we say Native American,” cause y’all trying so hard,

“Pass the oregano, I don’t want to hurt him,” yet y’all still act like Custer.

Can you even see him? Beyond your beliefs of wild savages, people murdered, sacred

objects housed in your anthropology departments.

Same refrain, the only good Indian is a dead Indian.

This week’s big bad is America’s original sin:

Can we blame Buffy for not knowing what to do? This country has never settled this question, so why would Joss know better or Marti?

When white folks interpret history based on what they haven't been told--we get the same result: stoic, unspoken, silent native, rage in a vacuum.

Just get over it!

The past is the past until it rises again.

We know what you do to the land you do to yourself—from hidden missions to Standing Rock to Washington DC to Sharice, Deb and AOC—honor the histories.

They stand in the hallways of congress bold and needed because our rage won't be held in mystery or the past.

We survived. We are here.

Don't fear vengeance, fear everything you didn't learn:

A planet on fire, this temporary reality, denial.

We tried to tell you—live in balance with all life instead we got missions, churches, mass graves, and walks of death.

Hus is our ancestor's trauma come full circle.

Why are you here and how do we let you go?

What brings peace to the restless? How do we heal and how will we know? (Coya

White Hat-Artichoker)

Coya White Hat-Artichoker's poem serves to give voice to the indigenous people who are othered in the show, while also allowing for current political commentary by mentioning the Standing Rock protests and the three indigenous women who (at the time of the airing of the podcast) were newly elected to congress. White Hat-

Artichoker points to the importance of knowledge and how knowledge becomes compiled, typically in imperialistic ways “housed in anthropology departments.” They explicitly call out methods of white washing history, and caution the reader to question who gets to tell the stories (in this case explicitly calling out the writers of the show, a white woman Marti Noxon and a white man Joss Whedon) that are made up of “what we haven’t been told.” In the show, Hus is never given more motivation than pure vengeance and rage, but White-Hat Artichoker via the podcast is able to provide a more fully fleshed out vision of the character and the cultural complexities and facts that are often missed when white people represent indigenous people in media.

Youngs and Russo make it a point to use the term “patriarchy” at least once an episode to indicate when oppression occurs that stems from patriarchal constructs. They have even created a patriarchy jingle that they play during patriarchal moments of oppression during the show. In addition, after the season two episode “Reptile Boy” that centers on the abuses of power enacted by a fraternity against girls in order to appease a reptilian demon who bequeaths the members of the fraternity with wealth and prestige (Greenwalt, 1997), the podcasters termed the phrase “smash the demon lizard patriarchy.” The phrase has become a paratextual entity in its own right as it has become emblazoned on shirts, hoodies, mugs and perhaps most importantly, a free downloadable poster meant to be printed on poster board for political marches and protests.

Furthermore, Youngs and Russo honor a pair of characters with the sexual tension award every episode. The sexual tension award is often bestowed to the characters that display the most homoerotic desire. A few of the winners of the sexual

tension award are Angel and Xander, Giles and Ethan Rayne, Willow and Cordelia. Most notably in season three, the relationship between Buffy and Faith is given special attention as the podcasters emphasize the homoerotic undertones on the show. They have even gone so far as to create a new version of “Baby It’s Cold Outside” that replaces the lyrics with those driven by Buffy and Faith partaking in the flirtatious banter of the redone Christmas carol. The revised song can be looked at as a form of slash fanfiction as the show never materializes more than subtle hints at the desire between the two women.

The podcast not only smartly discusses each episode, but it has become a haven for the queer community as well. Youngs and Russo have had many other queer podcasters and entertainers guest star on their show. Furthermore, the use of technology, such as Facebook live allows Youngs and Russo to participate in a “live watch” of particular episodes online. Fans from all over the world watch the episode together, while also watching Youngs and Russo provide commentary. The viewer utilizing the Facebook messaging function may live chat with one another as well. A show that has not aired “live” in essentially 20 years is being revived once more and being watched at the same time by people all over the globe.

Moreover, the inclusion of the original song at the end of each podcast also speaks to new world building. The songs, while being an homage to the series, produce a new archive detailing the narrative and emotional trajectory of the show. Youngs performs the songs written by herself and Russo and generally produces them from the perspective of Buffy allowing us a glimpse of interiority that may not have been present otherwise.

It can certainly not be denied that much of fandom relies on the urge to collect and consume material goods. Fans can, thus, be seen as “specialist consumers, whose fandom is expressed through keeping up with new releases of books, comics and videos,” and I would add clothing, jewelry, games, action figures, prop replicas, among other ephemera related to fandom to this list (Hills 29). Jenkins articulates a persuasive argument that relocates the perception of fans from passive consumers to active participants in that “media fans are consumers who also produce, readers who also write, spectators who also participate” (208). This move positions the active fan, such as Youngs and Russo, in a unique locus.

The consumption of the text is one way in which the fan becomes always already a consumer, but fandom also relies on the need to encounter the text multiple times. The act of rereading a text is considered an integral element of fandom. “Rereading is central to a fan’s aesthetic pleasure. Much of fan culture facilitates repeated encounters with favored texts” (Jenkins 1992, 69). Jenkins, by way of Roland Barthes, suggests “that rereading runs counter to ‘commercial and ideological habits of our society’ and thus books are constructed to sustain our interests only on a first reading ‘so that we can then move on to another story, buy another book’” (1992, 67). Essentially Barthes and, therefore, Jenkins argue that this return to the material disrupts the consumer cycle because instead of purchasing a new text you are returning to the one you have already bought, thus, not consuming more material. However, it seems that the mere act of rereading a text has lost a bit of its radical denial of the commercial with the rise of streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu. Streaming sites with monthly subscription costs have commodified the urge to

rewatch. You can easily choose to repeat your viewing of a television show, but you are still always paying for that pleasure.

There may still be a way that rewatching a text can be seen as a resistant act to the formation of commercial consumerism. The act of rereading a text in the streaming age now no longer runs counter to the commercial habits of our society. However, I argue that we can read podcasts as the radical intervention that disrupts commercial capital and employs a form of resistance against industrial consumerism. Fandom podcasts, such as *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, follow a similar structure of rewatching a television show one episode at a time. Fandom podcasts generally format their show around a chronological rewatching of a television series. For example, *Buffering the Vampire Slayer* calls for consumption of the original primary text, but Youngs and Russo, fans of the show, not only produce new material through their podcast but also through creating an entirely original song at the end of each session that summarizes the episode's central themes. The podcast itself exists as a free piece of media. I acknowledge that one must have the technology to support playing podcasts, which still elevates the show into a space of economic privilege that cannot be accessed by all classes of people, but at the same time, it points to an exciting way to trace fan consumption and disruption of economic means in the current moment. However, if a listener of the podcast is so inclined, they may become a patron of the podcasters by supporting them through Patreon, a company that allows independent producers to collect monthly subscription fees from fans of their show. If one becomes a supporter through Patreon, they choose to donate a specified amount per month to the podcaster of their choosing. Not only do fans have the ability to support only the

artists that they wish, but also they are able to consume this media without any cost, if so financially constrained. Podcasters can, of course, make money off their podcasts by soliciting advertisements for their show and creating fan merchandise. Fans can efficiently make a living off their fandom pursuits and have been dubbed “fan-trepreneurs.” However, while this still inculcates the fan as a part of the consumer culture that has plagued the image of fans, it concurrently motions to a radically new formulation of the commodity. In the example of *Buffering the Vampire Slayer*, the fan may choose to support two queer women by becoming a Patreon supporter and by purchasing their extensive line of t-shirts, CDs, and enamel pins. Many fans, dismayed by the recent allegations lobbied against Joss Whedon by his ex-wife as a philanderer and gaslighter, have opted out of buying licensed merchandise and instead choose to support podcasts like *Buffering* and other independent artists that also create fan related merchandise to sell on such platforms as Etsy. Furthermore, if podcasters (such as Youngs and Russo) operate from a place of social justice issues, the power of the fan’s capital can also have a positive charitable effect. For example, each month, Youngs and Russo sell five handwritten lyric sheets for \$100 each and donate 100% of the proceeds to a different charity. Additionally, they recently had an exclusive promotional T-shirt where 100% of the proceeds went to support the #TimesUp movement, which has established a Legal Defense Fund that provides subsidized legal support to those who have experienced sexual harassment, assault, or abuse in the workplace, and another fundraiser to provide aid to the animals harmed during the fires in Australia. Additionally, for their “Pangs” episode they donated 100% of the profits from their lyric sheets to the Native American Rights Fund. I find these

examples to be encouraging ways in which fandom can disrupt the typical capitalist ensnarement of consumption that has traditionally plagued fans. Fandom's relationship to merchandise is undoubtedly complicated, but podcasts like *Buffering* provide a new and potentially fruitful way to think about fandom and consumption.

By rewatching Buffy in the twenty-first century alongside the *Buffering* podcast, Buffy proves that she is the hero we still need today when we have a president and a government that threatens women's reproductive rights and the rights of LGBTQ+ folks. Buffy helps to empower people to stand up to oppressive forces. After all, at the end of the series, instead of gaining more power for herself, Buffy changes the entire future of the slayer line by sharing her power, allowing all girls who might be slayers to become slayers. After the 2016 election, Youngs and Russo offered statements of solidarity, as they mourned with the queer community and much of America about the events that transgressed that fateful November 8th. The podcast was gearing up for the season one finale, wherein Buffy faces the Master—the ancient vampire who has been prophesied to rise from his underground prison, kill the slayer and unleash literal hell upon Sunnydale. When Buffy learns she is fated to die, she tries to run away from her responsibilities. However, Buffy learns that the Master's minions have slaughtered numerous high school students on campus. Buffy's best friend Willow sits beleaguered on her bed as she explains to Buffy that the vampires had made our world theirs. Buffy, determined to no longer run from her doomed fight, meets the Master in his underground lair where he drowns her, and Buffy momentarily dies. Luckily, her friends find her, and Xander revives her with CPR. Once alive again, Buffy knows the fight is not over and proceeds to track the Master

down and properly stake him (Whedon, 1997). Buffy's urge to "just keep fighting" becomes an anthem that songwriter Jenny Owen Youngs notices. The song that Youngs performs for the last episode of season one of the podcast resonates with Buffy's final trials against the Master, but more importantly crystallizes the mournful but impassioned pleas that so many felt during the last days of 2016...to just keep fighting. The following is a verse from Youngs' song "Prophecy Girl":

What will come, what will come

If our world belongs to them

What will come, what will come

Just keep fighting, just keep fighting, that's what I'm supposed to do

If I just keep fighting, just keep fighting, know that I'll believe it too. (Youngs, 2016)

The probing question of "what will come if our world belongs to them" relates back to Willow's fears of the vampires making our world their own, but even more so in light of the 2016 election night news, the fear that gripped the hearts of those who saw a hate mongering tyrant win the election. This caused many to fear what would come from the Trump administration and many of those fears have been rightfully confirmed in the subsequent four years in terms of nightmarish immigration policies, rollbacks on environmental protections, the ban on trans folx in the military, and a litany of other grim political realities that Americans have faced. Back in 2016, many queer folx and allies were left terrified and immobile at the thought of how the world would change now that hate had seemingly been allowed to win the election. The immobilization did not last long as the women's march galvanized those to take action and stand for the rights of all marginalized people. Youngs' song became an anthem

for many in the Buffering fandom to unite and gain strength from both Youngs' words and the images of a slayer standing against seemingly insurmountable odds. Youngs' ventriloquial use of Buffy's determination to "just keep fighting" illustrates the staying power of *BTVS* and the ability to imbue the show with new meanings and new connotations as it is consumed by new audiences or re-watched by old fans in new political contexts.

Elana Levine and Lisa Parks, editors of *Undead TV*, state that "the industrial structure of commercial television lends itself to the constant recovery of used, terminated, canceled, expired material for maximum return" (5). Thus, the life of a rich television show can virtually live forever and continually be resurrected. I see both fan podcasts and the comics as opening up queer spaces and a means of resistance to mainstream, heteronormative media. The comics have become freed from the shackles of television studio constraints, while the podcast is free from any overarching constraints to shape its discourse and format in whatever way the hosts deem suitable. Ultimately, we do not live in a post-Buffy world, and we still need our favorite vampire slayer to remind us to "just keep fighting."

The pursuit of knowledge in the series sketches the problematic elements of the show's centering of whiteness. The transmedial texts that come after and build upon the Buffyverse, point towards viewer's understandings of the problematic way that the original show dealt with race and class issues. It will be interesting to see how the planned reboot (air date to be determined) that has stated that the slayer will be a woman of color, as well as employing a woman of color as the showrunner will add to this conversation of diversity in the Buffyverse. By tracing the active way that

curiosity plays out in *BTVS* we can see that curiosity becomes an agent for change, and an action that is rewarded but requires labor. The pursuit of knowledge is an important mechanism in both the show and points to the way that fandom cultures interact with texts. To trace the lineage of the Female Gothic through *BTVS*, shows how the mode has changed and grown and highlights the changes that still need to occur in the mode, as in decentering whiteness and overcoming dominant middle class ideologies. Buffy's strength, agency, and power point to the subversive edge of the Female Gothic, but her whiteness and middle class upbringing only allow the Female Gothic to progress so far. As Donna Heiland writes, the patriarchy "is not only the subject of gothic novels, but is itself a gothic structure" and on which often demands, "the outright sacrifice of women" (10-11). Therefore, one of the ways in which the Female Gothic may counter these demands is by imbuing its female characters with complexity and agency, which Buffy inhabits, but also allowing the intersections of race and class to be a more dominant part of the mode. While *BTVS* does not have the best track record with intersectional practices, the transmedia texts that come after illustrate a more diverse Buffyverse.

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