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Article

Accepted Version

Renshaw, D. (2023) 'And now you love me, and there is no way out of it': marital engagement, misogyny and violence in the Victorian fin-de-siècle gothic short story. *Women's History Review*, 32 (1). pp. 82-100. ISSN 1747-583X doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2022.2103894> Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/106394/>

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To link to this article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2022.2103894>

Publisher: Taylor and Francis

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## **‘And now you love me, and there is no way out of it’: Marital engagement, misogyny and violence in the Victorian fin-de-siècle gothic short story**

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### **Abstract**

This article will examine the gendered nature of monstrosity in the fin-de-siècle gothic short story, using the phenomenon of marital engagement as a lens on how ‘correct’ and transgressive sexual behaviour on the part of both women and men were defined and distinguished from each other in the 1880s and 1890s. Framing this fiction in the wider context of the discourse concerning the ‘Woman Question’ and the inter-connected so-called ‘crisis of masculinity’, seven gothic texts will be examined that reveal both how betrothal functioned in the late-Victorian period, and how the cultural elements of engagement, sexual, spiritual, and mercantile, combined to form a potent inspiration for the horror narrative. The first part of the article will consider four ‘monstrous’ females who all displayed aggressive sexual appetites, and in general advanced their own interests in ways considered fundamentally masculine. The second part will discuss three ‘monstrous’ men who transgressed accepted forms of masculine behaviour, failing to observe the approved demarcation between private and public male sexuality. Ultimately, the gendered violence apparent in all of these stories reveals the implicit threat of physical force and legal subjugation underpinning the Victorian marital ritual, including in betrothal.

### **Introduction**

Along with money and revenge, and often melded together with these two motivations, marriage constituted the great engine for character development and action in Victorian fiction. Marriage itself was held up as the ideal state for both man and woman; to fail to marry, to be defined as a ‘confirmed bachelor’ or an ‘old maid’, was to have revealed oneself to be eccentric

at best or misanthropic at worst.<sup>1</sup> Into the Edwardian period it was asserted in anti-suffragette propaganda that involving oneself in the campaign for female enfranchisement was the only option left for women who had failed to make a conjugal alliance.<sup>2</sup> From the mid-nineteenth century these women who neither married nor produced children were described as in both popular and medical literature as 'surplus', a redundant part of the wider society.<sup>3</sup> For men, a decision not to enter into a marital engagement was to a degree more acceptable in the various homosocial sites that existed in upper middle-class society. Indeed, the term 'woman-hater' that was often used before the First World War to describe these men was not wholly pejorative, instead it could be expressed in an approving sense to recognise individuals who had avoided being caught in 'feminine snares' (as well as being a euphemism for homosexuality).<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, married life was presented as the goal that right-thinking men and women should pursue; the contented 'happy marriage', with clearly defined gender roles within it, formed a constituent part of what John M. Mackenzie describes as the 'ideological cluster' of late-Victorian life, taking its lead from the cosy domesticity of the royal family and the prevalent bourgeois ethos of the time.<sup>5</sup>

To enter into marriage, one first had to traverse engagement. Once engaged, for the middle classes at least, both man and woman entered a carnal netherworld between the chasteness that defined identity up to that point, and the world of marriage, where physical relations were presumed, even if shorn of pleasure and solely for the purpose of producing children.<sup>6</sup> Betrothal, as idealised, also meant that both parties were no longer able to enter into relationships with another person. The middle ground between single status and marriage could sometimes last for a long period of time, with engagement becoming associated with sexual frustration and denial.<sup>7</sup>

For the male a formal contract was positioned as heralding the end of a period of often unspoken but assumed sexual-social freedom. For the female an engagement acted as a

precursor to presumed sexual initiation, although Ginger Frost has noted that that in fact pre-marital sexual activity between affianced couples was not unusual, and to an extent viewed as acceptable.<sup>8</sup> The process of engagement and the odd intermediary stage of evolving status and promised sexual induction that it represented attracted so much attention and carried so many ambiguous associations that it is not surprising that this became a key plot device of gothic and sensationalist fiction over the course of the nineteenth century. However, in the now substantial academic literature on the relationship between the gothic, gender roles and sexuality, betrothal as a phenomenon separate from marriage has been almost wholly neglected. Indeed, an extended examination of marital engagement, its lexicon, and its consequences in Victorian fiction is limited to Randall Craig's *Promising Language* (2000). The classic historical account of betrothal in the nineteenth century remains Frost's *Promises Broken* (1995), which uses 'breach of promise' cases as a lens on love, sex and class in Britain; although more recently Jennifer Phegley has examined the positive and negative elements of the process of affiancing from initial romance to marriage and bereavement across a stratified society in *Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England* (2012).

This article will examine how various forms of explicitly gendered female and male 'monstrosity', as described in seven fin-de-siècle gothic short stories, contrasted, reflected, and merged with each other, in the particular context of sexualised violence, and how those features of engagement as defined as key by Craig, the spiritual, the sexual, and the mercantile, which influenced Victorian perceptions of betrothal, its making and its breaking, fed into the horror narrative.<sup>9</sup> The first four stories involve monstrous women, who inflict violence on men or force men to inflict violence on themselves. Although these women are certainly 'fatal', the female antagonists considered here all differ in certain key respects from the established femme fatale archetype.<sup>10</sup> Most importantly, unlike many of the classic femme fatales in English literature, they do not attempt to incite one man to commit violence against another through

seduction, but rather perpetrate this violence themselves, physically or mentally. Nevertheless, they all, in one way or another, bring to the surface the societal fixations identified by Heather Braun as surrounding the seductive figure of the ‘dangerous’ woman in the late-Victorian era: ‘sex, aggression, disease, madness, foreign contagion and social degeneration.’<sup>11</sup> At the core of this gothic ‘othering’ of the monstrous female was sexual assertiveness. As Ginger Frost notes, whilst criteria for acceptable manifestations of ‘manliness’ were many and varied (and sometimes contradictory), the fulfilment of ‘womanliness’, or its rejection, boiled down to one essential – a presumed chasteness.<sup>12</sup>

The second part of the article considers three monstrous males, ‘homme fatales’, who either assert a form of violent sexual dominance and control over their fiancées, or over other women, or in other ways challenge the (ambiguous) notions of acceptable male behaviour within the unique relationship of the marital engagement.<sup>13</sup> In all cases these individuals act in a transgressive manner, displaying forms of femininity, masculinity, or, most potently, a combination of the two, that are framed as unacceptable, and in all of these narratives betrothal or its anticipation acts as a precipitate for this ‘monstrous’ behaviour. The confirmations or compromises of sexual identity precipitated by marital engagement bring to a head ‘the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite...’ sensation of abjection as described by Julia Kristeva.<sup>14</sup>

These stories were written in the wider context of a rapidly changing British society, with a sustained controversy concerning the figure of the ‘New Woman’, and a backlash against the vaguely-defined concepts of ‘degeneration’ and ‘decadence’ which were both felt to corrode the boundaries between femininity and masculinity, a nexus of moral panics that attained psycho-sexual critical mass in the period in which these narratives were published, from 1884 to 1898.<sup>15</sup> As Angelique Richardson writes of the emergence of the ‘Woman Question’ in the late 1880s, which overlapped with fears of societal degeneration and imperial decline: ‘A new

and radical uncertainty was emerging. What constituted the nature of woman? What was her status and role?<sup>16</sup> From her inception the New Woman was fictionalised, presented as protagonist, antagonist, or grotesque object of humour, depending on the inclination of the author.<sup>17</sup> At the same time cultural shifts were taking place in what constituted 'normal' female and male roles within a marriage.<sup>18</sup> This article will position betrothal not solely as a formality before marriage, but as a separate emotional and legal status made 'monstrous' in its own right.

### **Betrothal in the wider gothic form**

Marital engagement as precipitate plot device recurred throughout the Victorian gothic mode. In Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) Catherine's engagement to another man acts as the catalyst for a final break with Heathcliff, with all of the consequences that this has for both of the protagonists. Published in the same year, in *Jane Eyre* (1847), with its gothic elements, Charlotte Brontë uses the announcement of a formal understanding between Jane and Edward Rochester to hasten the final revelation of Betha Mason's imprisonment in Thornfield Hall, and the nature of her madness. The use of marital contract as harbinger of catastrophe in the gothic novel continued during the diversification of the genre from the late 1880s onwards. In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Dorian's engagement to Sybil Vane crosses class lines, and his callous breaking of the agreement leads to the first alteration of his concealed portrait. Sybil Vane commits suicide, setting in train a series of events that ultimately lead to Dorian Gray's own destruction.

In Bram Stoker's apotheosis of the vampire genre, *Dracula* (1897) we are introduced to the character Lucy Westenra through her own account of having received three proposals in one day. Lucy rhetorically asks her friend Mina Murray, 'Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it.'<sup>19</sup> This desire for polygamy is contrasted with Mina Murray's committed, stable and desexualised

engagement to Jonathan Harker.<sup>20</sup> Lucy Westenra, of course, is not destined to marry any of her three mortal admirers, who are outmanoeuvred by Count Dracula, a vampiric equivalent of eloping to Gretna Green. The different fates of the two women are instructive; Lucy is butchered by her former suitors, whilst Mina (who at one point disparagingly refers to the ‘New Woman’) is ultimately redeemed. Alison Case frames Lucy’s destruction as a preference, on the part of her murderers, for ‘an idealized dead fiancée over a sexually initiated wife.’<sup>21</sup>

Stoker was obviously unsettled by the societal changes inching forward as the nineteenth century drew to a close, and the limited cultural and political freedoms (in particular following the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882) that some women were gaining for themselves.<sup>22</sup> In the last two decades of the nineteenth century a number of writers, female and male, questioned the act of proposal itself, the institution of marriage, and the laws that governed interactions between the couple, particularly the power of husband over wife, including sexual coercion.<sup>23</sup> The battle for the possession of the engaged woman as waged in *Dracula* is both temporal and spiritual. This ‘ownership’ of body and soul was a precursor to the legal subjugation of marriage, described memorably by Nina Auerbach as a process of ‘forcing wives into the category of the dispossessed and bestowing on husbands the legal identity of the tarantula spider who gobbles his mate...’<sup>24</sup> A number of the texts under examination involve such a consumption, physical or psychological, by one partner of the other, but with the power dynamics reversed.

### **The ‘monstrous’ female fiancée**

Two examples of betrothal as conflation with an alignment with dark powers and as an enabler of female monstrosity in the short story form are Arthur Conan Doyle’s ‘John Barrington Cowles’ (1884) and Arthur Machen’s ‘The Great God Pan’ (1890). In both of these stories young men form martial arrangements with attractive and mysterious women who turn out to



be wicked, sadistic and possibly non-human. In both works a number of upper-class males commit suicide or die in mysterious circumstances, eventually prompting their friends to investigate. Like *Dracula*, both combine elements of the detective genre and horror, with the monstrosity of the female antagonist being gradually revealed to the reader, extreme examples of what Diana Basham describes as ‘a duality in the concept of woman which related a hidden guilt to an apparent innocence.’<sup>25</sup>

Crucially, Kate Northcott in ‘John Barrington Cowles’ and Helen Vaughan (later to become Mrs Beaumont) in ‘The Great God Pan’ become engaged, or form relationships with men, *multiple* times; they are effectively carrying out the desires that Lucy Westenra feels but knows cannot be openly expressed or acted upon. Northcott and Beaumont form understandings with a number of men, sometimes with these arrangements partially overlapping. The implication is that these men are exploited, carnally, and then disregarded, a role-reversal of how bourgeois males regarded the women of the urban proletariat in the poorest areas of Victorian cities, how employers treated female domestic servants, or indeed the activities within aristocratic society of the male ‘rake’.<sup>26</sup> Significantly though, Kate Northcott and Helen Vaughan feel the need to make conventional engagements with some of the men they are involved with; they recognise to an extent the requirement to concur with the societal expectation of formalising romantic relationships, and in the former case it is made clear that a wedding contract plays a central part in an obscure and supernaturally-evil compact between woman and man.<sup>27</sup>

Kate Northcott first appears in Doyle’s narrative in an art gallery, where she attracts the attention of both John Barrington Cowles and the narrator. Almost the first thing that we learn about Northcott is that she is engaged, to a mutual friend of the two men who is also a student at Edinburgh University. Cowles, strongly attracted to Northcott, reacts with anger to the news. Very soon after this, as the narrator questions an acquaintance, he is informed that the prior

engagement has been broken. It is assumed that the fault lies with the male fiancé: ‘Deucedly mean of Reeves [the engaged man], if he has backed out of it, for she was an uncommonly nice girl’.<sup>28</sup> It is then revealed that this is not the first terminated engagement Kate Northcott has experienced. ‘That was a very sad affair. The wedding day was fixed, and the whole thing looked straight as a die when the smash came’ (Doyle, 95). This first fiancé had spent the evening at his betrothed’s house, leaving very late, and was found three days later drowned in a loch.

Cowles, as might be expected, very quickly reaches an understanding with Northcott, who is revealed firstly to be a formidable practitioner of psychic control and later, it is implied, of black magic.<sup>29</sup> It becomes apparent that, of the engaged couple, Northcott is much the stronger individual. At the beginning of the story Cowles is described as ‘dreamy, and even languid’, as well as being physically attractive, in other words possessing stereotypically feminine attributes. (Doyle, 92) There is a grimly humorous scene halfway through the tale where Northcott, Cowles and the narrator attend a public demonstration of mesmerism. The practitioner attempts, and fails, to hypnotise Cowles. Cowles attributes this failure to his own strength of character; the narrator, and the reader, know it is because of Kate Northcott’s superior powers of mental control.<sup>30</sup> By this point in the account, we have already encountered Northcott’s (living) former fiancé, staggering through the streets of an Edinburgh slum. In a drunken incoherent slur, he hints to the narrator about some terrible suggestion made to him by Northcott: ‘I brought it upon myself. It is my own choice. But I couldn’t – no, by heaven, I couldn’t accept the alternative. I couldn’t keep my faith to her. It was more than man could do... Why did she not give me a warning sooner? Why did she wait until I learned to love her so?’ (Doyle, 97)

It is shortly after this that Cowles’ engagement to Kate Northcott is announced. The brutal and possibly supernatural character of this *femme fatale* is made more and more explicit as the tale

goes on. Eventually John Barrington Cowles too is invited for a late-night conference with his future wife. As the narrator waits for his friend to return, he speculates on the reality of Northcott's three engagements, and the two previous tragic ruptures of these arrangements: 'Had this woman some baleful secret to disclose which must be known before her marriage? Was it some reason which forbade her to marry? Or was it some reason which forbade others to marry her?' (Doyle, 107) The anonymous storyteller's fears are well-founded. Cowles returns a broken man, once again some horrific offer made and rejected is alluded to in fragments. Like his predecessors, Cowles perishes in mysterious circumstances, attributable, without absolute proof, to Northcott.

'John Barrington Cowles' is an outstanding early example of the sub-genre of psychic vampirism and energy transfer.<sup>31</sup> But it must also be viewed in the context of unwelcome carnal initiation. Northcott's fiancés are semi-legally committed to her, but are in abject terror of what will take place, sexually, once engagement becomes marriage. The only alternative for these men is death. Their suicides are in themselves a mirroring of the approved response within sensationalist literature of virtuous young women, who take their own life after being sexually exploited. They are thus placed, according to the socio-sexual attributed roles of the time, in the position of the virginial bride on the eve of her wedding, with Kate Northcott in the place of the rapacious bridegroom.<sup>32</sup> Dominance is inverted; rather than the sexual control of man over woman codified in marital law (legally, a husband could not be punished for raping his wife, a state of affairs that was only partially prohibited by legislation in 1891), Northcott's power over her suitor will be finalised and formalised by this penultimate required expression of complicity.<sup>33</sup>

Kate Northcott's practices are literally unspeakable, although the terms 'vampire' and 'ghoul' are both used to describe her. Although her general aggressive assertion of her own interests and her sexual dominance are viewed as 'masculine', in other respects the nature of her

engagements confirms conventional Victorian views on the process of marital commitment.<sup>34</sup> Existing simultaneously with the belief in the innocence of the fiancée was a long-lasting cynical depiction of the calculating female, often of a lower-class status, seeking to ensnare a man in marriage, sometimes through dissimulation and often through sex.<sup>35</sup> This is what Kate Northcott achieves, on multiple occasions.

Arthur Machen's Helen Vaughan, like Kate Northcott, is a woman who involves a number of men in monstrous sexualised interactions. In 'The Great God Pan' this activity actually takes place, and the suicides of the men she is in relationships with are motivated by remorse after the deed, rather than the pre-marital revelations of Kate Northcott. 'The Great God Pan' has a decidedly 'decadent', even 'degenerate' aspect to it, more so than 'John Barrington Cowles'.<sup>36</sup> Helen Vaughan's antecedents are examined in much more detail than Kate Northcott's – and her supernatural character is affirmed, rather than hinted at. Vaughan, unlike Northcott, is also ultimately defeated. Her relationships progress beyond betrothal; Helen Vaughan actually gets married. The tale of Helen Vaughan's honeymoon is relayed by her former husband, now a beggar on the streets of Soho, who turns out to be an old university acquaintance of a reveller passing through the area. Whilst in Florence the man had fallen in love, and got engaged, in short order, to a mysterious and beautiful woman, apparently of Italian extraction. This is what followed:

The night of the wedding I found myself sitting in her bedroom in the hotel, listening to her talk. She was sitting up in bed, and I listened to her as she spoke in her beautiful voice, spoke of things which even now I would not dare whisper in blackest night, though I stood in the midst of a wilderness... you can have no conception of what I know, no, not in your most fantastic, hideous dreams can you have imaged forth the faintest shadow of what I have heard – and seen... In a year... I was a ruined man, in body and soul.<sup>37</sup>

The nightmare narrowly avoided in ‘John Barrington Cowles’ (at the expense of the lives of the former suitors) here takes place – the engagement is fulfilled, with a horrific consummation as the result. Again, the gender roles of who has most to fear from post-engagement sexual initiation are reversed.<sup>38</sup> The experience is also not solely physical, the fiancé becomes the recipient of new, highly disturbing, and unwelcome knowledge; an intellectual debasement has taken place, as well as a bodily one.<sup>39</sup> Kelly Hurley has discussed the contemporary characterisation of female physicality as compared to male intellectuality; the belief that men could transcend their bodily natures whilst women were bound and confined by them.<sup>40</sup> However, Helen Vaughan combines a ferocious carnality with a cerebral power, an ‘unnatural’ confluence. The lack of emotional control displayed by the male victims as compared to the cold purpose of the female antagonists in both stories is telling; repeatedly the men in the narratives break down, and their spoken accounts become incoherent. As Carol Margaret Davison has written, ‘[in the Victorian period] manliness became increasingly and inextricably bound up with the concept of self-control, with femaleness raising the spectre of hysteria and a lack of restraint...’<sup>41</sup> In another inversion, here it is only men who become hysterical. In these short stories ‘male’ hysteria is not the product of sexual frustration, as the feminised pseudo-malady was often described as being in the nineteenth century, but of sexual experience.<sup>42</sup>

Seduction by the female party has resulted in engagement and marriage, and in consequence a rich man has been drained, morally and financially, and ends up as a mendicant. The unfortunate who recounts this story is found dead in the street, just off the Tottenham Court Road. Several other rich young men commit suicide after being exposed to Helen Vaughan’s predilections, but there is no marital engagement mentioned in these affairs. In Kate Northcott’s case, some sort of formal promise necessarily forms part of whatever mysterious ritual or pact is taking place; this does not seem to hinder Helen Vaughan. Frost has outlined how gendered power dynamics, sometimes rooted in class differences, led to men initiating

pre-marital sexual intercourse with their fiancées – but here the pressure in this respect is applied by the female on the male.<sup>43</sup>

In ‘John Barrington Cowles’ and ‘The Great God Pan’, the female antagonists are the only women of marriageable age who appear in the narrative, surrounded by weak men – they can thus be viewed as representative of womanhood - or assertive womanhood - as a whole. This, after all, was the central transgression of the ‘decadents’ of the 1890s, as articulated by their critics and persecutors; the male as passive, and, by extension, the female as dominant, with both states being fundamentally unnatural in character.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, female strength would directly lead to male weakness, with fatal consequences for the racial dynamism of British society.<sup>45</sup> Northcott and Vaughan are *active* characters - they make things happen, whereas the men in the stories are almost wholly reactive, victims or onlookers. These reversals of behaviour harken back to the 1882 polemical attack on feminism, *The Revolt of Man* by Walter Besant, where women work and occupy public positions, whilst men are confined to the domestic sphere.<sup>46</sup> Notably, in neither story is a ‘pure’ female character presented as an alternative to this transgressive wantonness; in these narratives there is only a monstrous form of femininity on display. Whilst Helen Vaughan was a unique character in Machen’s corpus of work, Doyle’s popular fiction involved a number of dynamic female antagonists, including the famous Irene Adler and also Isadora Klein, both opponents of Sherlock Holmes, although neither of these women were painted in such unpleasant colours as Kate Northcott. Doyle was also capable of producing graphically-violent misogynistic prose, such as in the horrific revenge fantasy ‘The Case of Lady Sannox’ (1893).

In Arabella Kenealy’s gothic horror ‘A Beautiful Vampire’ (1896) we are introduced to Lady Deverish, known amongst those who have had close and prolonged contact with her as ‘Lady Devilish’, in the context of a failed homicidal assault. She is a psychic vampire, although she is not averse to attempting actual blood-drinking if it is required. Deverish is an example of the

upper-class ghoul, for whom Karl Marx's description of capital as 'dead labour' that 'lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks' is apposite.<sup>47</sup> Like Count Dracula and Carmilla Karnstein from Sheridan Le Fanu's *In a Glass Darkly* (1872), Deverish generally uses her social inferiors as sources of sustenance; domestics under her employ and the children of the local village.<sup>48</sup> In this respect she is a sort of energy-consuming Elizabeth Bathory (who also killed in an attempt to preserve youth and vitality) in an English bucolic setting. Similar to Carmilla, when it comes to forming relationships, rather than merely feeding, Deverish chooses partners from her own social strata.<sup>49</sup> The result, however, is no different from the experiences of those men who become engaged to Kate Northcott and Helen Vaughan. 'Devilish' has been married twice before, to young men who have died soon after the wedding ceremonies, and, halfway through the story, becomes engaged again, to an aristocrat, the Earl of Arlington. It is made clear that Arlington was 'promised' to someone else, and that the vampire has exerted overwhelming powers of attraction over him to detach the youth from his previous fiancée. Their relationship is described thus: 'Lord Arlington's infatuation amounted to possession. He sat staring at her [Deverish] in a kind of ecstasy of fascination. He was pale and moody and obviously unhappy. I was told he had lost health and spirits markedly since his engagement.'<sup>50</sup>

Engagement as an acknowledgment of domination by one partner over the other, is made clear in an exchange between the couple that is overheard:

'I must have been mad', he exclaimed, in a hoarse, passionate voice. 'For God's sake let me go free. They say her heart is broken.' ...

'I will never let you go' she said, with a curious ring as of metal in her voice. She wound her arms about his neck and kissed his throat. 'And you love me too much.' she added.

‘Heaven only knows if it is love’ he answered, ‘it seems to me like madness. I had loved her faithfully for years.’

‘And now you love me, and there is no way out of it’ she whispered. She leaned up again and kissed him. Then with a little cooing laugh she left him.’<sup>51</sup>

Once again, this narrative both confounds and confirms contemporary gender expectations surrounding the process of matrimonial agreement. The possession here is obviously by the woman of the man, she refuses to let him be ‘free’. He has been half-bullied and half-seduced into an arrangement that he is uncomfortable and unhappy with. Implicitly she has used her status to achieve this. She is also the older and more experienced party in the relationship. To quote Kristine Swenson, ‘Lady Deverish’s is the sexuality of the ageing woman, no less dangerous despite its sterility’.<sup>52</sup> Yet it also affirms the popular idea of women ‘competing’ for men, that romance is a sort of intra-gender conflict between members of the same sex for the love of the opposite, and highlights the tension apparent in any betrothal; what if a more attractive, more powerful, or more prosperous potential spouse appears?<sup>53</sup> Engagement is in theory inviolate, but in practice vulnerable. Lord Arlington extricates himself from this situation by shooting himself.

To complicate the narrative, there is also physical violence committed *against* Lady Deverish in the text. The story begins with a local doctor assaulting her – it is assumed, erroneously as it turns out, that the attack was motivated by unrequited sexual desire on his part; but there is general approval in the wider community for his attempted strangulation of this ‘fatal woman’, an attack which leaves her neck bruised. Deverish’s sexuality is less openly transgressive than that of Kate Northcott or Helen Vaughan, but again there is the positioning of the dominant woman as sexual predator, in the rather different context of implicit class-warfare. Ultimately, Deverish is punished (in fact ‘executed’) for this, just as Lucy Westenra and Helen Vaughan



are. Kenealy, it should be noted, was by this point an enthusiastic exponent of Francis Galton's eugenicist ideas; she would go on to become a vitriolic opponent of the campaign for female suffrage in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>54</sup>

In all of these accounts the weakness but also the innocence and essential goodness of the men in these arrangements is made clear. A very different proposition is 'The White Wolf of Kostopchin' (1889) by Sir Gilbert Campbell, which features not only a memorably evil female werewolf, Ravina, but also a 'monstrous' male in the form of Paul Sergevitch Kostopchin. The story is set in Russian-controlled Lithuania, relating the appearance of an enigmatic woman in white at the same time as a huge she-wolf ravages the local countryside. Ravina is taken in by the local landowner, a brutal and cruel man living in internal exile. These two enter into a hellish version of an engagement, in which he endeavours to prove his love for her within a set amount of time. Her ultimate aim in all of this is to devour his two children (a daughter whom he adores, and a son whom he neglects).<sup>55</sup> Kostopchin is no naïve young man, but a middle-aged, violent, heavy-drinking, oppressive *boyar*, who is absolutely callous about the serfs whom he is lord over. Their 'engagement' is mutually exploitative and selfish – he hopes to pressure her into marriage and sexual relations, whilst she plans to murder and eat him. Here betrothal is depicted as something violent, abusive, and transactional. The final conversation between Ravina and Paul constitutes a gruesome parody of the ideals of monogamy and commitment, and indeed of the formalised act of proposing itself:

'All I have is yours, Ravina,' returned Paul, 'name, wealth and the devoted love of a lifetime.'

'But your heart,' persisted she, 'it is your heart that I want; tell me Paul, that it is mine, and mine only.'...

‘I am hungry,’ she murmured, ‘oh, so hungry; but now, Paul Sergevitch, your heart is mine.’<sup>56</sup>

The werewolf then kills and partially consumes the tsarist landowner. This is love as cannibalism, or even as social Darwinism, and similarly to ‘John Barrington Cowles’, some sort of formal commitment, for opaque reasons, is necessary before the demonic female can attack her male victim. ‘The White Wolf of Kostopchin’ could also be read as an allegory for Russian autocracy; both Ravina and Paul, in their different ways, prey on the peasantry, and their uncontrolled appetites are ultimately self-destructive.

All of these texts involve a woman exerting power over a man, and all of them, with the exception of ‘A Beautiful Vampire’, were written by men. These representations of fatal women who draw strength from occult forces themselves build on a much older conception of the Devil assuming the guise of a mortal man to trap innocent women.<sup>57</sup> Evil fiancés exploiting innocent females continued to appear in the short fiction of the fin-de-siècle, although most often these suitors were melodramatically villainous (‘cads’) rather than actually supernatural. The fraught issue of insincere betrothal was bound up with the ability of women in the nineteenth century to take a civil action for breach of promise when men who had promised engagement, often for the purpose of initiating sexual relations, reneged on this.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Kate Northcott’s behaviour could be viewed as an extreme form of holding her fiancés to account for their failure to make good on their promises (albeit ones that were obtained through a deception). Just as the Devil must be summoned, just as the vampire must be invited in, so these male ‘victims’ are, through a form of contract that only a man could initiate, complicit in their own destruction.

### The 'monstrous' male fiancé

The female 'monsters' examined above committed various transgressions, but perhaps the most egregious of these was a ferocious physicality. Ravina and Lady Deverish actually attempt assaults on their partners/prey or on local children, whilst Kate Northcott and Helen Vaughan sadistically inflict pain, albeit through the power of the mind rather than through physical contact. However, males too in the fin-de-siècle gothic form could breach prescribed gender roles, either through implicit 'perversion', a challenge to or negation of conventional masculinity, more or less explicit, or through what could be described as 'hyper-masculinity', an excess of physical dominance and uncontrolled sexual desire (often breaking the formalised constraints of betrothal itself). The former threatened to dissolve gendered boundaries, while the latter, through the extremity of its manifestations, called into question the nature of 'manliness' as it stood at the end of the nineteenth century. As with female antagonists the use of violence was key, but unlike in the female case, this was complicated by a societal dichotomy between acceptable and unacceptable displays of such physical force.

A now obscure vampire tale by H.B Marriott Watson, 'The Stone Chamber' (1899), published in the wake of *Dracula*, features a broken engagement, and is an interesting psychological study of a man involved in an understanding he subconsciously but profoundly resents and wishes to extricate himself from. Warrington has recently purchased Marvyn Abbey, prior to his marriage to Marion Bosanquet, presented in the narrative as a virtuous and virginal future bride. At the beginning of the story the narrator, who is staying with Warrington, describes his host in the following terms: 'There was never a man who pursued his passion with such ardour. He was ever at Miss Bosanquet's skirts, and bade fair to make her as steadfast a husband as he was attached a lover.'<sup>59</sup> This optimistic assessment of Warrington as a caring future spouse, an exemplar of the 'compassionate marriage' ideal, does not prove to be entirely well-founded.<sup>60</sup> Anticipating the themes of personality transfer later explored by the American horror writer

H.P Lovecraft, Warrington (and subsequently the narrator as well), following the bite of a female vampire, begin to assume the characters and ape the behaviour of the former occupants of the hall, dissolute aristocrats of the Restoration era. For Warrington this initially manifests itself in an inclination to gamble and drink excessively, and later by attempting to publicly sexually assault both his fiancée and a female servant at the abbey. This ends with the abandonment of the affiance, and Warrington having to leave the country. Here, engagement is conflated with the repression of desire, in response the protagonist abandons the decorum and emotional control of his own time for the pursuit of selfish pleasure associated with a previous age.<sup>61</sup> Masculinity in this text is not subverted or undermined, rather it is accentuated to an unacceptable degree, it is the *wrong kind* of manliness, not the prescribed ('chivalrous') contemporary form of male behaviour towards women, but an atavistic and monstrous explosion of repressed desire. This ultimately expresses itself in misogynistic violence.<sup>62</sup> This is 'maleness' stripped of a patina of codified behaviour and also a rejection of betrothal as a binding understanding restricting the public sexual appetites of the male participant. As Lesley Hall writes: 'Men were expected to have an appropriate degree of assertion and even aggression, but this was ideally to be kept in rational check.'<sup>63</sup> This is what Warrington manifestly fails to do. John Tosh has located the perception of a 'crisis of masculinity' at the turn of the century in the fears that 'men were under threat and losing control of themselves and others.'<sup>64</sup> 'Losing control' is apparent not only in the hysterical narrative breakdown of victims such as John Barrington Cowles, but in the unchecked violent sexuality of Warrington.

In two Arthur Conan Doyle gothic short stories from the 1890s a broken marital arrangement is the catalyst for the homicidal intent of one man against another, and again calls into question the nature of prescribed masculine behaviour. In 'Lot No. 249' (1892), perhaps the author's most frightening work in the horror genre, he conjures up a notably unpleasant villain, Edward Bellingham. Bellingham, during his travels in the east, has learned how to reanimate an

Egyptian mummy, which he uses to settle personal scores. Bellingham is also engaged to Eveline Lee, the sister of a fellow student at Oxford. Another scholar candidly describes the relationship: ‘It’s disgusting to see that brute with her. A toad and a dove, that’s what they always remind me of.’<sup>65</sup> Bellingham and Monkhouse Lee (the brother) eventually fall out when the Egyptologist confides in his friend about his occult powers. The conversation that takes place following this rift is instructive:

‘You fool!’ he [Bellingham] hissed. ‘You’ll be sorry.’

‘Very likely,’ cried the other [Monkhouse Lee]. ‘Mind what I say. It’s off! I won’t hear of it!’

‘You’ve promised, anyhow.’

‘Oh, I’ll keep that! I won’t speak. But I’d rather little Eva was in her grave.

Once for all, it’s off. She’ll do what I say. We don’t want to see you again.’

(Doyle, 225)

This exchange is overheard by the protagonist, Abercrombie Smith, who reflects that he was ‘glad to think that the matter was at an end. Bellingham’s face when he was in a passion was not pleasant to look upon. He was not a man to whom an innocent girl could be trusted for life.’ (Doyle, 225) In this case, the question of whether or not Eveline Lee should marry Edward Bellingham is entirely outside of her control. It has been decided by her male guardian, who makes explicit that he would prefer his sister to be dead rather than continue in a matrimonial alliance that would dishonour the family. Her submission to his wishes is also taken for granted. In the context of the story, the ending of the engagement is justified; Bellingham is certainly amoral, and possibly sadistic. But the decision is ultimately not hers. Here an affiance is presented as a familial business contract. Contracts, of course, cannot be cancelled without consequence, and the breaking of this engagement leads to violent action on the part of

Bellingham, who comes close to murdering Monkhouse Lee using his undead tool.<sup>66</sup> However, the remarkable point here is not the actual harm Bellingham inflicts on his rivals, but the implicit harm that the meek and mild Monkhouse Lee is prepared to commit against his sister. This is a wholly masculine, homosocial environment.<sup>67</sup> Eveline Lee is discussed and disputed, but never seen or heard; she is the fiancée in the abstract. At one point Abercrombie Smith considers the possibility that Bellingham had smuggled a woman into his rooms at Oxford, before dismissing the idea, in this all-male milieu, as inconceivable.<sup>68</sup>

Bellingham's unsuitability for the role of fiancé extends beyond a predilection for the occult however. He is repeatedly described as 'reptilian', 'unhealthy' and 'unnatural' by his contemporaries, 'a man with secret vices, an evil liver' (Doyle, 212) He displays cerebral rather than physical prowess, and does not fulfil the criteria of (elite) manliness expected by his male peers at Oxford.<sup>69</sup> The unstated implication is that Bellingham is sexually 'abnormal' in some way, a monstrous male who negates masculine norms.<sup>70</sup> He discusses his need for a 'partner' in his scheme, another man rather than the absent Eveline Lee; his initial overtures to Smith can be viewed as an attempted seduction: 'Bellingham, however, appeared to have taken a fancy to his rough-spoken neighbour, and made his advances in such a way that he could hardly be repulsed without absolute brutality... His manner, too, was so pleasing and suave that one came, after a time, to overlook his repellent appearance.' (Doyle, 220)

Indeed, through his reawakening of the mummy Bellingham *is* involved in a relationship that he wishes to keep secret from his fellows in the college.<sup>71</sup> This goes far beyond the homosocial status quo that Bellingham's opponents uphold. Monkhouse Lee's threats of physical violence against his own sister, however, fall within the boundaries of acceptable male behaviour.

One final text from the fin-de-siècle that reveals the class dynamics apparent in engagement also involves two young male academics. This is Doyle's 'The New Catacomb' (1898), a

delicately disturbing revenge narrative with a grimly gothic conclusion. We are first introduced to the aristocratic archaeologist Kennedy in Rome, who in conference with his colleague Julius Berger, is described as having (in terms Cesare Lombroso would have approved of) ‘[a] handsome face, with its high, white forehead, its aggressive nose, and its somewhat loose and sensual mouth...’.<sup>72</sup> Kennedy, it is made clear, is from a privileged background, whilst Berger has reached his position through his own effort and perseverance. Berger by degrees discloses to his rival the existence of a previously-undiscovered Christian catacomb of unprecedented size and richness underneath the city. He then draws Kennedy into a discussion of a scandal that the latter had recently been involved in. The archaeologist had seduced a young Englishwoman living in Italy, Mary Saunderson. Kennedy had left with the woman, who was engaged (to a person unknown to Kennedy), relocating to a residence outside of the capital for three weeks of carnal relations, before tiring of the situation and abandoning her. Kennedy makes clear that neither the fact that Mary Saunderson was engaged, nor the ruination of her reputation that would inevitably follow such behaviour, were sufficient to prevent him from pursuing sexual pleasure. Indeed, he admits that this prior commitment gave the seduction an enjoyable frisson. On the ‘other man’, Kennedy explained, in language evocative of Old Testament scripture: ‘... you can remember that the apple you stole from your neighbour’s tree was always sweeter than that which fell from your own.’<sup>73</sup>

Kennedy accompanies his colleague to the subterranean tombs of the early Church, and through the labyrinthian passages that only Berger can navigate. At their centre Berger reveals that he was the unnamed suitor, before leaving the libertine in the pitch blackness, to die of starvation, exhaustion, or terror. This is an example of the Victorian engagement as fragile and transitory; the relationship between man and woman formalised, but not yet cloaked in the security of marriage. In ‘The New Catacomb’ both male and female sexualities are presented as dangerous and insidious. Kennedy does not view a matrimonial agreement as sufficient deterrent against

him indulging his own peccadillos, whilst Mary Saunderson, unlike the pure and chaste fiancée portrayed in ‘The Stone Chamber’ or the invisible one in ‘Lot No. 249’, responds to these attempts and enjoys sexual relations with another man. Like Dracula, Kennedy purposefully corrupts a prim and provincial bourgeois English woman, and awakens a suppressed and threatening sexuality within her. Kennedy’s lusts are public, he does not bother to conceal his desires, and he does not feel bound to honour societal conventions or obligations, or take cover in hypocritical cant. But ‘The New Catacomb’ is also about social position, reflective of a battle that had been waged for the entirety of the Victorian period, and which was at this time reaching a conclusion. This was the shift in power from an old landed aristocracy to a new middle class, who had achieved hegemonic cultural influence and political control through hard work and self-denial rather than inherited wealth and entitlement.<sup>74</sup> Kennedy represents the former, exercising something comparable to *droit de seigneur* in his attitude towards women, whilst Berger has not only reached his position through his own application, but follows the approved rituals of courtship that his rival disregards. Ultimately however, the mercantile bourgeoisie triumphs (homicidally) over the feudal lord (as occurs in *Dracula* as well).<sup>75</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Engagement, both in the gothic text and in the society such writing grew out of, simultaneously functioned as a transitory stage; a precursor to stability, status, home, and parenthood, but also as a finality; the heralding of the irreversible end of a particular identity and life experience. As Randall Craig notes, although the ‘contract’ of engagement was viewed as inviolate in Victorian Britain, there was no guarantee, and perhaps little expectation, that the marriage that followed would be happy, or indeed preclude serial infidelity or abuse.<sup>76</sup> However, in the stories examined here that married stage is in fact only reached in ‘The Great God Pan’; in all of the other cases extreme violence of some kind serves to prevent marriage (and procreation) actually taking place. The gothic imagination fed on fears that the stage following engagement



was something monstrous, a harbinger of experiences that could not be spoken about, nor written down, a submersion of identity, and a fear that the marriage which was to follow precipitated not sexual fulfilment but sexual subjugation, not idealised love but a form of hatred that could not be expressed and perhaps not even acknowledged. As Judith Halberstam has written: 'The Gothic... inspires fear and desire at the same time – fear of and desire for the other, fear of and desire for the possibly latent perversity lurking within the reader herself.'<sup>77</sup>

As is so often the case in the gothic mode, in marital affiance roles and positions could be exchanged and identities inverted, split and reformed. The fiancé becomes the fiancée in terms of expectations and treatment; desire becomes repulsion; the ideal of contentment transmogrifies into the receiving of disturbing and unsettling knowledge, in other words, a classic example of socio-sexual abjection.<sup>78</sup> Kristeva positions an external and internal relationship with the 'Other', some person or object outside the social and moral pale that provokes a visceral disgust, as key to the personal experience of abjection; in these stories that relationship, through betrothal, is formalised, and also made inescapable, death is often the only way to disengage with a complicity with evil.<sup>79</sup> Sometimes that evil is defined, and sometimes it is kept deliberately unspecified.

The forms of 'monstrosity', male and female, examined in this article served to both confirm and disrupt, sometimes simultaneously, bourgeois gendered roles in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. In certain respects, Kate Northcott and Helen Vaughan embodied contemporary negative expectations of femininity - that betrothal functioned as a 'trap' that women ensnared men in, and that some women would be sexually available to multiple men. Yet their monstrosity was also overwhelmingly physical, essentially masculine in nature, and served to dominate, intimidate, and terrify their fiancés.<sup>80</sup> Lady Deverish and Ravina go beyond this, they actually want to cannibalise their potential partners. In doing so these women disrupt the power dynamics of late-Victorian engagement, that permanent unmarried status was much

more harmful on multiple levels for women than it was for men, and thus that the ‘advantage’ in shaping a courtship lay with the male. None of these antagonists were ‘New Women’ exactly (Kate Northcott probably comes closest to resembling the stereotype as envisaged by the opponents of the milieu), but all of them are products of the negative cultural response to the presence of the ‘Woman Question’ in the societal consciousness of the time.

The ‘monstrous’ men under examination were also, to a degree, acting out acceptable forms of masculinity, that violence could be employed to protect the honour of one’s self or one’s dependants, that it was prescribed by the wider society that men could have sexual relationships without any sincere promise of marriage with women of lower social status. This is what both Warrington and Kennedy do, although they ultimately pay for it. Their transgression, in these short stories, is not the actual sexual assault or seduction, but the public nature in which it is carried out, an open and unacceptable display of hyper-masculinity and aggressive sexuality, as well as a rejection of cosy domesticity and middle-class sentimentality.<sup>81</sup> They too challenge the established assumptions underpinning betrothal, but through unconcealed libertine behaviour. As Ginger Frost has discussed, although a failure to marry was more detrimental in the long-term for the female party, the onus on societally-condoned behaviour in the courting stage of engagement lay with the man: ‘Proper manly behaviour demanded honesty, kindness to inferiors, responsibility for sexual immorality, and especially the keeping of promises.’<sup>82</sup> Both men fail to observe this. Warrington, Bellingham, and Kennedy are all ‘decadent’ or ‘degenerate’; Warrington (in his ‘liberated’ manifestation) partakes in gambling and over-consumption of alcohol, Bellingham is an intellectual who rejects conventional parameters of male physicality and sociability, and Kennedy is a taboo-flouting hedonist, each in their own way personifying an element of the ‘crisis of manliness’ that was intertwined with the response to shifting female roles in the fin-de-siècle, all of them aberrations from the upper-middle class male mould. The behaviour of these men towards women, and crucially the responses of their

male peers to their actions, gives solid form to the profound confusions apparent in what John Tosh has identified as the contested notion of what constituted acceptable masculinity in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>83</sup>

The most notable common feature in all of these accounts is gendered violence. In the gothic mode the disrupted status quo and established systems of behaviour are by necessity restored at the end of the account; in the stories examined above this restoration is realised by the destruction of one or both parties to the engagement, achieved by murder and/or suicide.<sup>84</sup> This is either explicitly misogynistic violence, or a deliberate inversion of the familiar dynamics of misogynistic violence. This fictionalised conflict channelled, not always consciously, the implicit brutality of the domestic sphere in Victorian life, a brutality that in middle-class society was compartmentalised into the private, behind the threshold of the front door, but which still existed, and which was recognised and legitimised by the legal system established to set out the boundaries of violent male control in marriage.<sup>85</sup> This was the grim form, shadowed and partially-concealed, that was present behind the ritual of the Victorian marriage agreement, and the plot device of the turn-of-the-century gothic short story.

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Dr Jacqui Turner and Dr Ailise Bulfin for reading earlier drafts of this article and their very helpful suggestions and encouragement. Thanks too to the anonymous reviewers for their detailed and constructive criticism of the article at peer review stage, and their suggestions for improvement.

### **Disclosure Statement**

The author reports that there are no competing interests to declare

**Word Count - 9986**

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Sasha Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*, (Cambridge: Mass., Harvard University Press, 1982), 108-109, 111, 146. See Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle*, (London: Virago, 1992), 18, on the ‘odd’ [i.e. unmarried] woman as cultural and economic threat.
- <sup>2</sup> See Lauren Alex O’Hagan, ‘Contesting Women’s Right to Vote: Anti-Suffrage Postcards in Edwardian Britain’, *Visual Culture in Britain*, 21, Issue 03, (2020), 330-362.
- <sup>3</sup> Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 35-36.
- <sup>4</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 89, Christopher Craft, *Another Kind of Love: Male Homosexual Desire in English Discourse, 1850-1920*, (Berkeley, Cal., University of California Press, 1994), Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, 12-13, 26.
- <sup>5</sup> John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 242-243. See Shirley Foster, *Victorian Women’s Fiction: Marriage, Freedom and the Individual*, (London: Routledge, 2016) 6-7.
- <sup>6</sup> Randall Craig, *Promising Language: Betrothal in Victorian Law and Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000) 121, See Lesley A. Hall’s discussion of the complexities existing beyond the dichotomy of the ‘good’, ‘sexless’ woman and the ‘bad’ ‘promiscuous’ one in Victorian society (Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) 16).
- <sup>7</sup> See Jennifer Phegley, *Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England* (Santa Barbara, Cali: Praeger, 2012), 31-68.
- <sup>8</sup> Ginger S. Frost, *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class, and Gender in Victorian England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995) 98-99.
- <sup>9</sup> Craig, *Promising Language*, 5.
- <sup>10</sup> See Jennifer Hedgecock, *The Femme Fatale in Victorian Literature: The Danger and the Sexual Threat* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008) and Helen Hanson and Catherine O’Rawe (eds.), *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
- <sup>11</sup> Heather Braun, *The Rise and Fall of the Femme Fatale in British Literature, 1790-1910* (Madison, N.J: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012) 11.
- <sup>12</sup> Frost, *Promises Broken*, 46-47.
- <sup>13</sup> Frost, *Promises Broken*, 40.
- <sup>14</sup> Julia Kristeva (translation by Leon S. Roudiez), *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.
- <sup>15</sup> See Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin-de- Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 94-121.
- <sup>16</sup> Richardson, *Love and Eugenics*, 34.
- <sup>17</sup> See Talia Schaffer, ‘Nothing but Foolscap and Ink: Inventing the New Woman’ in Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (eds.), *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de- Siècle Feminisms*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Publishers, 2001).
- <sup>18</sup> Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, 32, 51-54.
- <sup>19</sup> Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, (Penguin Books: London, 1994, (originally published 1897)), 76.
- <sup>20</sup> Carol A. Senf, ‘*Dracula*: Stoker’s Response to the New Woman’, *Victorian Studies*, 26, no.1, (Autumn 1982), 33-49, 42, 46.
- <sup>21</sup> Alison Case, ‘Tasting the Original Apple: Gender and the Struggle for Narrative Authority in “Dracula”’, *Narrative*, 1, no.3, (October 1993), 223-243, 224.
- <sup>22</sup> Ben Griffin. ‘Class, Gender, and Liberalism in Parliament, 1868–1882: The Case of the Married Women’s Property Acts’ *The Historical Journal*, 46, no. 1 (2003): 59-87.
- <sup>23</sup> Rebecca Styler, ‘Marriage in Matriarchy: Matrimony in Women’s Utopian Fiction, 1888-1909’, in Carolyn Lambert and Marion Shaw (eds.), *For Better, For Worse: Marriage in Victorian Novels by Women*, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 157, Lisa Surridge, *Bleak Houses: Marital Violence in Victorian Fiction* (Ohio: Ohio University Press) 2005, 148-149, Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, 7-8.
- <sup>24</sup> Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon*, 13.
- <sup>25</sup> Diana Basham, *The Trial of Woman: Feminism and the Occult Sciences in Victorian Literature and Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 5.

- <sup>26</sup> See Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 13-31. See Carolyn A. Conley, 'Rape and justice in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies* 29, no. 4 (1986): 519-536.
- <sup>27</sup> See Kelly Hurley, 'Science and the Gothic', in Andrew Smith and William Hughes (eds.) *The Victorian Gothic*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014) 179-180.
- <sup>28</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, 'John Barrington Cowles' (1884) in Darryl Jones (ed.) *Arthur Conan Doyle: Gothic Tales*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 94. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
- <sup>29</sup> See Catherine Wynne, 'Arthur Conan Doyle's Domestic Desires: Mesmerism, Mediumship and Femmes Fatales' in *Victorian Literary Mesmerism* ed. by Martin Willis and Catherine Wynne (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006) 223-243.
- <sup>30</sup> See Basham, *The Trial of Woman*, 75, 78, for the relationship between mesmerism and the occult.
- <sup>31</sup> See Beverley Dear, 'All in the Mind: Fin de Siècle Psychological Vampire Fiction, Powers of Mind Control and Mesmerism' in Andrea S. Dauber (ed.) *Monsters in Society: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 97-107.
- <sup>32</sup> See Claire Jarvis, *Exquisite Masochism: Marriage, Sex, and the Novel Form*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).
- <sup>33</sup> Surridge, *Bleak Houses*, 153, Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*, (London: Tauris, 1989), 156-188, Ledger, *The New Woman*, 11.
- <sup>34</sup> Hurley, 'Science and the Gothic', 172.
- <sup>35</sup> Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, 33.
- <sup>36</sup> Lucy Ambrogiani, 'The Fin-De-Siècle Femme Fatale and the God Pan: Tracing Aestheticizing Practices and Orientalized Modes of Discourse in the Female Villains of the 'Yellow Nineties'', *Linguae*, 16, no.2, (2017) 29-44, 41, Susan J. Navarette, *The Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin-de-Siècle Culture of Decadence*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 188, Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin-de-Siècle*, (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1986), 161-162.
- <sup>37</sup> Arthur Machen, 'The Great God Pan' (1890), in Roger Luckhurst (ed.), *Late Victorian Gothic Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2009, 198.
- <sup>38</sup> David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 40.
- <sup>39</sup> Glennis Byron, 'Gothic in the 1890s' in David Punter, *A New Companion to the Gothic*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 205.
- <sup>40</sup> See Hurley, *The Gothic Body*, 119-120, Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon* p.12, Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the Fin-de-Siècle*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 33.
- <sup>41</sup> Carol Margaret Davison, 'The Victorian Gothic and Gender' in Smith and Hughes (eds.), *The Victorian Gothic*, 125-126.
- <sup>42</sup> See Smith, *Victorian Demons*, 15-16.
- <sup>43</sup> Frost, *Promises Broken*, 98-105.
- <sup>44</sup> See Ruth Robbins, 'Vernon Lee: Decadent Woman', in John Stokes (ed.) *Fin De Siècle/Fin Du Globe: Fears and Fantasies of the Late Nineteenth Century*, (London: Macmillan, 1992), 145, Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1979): 434-453, 435-436.
- <sup>45</sup> Richardson, *Love and Eugenics*, 43-44.
- <sup>46</sup> Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, 41-42.
- <sup>47</sup> Frayling, *Vampyres*, 119.
- <sup>48</sup> Arabella Kenealy, 'A Beautiful Vampire' (1896), in Richard Dalby and Brian J. Frost (eds.), *Dracula's Brethren*, (London: Harper, 2017) 257. See Sheridan Le Fanu, 'Carmilla' in *In a Glass Darkly*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) (originally published 1872), 266.
- <sup>49</sup> Kristine Swenson, 'The Menopausal Vampire: Arabella Kenealy and the Boundaries of True Womanhood', *Women's Writing*, 10, no.1, (2003) 27-46, 34-35
- <sup>50</sup> Kenealy, 'A Beautiful Vampire', 255.
- <sup>51</sup> Kenealy, 'A Beautiful Vampire', 255-256.
- <sup>52</sup> Swenson, 'The Menopausal Vampire', 32.
- <sup>53</sup> Hurley, *The Gothic Body*, 136.
- <sup>54</sup> Richardson, *Love and Eugenics*, 50-51.

- <sup>55</sup> For a wider discussion of ‘monstrous’ women and the threat to infants see Carol Senf, ‘Dracula and Women’ in Roger Luckhurst (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Dracula*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 114–122.
- <sup>56</sup> Gilbert Campbell, ‘The White Wolf of Kostopchin’ (1889) in Eleanor Dobson (ed.), *Silver Bullets: Classic Werewolf Stories*, (London: The British Library, 2017), 125-126.
- <sup>57</sup> See Sarah Bartels, *The Devil and the Victorians: Supernatural Evil in Nineteenth-Century English Culture* (London: Routledge, 2021).
- <sup>58</sup> Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, 18.
- <sup>59</sup> H.B Mariott Watson, ‘The Stone Chamber’, (1899) in Richard Dalby (ed.) *Dracula’s Brood*, (London: Harper, 2016) 236.
- <sup>60</sup> See Tara MacDonald, *The New Man, Masculinity and Marriage in the Victorian Novel* (London: Routledge, 2015).
- <sup>61</sup> See Mike Huggins, ‘More Sinful Pleasures? Leisure, Respectability and the Male Middle Classes in Victorian England’, *Journal of Social History*, 33, issue 3, (2000) 585-600, for the limitations and contexts of this restraint.
- <sup>62</sup> See Joanna Bourke, ‘Sexual Violence, Marital Guidance, and Victorian Bodies: an Aesthesiology’, *Victorian Studies*, 50, No. 3 (2008), 419-436.
- <sup>63</sup> Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*, 17.
- <sup>64</sup> John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2016) 119.
- <sup>65</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘Lot No.249’ (1892) in Jones (ed.) *Arthur Conan Doyle: Gothic Tales*, 213. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
- <sup>66</sup> See Craig, *Promising Language*, 52, Frost, *Promises Broken*, 41-42.
- <sup>67</sup> See Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 37-38 on the importance of homosocial organisations in creating conceptions of acceptable ‘manliness’ and masculine behaviour.
- <sup>68</sup> See Lesli J. Favor, ‘The Foreign and the Female in Arthur Conan Doyle: Beneath the Candy Coating’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 43, no.4, (2000), 398-409, 398.
- <sup>69</sup> See Eleanor Dobson, ‘Emasculating Mummies: Gender and Psychological Threat in Fin-de-Siècle Mummy Fiction’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 40, no. 4 (2018), 397-407, 403-404. Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 113-114.
- <sup>70</sup> See Ardel Haefele-Thomas, *Transgressing Monstrosity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012)
- <sup>71</sup> Ruth Hoberman, *Museum Trouble: Edwardian Fiction and the Emergence of Modernism*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 105-106.
- <sup>72</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The New Catacomb’, (1898), in Jones (ed.) *Arthur Conan Doyle: Gothic Tales*, 348. See William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel, 1880-1940*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 103-106 for discussion of Doyle’s references to Lombrosian conceptions of the relationship between physical and moral degeneracy
- <sup>73</sup> Conan Doyle, ‘The New Catacomb’, 354.
- <sup>74</sup> For an overview of this transition see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875*, (London: Abacus, 1997).
- <sup>75</sup> Smith, *Victorian Demons*, 35, 142. See Clive Leatherdale, *Dracula: The Novel and the Legend*, (Brighton: Desert Island Books, 1993), 223-226.
- <sup>76</sup> Craig, *Promising Language*, 53-54.
- <sup>77</sup> Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 13.
- <sup>78</sup> Glennis Byron, ‘Gothic in the 1890s’ in Punter (ed.), *A New Companion to the Gothic*, 208, Navarette, *The Shape of Fear*, 152.
- <sup>79</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 12.
- <sup>80</sup> Ledger notes this contradiction in her initial discussion of what constituted the ‘New Woman’ – that they were portrayed both as an exponent of ‘free love’ (whatever that actually meant), but were also ‘mannish’ in their behaviour. (Ledger, *The New Woman*, 15-17).
- <sup>81</sup> Frost, *Promises Broken*, 63-64. See John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999).
- <sup>82</sup> Frost, *Promises Broken*, 9, 40-44, 55-56.
- <sup>83</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 21-22, 34, 39-40.
- <sup>84</sup> See Basham, *The Trial of Woman*, 74.
- <sup>85</sup> See Catherine Pope, ‘The Chains That Gall Them’ – Marital Violence in the Novels of Florence Marryat’, in Lambert and Shaw (eds.), *For Better, For Worse*, 143-145.