

**THE VAMPIRE-FRIEND IN THE HOUSE:  
LE FANU'S *CARMILLA*, HER SECRET, AND THE INCITEMENT TO DISCOURSE**

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When discussing Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1871-72 novella *Carmilla*, little to no scholarship fails to mention the implicit homosexual relation between the heroine-narrator Laura and her guest-friend Carmilla. Set in Styria<sup>1</sup> in the late nineteenth century, Laura's story begins with Laura and her aristocratic English father receiving news from a family friend, General Spielsdorf, in which he cancels his visit with his niece Bertha Rheinfeldt to Laura and her father's *schloss* because Bertha has died from a mysterious condition. Although Laura grows upset over the death of her would-be friend, things quickly change when a carriage accident involving a lady and her presumed daughter takes place outside the *schloss*. Having to leave on a journey of life or death, the lady entrusts her daughter, who is later revealed to be named Carmilla, to the care of Laura's father and governesses and to Laura herself. Laura and Carmilla become friends very quickly, sharing embraces, touches, kisses, and even professions of love (more frequently from Carmilla's side). But during this time, Laura begins having nightmares, feeling and seeing strange things at night, and losing energy. As the story reaches its end, it is revealed that Carmilla is a vampire (i.e., a monster) and hence the cause of Laura's frights as well as the deaths of female villagers near Laura's *schloss*. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock points out that "the monster is the thing that, from a particular perspective in a given context, shouldn't be, but is" (3). This violation of the order of being has led some researchers like Barb Karg et al. to argue that, to a Victorian audience, Carmilla's homosexuality-as-monstrosity renders her problematic: "Laura and Carmilla's tense relationship is seething with sexual undertones that no doubt would've proved shocking to the Victorian contingent" (34). Nonetheless, a socio-historical consideration of sexuality and women's roles during the Victorian period reveals that the problem might not be so simply explained.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ardele Haefele-Thomas' *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic: Transgressing Monstrosity* for an explanation of how, though located in Styria, the novella's aspects are more representative of "the vampirism of the British Empire" (99).

In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains how, in the nineteenth century, the homosexual identity was confined to a secret place, the closet. In *Talk on the Wilde Side*, Ed Cohen sketches the discursive origins that turned the homosexual (man) into a person, a shift from earlier conceptualizations of the homosexual as the author of crimes, that is, as someone who commits a homosexual, forbidden act. And in *The Wilde Century*, Alan Sinfield examines the designation of the homosexual man as effeminate, a discourse that ruled from the late nineteenth century throughout the twentieth century. With regards to female homosexuality, on the other hand, evidence suggests that its development was much more uneven and complicated. In “Lesbian Perversity and Victorian Marriage: The 1864 Codrington Divorce Trial,” for example, Martha Vicinus shows how the lesbian identity was more so dominated by “an eloquent silence,” a regulatory mechanism that sought to “control information, lest it corrupt the innocent” (71-72). In addition, the Victorians believed that women naturally lacked sexual desire. The common conception was that women engaged in sexual acts with their husbands only to please them or to procreate and fulfill their own true desire: motherhood.<sup>2</sup> Thus, if women could not even be hetero-*sexual*, it becomes easy to see why it was mythologized that Queen Victoria had rejected the existence of lesbianism.

But interestingly, in “Comparative Sapphism,” Sharon Marcus notes that many Victorians were actually able to understand discourses and ciphers that alluded to female-female sexual relations. And many did view these relationships as abnormal and perverse, but only in the French sapphic canon, for instance, Balzac’s *La Fille aux yeux d’or* and Gautier’s *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. A majority of Victorians did link what is modernly classified as “lesbianism” to transgressive practices like incest, adultery, and other abnormal/unnatural realities. However, in *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian*

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<sup>2</sup> See Steven Marcus’ (1964) *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* and Richard D. Altick’s (1973) *Victorian People and Ideas*.

*England*, Marcus explains that, when thinking about Britain (and not France), the Victorians did not consider lesbian sex under the same lens that they viewed “friendship or love between female kin,” which could be naturally homoerotic and homosocial (15). Lizzie from Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market*, for example, arrives to save her sister-friend Laura, commanding, “Come and kiss me. / . . . Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices / . . . Eat me, drink me, love me” (466, 468, 471). Femininity, the sole quality in which women were superior to men, explains this normalized, erotically charged language. Femininity was equated with honor, morality, and innocence. It was this quality, after all, that turned woman into “The Angel in the House,” as Coventry Patmore suggested in 1854. Thus, regardless of how much romance or eroticism they expressed, a dominant discourse had it that angelic/female friends could never be corrupt/sexual, much less with one another.

Friendships between women and girls were considered important for the Victorian patriarchy. Sharon Marcus explains that, as a cause-effect, it was not abnormal or unnatural for friendships between women to be so erotically charged because it helped to normalize female objectification and consequently “the constitution of normative femininity” (*Between* 21). Women could normally and naturally feel erotic desires for other women—their friends, sisters, and kin—because doing so would strengthen the patriarchal system’s conviction that a woman is by nature an object through her body and her beauty. The intention was for women to discipline each other and their own selves to internalize the male gaze:

Women took note of other women’s attractions not only as models to emulate but as pleasurable objects to consume. Women who felt physically attracted to other women were not seen as less feminine because of the attention they lavished on other women’s bodies, but more so. . . . The imperative to please men required women to scrutinize other women’s dress and appearance in order to improve their own, and at

the same time promoted a specifically feminine appetite for attractive friends and lovely strangers. (Marcus, *Between* 61-62)

A woman's body and beauty made her an object of desire, and her role was to be desired because of her body and her sensibility to patriarchal reality. In erotically desiring other women, the Victorian woman would therefore regulate herself, too, as a body to be made desirable for men (but also women), ready to enter society. Her friend is who prepared her to go through every step in life: "For there is no friend like a sister / In calm or stormy weather / To cheer one on the tedious way" (Rossetti 562-64). Hence, as the product of Englishness,<sup>3</sup> many Victorian works portrayed and imagined these romantic relationships as acceptable and naturally feminine.

Yet the case of *Carmilla* somehow appears to problematize the acceptance of these intensely homoerotic yet normalized views of Victorian girl-friends. Much scholarship has investigated how Carmilla's vampirism-homosexuality is portrayed as potentially infectious, as something that Victorian young ladies could catch through biology, knowledge, language, and imitation. Most definitely, this infection is present in *Carmilla*. But seeing Carmilla's lesbianism as the sole quality that renders her monstrous (as order-violating) or problematic to a reader, especially to a Victorian reader, as Karg et al. have suggested, fails to capture the whole truth of the story. Of course, in being a vampire/monster, Carmilla does represent a cultural anxiety,<sup>4</sup> but if homoeroticism in the Victorian era was considered natural between female friends and beneficial to patriarchal power, then Carmilla's status as Laura's friend should receive more critical attention. After all, as Laura states shortly after Carmilla becomes a guest at her *schloss*, Carmilla "was determined that we should be very dear

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<sup>3</sup> Altick notes that Englishness transcended "considerations of superiority or inferiority, [which] proved one source of the country's salvation during the Victorian years" (19).

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's first thesis in "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" is that "[t]he monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically 'that which reveals,' 'that which warns,' a glyph that seeks a hierophant" (4).

friends,” indeed a language similar to that of Jane Eyre and Helen Burns. But the problem is that Carmilla, much unlike Helen, is a vampire and therefore not a true friend but a fiend.

As Laura’s friend, Carmilla’s supposed role within the Victorian context is to help Laura conform to the patriarchy by preparing her to enter society and the marriage market. The homoeroticism in their relationship is supposed to normalize patriarchal ideas and feminine behaviors in Laura’s mind/soul and body. Yet, and this is where Carmilla alarms the reader, she does the complete opposite. Carmilla vexes and sometimes discomforts Laura. As this essay will show, Carmilla challenges Laura’s nineteenth-century morals and traditions, and she gives Laura the forbidden knowledge that comes in knowing Carmilla’s transgressive identity/monstrosity. That is, Carmilla, the friend who was gladly let into Laura’s and her father’s *schloss*, fails her duty as a Victorian girl-friend as she derails Laura from developing into an angel of the house. Carmilla instead gives Laura the knowledge that not only corrupts her but also threatens patriarchal power. Indeed, as Amanda Paxton argues, “Carmilla indirectly exposes a parasitism inherent to the naturalized customs of Victorian culture” (179)<sup>5</sup>. But although true in that the novella reveals a monster that has been allowed in Victorian society, in being compared to parasitism, Carmilla’s condition is interestingly presented as naturally abnormal.

This natural abnormality is, to an extent, the product of the discursive (r)evolution that Victorian scientists like Charles Lyell and Robert Chambers had commenced and that Charles Darwin powerfully synthesized and expanded when he published *The Origin of the Species* in 1859. Such (r)evolutionary thought redefined Nature to some Victorians: “In the vernal wood where Wordsworth had heard only harmony, the later Victorians heard only anguished animal cries” (Altick 229). With this new conception of Nature, some Victorians began to

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<sup>5</sup> See Paxton’s “Mothering by Other Means: Parasitism and J. Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*” for a more in-depth exploration of an allusion to George Louis Leclerc Buffon’s *Natural History* (1749-1804) that Carmilla makes, comparing her vampirism-homosexuality to the parasitic and asexual modes of reproduction of the ichneumon wasp.

conceptualize abnormal, criminal, and perverse acts, bodies, and desires as products of Nature. As such, given these new conventions of abnormal-by-Nature, in which Nature is made responsible for creating abnormal and perverted individuals, this investigation will explore how Le Fanu shows his readers how it is the very same Victorian system of female friendships that made it possible for (lesbian) vampires like Carmilla to multiply. The discourses that had rendered Carmilla's intentions unquestionable by seeing female sexuality as non-existent will thus turn on her, partly because she transforms these discourses, but largely because these will be deployed to regulate her. To make such a case, *Carmilla* presents the reader with a girl-friend who is naturally abnormal—vampiric, mad, perverse—and perhaps worst of all, she is real. Far from an angel, Carmilla is the vampire in the house; she has been let into the house, the room, and the mind/body. As Alan Ryan remarks, “vampires seemed to have a special interest in attacking beautiful young women, a symbol for all that was good and holy in Victorian England” (xiv). In *Carmilla*, this fear is worsened because it becomes introspective: what if it is the young women themselves who are the vampires? Therefore, by considering the Victorians' ideas surrounding Natural abnormalities, femininity and romantic friendships, and infection through the mind and (sexual) body, this study will also explore how Le Fanu instills in Carmilla a secret that not only makes her a vampire-monster but that also necessitates a discursive explosion. Intertextually, that is, *Carmilla* demands the Victorian patriarchy to learn the true natures of monsters like Carmilla.

As Michel Foucault explains in *Abnormal*, “[t]he recurring problem of the nineteenth century is that of discovering the core of monstrosity hidden behind little abnormalities, deviances, and irregularities” (56). Undoubtedly, the era that saw one of the biggest shifts in scientific thought began to question the bodies and desires that were earlier seen as unnatural, as other from Nature. What the Romantics used to find pleasure and inspiration became to



some Victorians a brutal force that was not just respected but also feared in some instances, as Tennyson illustrates in his masterpiece, *In Memoriam A.H.H.*:

Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life  
That I, considering everywhere  
Her secret meaning in her deeds  
And finding that of fifty seeds  
She often brings but one to bear. (55.5-12)

Nature, the creator of the species, had now become an entity that was indifferent to individual, human lives. And in this Victorian worldview, Nature had all the right to create monstrous species that threatened human normality. With this in mind, Foucault argues that “the abnormal individual is essentially an everyday monster,” a figure that has already infiltrated society in a natural-systematic progression—a monster that Nature created and that has also already and silently entered the society and is not regulated or docile (*Abnormal* 57). One major concern for many Victorians, unquestionably, was for these “monsters”<sup>6</sup> to be identified and studied, for them to become objects of discourse. Only then would it be possible for power to grasp, know, and then guide these individuals.

Within this cultural context, the story of *Carmilla* enters the scene. When publishing the second edition of *Carmilla*, Le Fanu added a prologue to justify its inclusion in his collection, *In a Glass Darkly* (1872), whose five stories are presented as a posthumous casebook of the fictional Dr. Martin Hesselius. The narrator in the “Prologue,” Dr. Hesselius’

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<sup>6</sup> In his genealogy of abnormality, Foucault identifies three key figures: the human monster, which violated both social and natural laws; the incorrigible individual, which many have tried to correct but continue to fail; and the child onanist, whose secret was linked to the root of disease and evil.

secretary, mentions that, with *Carmilla*, he has chosen to “abstain from presenting any *précis* of the learned Doctor’s reasoning” given that the story contains “some of the profoundest arcana of our dual existence, and its intermediates” (72). This framing suggests that the complete truth of Carmilla and Laura’s story is, from the start, threatening, something that still cannot be named, as the removal of Hesselius’ opinion suggests. But what is also important about this story is that it reveals how something so mysterious, so abnormal, is seen as encompassing features of a different way of being and knowing, an existence that is other, perhaps monstrous. This language is similar to Victor Frankenstein’s when introducing Robert Walton to his story, which is filled with “occurrences which are usually deemed marvelous,” a language that introduces monstrosity as the product of “the ever-varied powers of nature” (31). In considering this monstrosity a secret/abnormality that alludes to a “dual existence,” the “Prologue” to *Carmilla* also demonstrates how the monster-problem in the story is already part of the social world, of the (Victorian) order of things. It is for this reason that, although difficult and metaphysically perilous to name, the abnormal is introduced in the prologue. The story is quite literally a case to be studied to understand not only the abnormality’s systematic history but also its natural present in regards to power. It is only this way that society can prepare for the future of the vampire-monster that the text introduces.

After alluding to the existence of a mystery in the contemporary order of being, hinting to the existence of a monster, *Carmilla* directs readers to one important place where this being might go, to where it can be found within the society. In the second chapter, titled “A Guest,” Laura and her father receive the news from General Spielsdorf cancelling his visit with his niece Bertha, “in whose society” Laura had imagined “many happy days” (76). In the letter he sent to Laura’s father, General Spielsdorf, vaguely and “in great affliction,” explains why he is cancelling: “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. . . . I thank God my child died without a suspicion of the cause of her sufferings” (77). While Laura and her father declare that they have trouble understanding what General Spielsdorf could truly mean in his strange letter—perhaps because of his inability to name the monster that had been let into his house, as he evinces by claiming that Bertha died without knowing the truth—it is clear to the reader that the General at first received a guest-friend for Bertha who then turned into a treacherous “fiend.” Given General Spielsdorf’s initial assumption that this guest was innocent and charming and would become Bertha’s friend/companion, the reader can infer, following Sharon Marcus, that this guest was a girl-friend, the naturally pure product of the Victorian episteme.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after the discussion of Spielsdorf’s letter, the un/fortunate carriage accident takes place, in the presence of Laura, her father, and her two governesses. The men guiding the carriage lift from its door Carmilla, “a young lady, who appeared to be lifeless,” though upon closer examination, Laura reveals “was certainly not dead” (80). Carmilla’s (presumed) mother grows distressed because of the importance of her journey and the delays that Carmilla’s current state will cause. But after Laura begs, her father asks the woman to “entrust the child to the care” of Laura and her governesses. To justify this, he explains that Laura “has just been disappointed by a cruel misfortune, in a visit from which she had long anticipated a great deal of happiness,” namely, Bertha’s visit (81). In Carmilla, both Laura and her father see a replacement-solution to the friendship that Laura hoped to form and learn from with Bertha. With this new guest, who is also presumably innocent, happy, and charming due to her natural innocence as a Victorian young woman, Laura will be able to prepare herself for society. Laura can learn what it is to become a “real woman.” After all, her first duty is to take care of the afflicted Carmilla.

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<sup>7</sup> In *The Order of Things*, Foucault explains, “In any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice” (183).

Because of the natural innocence and the socio-patriarchal value seen in forming friendships between women, Carmilla is unsuspectingly let into the house as a friend.

Thus, these patriarchally designed female friendships make possible the invitation of Carmilla the vampire into the house. Discourses on the roles of women during the Victorian period normalized and regulated these friendships. Sarah Stickney Ellis, for instance, was a dominant voice in these discourses, having presented a philosophy for domestic life that is marked for its clear separation of the roles of men and women in her conduct books *The Women of England* (1839), *The Daughters of England* (1842), *The Wives of England* (1843), and *The Mothers of England* (1844). In *The Women of England*, Ellis argues that women should accept being men's inferiors to further foster the development of their morals and social values. Ellis also describes friendships between girls and between women as highly valuable for not just the household but also for society. To Ellis, friendships strengthened women's vulnerability because they would create bonds of a mutual "capability of receiving pain" (*Women* 75). They also emphasized marriage by establishing the erotic discrepancies that advanced a man's desire for a woman. Furthermore, in *The Daughters of England*, Ellis is more direct in arguing that a woman "[i]n the circle of her private friends . . . learns to comprehend the deep mystery of that electric chain of feeling which ever vibrates through the heart of woman, and which man, with all his philosophy, can never understand" (337). Aspiring the complete opposite of Jane Eyre's hard-fought marriage to Rochester, Ellis notes that among other girls and women, the innocent Victorian woman could learn to accept and strengthen the feeling and the emotionality that made her naturally and socially inferior to her male counterpart. And this feeling, Ellis suggests, is not something to be repressed. Just because they make the woman different and inferior to man does not mean that she should deny her natural qualities. On the contrary, if these are the qualities that make her perfect, angelic, and desirable in the Victorian patriarchy, then she should fortify them among other

women. In looking at Ellis' popular books, one can further consider why Laura promises herself joyous moments with Bertha, why Laura so rapidly and eagerly wants Carmilla to stay, and—perhaps more interesting, given patriarchal authority—why her father goes out of his way to convince the travelling woman to let Carmilla, a complete stranger, stay under their care at the *schloss*. That is, given the Victorians' discourses and ideas surrounding women's natural innocence and the importance of their friendships, it becomes easier to see not just why Carmilla is (systematically) let inside the house but also why her role as friend gains utmost importance when considering the novella. After all, what harm could such an innocent guest-friend cause if she is naturally innocent to the realities of a society that was becoming infested with degeneracy?<sup>8</sup> If anything, in being the innocent friend, this guest could help reinforce Laura's own innocence. Laura and Carmilla would mutually discipline their innocence-perfection—or, at least, that is what many discourses on women's natural and social roles claimed. But *Carmilla* steps in to question these discourses.

“The young stranger” Carmilla is given a room in the *schloss*, and while she sleeps, the household talks about her and the strange situations surrounding her (83). The governesses praise her beauty; but then one of them describes having seen “a hideous black woman” inside the carriage (83). Laura's father also shows concern over the “ill-looking pack of men” that are the coachmen and servants, and to Laura, he says he hopes to not having “done a very foolish thing, in taking charge of the young lady,” given that her mother has told him that Carmilla's and her family's identity is to remain a secret (83-84). Indeed, the adults are rather aware that there is something suspicious regarding this beautiful young lady who has just been let into the house. What could such a beautiful and honorable creature be doing in the company of such ill-looking figures? For what reason must she be silent about it? And,

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Kathleen L. Spencer's (1992) “Purity and Danger: *Dracula*, the Urban Gothic, and the Late Victorian Degeneracy Crisis.”

as Laura says, why would her mother even mention something “so unnecessary” (84)? With the introduction of this secret, the mystery that is referenced in the prologue begins to take a more defined shape as something that cannot be named or talked about. Yet despite this, Laura, innocent girl who she is, is delighted and can only think of “how great an event the introduction of a new friend is” (84). But upon her first encounter with Carmilla, Laura is not just dumbfounded but also rather horrified. Earlier in the narrative, Laura had explained the first moment in her life that marked her mentally. She recalls a night when she was six years old in which she awoke alone in her nursery and began to cry when, suddenly, she saw a young lady near her bed. The lady got in bed with Laura and caressed her until she fell back asleep. Yet Laura recalls waking up once again due to “a sensation as if two needles ran into [her] breast very deep at the same moment” (74). Laura cried, and the young lady disappeared from the room, but never from Laura’s mind. Twelve years later, when she meets Carmilla, Laura re-encounters the same face that she had seen during that vivid memory, which many had convinced her had been only a nightmare. The young lady who one night disappeared from Laura’s room, but never from her mind, has now been let inside her house.

Laura’s initial reaction when recognizing Carmilla’s face takes the mystery further by making it disturbing, again pointing to the existence of something real but other/abnormal. Sigmund Freud’s theory that “[a]s soon as something *actually* happens in our lives which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs we get a feeling of the uncanny” helps to explain Laura’s feeling (949). This is because Laura’s first time meeting Carmilla ends up uncannily being the second time she sees her. More than just a repressed feeling that “can fairly be traced back to infantile sources,” Laura’s first encounter helps to confirm to the reader that there is, indeed, something odd and abnormal about this young stranger, as the adults had earlier speculated (Freud 940). Adding to the uncanny effect, Carmilla herself expresses wonder in meeting Laura, for she also recalls a memory that somewhat matches Laura’s

version, except that in Carmilla's recollection, both she and Laura were already young ladies. Because of this, Carmilla professes to Laura, "I feel only that I have made your acquaintance twelve years ago, and have already a right to your intimacy; at all events, it does seem as if we were destined, from our earliest childhood, to be friends" (87). Hence, naturally, while Laura's uncanny feeling does not fade away as she admits to feeling a sense of repulsion "towards the beautiful stranger," she does note that an intense attraction to Carmilla has won her over (87). And so the young ladies can laugh together over their initial horrific experience as they naturally become dear friends. Yet the uncanniness that it causes signals that this abnormality represents something that is wrong, other, and scary.

At the beginning of the fourth chapter, merely two lines after expressing that she and Carmilla can laugh over this uncanny feeling, Laura makes it clear that there are some aspects of Carmilla's character that are not just abnormal but also discomfiting. First, Laura is troubled with the same anxiety as her father because Carmilla will not speak the truth of herself or her history. This silence vexes Laura because she believes that Carmilla distrusts her honor and morality, for why would her friend keep such important yet simple information a secret? How is Laura to learn about femininity and women's roles if her only friend is keeping the truth from her? But on top of that, Carmilla's "foolish embraces" (89) perplex Laura, and according to her, they make her feel both pleasure and disgust:

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pleasure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardour of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet overpowering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, "You are mine, you *shall* be mine, and you and I are one

forever.” Then she has thrown herself back in her chair, with her small hands over her eyes, leaving me trembling. (90)

Such a description correlates with Marcus’ claim that “[t]he language of Victorian friendship was so ardent . . . that it is no simple task to distinguish female friends from female lovers or female couples” (*Between* 43). Nevertheless, the case becomes interesting when considering how Laura feels about such acts. If friendships between Victorian women could be sensually intense by nature as Sharon Marcus explains, then why do Carmilla’s embraces somewhat repulse Laura? Clearly, there must be something more than a normal romantic friendship going on for such a natural quality to suddenly be seen as abnormal and disquieting.<sup>9</sup> And indeed, there is more. Before the description of Carmilla’s embraces, Laura explains that even though she is writing this manuscript ten years after it happened, she is doing so “with a trembling hand” because “there are certain emotional scenes, those in which our passions have been most wildly and terribly roused, that are of all others the most vaguely and dimly remembered” (90). What Laura has trouble recollecting or mentioning is something that cannot be named, something that a loud silence surrounds and overpowers, as Carmilla does in hiding her story. This secret is something that cannot be brought to mind or mouth.

Yet, paradoxically, just because Carmilla has secrets and Laura is silent about them does not mean that silence—that the secret—cannot, in itself, speak. In his introduction to *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains how silence truly functions: something “that was not ordered in terms of generation or transfigured” saw itself threatened in the society, for “[n]ot only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestation—whether in acts or in words” (4). Things that were not seen as “normal” had no chance of being spoken about. Simply put, if it was not part of the episteme, it could

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<sup>9</sup> The case is strikingly dissimilar to Rossetti’s *Goblin Market*, for instance, in which the sick Laura “kissed and kissed [Lizzie] with a hungry mouth” to be saved (492).



therefore not exist. And it is precisely because of this that a collective yet studied and regulatory silence was demanded in the Victorian age upon such abnormal non-existences, like forbidden and impossible sexual desires such as lesbianism, as Vicinus highlights. Nevertheless, an object is not free of discourse merely because there is a silence imposed upon it. Foucault further argues that silence “is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies” (*History* 27). Evidently, Carmilla’s secret-silent identity and Laura’s ambivalence to speak of her moments with Carmilla actually end up not being so truly silent. Their “silence” participates in a discourse that sought to know truth through silence, a discourse that sought to know and control bodies through their sexuality.

In the case of these two girl-friends, presumed to be the most honorable creatures in the Victorian patriarchy, the only thing that could not be spoken of around them, and that they themselves could not speak of, was the thing that they naturally could not do—(un)namely, sex. Amy Leal argues that Le Fanu plays with names and silence to avoid being dangerously explicit when dramatizing “unnameable desires,” again according with Vicinus’ claim that Victorians did not speak of the lesbian identity to avoid public moral corruption (38). Yet this inability to name these *foolish embraces* and desires also follows what Foucault claims is common in modern societies, which instead of giving sex “a shadow existence,” have actually committed “to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the secret*” (*History* 35). Hence, no matter how silent or censored Laura tries to be when speaking of her troubled thoughts about Carmilla, years later, she is still speaking about that which she (now) knows—and which everyone else, too, knows—cannot be spoken of (yet needs to be known). Silence here functions as one of Laura’s loudest words. Through it, Laura demonstrates that lesbianism, the thing she is trying not to speak of, is precisely the thing that she is not allowed

to speak of. Worse, with Carmilla, this secret is something that not even the discourses surrounding her vampirism/sexuality had found a way to talk about. In the same way that Laura and her father had never imagined (and the latter even dismissed) the legend of vampirism to describe Carmilla, there were still no discourses on sexuality equipped to name lesbian desires. With little surprise, it is easy to understand why, as nearby female villagers begin to die of a plague believed to be a supernatural entity, Laura's father says, "These poor people infect one another with their superstitions, and so repeat in imagination the images of terror that have infested their neighbours" (94). If such things were not talked about, reasons the Victorian patriarch, then evidently there would not be such socio-cultural chaos.

To make sense of these unnamable and unknown desires, Laura relies on Victorian epistemology. And it is here that the novella commences to examine Carmilla's secret as an abnormal product of the mind/body and of Nature. In claiming that Carmilla's embraces are discomfiting, Laura shows that Carmilla's secret and transgressive homoeroticism do not accord with the normalized homosocial dynamics in friendships between women that Sarah Ellis promoted. Because of this, Laura theorizes that Carmilla's vexing behaviors, her vampiric and homosexual advances, are undoubtedly "the momentary breaking of suppressed instinct and emotion" (90). Hence, Laura wonders if Carmilla had been "subject to brief visitations of insanity; or was there here a disguise and a romance?" (90). Through these descriptions, it becomes clearer that Carmilla's behaviors do not fit the acceptable norms that a Victorian young lady was expected to perform. Nevertheless, Laura is aware that Carmilla's acts are products of Nature, the brutal force which many Victorians realized was much more powerful and violent than had been earlier conceived. In fact, later on, when discussing the disease that is killing the female villagers, Carmilla admits to having been infected with it in the past. Rejecting Laura's father's claims that God must have a purpose to explain the disease and the deaths, Carmilla counterargues that it is the product of "*Nature!*" that "this

disease that invades the country is natural. Nature. All things proceed from Nature” (95). Her disease, her secret vampirism/sexuality, regardless of how transgressive, is the real product of Nature, and it has found its way into the social body. Yet even if Carmilla is the way she is by Nature, that does not mean that she is *de facto* “normal.” A complication surges, for it is the complete opposite of acceptability and normality that becomes the case.

Laura can devise only two (epistemo)logical theories for Carmilla’s behavior, and both of these cause constraint in the mind/body relationship. To Laura, Carmilla is either insane, or she is a “boyish lover” in disguise who “had found his way into the house” (91). And the parallel here grows interesting. Whereas Carmilla, as potential girl-friend, is let into the house, Carmilla as someone other-than-friend is actually seen as an invader, as someone who devised a plan to get into the house or, rather, to be invited into the house. But, as will be shortly explored, Laura dismisses this second theory. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault explains how the mind/body dynamic becomes useful to explaining the natural abnormality of certain diseases and desires:

If it is true that there exists a realm, in the relations of soul and body, where cause and effect, determinism and expression still intersect in a web so dense that they actually form only one and the same movement which cannot be dissociated except after the fact . . . then we see that there can be diseases such as madness which are from the start diseases of the body *and* of the soul, maladies in which the affection of the brain is of the same quality, of the same origin, of the same nature, finally, as the affection of the soul. (88)

Transgressive as they are, Carmilla’s unnamable (lesbian) acts have an unquestionable relationship to both her mind and body. The abnormality in her mind sees itself expressed through the vampiric/homosexual acts her body exercises. Thus, although rather invasive, the latter of Laura’s theories would prove to be the most natural and normal one, following

Victorian epistemology. If Carmilla were, after all, a boy, then there would be a perfect and reasonable accordance between *his* body and *his* soul: *he* would be acting on the natural, accepted, and normalized sexual behavior expected of men. But Laura rules out this theory because she recalls there was almost always a languor, a mind/body weakness, that accompanied Carmilla, which Laura deems as “quite incompatible with a masculine system in a state of health” (91). So it is, then, Laura’s former theory of madness that cannot be disproved, and this conclusion complicates the matter. For if Carmilla’s homosexual acts seem to correspond with the sexual desires of a man, then Carmilla becomes one of the “perverts who were on friendly terms with delinquents and akin to madmen” (Foucault, *History* 40). Carmilla’s perversity is worsened with the fact that when she says to Laura, “I have been in love with no one, and never shall . . . unless it should be you,” she is telling it to one of her blood descendants (98). Upon finding a portrait dated to 1698 of Mircalla, Countess of Karnstein, Laura points out that “[i]t was the effigy of Carmilla!” (97). But while this event is important for the reader to recognize the mysteries of vampirism in Carmilla, considering that it is later revealed that Carmilla is Mircalla, what is key here is the fact that Laura says, “I am descended from the Karnsteins” (97). Now, Carmilla’s vampiric perversity is furthered. She not only has a masculine attraction, but her desires are also incestuous. It is no wonder, then, that Carmilla’s supposed insanity surges from the fact, or the secret, that she is perverse. Granted, Laura does state that Carmilla’s hysteric episodes were somewhat rare and momentary, but these are, still, seen as insanity, and they consequently demonstrate that Carmilla’s secret sexuality is socially problematic. For as Laura argues, “[t]he precautions of nervous people are infectious, and persons of a like temperament are pretty sure, after a time, to imitate them” (101). That is, Carmilla’s secret vampirism/sexuality could thus become an infection, although the case might not be too simple.

Indeed, a discourse-idea behind *Carmilla* is the systematic spreading of a (secret) infection that cannot be named, though madness itself is not the secret but the step towards conceiving (of) it. Martin Willis explains that *Carmilla* finds itself combining the two most prevalent discourses on disease of the Victorian era, miasmatism and contagionism, in which, respectively, diseases spread from the environment or the body. Certainly, the village near Laura's *schloss* was an environment in which this disease was spreading, and inside the *schloss* was located Carmilla and her infectious body. But Willis also makes the case that Carmilla's infection has reproduced through the Karnstein bloodline, creating "a direct lineage from the vampire through the dead mothers to their infected daughters" (125). Already through her blood, Laura is prone to catch Carmilla's infection. In addition, eminent Victorian doctors, according to Jarlath Killeen, "diagnosed spiritualism as a pathology linked to transgressions of the home, including child-abandonment, intense erotic desire, a tendency to refuse orders issued by husbands and extreme religious piety, and named the condition 'uteromania'" (qtd. in Cadwallader 84). As Jen Cadwallader further explains, such a view is linked to a discourse that saw any behavior that defied the Victorian feminine ideal as "a type of madness related to the female sex organs. . . . [For] a woman's psychological makeup largely stemmed from her reproductive organs" (85). Any *irregularity* in the uterus, like in the menstrual cycle, it was believed, would manifest itself in/through the mind. Hence, any abnormality in the woman's mind, any step towards Unreason, was forcibly tied back to her uterus. In 1894, for instance, Henry Havelock Ellis, a leading name in the field of sexology, explained in *Man & Woman* that "[t]he very periodicity of the sexual life in women indicates an accumulation of nerve force ready to use when the periodic occasion arises, or to burst out tumultuously" (333). Mood shifts and fits of insanity and violence in women, therefore, like those Laura describes of Carmilla, whose "energies" sometimes "seemed to suppress a fit," were symptoms of the menstrual function, of a more-or-less mad or *manic* uterus (92).

Here is where the consideration of madness in *Carmilla* grows provoking, for women in the Victorian period were thought to have a natural connection to one another through their (menstrual, feminine) blood. Their bodies were of the same flesh, of the same organs, of the same sex, so as Laura Grenfell notes, in *Carmilla*, “the physical closeness of . . . two women and their connection through blood” made it possible in the Victorian episteme for the madness-as-infection to be passed “in the form of menstrual synchronization between the two women’s bodies” (161). If Carmilla’s fits of insanity and (consequent) perversity point to a condition like *uteromania*, then what is to occur naturally to Laura when she and Carmilla synchronize? While discussing the possibilities that the haunting “oupire,” which villagers believe to be haunting-infecting their town, has visited the *schloss*, Carmilla tells Laura that these evil spirits “begin by trying the nerves, and so *infect* the brain” (104, emphasis added). The vampiric infection is, clearly, one that enters through the body and then becomes part of the mind/body. For many nights after this, Laura recounts strange dreams, sometimes nightmares, but even more peculiar, her senses were becoming affected:

[E]very morning I felt the same lassitude, and a languor weighed upon me all day. I felt myself a changed girl. A strange melancholy was stealing over me, a melancholy that I would not have interrupted. Dim thoughts of death began to open, and the idea that I was slowly sinking took gentle, and, somehow, not unwelcome possession of me. . . . 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. My heart beat faster, my breathing rose and fell rapidly and full drawn; a sobbing, that rose into a sense of strangulation, and turned into a dreadful convulsion, in which my senses left me, and I became unconscious. (105-106)

Describing this vampire attack, Laura says that she somehow allowed the “thoughts of death” to possess her, that is, to enter (and control) her mind and body. And in letting in these death thoughts, in letting the vampire penetrate her body through its bite, they, in turn, result in a *petite morte* for Laura. In other words, Carmilla’s vampiric/homosexual bite has made it into Laura’s body. Carmilla was surely not joking when she told Laura, “You must come with me, loving me, to death” (100). But also during this time, Laura reports that Carmilla, as her friend, would spend much more time with her, even taking care of her, so Carmilla now receives an extra-important role as Laura’s caretaker. Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton notes that, in the Victorian era, “those entering the sickroom were the focus of anxiety about personal hygiene, and by extension, moral purity. The constant level of physical contact involved in caring for the ill person could be seen as potentially transgressive” (28). Thus, in the sickroom and in the bedroom, as Laura’s *petite morte* evinces, Carmilla has, at once, been systematically let *too* close to Laura’s sexual organs, and so, Laura and Carmilla have finally synchronized. Laura, more precisely, has become infected with her friend’s vampirism.

Initially, Carmilla’s madness is passed on to Laura. The languor that was characteristic of Carmilla is now expressed in Laura as well, and perhaps worst of all, Laura, too, is keeping secrets: “I would not admit that I was ill. I would not consent to tell my papa, or to have the doctor sent for” (105). The obvious danger is that, while Carmilla’s madness is not itself *the* secret, in contrast to Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, insanity is what threatens to help Laura know that the secret is an epistemological, unnamable problem for Victorian power systems. With Carmilla, the non-verbal expression of her vampiric, homosexual secret is explained as/through madness, the epitome of unregulated, unacceptable behaviors. With Laura, the reverse threatens to take place: if she is infected with Carmilla’s madness, then she could use it to explain and know Carmilla’s secret. Madness—“nature made manifest,” “nature restored”—is what can open Laura’s mind to the conceptualization of the knowledge

of the homosexual secret (Foucault, *Madness* 283). And if Laura were to discover this secret truth, the whole system of Victorian friendships between women would blow up in its own face. For what was supposed to be a carefully thought-out system that would normalize regulatory femininity and disciplinary purity is exposed as the very system that risks the purity of young women. In allowing and promoting these friendships, the Victorian patriarchy is seen as the system that allowed women to access and spread knowledges that, before, were unknown and prohibited to them. Once the (natural) vampire is let inside the house, she gains access everywhere else in the innocent young woman's life, be it her bedroom, her sickroom, her mind, or her body. At a general sense, then, the Victorian patriarchy becomes the destroyer of the Victorian woman, giving the (lesbian) vampire-friend the chance to exist within society and to multiply, to become a figure whose prevalence made her need a name.

Whatever is to be done with the vampire, it is proposed in *Carmilla* that it should ultimately be the responsibility of the patriarchy itself. When the patriarchs begin to scrutinize Laura's condition, when the unnamable secret of lesbianism begins to manifest itself among more women and therefore becomes a social problem to the villagers and the aristocrats, General Spielsdorf (re)enters the narrative. He is finally able to give Laura and her father much more clarity on the complete story of what happened to his niece Bertha. Spielsdorf explains that at a masquerade ball, he and Bertha met with a Countess and her daughter. The Countess claimed that she was the long acquaintance of the General, though she would not reveal her identity to him, and he could not remember her. Yet what truly perplexes the General is that shortly after, the Countess told him that she must travel on a vital journey and that her daughter Millarca must stay, so she asked him to take Millarca as his guest. About this, General Spielsdorf says that it was a strange and bold request but that he somehow felt disarmed. "At the same moment," says the General, "by a fatality that seems



to have predetermined all that happened, my poor child came to my side, and, in an undertone besought me to invite her new friend, Millarca, to pay us a visit” (122). Although acted out in terms of an invite, Millarca’s entrance into the General’s house was more so an (imposed) invite, as if he and Bertha had been tricked to let Millarca in, making the reader recall not just Carmilla’s mother’s life-or-death journey but also Laura’s theory that Carmilla (as potential “boyish lover”) had deceived a plan to be let into the house. As time passes, Bertha grows ill, and the General is made aware that she “was suffering from the visits of a vampire!” (130). During Bertha’s final night alive, he sees the vampire, the girl-friend Millarca, attacking Bertha during her sleep. And then it is shortly after revealed that Millarca is Carmilla, who is originally Mircalla, Countess Karnstein.<sup>10</sup>

General Spielsdorf’s account of Carmilla solidifies that the existence of the vampire and its permission into the house is an ongoing systematic and epistemic intrusion. In response to the revelation that Carmilla is required to use anagrammatic variations of her name, Leal argues that just like homosexuality, which Oscar Wilde’s lover later famously called a love “‘that dare not speak its name,’ the variations of the vampire’s name (both *Millarca* and *Mircalla* are neologisms) hint at identities and relationships that Le Fanu cannot directly discuss in his text. Subversive anagrams hint at inverted passions, and vampirism becomes parallel to lesbianism and incest: each involve lusting for one’s own kind” (45). Indeed, Carmilla’s unnamable secret is that she is a lesbian who, unsuspectedly, is easily let into the house because of her socio-systematic position as a presumably innocent and pure woman. General Spielsdorf was apprehensive of taking Carmilla in (as was Laura’s father at one point, though it was too late for him), especially because she was a stranger: “I recognized a new folly in my having undertaken the charge of a young lady without so much

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<sup>10</sup> Indeed, then, Laura’s dismissed theory ends up being half correct. The only problem with it was that Laura had failed to account, given patriarchal ideas on femininity, that women could deceive as well, especially if they were vampires with secret, forbidden, homosexual desires.

as knowing her name” (124). But since, as Sharon Marcus showcases, many Victorians saw girl-friends as the innocent creatures that would regulate one another into becoming the desired women of patriarchal power, then it was made impossible to question the intentions or the nature of a young lady like Carmilla. Before the truth of Carmilla, even, the General had embraced these discourses: “I was only too happy, after all, to have secured so charming a companion for my dear girl” (124). After the fact, Spielsdorf realizes that the discourses on femininity and female friendships were systematically designed to make him concede and let his guest, a lesbian/vampire, inside. Yet the problem does not, cannot, end there. As any reader who is presented with this social problem/anxiety would ask, what is to be done with this girl-friend who ends up being a vampire, who has sexual desires, and whose desires are for women’s bodies? More simply, how can patriarchal power fix its own mess?

One solution that *Carmilla* presents is that the secret could be made to remain a secret, but the bearers of the homosexual secret, the vampires, must be terminated. A doctor comes to diagnose Laura, and upon determining-discussing the true nature of her disease, she is isolated. Laura cannot know her true disease; only her father and the physician can know. As Cadwallader explains, “were Laura able to understand Carmilla’s sexual desire, she would be as unnatural as Carmilla herself. . . . Laura must never know Carmilla completely because this might lead to new knowledge about herself. She is better off thinking she might be losing her mind than realizing there is more to her body than what she has been told” (99-100). If Laura were to learn of Carmilla’s true secret/disease, that her female mind/body has same-sex desires, then that would mean that the secret infected Laura’s mind. Indeed, in there being a more general knowledge of it, the secret begins to enter the society and its orders, so whereas before “it had no right to exist,” to recall Foucault, it now actively seeks to *corrupt* the innocent (*History* 4). In this way, the madness and the knowledge of the (perverse, lesbian) secret would thus spread, and the Victorian woman would no longer be pure. As a solution,

then, patriarchal power could kill the vampire and shut it from existence. The patriarchs do so in the case of *Carmilla*, in a Commission composed of a vampire expert/hunter, two medics, General Spielsdorf, and Laura's father. And Laura, the innocent young woman, is left knowing as little as possible about her and Carmilla's condition. "[N]o explanation was offered to me, and it was clear that it was a *secret* which my father for the present determined to keep from me," explains Laura (133, emphasis added). But while this solution proves to have real (historical) manifestations in society, the problem with it is made evident through Laura herself, who concludes her story by saying that she sometimes still hears—that is, thinks about—"the light step of Carmilla at the drawing-room door" (137). After all, Laura now knows of Carmilla and her dangerous secret/sexuality. Repressing the secret will haunt Laura forever, even after she dies. For by knowing (of) it, Laura becomes one of the infected and wicked people who, after death, is prone to become a vampire, as explains the Baron Vondenburg, the vampire hunter who leads the patriarchal commission to kill Carmilla. And by the time *Carmilla* is published, says Dr. Hesselius' secretary, he had "found that [Laura] had died in the interval" (72). The problem with this first solution of shutting the vampire away from language and existence, therefore, was that it was too late for it. The vampire's secret was already spreading, so the tradition of keeping it as so needed come to an end. The vampire, the naturally abnormal girl-friend with sexual desires for her own girl-friends, was already unstoppable because it had integrated itself into society, its orders of existence, and her friends' bedrooms and sickrooms.

Consequently, *Carmilla* proposes a second and better solution: intertextually follow the example of the *Carmilla* manuscript and leave the secret to the mercy of discourses. For the secret can no longer remain a secret. The (lesbian) vampire must be brought to light. The people who know (of) the vampire's sexual secret, like Laura, must come forward and tell it, make it real, expose it. Once it is out in the open, power can send all of its systematic force,

its discourses, into it. Patriarchal power could then study, name, regulate, and control this sexuality. It could dictate the knowledge of the secret. Is this not, after all, why the *Carmilla* manuscript is part of Dr. Hesselius' case studies in *In a Glass Darkly*? The more that people become aware of the existence of this vampire—these *arcana*, these girl-friends with homosexual desires—the easier it becomes to identify them in or outside of the house and the pre-supposed romantic friendship. Through this identification of an abnormal, vampiric sexual desire within the very systems of being that govern the society, it is un/surprising to consider that, from the 1880s and most especially by the *fin-de-siècle*, the field of sexology had a discursive explosion. Names such as Havelock Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebing guided a body of power/knowledge that theorized and invented, so to speak, sexuality and its desires. By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, names to explain behaviors like those of *Carmilla* began to surge. In 1895, for example, Oscar Wilde was classified as a homosexual. It was only a matter of time for *Carmilla* to be named a lesbian. Vicinus shows that already by the late eighteenth century in England, “the fear of active female sexuality in places of power was a potent threat,” and so the lesbian figure “became the identified deviant ‘invert’ in the later-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century work of such sexologists” like Havelock Ellis, Krafft-Ebing, and Freud (“They Wonder,” 479-480). By the late 1920s, at least, the bodies that engaged in what once were considered Boston marriages or romantic friendships were identified/instilled with the lesbian identity, with a desire that suddenly was so transgressive that it was almost vampiric. *Carmilla* therefore is an example of these discourses on the (newly-imagined) sexual female body.

*Carmilla*, then, is not a text whose depictions of homoerotic affection would have made a Victorian become “shocked,” by the meaning of the word. Instead, *Carmilla* points to the intertextual development of a discourse that began to question not just women's naturalities, abnormalities, or sexualities, but also, and more preoccupiedly, the love and

romance that girl-friends were giving to one another. More than just a question of whether women themselves are the (homosexual) vampires, *Carmilla* explores how the existence of vampires in a system that has allowed them to be among women inevitably leads to an undeniable, unstoppable spread of vampirism and the knowledges it contains. After all, one of the main responsibilities of the Victorian girl-friend was to ensure femininity among women, to prepare them for their entrances into marriage and the society. But Laura's friend Carmilla never introduces her to such concepts. Laura does not get married and instead gains a knowledge about the natural (sexual) world that seems to violate the social order. As Laura admits, even recalling Carmilla and her secret as well as her own relationship (or friendship) with her becomes "a task that has unstrung my nerves for months to come" (135). Clearly, some Victorian girl-friends were not fulfilling their socially prescribed roles as naturally innocent figures. Interestingly, this discourse on (Carmilla's) sexuality also finds itself linked to ideas about women that were to spark in the *fin-de-siècle* as well, those of the New Woman, a much more (sexually) liberated woman, whose desires were shocking but nonetheless *natural*. But what is more interesting about *Carmilla* is that it functions within what Foucault terms the incitement to discourse, the necessity to seek the truth about sexual bodies so as to know and have power over them. Instead of continuing to lock it away while simultaneously letting it spread, *Carmilla* proposes that the vampire's secret, homosexual desire receive systematically discursive attention. If these vampires, if these women desiring girl-friends, continue being secrets, then they could continue roaming in the shadows, living their secret, *perverted* lives among patriarchal society. On the other hand, if this secret desire/sexuality were to be exposed, it would become controlled. The natures of the vampiric women like Carmilla would be studied, and the system would change and re-take control. There would be more figures like Baron Vondenburg who would become experts on these (lesbian) vampires, and girl-friends like Laura (and her parents) would be aware of the

possibility that a girl-friend could, indeed, have vampiric/homosexual secrets and intentions. Hence, since it is too late to drive this vampire outside of the social realm because it has already multiplied to the point of immortality, the only true solution is for power to take epistemological and metaphysical control of the vampire. No longer an issue of man-made monsters like Victor Frankenstein's, the problem with a vampire/monster like Carmilla is that she is system-made, and nobody saw her coming.

Thus, the patriarchy is forced to find ways to deal with the vampires/monsters that it permitted to multiply, to name and explain them in accordance with a new order of things. As a vampire, monster, and violator of the natural and social order, Carmilla is a figure who should not exist. But her existence automatically destroys the assumption that she is unnatural. Indeed, Le Fanu was socially and epistemologically restricted by things that could and could not be said. But in his code—in the making of Carmilla's identity a secret—he does not necessarily make a case for the social acceptance or rejection of lesbianism. Rather, in *Carmilla*, Le Fanu somewhat demands for an explanation of a “monster” that had made its way into Victorian England and whose secret, whose never before explained desires, had the potential for a new system of being and thinking. It is because of this that Le Fanu traces the lesbian/vampire to the system of romantic friendships. For once these friendships can be regarded differently, containing sexual undertones that were previously inconceivable and unnamable, the whole society changes. As such, Le Fanu leaves it up to the patriarchal system that made the existences of women like Carmilla visible enough to explain why and how such a creature has come to exist in a world that did not even imagine her. And it is thanks to this demand for discourses and explanations of women like Carmilla that one can identify her as the “first lesbian vampire” (Case 6). The knowledge that *Carmilla* demands is ultimately the one that has allowed us to know who (and what) Carmilla is even though Le Fanu could not name her.

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