



Cappadocia University
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English Language and Literature

**ATTRACTED TO MONSTERS: WOMEN’S DESIRE AND
QUEER TRACES IN *FRANKENSTEIN* AND *CARMILLA***

Zeynep LEBE WATSON

Master’s Thesis

Nevşehir, 2023

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ABSTRACT

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Drawing upon gender and queer studies, the aim of this thesis is to explore how human and nonhuman relations unravel a liminal space in which new subjectivity might be born. In examining these relations, the study might create an expanded understanding of homosexuality to illustrate the overstepping of certain borders or the blending and overlapping a series of classifications, as well as portraying a self-identification process. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) respectively depict how attraction to and fear of the nonhuman are juxtaposed in terms of desires, be it monstrous or sexual. In this sense, Shelley's and Le Fanu's monsters will be analyzed as they constantly lure their human partners, as well as being stalkers who chase their victims until one of the parties' death. The human and nonhuman partners, being the same sexes in both works, will be interpreted as queer with certain situational examples and quotations from the texts. Women's sexual desires will be also read as a pushing power to queerness. In *Frankenstein*, the chastity and passiveness of women will be underlined and the indifference towards women by Victor will be seen as a factor which makes him turn to other studies of interest so that he creates his own desire of science which results in the birth of the monster. In *Carmilla*, on the other hand, the unleashing of Carmilla's sexual power will be seen as the driving force for the two young ladies to pursue a queer romantic path. In the introduction, the theme of queerness in gothic literature will be explored from the perspective of lesbian feminism and queer theory. Queerness will be read as a recurring theme in gothic literature as an eerie motif that is considered as something to be avoided and escaped from. In the first chapter, Shelley's *Frankenstein* will be reinterpreted with the analysis of the women characters and the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his creature. What this study will demonstrate is that Dr Frankenstein's uneasy attraction to the monstrous creature might be considered as "queer" and the motif of women's desire as the driving force. In other words, female characters' suppressed desires will be demonstrated as the driving force to queerness. These characters will be such as but not limited to Elizabeth and Mrs. Frankenstein. In the second chapter, Le Fanu's *Carmilla* will be examined with regard to lesbian feminism and queer theory. The characters will be analyzed in accordance to their sexual desires, and the romantic relationship between Laura and Carmilla will be evaluated and again will be found as queer. Female characters' sexual tendencies will be scrutinized and identified as overpowered and unleashed in *Carmilla*'s case though being propulsive force to lesbianism. After the analyses of the works, there will be a comparison of the homosexual attractions in *Frankenstein* and *Carmilla* and how these works portray the attraction of a monster will be shown. It will be concluded that the sexual orientation of the characters, their interest to the nonhuman and certain parallel motifs in the novels point out the queerness of the works. The empowerment of women's desires will be also found repressed in the first work, whereas this is unleashed in the latter although giving the same result that is queerness.

Keywords: *Carmilla*, *Frankenstein*, Women Studies, Queer Theory, Lesbian/Gay Studies

ÖZET

LEBE WATSON, Zeynep. *Canavarlara Karşı Çekim: Frankenstein ve Carmilla'da Kadın Arzusu ve Kuir İzler*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Nevşehir, 2023.

Toplumsal cinsiyet ve kuir çalışmalarından yararlanan bu tezin amacı, insan ve insan olmayan ilişkilerinin nasıl yeni bir öznellik doğurduğunu ve bunun sonucunda nasıl bir eşik yarattığını incelemektir. Bu ilişkileri incelerken çalışma, belirli sınırların aşılmasını, harmanlanmasını veya örtüşmesini göstermek, aynı zamanda kendi kendini tanımlama sürecini incelemek için genişletilmiş bir eşcinsellik anlayışı yaratacaktır. Mary Shelley'nin *Frankenstein*'i (1818) ve Sheridan Le Fanu'nun *Carmilla*'sı (1872) sırasıyla, insan olmaya duyulan çekiciliğin ve bu çekicilikten duyulan korkunun, nasıl aynı anda yaşandığını inceler. Bu anlamda Shelley'nin ve Le Fanu'nun canavarları, insan partnerlerini sürekli olarak cezbetmeleri ve taraflardan birinin ölümüne kadar kurbanlarını kovalayarak iz sürmeleri açısından analiz edilecektir. Her iki eserde de aynı cinsiyette olan insan ve insan olmayan partnerler, belirli durumsal örnekler ve metinlerden yapılan alıntılarla kuir olarak yorumlanacaktır. Kadınların cinsel arzuları da kuirliğe itici bir güç olarak okunacaktır. *Frankenstein*'de kadının iffeti ve edilgenliğinin altı çizilecek ve Victor'un kadınlara karşı ilgisizliği, onu başka ilgi alanlarına yönelten bir etken olarak görülecektir. Böylece Victor, bilim arzusuna yenik düşecek, bu da canavarın –kuirliğin- doğmasına neden olacaktır. *Carmilla*'da ise, Carmilla'nın cinselliğinin serbest bırakılması, iki genç kadının tuhaf bir romantik yol izlemesi için itici güç olarak görülecektir. Giriş bölümünde, gotik edebiyatındaki kuirlik teması, lezbiyen feminizm ve kuir teorisi perspektifinden incelenecektir. Kuirlik, gotik edebiyatında sürekli kullanılan ve tekrar eden ürkütücü bir motif olarak okunacaktır. Birinci bölümde Shelley'nin *Frankenstein*'i kadın karakterlerin analizi yapılacak ve Victor Frankenstein ile yarattığı canavar arasındaki ilişki yorumlanacaktır. Bu okuma ile, Dr. Frankenstein'in yaratığa olan huzursuz çekiciliği “kuir” olarak okunacak, kadın karakterlerin bastırılmış arzuları da kuirliğe itici güç olarak gösterilecektir. Bu karakterlere, Elizabeth ve Bayan Frankenstein dahil olmak üzere çeşitli örnekler gösterilecektir. İkinci bölümde Le Fanu'nun *Carmilla*'sı lezbiyen feminizm ve kuir teorisi perspektifinden incelenecektir. Karakterler cinsel arzularına göre analiz edilecek ve Laura ile Carmilla'nın romantik ilişkisi değerlendirilecek, yine kuir bulunacaktır. Kadın karakterlerin cinsel eğilimleri incelenecek ve Carmilla'nın durumunda, lezbiyenliğe itici güç olmasına rağmen, aşırı güçlü ve serbest bırakılmış olarak tanımlanacaktır. Eserlerin analizinin ardından *Frankenstein* ve *Carmilla*'daki eşcinsel yönelimlerin karşılaştırması yapılacak ve bu eserlerin bir canavarın çekiciliğini nasıl yansıttığı gösterilecektir. Romanlardaki karakterlerin cinsel yönelimlerinden, insan olmayan varlıklara olan ilgilerinden ve bazı paralel motiflerden, eserlerin kuir olduğu sonucuna varılacaktır. Kadınların arzuları da, ilk eserde bastırılmış olarak bulunacak, ikinci eserde ise kuir ilişkiler sonucu vermesine rağmen güçlendirilmiş bulunacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Carmilla*, *Frankenstein*, Kadın Çalışmaları, Kuir Teori, Lezbiyen/Gey Çalışmaları.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis will analyze Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* and Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla* with a focus on the idea of "queerness" and monstrosity. Drawing on queer and lesbian feminist theories, the study will examine monsters, queer identities, and feminist bodies in addition to plots, characters in these texts and their authors. In doing so, the thesis will also question the hetero-normative views of the 19th century English way of life and culture, while scrutinizing the selected gothic queer literary works as an opposition, a reaction or a declaration. Indeed, queer theory is a critical theory that has effectively renewed the investigation of sexuality and gender relationships as well as enhanced prospects for transgender studies. With this opportunity, a re-reading of the texts in terms of queerness might open up a liminal space that is created by the relationship of the human and the nonhuman. On this view, this thesis will follow the path of queer theory, while examining not just gendered identities but being queer in the selected gothic texts. The aim of this study is to explore queer relationships between Victor Frankenstein and his monster in *Frankenstein*, and between Carmilla and Laura in *Carmilla*. Taking into consideration the fact that these relationships are between the same sexes, yet between different species (human and nonhuman), this thesis will demonstrate the queerness of the characters' unnatural attraction to one another. Furthermore, the study will attempt to interpret the depictions of women and their desires as a driving force to queerness in the selected gothic works.

First of all, it is important to define gothic literature as a whole. Gothic literature is a form of prose fiction that bloomed during the early nineteenth century. The authors who were producing works of gothic fiction such as Horace Walpole established their plots usually in the Middle Ages, with dark and gloomy environments, involving secrets within the mysterious castles. The focus of such works is on the sufferings and misfortunes of a protagonist who is stalked by an atrocious and desirous protagonist. The genre also makes use of supernatural elements and occurrences. The works in gothic fiction "opened up to

fiction the realm of the irrational and of the perverse impulses and the nightmarish terrors that lie beneath the civilized mind” (Abrams and Harpham 78). When considered as a genre, the gothic may be seen as a response to the Augustan literature. In contrast to the untamed and uncivilized Gothic style, the Augustan authors such as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, emphasize a culture of restraint and rules based on rationalism and logic¹. Early gothic fiction is also characterized by a concern with the past, that is reflected into an archetypal setting of haunted castles, wrecks, and old churches. Gothic fiction is usually associated with the authors who wrote between the 1760s and the 1820s. A great example, also the pioneer of the gothic novel is Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto*, which was published in 1764. *Castle of Otranto* is regarded as the first ever gothic novel. John Riely defines this new path, the school of gothic created by Walpole, in describing the novel and the setting in the novel as “a gloomy and portentous setting dominated by the castle itself, with its ruined towers, antique courts and galleries, cavernous vaults, dank dungeons, and underground passageways. ... A melancholy darkness hangs over the scene like a pall, the eerie silence broken by the tolling of a bell or a clap of thunder” (7), as the sightings of ghosts and supernatural happenings haunt and terrify the characters. All these features were established to raise and maintain the tension and readers were hooked. Walpole’s novel became very popular and was read a lot. As this new genre gained popularity, the gothic evolved into a type of fiction that expanded the gloominess and horror without taking place in the Middle Ages. The popularity of Walpole’s novel expanded gothic fiction to deal with themes that not only were eerie, brutal and savage, but also showed signs of disordered mental states and dangers of the misuse of science. Furthermore, during the Victorian Era (1837-1901), with scientific developments, the atmosphere of skepticism was evident. Thus, Victorian Gothic writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson wrote about the distorted mentality with concern towards science. In *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), Stevenson explores the dark sides of people through Jekyll’s grotesque counterpart, Mr. Hyde. Stevenson also

¹ The gothic revival takes place between the second half of the 18th and the early 19th centuries (Kilgour 3). The gothic genre is a response to the 17th and 18th century political, societal, technological, scientific, industrial, and cognitive transformations that facilitated the emergence of the middle class. It is a reaction against a mechanical or analytical understanding of the world and human relationships, and is in favor of reclaiming a previous organic nature, much like Romanticism. The gothic expresses a longing for the past and an idealization of the medieval era (Kilgour 10-11).

shifts the emphasis inwards, analyzing the abuse of science. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* also addresses the subject of social standing, which was extremely important to Victorians. Jekyll fights with the morals forced on him by his profession as a physician. Thus, it is safe to say that Victorian Gothic mirrors a fascination with the human mind, which may harbor concealed evil parts, the necessity of morality, as well as the abuse of science.

After the dwindling of the trend for gothic romances in the years surrounding the shift of the 18th to 19th century, it kept a prominent presence in the 19th century novel in many forms. Lyn Pykett in “Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel” mentions that for several critics, gothic fiction, sensation and the fantastic in literature are manifestations of the psychological or political unconscious, or the return of the suppressed, in which oppressed or unseen communities arise against societal structures that aim to reject or restrict them (192-210). The fantastic fiction is all that cannot be spoken, all that cannot be said in realistic manners. Sensation and fantastic literature are fraught with taboos; they are connected with extravagance, the irrational, and the otherworldly (Pykett 192). Thus, it is safe to say that the gothic as a genre embodies numerous characters that are suppressed and could not be represented in the society in a mysterious, bizarre, and nonhuman way. By handling the topics that are repressed, and out of the ordinary, the gothic aims to break taboos. John Bowen, for instance, declares that the gothic is “able to break norms, laws and taboos at will” and adds that “sexual difference is thus at the heart of the Gothic, and its plots are often driven by the exploration of questions of sexual desire ... it has a freedom that much realistic fiction does not, to speak about the erotic, particularly illegitimate or transgressive sexuality, and is full of same-sex desire, perversion, obsession” (n.p.). It is with no doubt that, the gothic is not afraid of the closeted aspects of sexual desire. In fact, it is common that undertones of homosexuality are evident in gothic texts though it does pose a danger to the Victorian notion of masculinity and heteronormativity. For instance, Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) demonstrates a homoerotic relationship between Dorian Gray, Lord Henry Wotton and Basil Hallward. Although the men do not overtly reveal their sexual orientation, there are hints: while Lord Henry expresses his interest vocally, openly

praising Dorian, Basil Hallward paints Dorian's picture with his secret, implying homosexual yearning. In order to decode such characters, certain literary theories have analyzed gothic texts in order to expose the underlying problems such as the repression of the queer and the feminine.

With the emergence of feminist and queer theories, new approaches towards literary texts have appeared. For instance, feminist critics such as Elaine Showalter, and Paulina Palmer analyzed gothic literature that were produced by women and conclude that it signifies the repression of women and their sexuality in the heteronormative society. Feminist critics also drew importance to the fact that “this fiction challenged the sexual hierarchy and values of male-dominated culture” (Abrams and Harpham 79) since certain female characters are sexually empowered, different types of sexual relationships are introduced in hidden and secretive plots, and hybrid creatures that belong to neither genders are suggested in the genre of gothic. Similarly, queer critics such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explore gothic fiction and revealed that the elements and characters that embody the themes of horror, terror and mystery would be found queer. For instance, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) portrays Count Dracula as an extremely mysterious figure; as neither dead nor alive, as neither human nor animal; he is a blur between the boundaries. Dracula, being a predator, remains in the shadows and feeds himself with blood of the ones he seduces. Commenting on the queerness of such characters, Misha Kavka argues that “a range of feminist and queer criticism has suggested that the Gothic must also be understood as a blurring of boundaries between the masculine and the feminine, where monstrosity is associated with the copying, mirroring, or incursion of one gender from onto or into the other” (211). The nonhuman hybrid creatures that emerged from gothic literature question and puzzle the gender roles and patriarchy because they belonged to none of the categories that society has created; in this sense, they might be considered as neither human nor animal, and as neither male nor female. Queer critics who reread texts from a queer perspective propose the idea that the reader is drawn into a liminal realm between the subject and the object in the queer readings of gothic texts which embody such characteristics of hybridity. All in all, it is essential that the correlation

of the gothic, gender and the queer is emphasized in order to analyze the selected texts in a broader manner.

1.1. QUEER THEORY AND GOTHIC LITERATURE

Queer theory was evolved from lesbian/gay criticism and developed in the late 1980s. It is a critical movement to describe a collection of criticisms on sexualities and genders. The main aim of queer theory is to reject social constructs of genders and heteronormativity, and to dismantle binary oppositions such as sex/gender and cisgender/transgender. Briefly, heteronormativity is a set of norms that imposes and limits heterosexual tendencies, while prohibiting and punishing any attempt outside of it. Heteronormativity not only accepts heterosexuality as normal and excludes and marginalizes homosexuality, but it also positions heterosexuality within an extremely limited space which is reduced only to reproduction. Queer theory strictly protests heteronormativity and its gender classifications as well as its repression and its power of marginalizing people that are not considered as normal. Those who were marginalized have been bullied; as a matter of fact, initially, ‘Queer’ was used to be a nickname for homosexuals, and also used as homophobic bullying. Recently, the term “queer” has been in a variety of ways as an umbrella concept for an alliance of socially marginalized sexual self-identifications, and as a name for a budding theoretical model that has emerged from conventional lesbian/gay studies. The concept of queer came into covering more than just sexuality. Variety of new research on “queer,” as Judith Butler argues, has expanded the word beyond sexual identity, looking at how ethnicity, race, and postcolonial identity intersect with these and “other identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses” (20). Consequently, “queer” has become a term that represents a fluid identity instead of one that fits into binary constructs which enables scholars to talk about identity in a way that is not limited to basic dichotomies. By dismantling the classifications and definitions that support traditional comprehension of sexual identity, queer has become a phrase that critiques them. The concept of “Queer theory” was first used in 1991 by Teresa De Lauretis in her article “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities” in which she argues that the term “queer theory” is coined in an attempt to escape any fine distinctions in our discursive norms, to

reject any of the assigned categories, to avoid assuming ideological obligations, but rather to both breach and surpass them (5). Thus, queer theory came to be an evolved and more comprehensive form of lesbian/gay studies, since it covers all that are out of the norms of normality. After De Lauretis's article, queer theory has made a big appearance in the academia. Queer theory arose as a direct evolution of concepts of justice and equality, based on feminist movements that explored categories of identity. By exposing works and narratives to a variety of queer techniques, queer theory has now crossed every discipline threshold from politics to literature. As a result, queer theory now stands among the oppressed and marginalized that is left outside of normal boundaries. Queer theory brings up new texts for analysis by challenging conceptions of objectivity and the essentiality of reality. Thus, with the emergence of queer theory, non-essentialist readings of gothic works have been made possible.

A noticeable amount of literary works has been written around the theme of queerness in Gothic fiction in the 18th and 19th centuries. The rise of the gothic in the eighteenth century has been interpreted as an indication of the revival of the yearning for the holy and sublime in a contemporary educated secular society that rejects the presence of the supernatural, mystic powers, and as the uprising of imagination over reason's domination. Maggie Kilgour suggests that in principle, the gothic has been identified with a revolt against the neoclassical aesthetic ideal of order and harmony in order to reclaim a restrained primordial and barbarian creative liberty, and defines the rise of the gothic as a "missing link between the romance and the novel... that leads from Enlightenment and Romanticism" (3). By means of the rebellious and mysterious force of the gothic, iconic queer literary figures have emerged: Dracula, Dorian Gray, Victor Frankenstein and his monster, Carmilla, and many other nonhuman characters with the tendencies of homosexuality have been paired with the genres of gothic and horror.

By the 19th century, however, homophobia was on the rise in England. The attitude of the English towards homosexuality was extremely harsh. Leslie A. Marchand gives emphasis to and declares how those with homosexual tendencies were treated:

It was a capital offense until 1861, when the sentence was reduced to life imprisonment. ... Vast angry mobs pelted them with rotten vegetables, mud, offal, and even brickbats. And worst of all was the conspiracy of silence imposed on all mention this "crime against nature," except in terms of disgust and opprobrium: this odious vice, this abomination, this moral pestilence, etc. No one dared to speak a word against the barbaric punishment for fear of being suspected of similar tastes. (191).

Hetero-normative culture and lifestyle pushed the ones who were different from the society to a state of isolation. The society was terrified of what was out of heteronormative family life and norms; thus, people with tendencies towards homosexuality were extremely repressed by the society and detached from it. Writers such as Oscar Wilde, who was known to have homosexual tendencies, consulted to gothic and horror genres since they had been the best literary places for queerness. Commenting on the relationship between the gothic and the queer, for instance, Patricia Duncker suggests that queerness is "often lived within gothic codes and disguises, masquerades, as well as closets" (58). In this regard, the characters in the selected texts will be revealed as queer, as their codes and disguises will be lifted through a detailed analysis. The aforementioned genres were about the abnormal, the mysterious, the displeasing and the frightening which paired with queerness since being queer was out of the ordinary, unpleasant and horrifying. Thus, it is likely that the Gothic authors wrote about the improper under the umbrella of Gothic fiction, since as previously mentioned, gothic was a counterattack for the limitations of creativity and the tyranny of reason. One of the critics who emphasize the bond between queerness and the gothic, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in her work *Between Men*, commenting on the genre of gothic and its evident queer undertones, argues that: "[t]he Gothic was the first novelistic form in England to have close, relatively visible links to male homosexuality, at a time when styles of homosexuality, and even its visibility and distinctness, were markers of division and tension between classes as much as between genders" (91). Sedgwick indicates that the gothic fiction originated around the same time as homosexuality became a discrete community in England. In order to define the pressure, stress and the rigidity of not only the homosexual bonds but also the relationships of the opposite sexes in the society, Sedgwick comes up with the

concept of “homosexual panic,” which she bases on the fear of being assumed homosexual. Homosexual panic, briefly, is the experience of an individual with homo-social connections, who is afraid that his bonds could be interpreted as homosexual. When a person is unable to demonstrate that he really is heterosexual and encounters restrictions on his capacity to engage in Western culture, homosexual panic sets in since he is intimidated into not taking part by the bigoted portrayal of homosexuality as forbidden. Sedgwick describes the struggles faced by males to retain their male to male relationships (homosociality) in a society that was beginning to view every relationship between men as having the tendency to be corrupted by homosexual behavior. The gothic is the first literary genre to have direct, readily apparent connections to homosexual behavior according to Sedgwick, since Gothic fiction embodies this paranoia with some undertones of homophobic themes. As a literary work, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* created an atmosphere of homosexual panic in the minds of critics of that time. Suzanne Raitt in her work “Immoral Science in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*” argues that while criticizing the book, unflattering and offensive words were frequently employed, while Samuel Henry Jeyes went as far as calling the novel “ordure” in *St James’s Gazette* (171). The novel was condemned because of its encoded homosexuality and set off a homosexual panic among the critics. Also, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* made critics accuse Oscar Wilde of being decadent and a homosexual. Correspondingly, as Elaine Showalter posits, queer gothic developed as a reaction to the authors’ repression, or in other words, as a powerful overflow of their repressed sexualities into literary texts (2-3). Undertones of homosexuality evident in gothic texts somehow freed the restricted, forbidden thoughts of those who wrote in the genre. Like Showalter, Richard Dyer also brings up the idea that queer gothic authors represent homosexuality in a monstrous way and as a threat to the English social norms. Dyer further mentions that the uncovering of the nonhuman in such texts can be read as the identification of homosexuality and the death of such monsters as the abolition of homosexuality (64). Hence, if Dorian Gray, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, shows a homoerotic male figure, the death of Dorian and the symbolic demolition of the portrait represents the strict rejection and abrogation of homosexuality.

Consequently, gothic fiction is a representation and an intervention of homophobia. For instance, using nonhuman bodies such as monsters, hybrid and animalistic figures, and vampires, the writer creates a medium in which the concerns towards homosexuality by the society, as known as homophobia is referred. Mario Ortiz-Robles in this sense explains that the characters which are given nonhuman, animalistic attributes are because of their difference from the society they inhabit:

The monsters' animality, in existing accounts, is acknowledged only to be dismissed as a mark of their radical alterity. ... these figures make themselves known or show themselves ... as anomalous or aberrant or precisely 'as' monstrous within the realist worldview that would reject them on both epistemological and ontological grounds. These monsters are monstrous only to the extent that they violate the protocols and conventions that sustain the mimetic logic of the literary ecology they inhabit, which must accordingly assert its priority by rejecting that which falls outside its purview. ... The monsters' animality, in other words, functions as a supplementary figure for their unrepresentability. (11)

The homosexual character, when represented in a queer, half animal and half human form, is thus removed and isolated from the society, because they are simply unfit, or inferior for their environment. It is essential that the connection between the queer and the gothic might be made as such. There are so many concepts and motifs that correspond to each other in both queer and gothic studies. Thus as Mair Rigby notes, gothic and queer fields of study could be treated as interdependent areas of research (46). He argues that the structures of life and marriage are disturbed, and there are interactions with alien creatures, and obsessions with forbidden knowledge, fear, lunacy, mystery, and remorse in these literary realms of extravagance in the concept of queer gothic. Rigby concludes that "gothic horror fiction has given queer theorists a language (metaphors, allusions, tropes, and figures) which they have drawn upon to speak about queer experience and produce critical narratives" (54). Thus, employing queer undertones and literary devices in gothic texts creates a secretive atmosphere, or a place, that gives privacy and generates openness for possibilities. This place could be called a "liminal" space, or as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls, a "closet." What the closet offers is a realm of ambiguity, where a code of concealment and knowledge might render someone readable only to those seeking a certain interpretation. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, for instance, the picture becomes a closet for the three men, Dorian, Henry and Basil. Ed Cohen argues that "while homoerotic desire must be muted in a literary text that overtly conforms to dominant codes ... it is nevertheless metonymically suggested by a

verbally unrepresentable medium, the painting” (806). The picture generates a space where silenced significance of queerness could invade the text. The portrait exists outside of the text and recalls an amorous picture that transcends the constraints of verbal representation. Its visual sexuality, more importantly, pervades the interaction between Dorian and Basil, emphasizing the male body as a source of both artistic and sexual desire. Therefore, the picture creates a closet for homosexual behavior. Considering the mystical traits of the portrait, one could say that closets are mysterious, frightening and discreet in a gothic fiction, but represent so much more than what they ontologically are.

The gothic’s discreetness, privacy and its mysteriousness are directly linked with its liminality. Liminality derives from the Latin word “limen,” which means “threshold,” (“liminal”) and is a common theme in gothic literature (Cuddon 398). Liminality refers to something that is on the dividing space between two categories, usually two opposites. Liminal places are areas that are confusing, unsettling, and sit on a border. Those places are hard to point out and hard to reach. Liminal characters are hard to define and categorize as “transgender and intersex people assume liminal identities in relation to the established categories of gender” (Cuddon 398-99). As a result, liminality provides a fertile ground for investigating our apprehensions about the unfamiliar and the unknown. Linking the gothic texts and queerness, E.L. Mccallum emphasizes that the association of gothic and queer is well-established through liminality in terms of their standing on thresholds (71). Mccallum argues that in order to maintain their edge and continue breaching traditional bounds, both the gothic and the queer must question, disturb, or undermine reading processes:

Gothic’s structural principle is inversion, then what destabilizes or queers the gothic is a continuous, dynamic inversion, hinging on the liminal, the crossing back-and-forth over thresholds ... What makes the gothic queer, in fact, is its investment in the liminal, the in-between, the brink - particularly, although not exclusively, the line between life and death ... This liminality, however, is especially valuable symbolically because of its dynamic uncertainty, its irresolvability. (Mccallum 77)

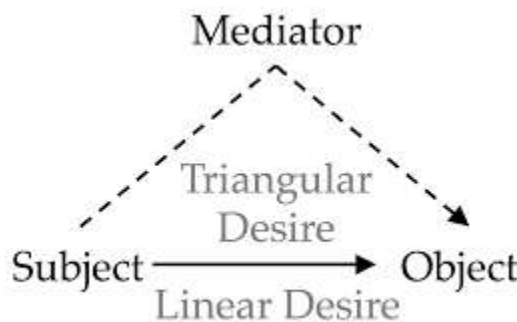
Thus, both the queer and the gothic are hard to categorize as they break free of the binary oppositions with animalistic or undead characters, and rural and remote places. Furthermore, commenting on liminality, Ortiz-Robles argues that, thanks to this liminality, “the limits of conventional realistic representation are pushed and, in being pushed, located and described

so as to be able to cross into a space of interiority to which access had previously been barred” (16). Thus, gothic texts’ liminality provides a space in which previously unrepresentable topic or the individual is freed and vocalized. Liminality is linked to marginalization since it exists on the precipice of societal acceptability and exclusion. Queer encourages uncertainty by its essence, and may be considered to embrace the flexibility given by the liminal space. The linkage of liminality and the queer generates the closet, as previously mentioned, and the gothic text adopts this closet creating a triangular bond between the gothic, the queer, and the liminal space.

The liminal closet ties the genre of gothic with the queer mainly in terms of homosexuality and homophobia, which Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick declares in her *Epistemology of the Closet*. Sedgwick argues that the gothic had effectively represented the homo social male bindings, and gives Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as an example. Paulina Palmer also underlines the fact that gothic fiction has been the most useful vessel for transmitting narratives of homosexuality since they shared similar motifs and themes, filled with secrecy and mystery. Gothic’s excess, its ability to challenge conventional perceptions of reality, and certain themes affiliated with it, including biformity, the unknown and the forbidden, help explain Gothic’s appeal to homosexuality (Palmer, “Lesbian Gothic” 121), implying its ability for the possible queerness of such narratives. However, in order to create the liminality gothic strives for, in order to queer its characters, gothic fiction provides a disguise by embracing some mystical, mysterious elements of horror. These elements are monsters, vampires, ghosts and other imaginary entities. These beings usually live a dual life, they live according to the heteronormative norms in their daily lives, but their monstrous sides represent their queerness, and their mysterious nonhuman body. As gothic fiction is considered far from literary realism, it provides a channel in which sexual orientations or identities to come to surface with their monstrous disguise. Stacy Holman Jones and Anne Harris mention that in gothic fiction, “certain performances of gender and sexuality remain hidden, misunderstood and ‘monstrous’ – deformed, destructive” (518). Since these performances are unspeakable inside a homophobic culture, the monstrosity of the forbidden relationships acts as a cloak that hides what is considered outside of the boundaries of

normality. Thus, the reason this kind of relationship and desire is deformed is because of its irrepresentability or its unfitness.

Lastly, another aspect which ties the gothic and the queer theory is a concept called “triangular desire.” In Sedgwick’s theory of the queer, homosexual desire is of great importance in understanding triangular relationships in the gothic. First, René Girard coined the concept “Triangular desire,” or the “mimetic desire” to refer to a kind of desire that causes competition and conflict, which then results in scapegoating. Girard argues in her work *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* that desire could always be depicted by a straight horizontal line between the person and the object (2). This horizontal line could be exemplified as two lovers with no other interference. Nevertheless, the straight line is not essential. Girard claims that a triangle desire involves a subject, an object, and a mediator. When these three components are put together, they create a triangle.



As a result, desire has a triangular shape since it originally rotates around three distinct positions: the desiring subject, the desired object, as well as the model that essentially sparks the object’s desire (mediator). This triangle is considered to be an erotic one as it deals with the complex sexual desires and puts together two rivals into a same geometrical scheme: Desire is contagious and spreads from one person to another, and as envy develops when someone desires what another person has, competition may ensue, and rivalry will raise desirability. For instance, In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Basil and Lord Henry strive for Dorian’s interest and both seek to acquire his affection. However, Lord Henry only

becomes engaged in Dorian when Basil describes how Dorian impacts his work, creating rivalry, thus increasing the intensity of their desire towards Dorian, which leads to tension according to René Girard's theory of desire. Sedgwick argues that "the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent" (524). Love becomes the starting point of desire and rivalry intensifies and even exceeds this prior desire. The concept of the triangular desire, or the erotic triangle will be further analyzed in this thesis with detailed examples from the works, *Frankenstein* and *Carmilla*, to further explain the queerness of the characters.

To conclude, having relationships out of what is considered normal is directly related to the genre of gothic displaying gender fluidity. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik argue that the analyses of several prominent Gothic writings demonstrate that, because of the propensity of gothic to express the instability of gender categories, they commonly support and represent shifting notions about gender (55). This instability mentioned by Horner and Zlosnik is directly related to the significant societal upheavals that led in sexual anarchy in the late 19th century. As bodies defied bounds and grew abhuman², sexual identity and the societal significance tied to it seemed fragile. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* depicts such change in the body. The story depicts the ambiguity of physical identity and is more performative than essential in nature. Thanks to gothic fiction, a liminal space in which this performativity could be carried out was provided. The gender fluidity in gothic fiction not only allowed queer theory critics to decode the underlying themes and concepts of previously unspeakable societal norms, but also allow writers to challenge heteronormativity and gender roles as a construct within the scope of feminist literary criticism.

² The abhuman is a term utilized to indicate a separation from the normal human subject. The abhuman is constantly at risk of turning into something else due to its morphological diversity. The abhuman body rises when the human body dissolves and is reshaped in a variety of morphic ways, such as "snake-woman" and "beast-people." The prefix ab-, which signifies both a distancing from and a push towards something, suggests that the abhuman is a person in transformation (Hurley 4-5).

1.2. FEMINIST CRITICISM, THE FEMALE GOTHIC, FEMINIST LESBIAN THEORY, THE LESBIAN GOTHIC

The feminist movement of the 1960s (second wave feminism) would not be the birth of feminist theory, but rather a revival of a school of thought that had already addressed the issue of women's social inequality. Some publications such as Mary Wollstonecraft's ³*A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) emphasized this idea. These works depicted women's representation in books written by men, as well as their uneven treatment while pursuing education and alternatives to marriage. In *A Room of One's Own*, for instance, Woolf reveals the absurdity of expecting women's relations with fiction to be the same as a man's under given conditions: women have been kept away from education, academy, culture and art, forced to engage in household chores and childcare by being confined to the private sphere, with the sole aim in life which is to build a happy home and raise children. Woolf further exposes the inequality towards woman scholars by giving simple examples such as accessibility to books, or the quality and quantity of food provided in Oxbridge (an imaginary university alluding to Oxford and Cambridge) to men and women: "Why did men drink wine and women water? Why was one sex so prosperous and the other so poor?" (Woolf 22). By explaining this injustice between sexes, Woolf supports her main argument: "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (4). She draws attention to the deep gap between the opportunities offered to a man by the patriarchal social structure and what it offers to a woman and emphasizes that inequalities between men and women put women in the secondary position in the field of literature. Another important text in the context of inequality between sexes is *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir's central argument is that males essentially oppress women by portraying them as the other on every level. Although it is normal for individuals to comprehend themselves in contrast to others, Simone de Beauvoir claims that this method is incorrect when performed to genders. Man denies woman's humanity by designating her

³ Mary Wollstonecraft was Marry Shelley's mother, and she greatly influenced Shelley's ideas on feminism.

solely as the other (29-33). Biology, psychology, history, and historical materialism all indicate undeniable essential fundamental distinctions among men and women, yet none of these justify women's subordination. Simone de Beauvoir's purpose is to show that women are molded by external conditions rather than being born "feminine" as she demonstrates how a girl is conditioned to accept obedience, reliance, and interiority at every step of her development, which brings us to the most famous quote from de Beauvoir; "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (330). This comment eloquently demonstrates that femininity is not based on biological, psychological, or intellectual characteristics. Femininity, instead, is a product of society, reflecting not fundamental distinctions between men and women, but inequalities in their situations. Critics such as Woolf and de Beauvoir, who have shown that fiction and non-fiction texts play an important role in the construction and reproduction of gender since the 1950s, paved the way for feminist criticism.

By 1960s, the feminist thought evolved and more scholars were dealing with the issue, thus the feminist school of thought reached more and more women. Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is a publication that expresses the imposed sexism to women who believed they belonged at home doing chores and taking care of children. Freidan demonstrates how the division of gender roles were taught to women:

Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him, how to breastfeed children ... They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights. (15-16)

Thus, the issue, as she claims, was not about women, but with the society, which denied them employ their intellectual, creative, and artistic talents. Plenty of Friedan's notions have already been explored by scholars and feminist thinkers when she published *The Feminine Mystique*; its reach and influence, on the other hand, was radical. It was read by housewives and educated women; thereby it enabled them to question the taught sexism and to show their anger accordingly. More works got published in accordance with Friedan's thoughts, about feminist literary criticism. For instance, Susan Gubar and Sandra M. Gilbert's work is of great importance in this regard.

Susan Gubar and Sandra M. Gilbert's publication *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) is regarded as a milestone for the second-wave feminist critique. Their work is essential since it demonstrates how a male-dominated literary realm represented women and how women writers were treated in the 19th century. *The Madwoman in the Attic* emphasizes the patriarchal environment in literature:

Male sexuality ...is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poet's pen in some sense (even more figuratively) a penis. ... The patriarchal notion that the writer "fathers" his text just as the God fathered the world is and has been all-pervasive in Western literary civilization (Gilbert and Gubar 4).

With this quote, the concept of "literary paternity" is examined in depth. Literary talent of men is compared to their reproduction ability in this analogy. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that patriarchal paradigms supported by religion anticipate creative masculinity and create inequality towards women in the realm of literature. Secondly, all female characters in male-authored works, as Gilbert and Gubar concede, have been diminished to simple possessions in patriarchal system, to characters and concepts confined in masculine narratives due to male demands and intentions (12). Thus, women figures depicted in the works of men are shaped and mended according to the perception of masculinity and patriarchy. Especially, in Victorian male literature, stereotyped images of women create an inaccurate and skewed perspective of women. Accordingly, female writers of the 19th century were angry about the misogynistic assumptions about women and that they were seen as an anomaly because of their involvement in literature, which was seen as a masculine creative power. Commenting on this frustration of female writers such as Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, and Emily Dickinson, Gilbert and Gubar assert that female authors in the nineteenth century felt a great deal of wrath and dissatisfaction about the sexist environment they were in, and especially the male dominated literary tradition that this gender-specific discontent affected their creative/artistic output (17). This anger, therefore, shaped the title of the book as the "mad woman." Briefly, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* implores female authors to break free from the inequality caused by patriarchy and not to be bound by its constraints.

By the 1980s, feminist criticism took a new path and became more diverse; it started to integrate methods from various types of critique such as structuralism, Marxism, and linguistics. More crucially, it shifted its attention away from challenging male representations of the world and toward analyzing the characteristics of the female world, recreating the lost records of female experience. Elaine Showalter talks about three phases while talking about this shift in feminist literary criticism: “Feminine, Feminist and Female stages” (“Towards” 216). During the Feminine stage, between 1840-1880, there was an attempt to match the intellectual triumphs of masculine culture, and internalized its beliefs about femininity. Women were empowered to reject the conforming stances of femininity and to utilize writing to dramatize the ordeals of mistreated femininity during the Feminist phase (between 1880-1920). There is a dismissal both to imitation and revolt, thus both previous stages, in the Female phase, which has been continuing since 1920, but rather resort to female experience as the basis of a liberated literature. In the Female phase, there is a focus on the necessity to establish a new canon of women’s literature by redefining the history of fiction or poetry in such a manner that women authors were given a voice (“Towards” 217-8). This phasing by Showalter enabled to demonstrate a sense of progress and also gave feminist literary criticism a terminology.

To sum up, the main objective of feminist literary criticism is to unearth and reveal patriarchal underlying conflicts in literature, as well as to question how basic literary preconceptions are predicated on women’s inferiority and submission. Through analyzing how female characters are portrayed, feminist literary criticism criticizes male writers’ patriarchal, male-centered perspectives. By reviewing the canon, it questions if or why society has placed a higher importance on male writers and their works of literature than on female writers, and emphasizes the inequality between sexes in the arena of literature and the academic realm. By examining various dimensions of identities, feminist criticism attempts to comprehend the crossing points of femininity and challenge beliefs about women’s issues such as class, race, and sexual orientation. As feminist literary theory grew to become an umbrella term, a number of concepts has been put forward that dealt with

women's maltreatment and suppression such as the "female gothic", feminist lesbian theory, and lesbian gothic.

Ellen Moers and Angela Wright combine gothic literature and women to define another concept called the "female gothic", which will also be inspected. The female involvement in literature, especially in gothic fiction unveils the oppression of women in a male dominated society. Gothic literature was especially a captivating form of fiction for many women who read and produced it, as various feminist critics have observed (Pykett 196). Hence, Ellen Moers came up with the term "female gothic" to attribute to the practice of gothic fiction by women. In her work "Female Gothic: The Monster's Mother," she explains that "gothic was a device to set maidens on distant and exciting journeys without offending the proprieties. ... heroines could enjoy all the adventures and alarms that masculine heroes had long experienced, far from home, in fiction" (216). By adopting gothic fiction, women have had a literary channel to be adventurous. Consequently, gothic fiction has freed and enabled women to broaden their horizons in literature, allowing them to write and read in a way they have never done before. Female writers such as Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, and the Brontë sisters escape to the ambiguity of the genre and protest the male-dominated society in their works. Female gothic became a much more multifaceted and contradictory concept during the Victorian era, representing not only women's worries of domestic detainment, but also managing and recontaining their desires of escape from the physical and mental boundaries of domestic and traditionally identified femininity (Pykett 198). By producing gothic fiction, female writers not only use their imagination and creative talents freely, but also empower their female characters in their narratives by created strong female figures rather than traditional domesticated women. Anu Kuriakose mentions that, in gothic fiction, "the text of the female writer undermines the female stereotypes created by patriarchy" (3). Such stereotypes for women are the caregiver, the obedient and silent woman, and the nurturing mother that is restricted to the domestic sphere only. These stereotypes are challenged by female gothic writers. By creating female characters that deviates from the late 18th century description of women as subordinate and obedient to the patriarchal world, Ann Radcliffe undermines more traditional understanding of gender.

Women that confront the 18th century concept of woman as an object that needs to be contained in the house, producing delight for the benefit of men, appears in Radcliffe's fiction. For instance, in Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), the protagonist Adeline repeatedly refuses Marquis' hand in marriage and attempts to flee, but she is captured and imprisoned as a result. Even though she is unsuccessful in her initial attempt to run away, she persists and tries again, succeeding this time. In this case, in the beginning of the novel, Adeline represents the typical woman who is imprisoned in her home; however, at the end of the novel, she flees this suppressive environment. The courageous deeds of Adeline suggest that she does not have to submit to patriarchy but instead intends to make her own judgments about matters like marriage. Consequently, it is noteworthy that women writers who adopt the genre of gothic challenge patriarchy and advocate female liberation. Furthermore, certain critics such as Moers underlines the fact that the female gothic exposes the feminine experience. For instance, Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, according to Moers, arose from Shelley's own experience and is a suppressed afterbirth in which the author extracts her own remorse for both causing her mother's death and failing to give birth to a son. Thus, the novel carries undertones of monstrous demonstrations of parental ties and post-partum trauma (Moers 218). Hence, Shelley developed a fiction to allay her intense emotional concerns about birth, mortality, and existence. Therefore, another pushing force of the female gothic is that it manifests the female anxieties, traumas, altogether experience and existence. As a conclusion, female gothic authors address inequalities, patriarchal oppression, patriarchal conventional family life, and rigid religious sanctions, creating anxiety and delusion.

Directly linked with the female gothic and the feminist literary theory, the feminist lesbian theory emerged from lesbian criticism as an attempt to cover all women, no matter race or sexual orientation, uniting women under a collective literary concept. By the 1990s, African-American women questioned the competence of feminism as it only focused on white, heterosexual women coming from the middle class families, and ignored the presence and the involvement of other races. By doing so, African-American women accused feminism of imitating "the structures of patriarchal inequality within itself" (Barry 135) as

they were involved in struggles for social reform (their struggle was called the Black Women's Movement). Barbara Smith, for instance, is a pioneer in black feminism with her essay "Toward a Black Feminism", in which Smith argues that black woman writers are the subjects of a more difficult literary journey than white women writers because of their ethnic origin and are rendered invisible. According to Smith, in the world of white and/or male perception, black women's presence, identity, and culture, as well as the cruelly intricate forms of oppression that form them, are overlooked, unseen, and unknown (20). Smith expresses her anger towards feminists that overlook the deep racism black women suffer from and calls for a broader school of feminism that includes women with different ethnicities and sexual orientations. Similarly, lesbian critics such as Bonnie Zimmerman and Paulina Palmer has the same opinion but from the view of sexual identity. They argue that feminism assumed and created a common woman figure disregarding their sexual orientation:

As women in a male-dominated academy, we explored the way we write and read from a different or "other" perspective. As lesbians in a heterosexist academy, we have continued to explore the impact of "otherness", suggesting dimensions previously ignored and yet necessary to understand fully the female condition and the creative work born from it. (Zimmerman 341)

As Zimmerman notes, feminist literary criticism was about women; however, it lacked the dimension of sexual orientation: Feminist texts prior to the influence of lesbian feminism ignore the fact that not all women are heterosexual. Lesbian feminists thus extend the term "feminist theory" as they put up a figurative, broader understanding of lesbianism and feminism without "othering" any woman.

There are some distinct differences between the feminist theory and the lesbian feminist theory that needs clarification. Emerging from feminist criticism, lesbian criticism is based on a set of assertions: that, as feminist critics have indicated, a woman's identity is not solely categorized by her relationship to a male world and male literary culture, that strong female connections are major elements in women's experiences, and that a woman's emotional and sexual attitude greatly impacts her perception and therefore her artistry and imagination (Zimmerman 452). Thus, profound emphasis is given to women bounds in

feminist lesbian theory. Since it offers the lesbian a distinct viewpoint to challenge patriarchal oppression, languages, and culture, the experience of strong bonds among women is particularly freeing and can provide new perspectives to literature.

Similarly, in her article “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (1980), Adrienne Rich firmly suggests that patriarchal oppression ought to be challenged and rejected by women since patriarchal tradition assumes and enforces female heterosexuality. For Rich, everyone around them convinces women that they are heterosexual individuals; thus, they are taught to be heterosexual and oppressed, and that seeking a male partner is the center of their lives. Therefore, Rich exhorts heterosexual feminists to see heterosexuality as a political institution that delegitimizes women in her essay. Rich views heterosexuality as being analogous to those other political systems such as discrimination, rather than having any meaning as a sexual preference (27). According to Rich, heterosexuality is not genetic; rather, it is strategy that patriarchal society, which value men over women, has imposed on women. Furthermore, Rich argues that there are eight ways males in heterosexual relationships abuse their position of authority (given by patriarchy) to oppress women: denying female sexuality, forcing male sexuality, controlling reproduction, controlling their children, confining women, using women as objects, rejecting women’s creativeness, and withholding information from women (18-9). Rich emphasizes the point that women must fight with a widespread set of factors, from physical violence to manipulation of mind, rather than a simple preservation of injustice and economic control, and women should challenge and break free from the manipulation of patriarchy. Consequently, Rich asserts that the depiction of homosexual bonding among women in literature or media has been erased, dismissed, or rendered invisible. Assumptions such as a “lesbian is simply acting out of her bitterness toward men” (13) or “lesbian relationships do tend to re-create mother-daughter emotions and connections, but most women are heterosexual” (16), conforming to Rich, has been and still is a widely accepted in literature. Despite these views, Rich calls all women to unite in order to overpower the discrimination against lesbians and heterosexual women. Whilst underlining the bonding and uniting of women, Rich comes up with two new concepts;

Lesbian existence and Lesbian Continuum. Firstly, “lesbian existence suggests both the fact of the historical presence of lesbians and our continuing creation of the meaning of that existence” (27) and it is the denial of an obligatory manner of existence. Secondly, lesbian continuum is women experience, whether lesbian or heterosexual, and it is a broad term that promotes women friendship and bonding. For Rich, lesbian continuum may accomplish the goal of obscuring the precise lines between both sexes as they are essential to feminism and the liberation of women as a whole. Consequently, Rich’s article aims to halt the pushing of heteronormativity that forces women to conform to societal stereotypes and conventions by uniting women regardless of their sexual orientation, while calling for all women to try and halt the erasure of lesbian existence in literature and media. It is essential that the concept “lesbian gothic” is mentioned as the term is directly related to how the lesbian existence found a way to reach many readers through gothic literature.

As a reaction of the depiction of lesbianism as a disruptive and monstrous force rejecting conventional heteronormativity, Pauline Palmer coins the concept of “lesbian gothic” in her *Lesbian Gothic: Transgressive Fictions* (1999). The lesbian gothic looks at how writers use Gothic elements and narrative techniques to portray and explore lesbian sexuality, same-sex relationships, and the difficulties that come with navigating lesbian living in a heteronormative culture. Palmer defines the concept of the lesbian gothic with some distinguishable features, some of which are; spectrality, being excess, which the terms lesbian and gothic have in common, intense female involvement, the theme of confidentiality, and the motif of the double (118-120). Several characteristics allow Gothic to be an appealing option for authors concerned in lesbian portrayal. Firstly, both lesbianism and gothic has been defined as excess, one in desire, the other in emotional experiences of desire, terror, pleasure, as well as ethical norms. Thus, the extremity of both gothic and lesbianism connects the two concepts together. Secondly, feminist issues are specifically explored in the Gothic fiction of female authors like Ann Radcliffe who include the troubled connection with female sexuality and gender of women, as well as their captivity in the private domain which is their house. As the *Encyclopedia of the Gothic* suggests, such gothic texts create “an image of the claustrophobic castle interiors in which the heroines of Ann Radcliffe’s novels and

other Gothic texts find themselves entrapped” (Hughes et al. 396). Thirdly, the secrecy of lesbian existence and gothic is another aspect tying both concepts; unknown information, repressed knowledge, and denied knowledge causes silence. In this silence, spectrality arises in order to empathize the invisibility or the silence of the lesbian. The idea of the homosexual as a ghost has always fascinated people. In addition to conjuring lesbian invisibility and ghostly visions, this technique also provides the author to refuse the invisibility of the lesbian and their marginalization as the spectre is never eliminated; instead, it keeps coming back (Hughes et al. 395). A woman who defines herself as a lesbian can relate to these three connotations, which is also present in gothic fiction. Lesbians have been refused information concerning lesbian identity and lifestyle, or they have been forbidden to speak or write about it due to taboos in heteronormative society. Furthermore, the motif of the double is prominent in both gothic fiction and the lesbian existence. The importance of the double appears to be confusing since meeting the double may provide the person a feeling of emancipation, but also the double may stand in for a feature of the person’s identity that the individual feels concerned or uneasy over. The motif of the double is adopted in gothic fiction, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as seen in Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This concept is relevant to the lesbian who chooses to live a double lifestyle, like Dr. Jekyll, and conceal her sexual identity because she is pushed to do so by prejudiced and homophobic sentiments. Consequently, Palmer further mentions that lesbian gothic includes “topics that society regards as unspeakable and taboo ... [which are] lesbian and male gay sexuality. It therefore comes as no surprise to find motifs with uncanny connotations, infiltrating lesbian and queer theory” (2). It is agreeable that gothic as a genre provides a venue for writers to depict lesbian identities and existences, concerning all the bridging motifs and contexts. Furthermore, certain figures emerged to portray the unruly women and queer individuals, such as the femme fatale. Writers adopted the femme fatale figure and incorporated it in their gothic texts to channel the experience of women who rejected the traditional gender roles and patriarchal values.

In the second chapter, while analyzing *Carmilla*, the concept of the femme fatale will also be adopted along with feminist and lesbian criticisms; thus, it is essential to define and give historical background about the femme fatale figure. A femme fatale has been a recurring figure in literature which is a secretive, attractive, and charming lady whose seductions entangle her partners or admirers, frequently leading them to dangerous and lethal situations. A femme fatale is a literary and artistic archetype. Her capacity to captivate, allure, and enthrall her prey with a charm was considered otherworldly in the early literary accounts. It is quite challenging to define or characterize the femme fatale as she frequently ignores her social and economic status, crosses societal lines and borders, and openly defies conformity. In the 19th century Europe, the femme fatale was a popular character, frequently depicting the consequences of unfettered feminine sensuality, as Jennifer Lee Hedgecock assures that “[i]n 1848, she becomes a popular literary motif ... By the 1860s she is a recurrent figure in sensation fiction ... She [femme fatale] suddenly resurfaces in the 1890s as the Gothic anti-heroine” (1). It is interesting that the femme fatale character has become a prominent figure in literature at the same time with emergence of the first wave feminist movement. According to Hedgecock, the femme fatale represents the growing independence of women and the evolving feminist thought as sensation novels from the late 19th century subtly reveal the extent to which an autonomous woman is considered as a challenge to the foundation of Victorian civilization by depicting the femme fatale as a specific danger to patriarchy (3). Contrary to the domestic and ideal Victorian women figure which had been depicted in male dominant literature, nineteenth century femme fatales challenge the patriarchal norms by posing a risk to males who uphold the prevalent Victorian worldview that suppress women.

The femme fatale becomes much more prominent with the rise of gothic fiction. This led to a supernatural direction in the figure of the femme fatale and she started appearing as a vampire, as in Stoker’s *Dracula* and Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*. Conrad Aquilina mentions that fear and sexuality fuels the femme fatale legend. The female vampire is revealed to be a literal hunter that feeds on men and women until death, and is not bound to this world, but returns from the grave indefinitely unless eliminated (n.p.). Lucy Westema and the three female vampires are the embodiment of the femme fatale in *Dracula*. When Lucy is

transformed into a vampire, she is portrayed as both attractive and terrifying simultaneously and she stalks men in darkness, provoking their desires while tormenting their thoughts. The gendered stereotypes of women are contradicted by the female vampires who reject the conventional figure of a nurturing mother or a domesticated beautiful wife. The female vampires in *Dracula* break every patriarchal prohibition that has been built into culture, signaling the end of the western world's social order and erasing boundaries among men and women. The figure of femme fatale will be adopted in the following chapters of this thesis whilst analyzing Le Fanu's *Carmilla*.

In the first chapter, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* will be analyzed with special emphasis on queerness, feminism, and female gothic. The relationship between Victor and the Monster will be examined with a focus on the sort of attachment they display, triangle desire, the queerness of the Monster's creation, their potential infertility, homosexual fear, and their estrangement from society. This thesis will examine their connection in two different ways: as lovers and as doubles. Victor and his Monster's emotions reflect those of a queer couple or an individual. Victor's fear, sadness, and shame are clear throughout the narrative. These emotions will be associated with homosexual panic. Furthermore, in addition to analyzing the female characters in *Frankenstein*, feminist critique will also be used to examine Victor Frankenstein, the lack of a maternal figure, and Mary Shelley, the author of the book. The connection between Shelley and her life as well as the distinctive narrative style will be examined.

In the second chapter, Le Fanu's *Carmilla* will be analyzed, significantly focusing on lesbian feminism, lesbian gothic, and queer theory. The traditional portrayal of a female monster will be explored in accordance with the character Carmilla and her sexual revolt against patriarchy. The protagonist Laura will be inspected in terms of growth in sexuality, way of life and identity. As Le Fanu exhibits a very assertive, independent, and sexually active woman who breaks the confines of the Victorian society, it will be determined that Laura and Carmilla's lesbian relationship violates and surpasses the conventional order of

heteronormativity. Furthermore, Sheridan Le Fanu and his life will be briefly scrutinized and some connections to the story will be made.

In the conclusion, the concepts of queer theory, feminist criticism, lesbian feminism, female and lesbian gothic will be used in the upcoming chapters to analyze and expose the relationships among characters of the selected works, with an emphasis on the characteristics of gothic as a genre, homophobia, homosexual panic, triangular desire, restrictions of patriarchy, and lesbian experience. The first chapter will concentrate on Victor and the Monster's queer bodies and their queer relationship, with a particular focus given to the kind of connection they exhibit, the queerness of the Monster's creation, homophobia, and their alienation from society. With the idea of feminine gothic, the gothic tradition strengthens feminist criticism in addition to enabling queer studies. This idea will be used to an analysis of Victor Frankenstein, Mary Shelley, and the novel's storyline, which deals with concerns about parenthood and pregnancy. The emphasis on pregnancy and childbirth that Mary Shelley places will be connected to unacknowledged female fears, worries, and anxieties about childbirth and its impact on a male audience. The queer study of the character Carmilla and her relationship with Laura will be covered in the second chapter. The concept of a female vampire will be seen as an image that no respectable lady should follow because it goes against the ideals of patriarchal nineteenth-century traditional Western societies. It will also be discovered that Le Fanu's *Carmilla* offers essential insights into the processes in which lesbianism emerges, flourishes, and manifests itself throughout life, beginning at a young age. It will be discovered that rereading Frankenstein and *Carmilla* in a queer way adds to the gender perspective and emphasizes the significance of the connection between queer theory and gothic fiction.

2. CHAPTER ONE: THE MALE MONSTER AND THE RAGING HOMOSEXUALITY

Mary Shelley's prominent novel, *Frankenstein*, which was published in 1817, is a gothic fiction that revolves around a scientist, Victor Frankenstein, who has a dangerous and unhealthy passion for the field of science. The protagonist Victor Frankenstein tries and fails to find the secret of life as he builds a body out of corpses. Curious to reveal the secrets of nature, Victor engages deeply in the field of science and starts an experiment in which he creates a monster out of corpses, and brings it to life. As soon as Victor gives life to his Monster, everything takes a turn for the worst. Victor and the Monster engage on a deadly chase which ends with the passing of Victor. The gloomy sceneries, eerie landscapes, the post-natural monster, the dungeon-like laboratory in which the monster is created, as well as the unstable mental health of Victor make the novel a remarkable precedent of the school of gothic.

It is possible that part of the young scientist Victor's research to uncover scientific puzzles is a quest to uncover his own innermost secrets, in other words, his homosexual tendencies. Throughout the story, the Monster chases Victor and brings him misery, embarrassment, and guilt until Victor passes away. This chase between Frankenstein and the Monster becomes the prominent plot of the novel. The guilt, alienation, and embarrassment of Victor as well as the Monster could be interpreted in two ways when analyzed from a queer perspective; the Monster and Victor as a queer couple in a love-hate relationship, or the Monster as a metaphor for Victor's homoerotic tendencies.

Furthermore, regarding Victor's questionable sexual orientation and his disinterest towards women, it is possible to reread Victor Frankenstein through concepts like absence of a parent, and loss of a maternal figure, especially when the author of the novel, Mary

Shelley and her anxieties about childbirth is taken into consideration. Some facts of Mary Shelley's life will be tied to the events in the narrative concerning birth and death.

2.1. QUEERNESS OF VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN AND HIS MONSTER

The relationship between Victor and his Monster seem complicated from the moment the Monster is created. They have a special bond which could be put as a love and hate relationship. In this part of this chapter, Victor and the Monster's relationship will be analyzed with an emphasis on their bond, triangular desire, queerness of the creation of the Monster, their possible infertility, homosexual panic, and their alienation from the society. Since the narrative contains unnatural characteristics like male birth, disturbing commitment between males, sexual aggression, and ultimately an obsessive relationship between a scientist and the destructive other he has conceived, the relationship between Frankenstein and his Monster is anything but normative. When commenting on male bonds, Sedgwick discusses that works written in gothic, such as *Frankenstein*, have plots in which the male bonds are eerie, full of desire and homoerotic. She mentions that such plots include "a residue of two potent male figures locked in an epistemologically indissoluble clench of will and desire" (*Epistemology* 187), as seen in Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Victor and his Monster find themselves in an endless chase in which they want to overcome each other but fail to do so. Their link is problematic; they cannot be together, because of the Monster's anger and Victor's guilt and disgust, yet they cannot be apart, as they run from and run into each other continuously. Their relationship is rather confusing. Thus, the usage of the concept triangular desire would be helpful to better understand and analyze their bond.

Firstly, in order to understand the queer bond between Victor and his Monster, their relationship can be put in the schema of the triangular desire, also known as the erotic triangle. It can be interpreted that the intense enmity of Victor and his Monster is hiding reciprocal queer passion through the diagram of this triangle. Victor and his Monster,

are filled with hatred and animosity that connects them to each other tightly. When placed in the erotic triangle, Sedgwick argues that “the bonds of ‘rivalry’ and ‘love’ ... are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent” (*Between Men* 708). Their enmity is so intense that it can be seen as a strong bond of attachment, which could be directly related to queer desire. After its creation, the creature becomes obsessed with Victor, as Victor also becomes obsessed with it. Thus, if the links of romance and enmity are comparable, Victor’s and the creature’s declarations that the other is their arch nemesis make them become the object of desire for each other. Victor describes the Monster as his nemesis, though his fixation with it is just as profound as his fixation with his fiancé, Elizabeth. As Victor is suggested that he shall marry Elizabeth, he is more preoccupied with the Monster than he is with Elizabeth, which his father asks him “have you, then, some other attachment?” (Shelley 200), which Victor denies, but he is subconsciously aware that his obsession with the Monster would never allow him to shift his attention from it to any other woman. Nevertheless, in order to get closer to each other, both Victor and his Monster dismantle the mediators in each other’s lives which are Elizabeth and Henry Clerval for Victor, and the female creature for the Monster. At the end of the novel, Victor and the Monster are alone in a room, in an atmosphere of melancholy since Victor is in his deathbed. The Monster exclaims that “Farewell, Frankenstein! ... I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct” (Shelley 235). The Monster almost weeps as it is standing next to its enemy/lover. Their continuous queer chase ends only when Victor dies. The last words of the Monster also mark that it may commit suicide following the death of Victor, ending their miseries that they suffered throughout the novel because of their queer desires.

Apart from the concept of the triangular desire, there are many interpretations on the relationship between Victor and his Monster. A.A. Markley, for instance, defines this relationship between Victor and his creature, which he finds homoerotic, as “a love/hate relationship that both distorts and far exceeds the emotional bond between parent and child and indicates elements of intense homo social desire” (120). The fact that Victor made the Monster puts him in the position of the father figure, and the ‘birth’ of the Monster is an

anomaly, perhaps an abortion. By creating his male monster companion from dead bodies, Victor disrupts the natural way of being born by stitching up body parts and creating the Monster.

The day of the male birth, or the creation of the Monster has homoerotic connotations if analyzed from a queer perspective. Victor describes the period leading up to his creation as time invested in excruciating labor towards producing a life form that would glorify him as its producer and creator; which resembles the terminology of giving birth. Victor talks about the days which leads up to the birth as “incredible labour and fatigue” (Shelley 47), “time spent in painful labour” (Shelley 48), and whilst talking about his creation, he proudly states that “a new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me” (Shelley 49). His usage of vocabulary resembles a woman who is expecting a baby and who has gone into labor. Thus, it is safe to say that male scientists, Victor in this case, play the feminine role of human reproduction in *Frankenstein*, which emphasizes the queerness of Victor by blurring the gender boundaries from the very beginning. Frankenstein’s effort to give life to inanimate materials reflects the disintegration of the normative status of heterosexuality since it not only breaks the natural cycle of life and death but also transgresses the laws of human birth. The natural reproductive system is challenged when the Monster is born, resulting in a rebellion against heteronormativity. Victor’s fascination manifests right from the beginning with the deranged passion of forbidden, rejected desire. As he declares, he wants to “penetrate the secrets of nature” (Shelley 33), because there were other men ahead of him, who “had penetrated deeper” (Shelley 34), he wants to be like those men. Each of the activities associated with this “loathsome” project which is about penetrating deeper, occurs in a private “workshop of filthy creation” (Shelley 50), concealed from the public, out of concern for ridicule and disapproval. The Monster is created as a result of this forbidden homoerotic encounter, and this creation occurs right after Victor’s climax of success, which resembles ejaculation. Furthermore, the unnatural birth does not result in an innocent child but a monstrous creature which haunts everybody that encounters it. The fact that Victor flees his laboratory as soon

as the Monster is ‘born’ brings about the resemblance of an abortion, escaping from the unwanted, or the feared. The moment Victor runs away from the table on which the Monster lies, their parental relationship is shattered and transformed into one that is definitely not a father and child relationship. McGarvan comments on the birth of the Monster and the relationship between Victor and Monster as follows:

Once we start to see it in terms of a deeply repressed homoerotic passion involving an adult man or men, we can see the creature too as motivated not only by an infant’s need for a parent — after all, he is a fully grown, in fact huge, man — but also by same-sex desire (61).

The Monster is born with a “gigantic stature” (Shelley 49), precisely eight feet tall and a large built. It is definitely not an infant who is in need of motherly care, but perhaps in need of companionship of a same sex partner. The Monster peeks at Victor’s bedroom with a grin, looking for affection, but then it is met with Victor’s disgusted and fearful face, who is laying in his bed, extremely tired and vulnerable. Furthermore, the fact that Victor dreams of Elizabeth, right after the creation of his Monster, in a terrible way reveals his subconscious on his view of women. When Elizabeth appears in his nightmare, her lips darken and she takes on the form of his deceased mother. In his dream, Frankenstein intends to embrace Elizabeth, but their intimacy quickly begins to represent death:

As I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (Shelley 54)

Victor’s dream brings about his unconscious on how he ties women with death and trauma and how women are no longer desirable for him. The moment he tries to be intimate with his fiancé in his dream, he sees a corpse infested with worms, which is not desirable in terms of sexual attraction. The fact that he has this nightmare right after he created his Monster is of great importance to understand that women are not sexually attractive to Victor. After Frankenstein’s creature is animated, Elizabeth and his mother both die metaphorically, signifying that Frankenstein’s connection with his mother and Elizabeth has been superseded by the close, homosocial attachment he has developed with his creation. The night of the creation turns a switch on him which makes him realize secrets about him of which he becomes subconsciously aware. The changing imagery in Victor’s nightmare is a clear reflection of the strange shifting of his desire from heteronormative to homoerotic. In his

subconscious, his attraction to Elizabeth is displaced and shifted to an attraction to the same-sex, namely his Monster. Apart from this chapter of creation and initial rejection, there are many aspects which points to queerness of Victor and the Monster, as well as the queer homoerotic relationship they have.

If looked from the biological and the reproductive perspective, both Victor and the Monster seem infertile or unwilling to start a heteronormative way of life. It is highly possible that the Monster, who comes into existence with the help of Victor, is barren and infertile because he is not born in a natural way. Since Victor is very preoccupied with his studies and the field of science, he does not repopulate. He does not even get married to Elizabeth and postpones the wedding multiple times. Accordingly, Frankenstein's reluctance about family and social norms, especially toward his fiancé, Elizabeth Lavenza, could be interpreted as proof of his sexual confusion and homosexual tendency. Anne K. Mellor comments on such Victor Frankenstein's sexual preferences, arguing that he develops a homosexual tendency towards his creation: "Victor Frankenstein's most passionate relationships are with men rather than with women ... In the place of a normal heterosexual attachment to Elizabeth, Victor has substituted a homosexual obsession with his creature" (121). The Monster thus becomes the priority for Victor and Elizabeth is kept waiting, never to have a husband and wife relationship with Victor. Indeed, it is acceptable to comment on Victor as a man who has no desire of having an offspring. Robertson argues that "Shelley creates her horrible tale ... between men who will never seed children. Death is their shared destiny and it is to be experienced without the hope of offspring" (67). Both male figures in the novel are barren and they represent a homosexual couple who are obsessed with each other, yet they cannot have children because simply it is biologically impossible.

Whilst Victor and his Monster represent a queer couple, the feelings of both Victor and his Monster also demonstrate the experience of a queer couple or an individual. Throughout the story, Victor's anxiety, depression, and embarrassment is evident. These feelings could be directly linked to homosexual panic; Victor fears his Monster to be exposed

and show its relation with him. McGarvan defines homosexual panic as a situation in which a man begins to believe that he, or some other male, is experiencing homosexual attraction, feelings such as dread, disgust, and loathing appears (48). As a result of this panic, which may or may not be conscious, personal connections or professional relationships might suddenly shift into mistrust or even open hatred. Thus, as soon as Victor feels this homosexual panic, he feels very angry, tries to flee, or confine himself in his room, right after he animates the lifeless matter, his Monster. Victor's initial rejection of the Monster could be seen as an example of homosexual panic. This could be an effort to break up a strong homosocial relationship that has been for a long time and carries the risk of being perceived as homosexual by the public. Pointing to Victor's panic in this way, David Sahai argues that Victor's descent into continual terror throughout his effort to flee from his creature may suggest an implicit homosexual panic in reaction to his normative obligation as a spouse to Elizabeth (64). Victor is anxious all through the narration, from the moment his Monster comes alive, until he dies. His anxiousness arises from the chase between him and his Monster. Although Victor continuously tries to flee from the Monster, he also flees from heteronormative marriage. It is evident from Mr Frankenstein's suggestion that Victor must wed Elizabeth that this union would uphold heterosexual gender roles. Nevertheless, soon after his father makes the suggestion, Frankenstein leaves for England and continues to communicate with his Monster. By doing so, Frankenstein evades his gender obligation to Elizabeth and deepens his homosocial relationship with the Monster. By avoiding marriage with Elizabeth and developing his bonds with the Monster, his anxiety takes a turn in a way that he thinks the society might see him as homosexual, which may make him vulnerable to the society he lives in. The role that is given to Frankenstein as a heterosexual male in a heteronormative society might therefore be interpreted in light of his persistent anxiety and attempts to escape. Thus, he becomes anxious of not only his feelings, but also possible reaction and rejection of the society. Moreover, when Victor and the Monster have their first conversation, Victor's hatred is evident, but also, Victor is striving to restrain his own socially improper desire while demonizing his creation. While reviling the Monster, he says "'Devil', I exclaimed, 'do you dare approach me? ... Begone vile insect! ... Abhorred monster! Fiend that thou art! ... Wretched devil!'" (Shelley 100). The dominant tone of Victor's remarks to

his creation is one of exciting disdain and excoriating denunciation; exactly the same tone used by homophobic group and individuals to name and demonize homosexual persons on a regular basis, and the Monster is made to take responsibility for the physical and verbal abuse and cruelty. Furthermore, due to this panic, Victor is very worried that his creature (in this case, his homosexual partner) might be seen by others and his secret is revealed. Victor's words clearly demonstrate the panic he feels in this matter: "I trembled excessively; I could not endure to think of, or far less to allude to, the occurrences of the preceding night. ... I dreaded to behold this monster, but I feared still more that Henry should see him" (Shelley 57). As the quotation shows, the main reason of his anxiety and fear is not the monster itself but the fact that others could see it and blame him of homosexuality. Correspondingly, examining the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his creation in *Frankenstein*, David Sahai argues that:

The fear Frankenstein exhibits throughout the novel, largely because of the designs and acts of his creation, is a manifestation of an underlying "homosexual panic" that intersects with Frankenstein's various gender roles. This is demonstrated in Frankenstein's progression from immediate rejection of his creation, to fleeing from it, to finally relentlessly pursuing it. (63)

Victor's sleepless nights, his depression, guilt, horror, anxiety, despair and panic evidently shows traces of homosexual panic. The entire narrative is an expansion of the shame of Victor for creating his Monster, and consequences that result from deviating from nature's normal course, such as having homoerotic tendencies. Helen Moore also argues that by creating the monster, Victor defies convention, goes beyond what is acceptable, develops a unique identity and sphere of life that is rejected by society (30), which insures social enmity. Although Victor alienates himself from the society on his own accord, the Monster has no choice but to hide since he looks horrendous and represents abnormality. His ugliness might as well be related to homosexuality in the society's perception; unnatural, wicked, disfigured, and absolutely unacceptable. Correspondingly, Elizabeth Nitchie comments on the Monster's unacceptability:

The Monster, ... yearning for human intercourse, was set apart by the circumstances of his origin and by his deformity. There was always a barrier before him like the wall which separated him in his hovel from the DeLaceys in their warm social cottage. His every attempt to pass this barrier to help others or to win affection was repulsed with fear and horror. (37)

Despite sharing emotional similarities with the people surrounding him, the Monster is despised and hurt by his failure to fit in a community that emphasizes his outsider position.

The Monster is alienated from the social sphere by the biased society because of its features it simply cannot control, which resembles a queer individual who is marginalized and rejected by the society because of the very same case, because of their sexual tendencies which is not preferred but comes naturally to them. The fact that even the Monster's creator abandons him; and that the monster has no relatives and no companions, resembles of the problems a young homosexual man might experience. After being alienated from and bullied by the society, the Monster brings up his wish for a partner of another sex after detailing his dismal encounters to Victor. The Monster displays a desire to abide by the heterosexual standards by wanting a companion, simply because he wants to fit in and also he is in need of attention and love that Victor rejects to provide him. The monster proposes a plan that would let him surrender to heterosexual authority after realizing that his homosexuality renders it unsuitable for him to integrate in the social norms. Although accepting at first, Victor destroys this female Monster as he thinks it would be dangerous for him and the society, but deep inside, Victor's secret desire towards the Monster prevents him to create a partner for his Monster. He neither wants the Monster, nor does he want it to be with another partner. He is confused and in between obeying to heteronormativity and having a place in the society, or acting on his homosexual desires, which makes him ultimately selfish and a hypocrite. Victor, resembles a man who have initially attracted this young homosexual man, but now is unable to accept or even recognize him; a man who initiated the homosexual tendencies within and really 'created' him in terms of sexuality. *Frankenstein* thus addresses the core of homosexual relationships.

Ultimately, in the society Victor lives in, heterosexuality and the heteronormative family structure are considered to be the natural way of living; the normal. Thus, it is inevitable that they stick out from the heteronormative culture they are in. Correspondingly, Siyu Yang declares that Frankenstein breaks heteronormativity "by violating nature" (592), the nature of birth and death, the nature of heteronormative family structure and reproduction. Frankenstein's monster represents the dead or the undead, and the abnormality within the society, which is homosexuality. Thus, it is noteworthy that they challenge the norms that are considered to be normal by heteronormativity. Furthermore, looking into the relationship

of Victor and the Monster conceptually, the concept of the double may arise to explain Victor's inner state of mind.

The representation of homosexuality can be also read as a more subconscious, abstract way in which the Monster can be considered as the alter ego of Victor. In this sense, *Frankenstein* introduces the gothic idea of the double, or the doppelganger, and it is conceivable to understand Victor and the monster as the same individual with close readings. Efforts of Victor leads to the creation of the Monster, who although an independent being, may be seen as an extension of the creator. Despite desiring to build a creature that is superior to nature, Victor Frankenstein develops the Monster, a horrific, ugly and brutal creature that haunts him. Instead of taking care of the Monster, he runs away from it since it is so unpleasant. Death and destruction follows the takeover of Frankenstein. In this sense, the monster represents the worst and evil aspects of human nature. The creator, Victor, is portrayed as having an internal defect and hidden inner desires through the Monster via the concept of the double. As the narrative goes on, the Monster murders Frankenstein's sibling, William, in retaliation for Victor's neglect. Victor admits to the crimes committed by the Monster after realizing that he, as the creator, is also the monster;

I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me. (Shelley 75)

When Frankenstein refers to the Monster as his own soul, he associates himself with it. The Monster stands in for and embodies the evil aspects of its creator's mind, forbidden and repressed desires. Through building the monster, a civilized creature like Frankenstein is able to unleash his brutal, hideous, and urge-filled inner self. Suppressed impulses are revealed by the primal, unpleasant self that resides in the mind of a civilized person. It is essential that the place in which the double is created is further analyzed in order to link Victor's forbidden homoerotic desires with the Monster, the doppelganger of Frankenstein. The laboratory in which the Monster is created is the key point of the doubling and arising of queerness of Victor.

When read in the manner of the queer gothic, Frankenstein's laboratory could be seen as the closet in which, with the creation of the monster, his repressed homosexual desires arise. The laboratory brings to mind the figure of the closet in queer theory. Victor does not reveal his homosexual tendencies to the public but he acts on these tendencies in his laboratory. Going back to the day of the creation and the time leading up to it, this time the Monster will be seen as a representation of Victor's homosexual desires, and the fact that Monster is, in fact, his Doppelganger. Human and animal parts are gathered by Frankenstein while he assembles his tools; the process is unpleasant, performed alone, and deals with human remains. When the Monster is complete, the terror and dread reaches its climax. The creature emerges from the darkness that midnight, with its gloomy, horrific, yellow eyes. This atmosphere of despair and horror, together with the twisted monster image, emphasizes how afraid Frankenstein is to act against heteronormativity since doing so would have serious repercussions. The laboratory in which the Monster emerges from the table may have been a result of Frankenstein's homosexual urges and a catalyst that enabled Frankenstein become aware of his tendencies. Therefore, the laboratory turns into a liminal space, a threshold between homosexuality and heterosexuality, and Victor passes this threshold, creating his closet.

The term "closet" is used and popularized by Sedgwick in her book *Epistemology of the Closet*, which alludes to the concept of the significance of homosexuality and heterosexuality to Western philosophical and cultural traditions. She employs the analogy of the closet, which has generally been a place of oppression for homosexual individuals, to highlight this construction. Sedgwick mentions that, coupled with and occasionally via these ontologically loaded pairings of homosocial/homosexuality, secrecy/disclosure, and private/public, Western society compressed these concepts into the figure of the closet (*Epistemology* 72). The closet represents the repression of homosexual individuals; it is a remote and hidden space, in other words, a liminal space, in which they gain the knowledge of their sexuality and shield it from the society. Lucy E. Bailey defines the concept of the closet as "a metaphor for the oppressive ways in which gays have been

forced to hide their sense of self and relationships – a site in which they are variously hidden and silenced – and it is also the place through which they come to be ‘known’ and revealed” (n.p.). In this sense, the laboratory acts as a hidden place, Victor’s closet in which forbidden and unacceptable desires linger.

The night of the creation resembles a homosexual sexual act, and regret and guilt afterwards with close reading. Victor defines his feelings as strong as a hurricane and adds: “The moon gazed on my midnight labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding places” (Shelley 50). He eagerly works towards the creation that mirrors his deep homoerotic desires, which, in part, resembles masturbation. Every night, he is occupied with parts of male corpses, hiding in his closet, breathless and eager, penetrating nature. At last, when the Monster is animated, Victor sees “the dull yellow eye of the creature open” (Shelley 53). This eye-opening moment is crucial because it represents the epiphany of Victor. He realizes what he has been doing for months in his laboratory, and guilt takes him over. As a result of this discovery, Frankenstein stays away from the monster in an effort to hide his homosexual inclinations since the Monster becomes a representation of the sexual orientation of his creator. After the Monster opens its eyes, when Victor passes the threshold of the heteronormative to homosexual, his feelings take a sharp turn: “I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished” (Shelley 54). The literal meaning of finished is him finishing his scientific experiment, however, it could well be read as finishing masturbating, and ejaculation. As a result of finishing, right after his climax, he feels guilty and sick as he flees; Victor leaves the Monster in the laboratory, in his closet, after he recognizes that his creation features all those impulses and actions that cannot be accepted or introduced into the domestic sphere, or the society.

Analyzing how Victor comes to build his closet and imprison his desires in a figure of a monster is crucial to support the theory that the Monster may in fact be a manifestation of Victor’s repressed emotions. Victor feels pressured by his family to live up to their standards of excellence and achievement, so he does everything they ask in order to win their

appreciation and approval. Victor becomes hollow, controlled by social expectations and norms as a consequence of denying himself any intense emotions or acts. Thus, just like *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, he lives a dual life, showing his representable sides to the society and his family, and his unrepresentable desires in the shape of a monster. On the duality of Victor, George Levine argues that,

The monster and Frankenstein are doubles, two aspects of the same being. ... As Frankenstein's creation, the monster can be taken as an expression of an aspect of Frankenstein's self: the monster ... leading an apparently independent organic life of its own and yet irremediably and subtly tied to its creator, re-enacting in mildly disguised ways, his creator's feelings and experiences (209).

This is a crucial insight into the motivations behind Victor's creation of the Monster: he despises the dark aspects of his nature although he requires it to complete him. For Victor, it is difficult to suppress his inner, subconscious desires, nor to endure the vision of his evil half, which is represented by the Monster. Having developed the idea that Victor and the Monster could be interpreted as both a queer couple and the concept of the double, the rest of the chapter will focus on the feminist analysis of the novel.

2.2.FEMINISM AND THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN *FRANKENSTEIN*

Feminist criticism will be adopted in order to analyze not only the women characters in *Frankenstein*, but also the protagonist Victor Frankenstein, the absence of a mother figure, and the author of the novel, Mary Shelley. The link between Shelley and her life will be analyzed as well as the unique narrative style in this part of the chapter.

2.2.1. Mary Shelley and The Female Gothic

In *Frankenstein*, almost all women are eliminated by death, or they are absent from the beginning. The Monster is born only with a father figure, hence, by excluding women from childbirth, the mother figure is essentially killed. *Frankenstein* establishes the narrative

of a man creating a life form on his own. All myths of creation rely on involvement of a female or involvement of a divine being. The unusual and unique myth created by Mary Shelley is that of a monster which is wholly manufactured by a man, with no involvement of a divine or feminine intervention. Consequently, the absence of a mother figure, and the search for a replacement object of desire in the lacking of a mother become two major themes in the narrative. Mary Jacobus in her essay argues that “a curious thread in the plot focuses ... on that of the dead mother who comes to symbolize to the monster his loveless state. [The Monster is] literally unmothered” (132). Shelley emphasizes how being motherless brings loneliness, lack of affection and love, as well as lacking social skills. From a feminist perspective, the narrative introduces the consequences of having a child without a female figure. However, when the life of Mary Shelley is taken into perspective, the novel deals with anxieties of women on birth and death. The most intensely experienced fears of pregnancy are expressed in the book. Mary Shelley’s emphasis on the pregnancy and childbirth sheds light on hitherto undiscovered female fears, worries, and anxieties over childbirth and its repercussions for a male audience. Accordingly, Anne K. Mellor argues that:

The experience of pregnancy is one that male writers have avoided; and before Mary Shelley, female writers had considered the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth as improper, even taboo, subjects to be discussed before a male or mixed audience. (41)

By publishing her novel which focuses on the common anxieties of women, her narrative also informs female readers that these concerns are common among women. Shelley’s fear of childbirth is directly linked to her life. It is evident that the development of the plot is connected to both death and birth with regard to Mary Shelley’s pregnancies, miscarriages, and her mother’s passing shortly after giving birth to her. Barbara Johnson in this regard emphasizes that the entire story is connected to Mary Shelley’s conflicted sentiments about childbirth through Frankenstein’s horror at the presence of the creature, which can be interpreted as postpartum depression⁴ and as a depiction of maternal rejection of a newborn (47). Consequently, Shelley conveys her bewilderment and anxiety of physically having a

⁴ A mental condition characterized by prolonged, severe clinical sadness that often starts within one month of giving birth and is accompanied by other symptoms, notably social withdrawal, trouble connecting with the infant, and sense of guilt or worthlessness (“postpartum depression”).

baby to tend for via the interaction between Victor and the Monster, especially the rejection or loss of a parental figure. To convey her sadness and sorrow in her real life, Mary Shelley constructs a failed father-son bond between Victor and the monster. Shelley establishes a remote and unsettling relationship among Frankenstein and the monster since she has no knowledge or experience raising her own babies or spending time with her mother. Mary Shelley's portrayal of Victor as incapable of giving the creature the love it needs reveals a cold alienation from what it takes to be a father or mother. Victor's initial reaction of rejection, and him being a failed father figure may be seen as a parallel to Shelley's experiences with childbirth, regarding her miscarriages and the death of her mother. At a young age, Mary Shelley might have felt conflicted feelings about the fact that her own mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, passes away after giving birth. Cynthia Richards highlights this situation, stating that "on the day of her daughter's birth, Wollstonecraft writes to Godwin that 'I have no doubt of seeing the animal today' ... Only a few days earlier, she had been teasing him about the arrival of the 'animal'" (587). In her note, Wollstonecraft refers to her child as the animal, which is the very same term Victor uses to define his own infamous offspring. Thus, it is possible that Shelly pictured herself as a monster which brought her mother's downfall. The loneliness of the Monster contributes to this theory as according to Mellor, Shelley reveals her long-buried sentiments of "parental abandonment" (Mellor 46) with the image of the Monster, who has no friends and its only family member, its father, has abandoned him.

All in all, having developed the idea that Shelley reflects her depression about birth and death via the image of the Monster in *Frankenstein*, Shelley also writes about her fears about childbirth, which is in fact a challenge to the general idea that mothers innately and unconditionally love their children. The story, which questions the social expectation that women must be loving mothers, makes clear the possibility that a mother could despise, fear, dislike, and refuse her child. Shelley challenges and defies the expectation that child care is solely the responsibility of the mother, and makes it clear that parental duties of a father should also be considered by demonstrating a father figure refusing his own child.

Furthermore, by writing about a parent abandoning a newborn infant, and the depression which follows Victor, Mary Shelley contributes uniquely to the tradition of female gothic, despite not having powerful female lead characters in her novel.

The literary concept of female gothic, which is coined by Ellen Moers, can be easily described as the literature produced by female authors. Moers' earlier type of the definition of the female gothic was marked by a traveling heroine and strong female characters, which contrasts Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* with its concentration on the Promethean over-reacher: The scientist who secludes himself in his laboratory and privately and remorsefully attempts to create life, just to discover that he has created a monster. Without such a dominant heroine figure, *Frankenstein* gives literary horror a unique level of dimension; no other fiction by a woman author equally justifies scrutiny in the context of the sex of the writer. Mary Shelley, the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, first the mistress, then the spouse of Percy Bysshe Shelley, had a turbulent history with parenting because she miscarried almost all her children⁵ and was not an official mother because she was unmarried when she was writing *Frankenstein*. The recurrent theme of "revulsion against newborn life, and the drama of guilt, dread, and flight surrounding birth and its consequences ... the trauma of the after-birth" (Moers 218) in *Frankenstein*, gives Victor a sense of femininity as if he is a mother suffering from confusion and agony related to birth, and ties Shelley with Victor. Furthermore, Shelley's work is most engaging, most intense, and most feminine when Frankenstein acts on his anxieties, flees and disowns the monster. Victor exhibits typical maternal responses to the birth of an infant, such as anxiety, remorse, melancholy, hysteria, and panic, all of which fall within the feelings of a mother who suffers from postpartum depression. Thus, feelings and emotions which Victor feels is directly linked with Shelley's experiences in her life. In a way, Shelley uses Victor to channel her inner anxiety about birth. Despite his sex, Victor can be identified as the travelling heroine, reflecting Mary Shelley, which makes *Frankenstein* a unique addition to

⁵ On 22 February 1815, Mary Shelley gave birth prematurely to a baby girl named Clara, who passed away a month later (Mellor xvi).

the female gothic. Thus, the protagonist Victor Frankenstein should be further analyzed from the scope of feminist criticism before moving onto the female characters in the novel, while disregarding his sex and focusing on his ability to give birth and replacing the role of a woman in *Frankenstein*.

The protagonist of *Frankenstein*, Victor, whilst representing the author of the work, also eliminates the necessity of a female figure in terms of childbirth with his experiment. When one reads this from a feminist perspective, Victor can be seen as a patriarchal figure who penetrates female nature, disrupts and possesses it. The patriarchal imprinting of the female as submissive, docile, as well as possessable, is one aspect of the unrestrained scientific invasion as well as technical abuse of female nature. Throughout the novel, Victor is extremely eager to interrupt nature and alter it: “I have described myself as always having been imbued with a fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature” (Shelley 33), “I pursued nature to her hiding places” (Shelley 50). When Victor talks about nature, he refers to it as a female, using “her” as the object pronoun. Thus, as Victor abuses science and his knowledge and disarrays the natural birth process, he eliminates the obligation to have females. Consequently, Anne K. Mellor claims that “by stealing the female’s control over reproduction, Frankenstein has eliminated the female’s primary biological function and source of cultural power” (115). Making his creation a man and foregoing the creation of a female companion for the Monster implicate that Frankenstein has an underlying purpose, which is to establish a society where men are the only ones allowed to exist. Shelley, as a proto-feminist herself, strongly criticizes the patriarchal values not only implying the fact that Victor intends to create a society of men, but also by silencing the female characters. Shelley demonstrates particularly how a societal conception of gender that prioritizes men over women has damaging consequences. Furthermore, the society in which Victor Frankenstein exists, is based on a tight gendered hierarchy that privileges men and confines women to a cramped area known as the domestic sphere. The domestic and public spheres, and how women are placed in confinement in the novel builds up the feminist criticism of Mary Shelly, and it is another issue that needs to be analyzed in detail.

The women characters in Shelley's novel is quiet, domestic and obedient; it seems from the very beginning that the purpose of women in the society is to build a family by getting married and reproducing in the contained place of their homes while the men are mostly out and working. This situation is directly related to the dichotomies of public and private spheres. These spheres can be defined as a conceptual division that are gendered as male and female. According to this division, males should inhabit the public domain while women should inhabit the private sphere. Women have traditionally felt alienated and separated from the public sphere that is often controlled by men. As a result, women's roles in the nineteenth century fiction as expressions of social reality have been severely circumscribed. Anne Mellor, with the division of sex roles and dichotomies in mind, mentions that "the man inhabits the public sphere, the woman is relegated to the private or domestic sphere. The men in *Frankenstein's* world all work outside the home ... The women are confined to the home" (115). While all men in the *Frankenstein* household and those who are related to it have jobs; Victor is an educated scientist, Clerval is a merchant, and Walton is an explorer, women are cramped in the domestic sphere. The women characters in the novel, are "either kept as a kind of pet ... or they work as housewives, child-care providers, and nurses (Caroline Beaufort *Frankenstein*, Elizabeth Lavenza, Margaret Saville), or servants (Justine Moritz)" (Mellor 116). Victor's adopted sister, who later becomes his fiancé, Elizabeth Lavenza, is seen as a property, a pet, by Victor and the other family members. Mrs. *Frankenstein*, upon introducing Elizabeth to Victor, says "I have a pretty present for my Victor" (Shelley 29) and Victor thinks to himself as she was his to protect. It is easily observed that the "female community in the world of Victor *Frankenstein* almost always exists only as women service the needs of others" (Wright 108). Consequently, women are unable to perform efficiently in the public sphere due to the separation of public man and private woman. This division between male/female, public/domestic in the novel, is indeed a system of oppression and sexual discrimination, which causes horrible consequences for the *Frankenstein* household.

The novel's division of the spheres of public (masculine) authority and private (feminine) attachment leads to the annihilation of several women. Justine Moritz, the housekeeper of the Frankenstein family, is executed when she is charged with William Frankenstein's death although she is innocent. Justine has been removed from the public sphere, thus she cannot defend herself at the court, simply because she does not have the skills to participate in the public sphere. Although she is a righteous, graceful and dignified woman, she is silenced and murdered because she is powerless, helpless, and alienated in a male-dominated society. In addition to highlighting the blatant unfairness of the assassination of Justine, Shelley criticizes the foundation of the society on patriarchal ideologies as well as the unequal allocation of power. Emphasizing the division seen between public and private realms that, where a female origin regenerates old patriarchal customs, is one way that Shelley illustrates her worries about the status of women in a patriarchal culture by presenting a different family structure via the DeLacey family.

DeLacey family is founded on fairness, equality of the sexes, and reciprocal respect; all labor in the household is distributed equally in a setting of compassion, and care. By introducing an alternate family structure, Shelley further criticizes the place of women in the society as well as empowering women by displaying a minor female character, a traveling heroine, Safie. Safie represents the fact that a woman can choose her religion, her husband, and can break free of the norms dictated by the patriarchal family structure. It is worth noting that female characters in the Frankenstein household are muted and imprisoned when compared with Safie, "who challenges patriarchal dictates of marriage and authority, and flees from those dictates" (Wright 109). Safie, who comes to live with the DeLacey family, is the daughter of a Turkish trader. She openly opposes the gender tyranny promoted by the faith her family practices and leaves her authoritarian home in which patriarchy is practiced. She travels abroad in search of Felix and DeLaceys. An essential part of Shelley's empowerment of women and reminder to them that there is an opportunity to flee patriarchy, and become an individual, rather than an object, is demonstrated by Safie, who leaves patriarchal tyranny in order to participate in a more open group in which she is

able to educate herself and voice her ideas. DeLacey provides this traveling heroine a safe space in which she can learn and love in confidence. The Monster, as it is narrating the atmosphere in the DeLacey household, exclaims that “what chiefly struck me was the gentle manners of these people, and I longed to join them” (Shelley 112). When Safie arrives at the cottage, her education process starts, at the same time as the Monster: “She and I improved rapidly in the knowledge of language” (Shelley 121). Felix teaches her language, history, and philosophy. The atmosphere in the DeLacey family is admirable in terms of their virtues, and the cottagers are filled with joy in their household. Although DeLaceys are happy with their life, the Monster learns about their tragic history, especially Safie’s, which affects him dearly. Safie’s story is of great importance since it reflects the independence she achieved by escaping her patriarchal home country: “[She was] sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia and being immured within the walls of a harem, allowed only to occupy herself with infantile amusements, ill-suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and a noble emulation for virtue” (Shelley 127). Safie portrays a woman who defies the norms of his religion and culture, and follows her heart all the way to DeLaceys’ cottage. All in all, Safie is a distinct expression of a feminist theme that rises to the top of the work. The male characters who narrate the story classify any other women as silenced and suppressed. Although all other women are oppressed and have to obey the norms of the patriarchy, there is a figure in the novel, which never comes into existence yet carries great importance in terms of feminist literary criticism.

Another important character, though never voiced, is the female monster who is removed from the society without even coming into existence. After going through miserable times, the Monster asks for a female partner from Victor as it talks about its struggles in life and loneliness. Despite several setbacks, Victor collects his supplies in a remote place and starts to construct a female creature. However, as he is displeased and disgusted with his endeavor, Victor feels anxious and ill once more, stopping his labor and destroying his instruments as a result of excessive disgust, fear, and terror. Here is the thinking process of Victor upon the female creature, which leads to its destruction:

I was now about to form another being of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant; she might become then thousand times more malignant than her mate and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness. He had sworn to quit the neighborhood of man and hide himself in the deserts, but she had not; and she, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal, might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. ... She also might turn with disgust from him to the superior beauty of man; she might quit him ... I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise ... and trembling with passion, tore the pieces. (Shelley 173-4)

Victor's concern is that the female monster would be autonomous and also have needs and ideas that the male monster cannot regulate or dominate. Victor thinks that the female monster may not agree to follow a societal rule established by someone else prior to her existence. It may insist on its own dignity and the freedom to choose what to do with its life; it may challenge the rules that the male monster has agreed upon, it may defy its partner and its creator. Victor thinks that the female monster would be untamed, making her much more evil than the male monster. Mellor suggests that Victor fears female sexuality; "a woman who is sexually liberated, free to choose her own life, her own sexual partner ..., and to propagate at will can appear only monstrously ugly to Victor, for she defies the sexist aesthetic that insists that women should be small, delicate, modest, passive, and sexually pleasing, but available only to their husbands" (120). Victor aggressively reinforces a masculine authority over the feminine body and destroys it because he is repulsed by her representation of unrestrained feminine sensuality and sexuality. Accordingly, Hoeveler interprets the destruction of the female monster as Victor's fear towards a liberated female who might have different choices in terms of desires and sexuality. "The fact that Victor constructs the body and then, when contemplating the realities of sexuality, desire, and reproduction, rips that body apart, suggests that the female body is for Victor infinitely more threatening and 'monstrous' than was the creature's male body" (Hoeveler 52). Victor's refusal to let the female creation live seems more than selfishness; it is yet another example of the sexism and mistrust towards females, which Mary Shelley uncovers and criticizes in her fiction. All in all, with great fear of a female rebel in a patriarchal society, the female monster is silenced, and destroyed.

As well as the female characters in the novel, in a part, Mary Shelley too is silenced in the society and literary atmosphere she is in because of her gender and the concerns she is

trying to address. Devon Hodges in his essay “*Frankenstein* and the Feminine Subversion of the Novel” argues that women writers needed to use a coded language in order to avoid being silenced by the patriarchal society and get their message across:

Feminists have long been aware that the woman’s voice is muted in a patriarchal culture. ... Feminist interpretations of women’s writing have increasingly concerned themselves with the woman writer’s effort to speak within the language of codes of her society without being appropriated by them. ... The woman writer desires to take advantage of opportunities to express herself, yet the language and codes of patriarchal culture impose yet another silence on her. (156)

For this reason, Shelley purposefully uses a male voice whilst placing her female characters in a subordinate status. In doing so, she perpetuates the conventional antithesis of male and female, the voiced and the silenced, which renders the situation of women writers as so contradictory as women is rendered as silenced in the society. All interactions involving women characters are seen from a masculine point of view in all times. Even when featured, the female characters are submissive and not present. This lack of a female viewpoint emphasizes how the men are focused on their individual goals and homosocial connections, ignoring women. However, on the other hand, by speaking as a male in the novel, Shelley smartly gains the chance to make a change from the inside and show the inequalities between genders. Shelley takes advantage of fiction and narrates the story from the eyes of three men.

By doing so, Shelley confronts the advantaged position of men in a patriarchal order, especially by questioning narratives that forcefully vocalize that man is the center of individuality, wisdom, and factuality while also capturing the unease of a female figure, engaging in an unknown order. In the case of *Frankenstein*, particularly Victor, who reveals his attempts to replace the participation of the female in childbirth and to independently generate life, the three male narrators enhance feminist concepts. Victor is a well-educated scientist and is openly in the public sphere. However, as discussed before, he suffers anxiety and depression related to birth. His narrative is continuously broken by fevers, nightmares, and unconsciousness, creating an unreliable narration. The Monster, who is another narrator, is biologically male, but has no opportunity to get an education and is self-taught, is alienated from the society, and it is marginalized to the extreme by the society. The novel opens with the narration of Robert Walton, who is in many ways similar to Victor in

terms of being excessively ambitious. Walton is also self-taught and lonely like the Monster. He complains to his sister in his letters that he is lonely: “I have no friend ... I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me ... I have no one near me” (Shelley 9). The story of Walton is brief, but it contains several patriarchal attitudes towards his sister; he assumes how she would feel whilst reading his letters, claiming; “You will rejoice” (Shelley 5), “you will exclaim” (Shelley 11), he brags about his journeys and uses ‘I’ in most of his sentences, never asking how she is nor any sort of questions that shows care towards her. When he asks questions in the letters, they are rhetorical, they are about himself and they are about his journeys and how successful he will be: “Do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose?” (Shelley 7), “What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of man?” (Shelley 14). The fact that his sister Margaret never replies is open to interpretation. Perhaps she never received the letters, maybe Walton never sent the letters, or her replies were never revealed by Walton. Even though Margaret simply receives the letters from Walton, and the reader never sees or hears from her, she is possibly equally or even more crucial to the plot than Walton. If not for her, Walton would not need to write the letters and would not be able to record the tale of Victor Frankenstein. This might be interpreted as a method to suggest that the most understated and unnoticed female figures are significant in the society and should be addressed. All in all, the three narrators of the novel are suffering throughout the story because they silence the women characters, and they do not include them in their journey of success (or failure).

The three male narrators deliberately create a misogynistic atmosphere in the work by excluding women characters and viewpoints, which demotes the male characters to defeat. James Davis argues that “all three men are engaged in quests that remove them from domestic interaction with women” (308). Victor is removed from his fiancé Elizabeth, Walton is removed from his sister Margaret, and the Monster is removed from its possible female partner. The exclusion of women is especially important when they are removed by force, by the male figures in the society. Particularly Victor reveals the misogynistic attitude towards women when he envisions possible female behaviors, then reacts violently to stop

what he believes they would do. Whilst he is working on the female companion to the Monster, he wonders how she will behave and concludes that females are much more capable of evil than males, destroying the female monster on the table. Furthermore, during the trial of Justine Mortiz, although Victor knows that she is innocent and feeling guilty, he does not reveal the truth and allows Justine to be executed. The Monster, the real murderer, explains that he was driven not only by rage, but also by a loathing of women when he defends his assassination of Victor's brother, William, and how he staged the scene so that Justine would be thought to be the murderer:

Should she indeed awake, and see me, and curse me, and denounce the murderer? Thus she would assuredly act, if her darkened eyes opened ... not I, but she shall suffer: the murder I have committed because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone. The crime had its source in her: be hers the punishment! (Shelley 148)

The Monster, just like its creator did with the female monster, anticipates how Justine may react although never meeting her prior to this encounter. Thus, although the male narrators attempt to silence the women, Shelley exposes the repercussions of their bigotry and reveals the atmosphere of misogyny in the male dominated society. The message of the narratives of Walton, Victor, and the Monster is that even those men who are most intelligent, gifted, decent, and generous are susceptible to their disregard for the opinions and ideals of women. The gist of the novel and the overall message is that, excluding females, creating gender inequality, and sticking to patriarchal norms which dictate the private and the public spheres, as well as the male superiority, would bring misery and catastrophe in a society.

3. CHAPTER TWO- THE FEMALE MONSTER AND THE BATTLE AGAINST PATRIARCHY

Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla* is widely regarded as the first lesbian vampire fiction wherein the shape-shifting vampire Carmilla seeks to lure Laura, a virgin young adult who resides with her father in an Austrian schloss. The story begins by the narration of Laura, who lives a lonely life, as she mentions that the closest town is far away and that she does not have anybody around her age for company. She begins the story by recalling a nightmare she had at the age of six, in which she envisions a face watching her before sliding into her bed. She can still feel the fear from that nightmare and it is clear she has been affected by it her whole life. One day, Laura and her father witness a carriage accident that wounds a young girl and her mother. When Laura's father approaches the woman, she tells him that she has to proceed without her daughter since her travel is vital. The young girl, who is revealed to be named Carmilla, is then kept in Laura and her father's care until her mother returns in three months. Laura continuously remarks that Carmilla is extremely beautiful and charming, and Carmilla does the same about Laura. Over the course of her stay, Carmilla and Laura draw closer to each other. However, the secretiveness, romantic advances and strong affection of Carmilla troubles Laura, as their relationship turns into an "inhuman" one. Once the true nature of Carmilla is exposed and it is revealed that Carmilla is in fact a vampire, she is assassinated by the men in the novella. By doing so, the patriarchal figures in the novella

terminate the eliminate the powerful woman figure, as well as the ambiguity surrounding Laura's sexual preferences.

Before moving forward with the detailed analysis of the novella, it is essential to give some contextual background about the author Le Fanu and the novella. Even though the rebellious female antagonist Carmilla is assassinated and silenced by male figures at the end of *Carmilla*, Le Fanu demonstrates a very autonomous, independent, and sexually active woman who defies the boundaries of the normal that is heteronormativity throughout the novella. Laura, whilst forming an alliance with Carmilla, enjoys feeling liberated; She flourishes sexually and socially as she steps up from being an adolescent to a young adult. Their bond is strong, their desires are unleashed and they become fierce, passionate, and powerful through their lesbian relationship. Nevertheless, the novella ends with the separation of the lovers and assassination of Carmilla. Amy Leal suggests that Le Fanu, could not conclude his tale in any other way than by putting an end to the lesbian vampire who had soiled male authority; in Victorian England, openly supporting homosexuality carried the risk of both moral outrage and incarceration (48-9). Despite removing the lesbian vampire, and being a man himself, Le Fanu adopts motifs of the Female Gothic to demonstrate the patriarchal control over women in the Victorian Period.

As Milbank also suggests, the female gothic “constructs plots of escape from incarceration in an ancient house or convent by a female protagonist who challenges the authority of a usurping male tyrant” (143). Carmilla, who becomes the rebel and poses a threat to the male authority, enables Laura to escape from her imprisonment and those who

control her. Correspondingly, for the female gothic, crucial motifs are “castigating patriarchal control of wives and daughters, the marginalization of women ... the isolation ... and the denial of women's sexual autonomy” (Snodgrass 116). Laura gains her sexual autonomy when her relationship with Carmilla evolves from platonic to sexual.

The fact that Laura is extremely lonely and depressed at the beginning of the novella depicts the patriarchal control over Laura. The castle in which they live, the schloss in Styria, acts as a prison for her according to her narration. Styria is portrayed in the opening of the story as a land of isolation. The isolated and lonesome schloss mirrors the personality traits of its female occupant; the scenery highlights her depressed and lonesome disposition. Laura continuously remarks how “solitary” and “lonely” their schloss is: “the forest in which our castle stands extends fifteen miles to the right, and twelve to the left. The nearest inhabited village is about seven of your English miles to the left. The nearest inhabited schloss of any historic associations, is that of old General Spielsdorf, nearly twenty miles away to the right” (Le Fanu 4-5). Correspondingly, Katie Mishler argues that “the focus on confinement within ... appears as a symbol for women’s imprisonment and disinheritance within a patriarchal society that limits her social, legal, financial, and bodily autonomy” (73). The solitary schloss represents feminine confinement and confinement, patriarchal domination, and the denial of female autonomy. Laura describes the castle as an enclosed and remote place: Nothing can be more picturesque or solitary. It stands on a slight eminence in a forest. The road, very old and narrow, passes in front of its drawbridge, never raised in my time ... Over all this the schloss shows its many-windowed front; its towers, and its Gothic chapel (Le Fanu 4-5). The isolated schloss mirrors Laura as she has no social contact with anyone apart from her father

and governesses, who are simply there to ensure that she is safe, secure, conditioned to obey the patriarchal norms and the male dominated society, and to control her.

Similarly, the author, Le Fanu, affected by certain controlling figures linked to politics and history, which impacted him both financially and socially, lived a modest life with his family. Garid Dowd notes that “Le Fanu was himself a singularly – and emphatically – displaced figure” (1157). Le Fanu lived a quiet life in Dublin, confining himself to his house, after certain drastic changes happened in Ireland, he started questioning his identity and remained silent and isolated from the rest of the society:

Between 1840 and 1870 each decade brought its own crisis, and each crisis served to undermine one or more of the positions on which Le Fanu had based his sense of identity- political turmoil during the 1840s, religious doubt following the death of his wife in 1858, and in 1869 the final disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. After the last of these crises Le Fanu withdrew completely from society. (Sullivan 245)

Thus, the mystery and sense of isolation in Le Fanu's novels and short tales are most probably intentional. The isolated castle in *Carmilla* “appears as a symbol of the cultural isolation, dislocation, and decline of the Anglo-Irish” (Mishler 76). After seeing everything he based his identity and way of living on drastically took a turn, it is plausible that he turned inwards, questioning his identity, and perhaps his sexuality whilst producing *Carmilla*. Accordingly, *Carmilla*'s unleashed same-sex desires could allude to Le Fanu's own anxieties regarding sexual identity and orientation. Sullivan notes that Le Fanu's marriage was not very happy (245). Despite having four kids, Le Fanu's marriage presumably did not work out, and it was claimed that he suffered from homosexual attractions. He struggled to convince his wife that he desired her, and after she passed away, remorse haunted him. Le Fanu stopped writing fiction for a while when his wife passed away in 1858. It appears that he was tormented by

guilt over whether or not his marriage and love were sincere. (Leal 48). Thus, it is possible to read *Carmilla* as a tale by a closeted author who is questioning his identity but finally giving up to the norms of the society by ending the narrative with the assassination of the dangerous homosexual. It is possible to read Laura as a mirroring character of Le Fanu in a way; an isolated, unhappy figure who is unsure about their identity, ancestry, and what they believe in. As Laura experiences same-sex relations, but finally gives in to societal and heteronormative norms, Le Fanu can be read as an insight to the reader about his journey of search for his identity and sexuality in the confinement of his home, challenging his past and the norms dictated by the Victorian society.

Whether Le Fanu's intentions were to reveal his inner feelings about sexuality and identity, or to create a story, indicating the dangers of otherness or homosexuality is unknown but open to interpretation. What is certain though, is that Le Fanu challenges patriarchy and ultimately, characters Laura and Carmilla demonstrate how female relationships potentially hold great ability to undermine or dismantle current patriarchal familial systems by usurping male dominance. To do so, Le Fanu utilizes the frame narrative technique to further emphasize the role and place of women in the heteronormative and patriarchal environment of the Victorian society.

The frame narration of *Carmilla* presents a depiction of a society where women occupy the assertive role and males are progressively confined to weaker situations. When Le Fanu's male protagonists lose all control over the females, he forces them to the very edge

of his story. *Carmilla* opens with a frame narrative that is never closed. The editor notes in the short prologue that Doctor Hesselius has prepared an intricate note on a piece of paper that is linked to the narrative that ensues, and he includes a citation to his paper on a peculiar topic. However, neither Dr. Hesselius's comment nor the editor's closing words are presented before the story comes to a closure. The story's opening frame never closes, alluding to the incompleteness or the continuation of the homosexual bonds between Laura and Carmilla. The impression that the females in *Carmilla* are liberated from patriarchal structures of trade or domination is bolstered by Le Fanu's half framed narrative as Signorotti notes:

Laura's relationship with Carmilla is not sandwiched between an editor's and doctor's comments and then exchanged with the reader; rather, like Spielsdorf's and Papa's failed attempts to contain these women, the editor similarly fails to frame them in his narrative. (619)

Just like she and Carmilla do in their personal relationship, Laura approaches her reader straightforwardly, cutting out any bystanders, eliminating male participation. By narrating the story from the perspective of a woman, and freeing her from any male interpretation at the end, Le Fanu emphasizes the female empowerment in *Carmilla*. The relationship between Carmilla and Laura finds a way to survive thanks to the incomplete frame of the narrative as it finds a way to slip its way away from the rectangular frame and goes outside of it, which in fact represents patriarchy and the heteronormative norms of the Victorian society they live in.

With all the contextual background information in mind, Le Fanu's novella will be read as a story of a troubled queer relationship among a human and a nonhuman that is disrupted by patriarchal figures. This bond will be found to create a liminal space in which a new subjectivity might be born.

3.1. QUEERNESS IN *CARMILLA*

In most myths, folklores, tales, and cultures, vampires are typically portrayed as the ‘other,’ the unknown, or the dangerous, as an entity that is both living and dead. Vampires pose a great menace, threat, or a risk to humanity in general by troubling the thoroughly drawn lines that human existence has established between the individual and the other, the animal and the human. Consequently, these monstrous creatures are meant to be repressed and destroyed for the sake of the human existence and peace. Every time a monster such as a vampire, or other type of creature appears, an enormous quantity of significance is instantly latched onto it. It immediately carries social and cultural implications. Mladen Dolar argues that “the monster can stand for everything that our culture has to repress - proletariat, sexuality, other cultures, alternative ways of living, heterogeneity, the Other” (76). What the monster signifies is based on the society, more importantly, what is repressed in that society, the unfamiliar, or the thing that does not fit the boundaries of the normal, therefore posing as a threat to the existence of the society. Correspondingly, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen declares that monsters are born in “metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place” (4). Monsters are directly linked to the culture they are born in, and their bodies are compact representations of panic and anxiety of the society that created them. Monsters are thus horrific beings which brings terror and mayhem. They pose as a dangerous anarchic figure since they deny to participate in society’s order and classifications: “they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist

attempts to include them in any systematic structuration ... they demand a radical rethinking of boundary and normality.” (Cohen 6). The monsters’ denial to fit into a category make them stand at the thresholds, which pushes the ones who encounter them to think outside of the box and see their liminality. Their inability to be classified violates the simple laws of nature since monsters defy binary oppositions and the order of hierarchy.

In Le Fanu’s novella, the monster is a female vampire, portrayed by Carmilla. The concept of a female vampire/monster⁶ lies on the societal representations of women in Western culture. During the 19th century, gendered conceptions of female sexual chastity contributed to institutionalize a double standard of sexuality. Women were to obey men and remain pure throughout their lives, staying in the domestic sphere with no involvement in the public domain. A common Victorian stereotype of the perfect woman, which seen as devout and obedient to her spouse, was called the ‘Angel in the House’. The concept of the ‘Angel in the House,’ which presented a prototype of the domestic goddess who maintained her modesty as a mother and wife. The popular infatuation with the ‘fallen woman,’ which is broadly defined to include women who had, or seemed to have, sexual experience outside of marriage, including adulteresses and prostitutes, offset the concept of the ‘angel in the house’ (Furneaux n.p.). Laura symbolizes the ‘angel of the house’ at the beginning of the novella, obeying her father and being controlled by her governesses, and accepting her father’s wishes

⁶ According to Julia Kristeva’s Abject Theory, the vampire’s body can be considered as an abject that is in between two conditions, or in a state of being abandoned or cast off since it repulses humans (Kristeva 3). The vampire is an abject that elevates the already desecrated human corpse, and represents a further assault on the line separating death from life. The vampire’s abjection is heightened by the craving for blood. In the case of the female vampire, the notion that a woman not only breaches the bounds of acceptable sexual behavior but also those of blood and the body is repulsing and a threat to society. For patriarchal culture, the female predator is an especially threatening and repelling figure.

to marry her to the General. When Carmilla is introduced, Laura undergoes a transformation in her sexuality and lifestyle. According to the Victorian belief, Carmilla would represent the fallen woman who is sexually active, not married, and not under the control of any men, and who preys on Laura and tricks her into becoming one as well, in other words, corrupting her. However, it is also possible to interpret Carmilla as a strong femme fatale character who demonstrates the feminine power and sexuality in spite of the oppressive patriarchal restrictions.

Le Fanu enforces and takes the mythical vampire tradition further by developing the vampiric femme fatale character Carmilla, who is hauled within the castle, sleeps until dawn, seems languorous, never prays, and goes on midnight rants, is explicitly erotic and also has piercing teeth that is sharp, long, slender, and pointy. Carmilla not only preys upon young girls but also distorts the traditional heteronormative structures as Signorotti notes:

The vampire, a dead body that drinks blood and preys on innocent victims to sustain its own life, acts as a complex metaphor: it could represent the economic dependence of women; ... unrepressed female sexuality; eugenic contamination; enervating parent/child relationships; and, of course, sexual relationships deemed subversive or perverse in hegemonic discourse. (609)

Carmilla is a rebellious character who poses a danger to the patriarchal society of the Victorian civilization. Since both strong female libido and homosexuality were considered by Victorian society as a deterioration of morals, values, principles and ethics, Sheridan Joseph Le Fanu depicts lesbianism and female sexuality in a delicate and a discrete manner. Because it contradicts the principles of nineteenth century traditional Western cultures which were ruled by patriarchy, the image of a female vampire was utilized in as an illustration that no moral lady should pursue. Furthermore, commenting on the dichotomy of the angel of the house and the fallen woman, Dijkstra further emphasizes that there were two radical positions

in which women were portrayed: “The virgin and the whore, the saint and the vampire- two designations for a single dualistic opposition” (Dijkstra 334). Their stance to sexuality and their sexual orientation determined which part of the dichotomy women belonged. Women could be a virgin/saint, or, if they were not pursuing a heteronormative relationship, openly exposing their sexual lives, they would be labeled as the whore/ the vampire. Correspondingly, the female vampire figure was used to portray a corrupted, fallen woman figure. The first widely read exemplar of the portrayal of the female vampire in the literary realm is *Carmilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu.

Carmilla not only represents an unleashed, animalistic female desire, but she is also a threat to the patriarchal way of living because of her sexual orientation. Her resistance to associate with domestic concepts such as home and family is rather rebellious given that she is completely by herself as an individual, living outside of the societal and cultural norms dictated by patriarchy. Her failure to share the specifics of her background is a hint that her history is problematic. No matter how much Laura pressures her to speak about her past, her family, and her country, *Carmilla* remains secretive as Laura exclaims: “no matter what my tactics, utter failure was invariably the result” (Le Fanu 28). She completely dismisses the idea of family and ancestry in favor of leading a physical, emotional, and friendly relationship with females. When Laura asks a lot of questions about *Carmilla*’s past and familial life, *Carmilla* directly tries to seduce her, putting her in a trance-like state: “when she had spoken such a rhapsody, she would press me more closely in her trembling embrace, and her lips in soft kisses gently glow upon my cheek ... Her murmured words sounded like a lullaby in my ear, and soothed my resistance into a trance” (Le Fanu 29). With soft physical

touch and sweet whispers, Carmilla makes Laura temporarily forget about family structures and focus more on their lesbian relationship. Slowly but surely, Carmilla tries to lure Laura away from the culture in which she has to obey her family. Thus, she is seen as a trickster and a monster, both physically and metaphorically in the society she is in, and therefore must be repressed and immediately removed.

All in all, Le Fanu gives Carmilla's actions a wicked and undesired tone, portraying her as a vampire/ monster, as the femme fatale who must be battled and socially stigmatized, which in fact represents the female freedom to express, live, choose, and to engage in emotional and sexual activities with whomever they wish. Female empowerment and freedom is also linked to the narrative of the story which bears great importance. The dominance of the woman and lesbian existence in the novella is directly linked with how the novella is a great example of the 'Lesbian Gothic.'

In Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, Carmilla is a lesbian vampire, who preys on Laura, a young innocent girl, who matures with the sexual advances experienced with the company of the lesbian vampire. Carmilla is over the top in terms of sexual desire, lives a double life that is different by night and day, and is extremely secretive about herself, her past and her heritage; thus, she falls into the category of the 'Lesbian Gothic', which is a term coined by Paulina Palmer, one that covers gothic fiction that expresses and investigates lesbian sexuality and existence (1). The mystical and inexplicable universe that gothic fiction explores is excessive and exaggerated in terms of sexuality and personality, and can interrupt the reasonable, physical reality. Similarly, Lesbian Gothic explores the lesbian characterization,

experience and tendency that go beyond the stereotypical roles that hetero-patriarchal society traditionally allocates to women, and thus “connects gothic interests with lesbian with the cultural -political ‘excess’” (Palmer 3). The lesbian vampire Carmilla is excessive in every way in terms of lesbian existence and experience. Correspondingly, lesbianism and female intimacy are embodied in grotesque and monster-like images, in this case a vampire, because they pose a serious danger to the patriarchal system since they would ultimately render male existence meaningless. Since they represent the height of blatant hedonism and decadence, tied together along with their female victim in a bond in which males are essentially absent, female vampires are seen as a menace to patriarchal dominance.

What makes Carmilla significant is also the placement of her bites. In contrast with the other vampires in other literary works, Carmilla bites not the neck but the breasts. The distinctive characteristic of biting the breast feminizes and sexualizes the encounter in a manner that biting the neck does not. Instead of serving as a way of nourishing a child, the breast is sexualized as Laura experiences both pleasure and pain when she is bitten and feels like her thoughts and her body has transformed, accompanied with pleasant sensations along with her sufferings:

I felt myself a changed girl ... certain vague and strange sensations visited me in my sleep. The prevailing one was of that pleasant, peculiar cold thrill. ... Sometimes there came a sensation as if a hand was drawn softly along my cheek and neck. Sometimes it was as if warm lips kissed me, and longer and more lovingly as they reached my throat, but there the caress fixed itself. (Le Fanu 51-2)

As Carmilla visits Laura in her bed, Carmilla invades her body with touches, kisses, and bites, especially the areas of neck and breasts. Instead of symbolizing giving birth and

maintaining a heteronormative family life, the breast turns into a liminal space in which lesbian sexuality is freed. Instead of feeding an infant, Laura feeds the lesbian vampire and the relationship they have, which makes their sexual bond develop and become overwhelmingly tight. Thus, by exposing tight lesbian relations, the novella bends and even breaks the dichotomies of opposite sexes, and openly unleashes female desire with the usage of gothic motifs and elements, refuting the patriarchal stereotypes of female sexuality and how it is supposed to be experienced in terms of the heteronormative society. Two of the most important gothic concepts used in the novella to demonstrate the empowerment of women are the duality and liminality.

There are many dualities concerning the vampire in the novella, which gives her a sense of liminality, marginalizing her from the rest of the society. The marginal nature of Carmilla makes her liminal and fiercely defiant as she is neither human, nor an animal. She defies nature as she appears to be young forever, although simultaneously being really old. She defies attempts at temporal definition and is actually older than a century although having the appearance of being at the peak of health, youth, fertility and beauty. Because of her liminality, she is a timeless character because of her immortality, which she uses to rebel against patriarchy. In order to do so, the vampire lives a secret dual life. She mimics human qualities as she pursues Laura, stressing traits such as harmlessness and decency while being tender, gentle, and sweet. Nevertheless, she exhibits her true form of a beast whenever she feasts on her preys which is described as a “sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat” (Le Fanu 46). The antagonist Carmilla intensifies the mysteriousness of its undead aspect by hovering among both death and life, upending ideas about life and death by turning the

grave its bed, and vice versa. In fear of revealing her dual life, Carmilla never answers questions about herself or her past except from very minor details.

There was a coldness, it seemed to me, beyond her years, in her smiling melancholy persistent refusal to afford me the least ray of light. ... What she did tell me amounted, in my unconscionable estimation — to nothing. It was all summed up in three very vague disclosures: First — Her name was Carmilla. Second — Her family was very ancient and noble. Third — Her home lay in the direction of the west. She would not tell me the name of her family, nor their armorial bearings, nor the name of their estate, nor even that of the country they lived in. (Le Fanu 28)

Laura, despite being overwhelmingly curious, does not push Carmilla to tell about her past, perhaps due to the fear of losing her only companion. Although being very old, which Laura expresses by saying she is “beyond her years,” Carmilla appears to be a beautiful innocent young girl. Thus, it takes a long time for people to crack the code and learn that it is in fact Carmilla who is making young girls sick and even die. As soon as the dual life of Carmilla is decoded by General Spielsdorf, and everyone realizes that Carmilla is in fact Mircalla Karnstein, she is assassinated by the male figures in order to ensure peace in the society. The story is in fact quite similar to possible experiences of a homosexual individual when read from a queer perspective. Carmilla can be interpreted as a lesbian woman who does not openly live her sexuality in the public, but behind closed doors, she is sexually active and unleashed in a homoerotic way. When the people around her see her true nature that she hides (vampirism/lesbianism), she is immediately deemed as an immoral and dangerous woman who should be removed at once by the heteronormative, patriarchal norms. Carmilla’s nature can be read as directly related to the concept of femme fatale due to its immorality and destructiveness.

Le Fanu explores lesbianism in a covert and cunning manner since the Victorian society perceived lesbianism and assertive female sexuality as signs of breakdown in cultural and ethical norms. The author incorporates aspects of vampire fiction to give vampire-like activities of Carmilla a sinister and undesirable undertone while also representing the femme fatale as a force to be overcome and socially stigmatized. As mentioned prior, Dijkstra asserts that female vampires reflect the dark and evil edge of the binary opposition that characterizes woman in society, in relation to cultural depictions of the figure of femme fatale (334). To

preserve the heteronormative order, a fatal lady who returns from the past to cause havoc should be put to death. But even though Carmilla is physically destroyed, she still lives on in Laura's mind and heart, perhaps indefinitely. The novella ends with the confession of Laura which asserts that Carmilla has in fact effected Laura so much that although she is assassinated, she still stands tall as a *femme fatale* in the mind of Laura:

To this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations — sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church; and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing room door. (Le Fanu 96)

The final words ensure that Laura cannot escape the consciousness of the fatal vampire who changed and matured her so much in terms of her sexual identity and orientation, both mentally and physically. Consequently, it is clear that Laura will never be able to see life the same as before, as she is enlightened about homosexuality, strong female desire, and her own stance towards them.

As the novella follows the sexual development of Laura, it offers important insights on the processes wherein lesbianism grows, flourishes, and manifests itself through life, beginning at an early age. The novella opens with the narration of the protagonist, Laura, who tells the tale of her idyllic upbringing in Styria with her socially estranged father. Her father makes arrangements for Laura to have female companionship because of her lonesome background, and Carmilla ends up being that female companion. Laura, who conforms to the norms dictated by patriarchal society, and surrenders to the enforced definition of the feminine, is a representation of the obedient Victorian lady at the beginning of the novella. However, towards the end, Laura realizes that for all those years, she had been living in a repressive, male dominated castle which deemed her lonely and loveless, as she exclaims that her “life was, notwithstanding, rather a solitary one, ... My [her] *gouvernantes* had just so much control over me [her]” (Le Fanu 6), prior to meeting Carmilla. When it comes to a dilemma that is endangering her entire existence and challenging the patriarchal traditions that have upheld her thus far, Laura is split between following the norms she grew up with, and her undeniable sexual connection to Carmilla.

Laura is only nineteen years old when she encounters Carmilla and their bond turns into a romantic one rather than a friendly companionship. This turn in their relationship is directly linked to a rebellion, a challenge against heteronormative society, as Carson Leigh Pender argues: “Laura’s rapidly growing relationship with sexual identity and sexual desire is heightened and promoted by the consistent appearance of Carmilla which is a direct threat to the expectations of Victorian heteronormativity and sexual secrecy” (40). Thus, Carmilla can be seen as both a positive stimulus for Laura to discover her sexual orientation, or a malicious predator who manipulates young Laura with the threat which she imposes. However, experiences with lesbianism of Laura begin from within her, much before meeting Carmilla. When she is a six years old, she dreams about a pretty lady, who turns out to be Carmilla later, in the comfort of her private bedroom and she feels both fear and pleasure, trying to make a meaning out of the dream:

I began to whimper, preparatory to a hearty bout of roaring; when to my surprise, I saw a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of the bed. It was that of a young lady who was kneeling, with her hands under the coverlet. I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling; I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again. I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly. The lady started back, with her eyes fixed on me, and then slipped down upon the floor, and, as I thought, hid herself under the bed. I was now for the first time frightened. (Le Fanu 7)

The intrinsic sensation of lesbian attraction that typically manifests in an early age can be likened to the dream Laura has. She feels frightened at first, but then seeing a beautiful woman calms and pleases her. When she feels the sharp pain, possibly due to a bite, she feels fear again, and at the same time, she is confused. This dream can be an interpretation of her inner sexual desires, how she starts realizing her sexual identity as a lesbian, and she feels both pleasure and pain from this realization. However, Laura is only six years old at the time she has this dream; thus, she cannot understand the depth of her vision, and thinks of it as a nightmare. Laura's initial encounter with Carmilla is crucial to her growth as a sexually independent lesbian since it begins as a covert, hidden, constantly present sexual image that forces Laura to process the event thoughtfully. As Laura and Carmilla become closer, Laura states:

I felt rather unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger. I did feel, as she said, “drawn towards her,” but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging. (Le Fanu 25).

Three unique and contradictory sensations are expressed by Laura: her sexual interest and fascination towards Carmilla, her repugnance towards this interest, and her cautious but grateful acceptance of Carmilla as a friendly companion. Laura becomes increasingly aware of her inner sexuality and lesbianism as a result of assured encouragement from Carmilla, towards the progress of her journey of finding her sexual identity. As a result of accepting Carmilla, the portrayal of Laura as an angelic and suppressed girl, who is dependent on her father for leadership, changes significantly, resulting in her sexual growth from a pure young girl to a sexually active woman. Thus, it is safe to say that the story depicts the development of sexuality and self of Laura as she begins the narrative as a shy girl who is all alone and uncertain of who she is and where she belongs, and with the influence and support of Carmilla, turns into a woman who can recognize her intense inner desires. She appreciates the alluring qualities of Carmilla as she continues to be sexually interested and inquisitive.

3.2.HOMOPHOBIA

Although Carmilla positively influences Laura in her journey to find her sexual identity, as soon as it is revealed that Carmilla is in fact a vampire, all men hurry to eliminate her. The reveal of Carmilla’s true nature results in a drastic change of the views, sentiments and emotions felt by Laura as she conforms to the dominant, socially constructed society in which males decide and take action for the females and they have to obey and respect those judgments. Laura’s change in attitude is essential since it captures the true feelings and experiences of a lesbian, who chooses heteronormativity because it would be easier while having very apparent homoerotic fantasies and behaviors. The ending of the story ensures that lesbianism is dangerous and inappropriate, presenting the homophobia of the late Victorian society. As the story comes to its climax and denouement, Laura’s feelings towards

Carmilla drastically change when the General's story is told: "in this solitude, having just listened to so strange a story, ... a horror began to steal over me, and my heart sank ... It was an instantaneous and horrible transformation" (Le Fanu 87-8). Upon hearing the General's story, Laura condemns Carmilla and expresses how terrified and disgusted she is about her. However, although Laura falls back into the submissive role of accepting male authority, she advances in her knowledge of self and her sexuality via Carmilla, and knows that the lesbian experience is intense and in a sense, unbearable. As Laura witnesses Carmilla get murdered by the patriarchal figures in her life, she understands that being homosexual can never be embraced or brought to light, and most probably she realizes that she has to maintain her secrecy about her lesbianism after Carmilla passes away, or perhaps she might also get eliminated by the very same patriarchal figures. So, Laura goes back into the closet which she left briefly with the help of Carmilla. Although she seems to be cured from this disease which represents lesbianism, the ending raises questions whether Laura is no longer interested in queer relationships or she is simply hiding her true nature due to the fear of sharing the same fate with Carmilla: "to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations ... and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing-room door" (Le Fanu 96). Her reaction is a great and realistic illustration of how a lesbian would turn to the simplicity and ease of heteronormativity at some point in their queer journeys.

Another way Le Fanu's *Carmilla* reveals the homophobic thoughts on lesbianism is evident simply by showing the lesbian as a blood sucking vampire who is like some vermin. The most important link between lesbianism and vampirism is the threat they pose to the establishment of safety and social order. Carmilla does not fit into the expected and desired woman figure as she is barren and infertile; Her failure to serve to the ideal woman figure and family by having children underlines the homophobia of the text. Accordingly, Palmer mentions that "the association of the vampire with sterility and death is also, sad to say, applicable from a homophobic point of view to the figure of the lesbian" (*Lesbian* 102). By not being able to reproduce, the lesbian vampire Carmilla interrupts the cycle of life, thus the

uniformity or the normalness of heterosexuality and the regularities of the norms of the society. Similarly, commenting on such predicament, James Craig Holte argues that the female vampire is “depicted as clearly outside the accepted norms of traditional Western culture: she is not only unnatural, undead, she is both a lesbian or bisexual and sexually aggressive. As a result, these female vampires, although depicted as sexually attractive and intelligent, are destroyed at the end” (166). By placing the queer woman in the realm of otherness, and depicting her as a monster, the text demonstrates that the vampire/lesbian must be executed because they simply do not fit, and therefore, is a great threat to the safety of heteronormativity. Thus, the patriarchal figures must rush to eliminate the unruly, and maintain stability.

The men responsible for curing Laura, Doctor Spielsberg and General Spielsdorf, whose names are almost identical, are duplicate characters who defeat the lesbian vampire Carmilla. Demonstrating the meaning behind the two male figures and how they represent the views of the society towards a lesbian relationship, Amy Leal contends: “They are ‘reduplications’ of one another, a Spiel, ‘mirror,’ and berg or dorf, ‘village,’ mirroring the conventions of society” (46). According to their names that convey Victorian anxieties about same-sex relationships, the Doctor and the General regard Carmilla’s connection with Laura as an abomination. They simply represent how the Victorian society interpreted homosexuality; it is dangerous, deadly, just like a sickness. The General is highly concerned and eagerly wishes to eradicate their town of this sickness: “I hope, by God’s blessing, to accomplish a pious sacrilege here, which will relieve our earth of certain monsters, and enable honest people to sleep in their beds without being assailed by murderers” (Le Fanu 67). General Spielsdorf makes an effort to rid the female sexual unions’ figurative beds of the menace of the vampire, or homosexuality. This violent deed by a man aims to metaphorically reconcile Laura with her father. Correspondingly, Carmilla is located and brutally destroyed; she is stabbed, decapitated, burnt, and dispersed by the homophobic figures. Nevertheless, she continues to live on Laura’s mind as an idea, a sensation, long after Carmilla is assassinated. While Carmilla’s secret is disclosed, her tomb is uncovered, and her corpse is

demolished, Laura stays single; eventually, neither the General nor her father's family lineages has a successor. This is because of the arbitrary nature of the ending. Laura still has an unquenchable passion for Carmilla despite patriarchal oppression. Ultimately, General fails in his attempt to invade Laura's bed by removing the homosexual lover.

The struggle of the General and Laura's father can be interpreted as an erotic triangle. As soon as Carmilla's intentions and actual nature are known, the patriarchal figures in the story become fiercely opposed to her because they see her as a menace. The patriarchal figures, the General and Laura's father, essentially form an erotic triangle against Carmilla, as they engage in a power struggle over Laura. The men regard Carmilla and the concept of vampirism as a disorder, an illness, implicitly equating it with homosexuality, and their solution is elimination rather than a treatment. The threat which a sexually active female vampire poses to the household and the society is inevitably seen when the concept of the erotic triangle is considered: The erotic triangle is especially critical and meaningful when the relationship of Carmilla and Laura is analyzed and compared with other relationships that Laura has with other people. Firstly, the relationship between Carmilla, Laura and Laura's father could be analyzed in terms of the erotic triangle; Carmilla and Laura's father as rivals and Laura as the object of desire. The triangle is clearly seen in the illustration by D. H. Friston, published in 1872, in the Victorian periodical, *The Dark Blue*.



Friston, David Henry. *Carmilla*. 1872. Illustration. The Dark Blue Magazine.

In the illustration, Carmilla leans above and reaches for Laura, visibly threatening her father, who bears a weapon. The thinness of Laura's dress and the cover that surrounds her suggests a sexual objectification of her figure because once she and Carmilla engage in sexual relationship, their connection turns immoral. Also, the covering is pulled around Laura's breast to emphasize her chest, asserting her sexual power. Clearly, Laura is the highest object of desire for her father and Carmilla, who want to control Laura and her body in different manners. Whereas Carmilla wishes to sexually pursue Laura, Laura's father wants to save her daughter from impurity and corruption by controlling her relationships, sexuality, and body as a patriarchal figure as Carson Leigh Pender emphasizes: "Carmilla's father holding the sword is a strong representation of how patriarchy promotes and encourages fathers to subconsciously and consciously control the sexuality, relationships, and bodies of their daughters" (36). A powerful illustration of how patriarchy enables patriarchal figures to

dominate the women in their family is depicted as Laura's father clutching his dagger, which could also be interpreted as a phallic figure symbolizing the power of patriarchy.

Furthermore, despite not as prominent as the triangular relationship between Laura, her father, and Carmilla, there is another erotic triangle worth mentioning between Laura, Carmilla, and General Spielsdorf's niece, Bertha, who wishes to accompany Laura but passes away shortly after. Laura is visibly happy that she would finally have a young lady that will accompany her and strip her from her loneliness. However, when Laura and her father receive General Spielsdorf's letter which reads as:

I have lost my darling daughter ... The fiend who betrayed our infatuated hospitality has done it all. I thought I was receiving into my house innocence, gaiety, a charming companion for my lost Bertha. Heavens! what a fool have I been ... I devote my remaining days to tracking and extinguishing a monster. ... I curse my conceited incredulity, my despicable affectation of superiority, my blindness, my obstinacy—all—too late. (Le Fanu 12)

Despite the fact that Laura does not get to meet Bertha, she is deeply affected by her passing and regrets that she will not be coming to visit her since she believes that they would have formed a good relationship. While Laura anxiously awaits her visit, the reader learns that Carmilla befriends, and slowly makes Bertha sick which leads to her death, eliminating the mediator in this triangle and making the desire between Carmilla and Laura a horizontal one. Critics such as Amy Leal interprets the illustration of D.H. Friston, again as an erotic triangle, but among Carmilla, Bertha, and the General: “[Carmilla] reading out to the scantily clad sleeping form of Bertha while the General, sword raised, peers through the door at the bedroom scene” (48). Both interpretations give a male insight to a lesbian relationship and reveal patriarchal fear, disgust, and intense anger towards lesbian bonds.

Although General Spielsdorf's letter is a foreshadowing of what is yet to come to the household of Laura, the situation dawns upon Laura's father when the General comes to visit them. As soon as he sees Carmilla, he attacks her, stating that she is the lady called Mircalla, who killed his niece, which is followed by a chase and ultimately the assassination of Carmilla/Mircalla. This assault on Carmilla might be seen as either or a confirmation of a

patrilineal power system and its restrictions on female desire, or a manifestation of the sexual inequality of women.

3.3.FEMINISM AND THE UNLEASHING OF FEMALE DESIRE

Although the female vampire is removed at the end of the narrative, Le Fanu follows the evolution of an extremely strong connection among two women who challenge the patriarchal control and gain sexual autonomy, revealing that Laura and Carmilla's lesbian relationship defies and transcends the usual order of heteronormativity. Carol Senf argues that their "rebellion consists of a refusal to live by the rules of their society" (152). For Carmilla and Laura, socially constructed and gendered obligations of the Victorian period, including remaining devoted to males and their viewpoints, become obsolete, and completely seized.

It is evident that both women, Carmilla and Laura, via their strong female bonds, challenge and defy the Victorian norms such as heteronormativity, motherhood, and marriage. Senf mentions that according to the Victorian society, sexuality was only promoted between a married couple because they attached such a high priority on reproduction. For the majority of the nineteenth century, it was believed that a woman's ultimate responsibility was to be a mother (158). Since their relationship is rather sexual, the feminine connection of Laura and Carmilla lead to a denial of both motherhood and matrimony. Their illicit connection violates the rules of reproduction required to uphold societal order. The intentions of Laura's father to wed his daughter to General Spielsdorf are thwarted by Carmilla's sexual domination over Laura. When Spielsdorf leaves Styria, Laura's condition is apparent, and her father worries that the General will see her poorly. Thus, Carmilla and Laura's bond rejects any heteronormative marriage. Correspondingly, Carmilla is barren since she is a lesbian vampire as mentioned prior. The fact that Laura is deeply influenced by Carmilla, and that she has been bitten by her a few times, it is possible that she is becoming barren too. If the vampirism of Carmilla is seen as a metaphor for lesbianism, by returning Carmilla's

love and affection, Laura accepts lesbianism and therefore rejects her ‘ultimate goal’ of motherhood.

Carmilla defies the gendered atmosphere of the Victorian society in multiple ways; it objects to the typical angel in the house stereotype which is associated with passive women, and it challenges the kinship system between men which suggests the exchange of women for male bonds. Instead of a strong male kinship in which women are exchanged and are expected to participate in reproduction, there is a female alliance/kinship which intensely challenges the usage of women between men for power relations in *Carmilla*. As unfolds in the novella, female relationships have the potential to be extremely powerful in subverting or destroying the patriarchal kinship system. The male kinship system can be defined as “the exchange of women” between men, and it is a belief that without the circulation of women, the culture and society would fall apart (Irigiay 174). Irigiay bases this theory on the fact that men trade women as goods in order to form alliances and keep their culture and society intact. According to the system of male kinship, while being exchanged, women do not participate in anything apart from providing men with children, and they have to be submissive and obedient:

Men make commerce of them [women], but they do not enter into any exchanges with them. ... [The society] requires that women lend themselves to alienation in consumption, and to exchanges in which they do not participate, and that men be exempt from being used and circulated like commodities. (Irigiay 175)

Irigiay draws attention to how women are seen as lower than men, and their values are reduced to mere goods for trade. In the patriarchal societies in which the relationships, alliances, and business of men comes first, the kinship system depends on subservient women who are extremely oppressed.

In Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, this kinship system is ignored by Laura and Carmilla. Elizabeth Signorotti inspects the concept of female kinship and exclusion of males in *Carmilla*, in her article “Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in ‘Carmilla’ and *Dracula*.” Taking Levi-Strauss’ views of kinship into consideration, she mentions that exchanging women between males ensures male bonding as marriage means the total

domination of a woman by a man, emphasizing that “woman’s sole purpose is to provide the passive link between men” (608). In order to eliminate any disorders in familial structures and relationships between opposite sexes, heterosexual marriage plays a significant role and assures that the patriarchal system runs smoothly without any distortions. In this system, the role of women becomes the protection of male relations and prevent any suspicions or possibilities of homosexuality. However, in Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, this patriarchal system fails: “Laura’s and Carmilla’s lesbian relationship defies the traditional structures of kinship by which men regulate the exchange of women to promote male bonding. ... Le Fanu allows Laura and Carmilla to usurp male authority and to bestow themselves on whom they please, completely excluding male participation” (Signorotti 607). As Carmilla’s influence on Laura increases, so does the disengagement between the men and women in the novella. The male characters in *Carmilla* are ineffective at protecting and controlling women as the female alliance between Laura and Carmilla does not let any male participation with one exception. The only exchange including male participation in the novella occurs when Carmilla’s chariot crashes and Carmilla’s mother, who is depicted as a distinguished and powerful lady, asks Laura’s father if he could take care of Carmilla for some time. Although there is an exchange, it is not between two males but between a male and a female in this case, and the male party is not as involved as the female party. Thus, it is safe to say that the novella emphasizes feminine power, challenges and overcomes the patriarchal kinship system in which women are exchanged between men.

In conclusion, cycles of patriarchal social trade and ownership are broken by female sexuality in the novella as female sexuality is linked with lesbianism, which emphasizes the danger that women's desire presents to male power since female homoeroticism excludes males and perplexes masculine control. As Steven Bruhm mentions, “Carmilla is also, for feminist and anti-homophobic readers, an agent of sexual liberation” (281). Their relationship oversteps the boundary of the women’s private sphere and creates a liminal space in which they openly show their love and affection towards each other with no male interruption or participation. “Le Fanu develops a tale of female desire—forbidden,

exclusive female desire that bonds against male tyranny and resists marriage” (Signorotti 613). By sexually engaging with each other in this homosocial and homoerotic bond, Laura and Carmilla shut down any possibility of male intervention. Carmilla boldly asserts that by saying “You are mine, you shall be mine, and you and I are one forever” (Le Fanu 30) to Laura. Evidently, they defy the boundaries of the perfect Victorian woman figure who is appropriate, innocent, pure, and devoted to the men in her life.

CONCLUSION

This thesis offers a detailed examination of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* with an emphasis on queerness, the oppression of women due to patriarchy, and complicated relationships between the human and the nonhuman. Based on gender and queer studies, this thesis investigates how human and nonhuman relations reveal a liminal zone in which a new experience is created. In this thesis, the focus is on two relationships: Frankenstein and his monster, and Laura and Carmilla. In order to highlight the crossing of some boundaries such as human and nonhuman, woman and man, and the merging and overflowing of a number of categories such as heterosexual and homosexual, masculine and feminine, dead and alive, as well as to depict the process of self-identification, the study generates an extended analysis of homosexuality by exploring these relationships.

Queer theory and gothic literature have been thought to be complimentary fields in which an inner, deeper meaning is attached to the nonhuman in order to demonstrate his/her/its queerness. Regarding the representations of the queer in gothic tradition, Diana Fuss argues that the "figure of the homosexual [is represented] as specter and phantom, as spirit and revenant, as abject and undead" (3). Fuss's argument can be interpreted in a way that queer not only sheds light to gothic literature, and gothic narrative enables queer studies with disguises such as supernatural motifs. Correspondingly, the focus of the first chapter is on the queer bodies and the queer partnership between Victor and the Monster with a focus on the type of bond that they display, the queerness of the Monster's creation, homosexual fear, and their estrangement from society. The monster's body represents this queerness as it stands at the thresholds as he is neither dead nor alive, neither human nor animal. The monster, in this sense is analyzed in two interpretations: Experiences of a homosexual man who is alienated from the society because of his inability to fit into certain categories, and a journey about discovering innermost secrets, and more specifically, homosexual tendencies. Since gothic entertains "uncertainties about sexual differences ... [that] relies on secret identities and misleading appearances" (McCallum, 71), Victor's Monster comes to represent

Victor's inability to represent himself as queer in the society; thus, Victor's homosexuality wears the disguise of a horrific monster that chases him. In the case of *Frankenstein*, the most crucial moment is when the Monster is born. The narrative of the creation has distinctive homoerotic overtones and Frankenstein's laboratory is seen as the closet where Frankenstein's suppressed homosexual urges emerges with the creation of the Monster. As Mair Rigby comments, "gothic horror fiction is indeed all about 'sex,' especially sex of the most dangerous, deviant and perverse varieties ... Gothic is a discursive space concerned with difference, otherness, marginality and the culturally constructed boundaries between the normal and the abnormal" (1). After Frankenstein collects his instruments and gets ready to give life to his Monster (his homosexuality), he reaches a climax (masturbation and ejaculation) and feels panic as a result because he knows what he has done is against the boundaries of the society and culture he belongs to.

The tradition of gothic, along with enabling queer studies, also empowers feminist criticism with the concept of female gothic. This concept is used to analyze the author of the novel Mary Shelley, as well as Victor Frankenstein, and the narrative of the novel. The novel is found to address the worries concerning motherhood and pregnancy. The focus Mary Shelley places on pregnancy and childbirth is directly linked with unrecognized female fears, worries, and anxieties around childbirth and its effects on a male audience. Frankenstein's fear at the existence of the creature, which might be read as a representation of maternal rejection of a newborn and postpartum depression, is found to reflect Mary Shelley's confused feelings about childbirth. Victor is interpreted from a feminist standpoint as a patriarchal figure who entered, destroyed, and possessed female nature, which brought his downfall. Patriarchy is determined to have silenced and marginalized the female characters in the book. Commenting on how the females are repressed in gothic narratives, Angela Wright argues that "gothic literature frequently concerns itself with silence, with inarticulacy, ... when heroines are silenced by imprisonment, enforced marriage or death ... Their stories are all narrated through the lens of the male narrators" (107). *Frankenstein* follows three men who tell the story, and the reader never really get a chance to experience how the repressed

women feel throughout the novel. The narrators are shown to be sexist and as such, unhappy, dissatisfied males.

In the gothic tradition, the female monster figure has played a key role in unravelling what is hidden from the society as well as demythologizing what is normatively associated with monstrous sexuality of women. Such a figure is found in the nineteenth century novella, Le Fanu's *Carmilla*: A female vampire. It is significant to note that *Carmilla* as a gothic text is open to various interpretations apart from its vampiric underlying. As Kathleen Costello-Sullivan argues, "story's potential as a political and/or cultural metaphor, its psychological resonances, its representations of gender and sexuality, and its unusual aesthetic and narrative characters ... repeatedly invite literary criticism, forcing scholars to return to this short, complex again and again" (xviii). The second chapter in this sense returns to the queer analysis of the character Carmilla, and her relationship with Laura in *Carmilla*. The idea of a female vampire is used as an example that no decent woman should embrace because it went against the beliefs of nineteenth-century traditional Western civilizations, which were governed by patriarchy. In line with this, a depraved, fallen lady figure is portrayed by the female vampire. In addition to being a symbol of unbridled, animalistic female desire, Carmilla is found to pose a danger to the patriarchal way of life due to her sexual orientation. Given that she is willingly alienated from society and the patriarchal rules that govern culture, her refusal to identify with domestic concepts like home and family is found very rebellious. Le Fanu's *Carmilla* provides crucial insights into the mechanisms through which lesbianism develops, thrives, and expresses itself throughout life, starting at a young age. With Carmilla's unwavering support, Laura is seen to advance in her quest to discover her sexual identity, becoming more conscious of her inner sexuality and lesbianism. Accepting Carmilla is read as a transformation in Laura's characterization as an innocent, subdued child who is dependent on her father for leadership to substantially change, causing her sexual development from a young girl with pure desires to a sexually active woman. Pointing to this lesbian intimacy, Nina Auerbach contends in *Our Vampires, Ourselves* that the "intimacy, the sharing, the maternal suffusion, were the essence, in the nineteenth century, of the

vampire's allure" (59). Stating that Laura becomes Carmilla at the end of the novella, Auerbach continues to argue that Laura "never stopped feeling Carmilla's feelings inside her, nor did she bother to question whether those feelings were good" (59). The vampiric lesbianism thus is a way to challenge the trenchant societal norms and traditions related to gender roles such as "angel in the house." Although at the end of the novella emerges a message depicting that lesbianism was harmful and improper, highlighting the homophobia of late Victorian society, the fact that Laura never forgets Carmilla and the way she feels with her is read as sexual orientations being inescapable but unrepresentable at the same time.

Gothic literature consists of codifications of gender, subjectivity, sexuality, and sexual orientation. Reading Gothic via a queer lens helps to reframe ideas about sexual issues by using gothic narratives as a proving ground for unrecognized and irrepresentable sexualities. One of the first work to read gothic fiction from the perspective provided by queer theory is Haggerty's *Queer Gothic*, in which he discusses issues including transgressive sexuality, forbidden urges, and the effects of culture on same-sex relationships. Haggerty suggests that to increase its own sexual intensity, gothic fiction tries to reinvent psychological reality: It alters the scope and complexity of cultural control in the process (10). Queer interpretations of Gothic literature demonstrate how to transform the very structure of meaning by going beyond the bounds of its literal meaning. This is why gothic fiction continues to be queer, confronts the status quo, and simultaneously broadens its scope. The excess of the gothic poses a challenge to the cultural framework that vulgarizes and dehumanizes desire (Haggerty 10). It can be better appreciated how the term queer is conceptualized in regard to the gothic if one takes a broad view of queer as both unusual, and denoting non-normative identities and sexualities. Characters who exhibit monstrosity and vampirism are deemed to be the other, which makes them a source of fear and a danger to the established order. Nevertheless, since they simultaneously express social and cultural worries as well as desires, gothic metaphors have a dual purpose: both fear and desire towards the non-normative. Rereading *Frankenstein* and *Carmilla* in a queer manner contributes to the gender perspective and the importance of the unity of queer theory and

gothic narrative. Analyzing these novels from a queer perspective, the reader surpasses the literal meanings and sees the challenges put forward by the nonhuman. Thus, it is safe to say that the tradition of gothic reveals what is unrepresentable, dirty secrets of identities and unravels them out of the closet. Even though the social power and the socially constructed gender identities and classifications try to silence the unrepresentable identities, gothic fiction provides a window to those who have been repressed. Broadly speaking, the gothic narratives' inexplicable mysteries, secrets, and gaps reflect suppressed sexuality. By portraying stories that marginalize, reject, and eliminate people who deviate from the norm, gothic has frequently served as a tool to define and determine what it is to be normal. The harm caused by identifying non-normative outsiders with the ghostly, the monstrous, and the hideous is offset by the gothic imagery and narrations. Because gothic depicts homosexuals as monsters, their meanings change drastically. Traditionally, these monsters can be read as a threat and danger to the well-being of the society, or they can be read as a misunderstood and overly repressed individual who has been alienated and mistreated by the society. Depending on the reader's self/dis-identification, these monsters stand at the thresholds, serving as a barrier or a bridge between social groups and sexual preferences, exaggerating, mocking, or exposing homophobia. For instance, one can read Frankenstein's monster as a destructive force who is heartless and full of hatred, but another can see him as an outcast who was never loved, or given a chance to fit in the society. Similarly, Carmilla can be seen as a blood-sucking predator, or a girl who had no choice over her body and desires, seeking affection. Therefore, the concept of the monster can be put in the heart of studies concerning gothic narratives because of the deep meanings attached to it. The analysis of the monster in gothic literature makes us discover a new medium of criticism and offers an insight into the hidden depths of queerness and gender studies. Correspondingly, gothic literature can be interpreted as a challenge to normative standards. Works that employ the gothic to explore innovative new ways of existence that are not constrained by cultural standards in addition to being viewed as manifestations of non-normativity.

It is now established that gothic fiction and queer theory are interdependent fields of study and that the gothic tradition is filled with queer implications which makes gothic texts cultural and societal texts of queerness. Gothic literature has strong undertones of sexual deviance, it questions the constancy of sexual orientation, skews traditional family and marital systems, and emphasizes the uncontrollability of impulses and desires. It is no doubt that queer literary theorists have been and will continue to return to gothic texts to observe and analyze both the fear and desire societies and cultures have felt when encountered with the queer. With the queer readings of seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century gothic texts, new subjectivities can be found and interpreted in regard to the nonhuman and the society that alienates it. It is essential for queer theorists to look back and investigate such texts as gothic tradition may have more to offer to queer theory with its mysterious, ambiguous, eerie, and attractive concepts.

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