LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

MONSTROUS FEELINGS: BISEXUALS, VAMPIRES, & GHOSTS, OH MY!

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Dedicated to Elaine—my fellow bisexual and best friend.
It’s you. It's me. It’s us.

—The Haunting of Bly Manor
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INTRODUCTION

KNOCK, KNOCK! WHO’S THERE? A BISEXUAL!

Multiplicities confuse, sometimes terrify, yet almost invariably intrigue us. Collapsed binaries, whether imploded or exploded, mystify and mesmerize us.

—Donald E. Hall, “Epistemologies of the Fence.”

Sometimes I wonder what it feels like to exist, how it would feel to not exist. Would I feel anything? What is existence? Life? Humanity? Monstrosity? What makes a monster and what makes a human? How do we go about deciding such a thing? These are some of the questions I have been guided by; questions that may be unanswerable. Perhaps my interest is because they are unanswerable, or their answers are conflicting. They rub against each other uncomfortably, chafing at contact. The queer body certainly resides in the space/moment of uncertainty. The queer body is unsettled and disrupted, unable to rest. The bisexual body, too, lives in the space of disruption and potentiality. The bisexual is within and without, visible yet invisible—an uncanny specter haunting/ed.

Within popular culture, bisexuality, and those who identify as bisexual, are positioned as duplicitous. The bisexual is seen as a heterosexual playfully exploring the occasional homosexual moment, or a homosexual unrealized. Bisexuals are seen to be straight or gay based on who they are partnered with at the time and often are seen as incapable of actually being attracted to multiple genders simultaneously. This assumed rigidity in sexuality is rooted in early conceptions of psychoanalysis that sought to define sexuality, to identify its truth and thus the truth of humanity. Bisexuality does not fit into the binary opposition of
hetero/homosexuality. Angelides argues that, despite bisexuality’s chafing against the sexual binary, bisexuality was critical in the construction of the binary in the first place, and thus necessary in its deconstruction (Angelides 3). Throughout this introduction I will be using the term bisexual(ity) flexibly, rather than exclusively related to sexuality. Occasionally, I will detach it from sexuality altogether. Bisexuality studies focus not on the epistemic location of bisexuality but also the lived experiences of bisexuals. While this is important, the latter is not my specific aim. Bisexuality offers theoretical potential for pluralism, specifically in deconstructing monosexualism, and mono- as a prefix altogether. I will be utilizing bi(sexuality) to deconstruct not only hetero and homo(sexualities), but the central role of mono(sexuality) within normative structures. As I will discuss later, San Filippo re applies bi- to various terms such as potentiality and textuality, highlighting the possibility of two or more sexualities, readings, realities, etc. Using this, I will be utilizing bi(sexuality) to deconstruct not only hetero and homo(sexualities), but the central role of mono(sexuality) within normative structures.

Bisexuality as a subject, sexuality, and theory is epistemically (dis)located. It is absent from gay/lesbian historiographies and queer theory. Bisexuality is (dis)placed in time and space, lost both in normative and queer time. It is always pre- or post-, yet never present. It is positioned in the pre- as primordial, original, and thus prehuman. In the post- it is utopian and distinctly outside of reality. The space, much like the time, in which bisexuality exists, is vanishing. This absence is intentional as to maintain the structured dyad of hetero/homosexuality (Angelides). These binaries further create an ideal of being/living queerly. The Ideal Queer Subject is subversive and lives subversively. In moments, this being is the pinnacle of freedom -- not tied to U.S. normative family or living, constantly transitioning both in and out of the body, time, and space. Much like queer, the ideal queer subject maintains a level of indefinability, yet it
is firmly oppositional to Western normativity in its various structures. It is important to note that the queer subject is not necessarily the “gay” subject. The broadness of what or who is the queer subject, allows for a mesh of possibility in which queer theory works simultaneously with decoloniality. The queer body may be the colonized body, pushed into imperialistic norms. Through the process of decolonization, the queer body misaligns, disrupting the white, monosexist heteropatriarchy.

Bisexuality as a theoretical approach, however, opens the door for pluralism, specifically in the ways bisexuality challenges and complicates monosexuality. It deconstructs the dyadic binaries found in queer theory’s deconstruction of normativity and presents pluralistic potential. Despite the active dislocation of bisexuality from queer theory, the two theories overlap in their deconstructive goals. Theoretically, both engage in critical deconstructive analysis of normativity. Since the early 2000s, bisexual theorists have sought to integrate bisexuality into queer theory and vice versa. I hope not only to contribute to this effort but go beyond it. The stitching of bisexuality and queerness as theoretical concepts creates more potential—the potential to further queer, queer theory—to deconstruct the binaries queer theory has forged unwittingly (hetero/homo).

As a field, queer theory was established in the 1990s with the work of Eve K. Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and Diana Fuss. The foundational work built upon Michel Foucault’s historicizing of sexuality and early psychoanalytic theories (Angelides 167-69). Queer theory functions as a type of deconstructive critical analysis that seeks to problematize normative structures within Western culture. The term queer has numerous meanings that varies from one dictionary to another. As an adjective, it typically denotes the “strange, odd, eccentric” or peculiar (Angelides 163; DiGrazia and Carlin 1). Queer is something that differs from the normal or usual. As a verb,
it means “to cheat, to spoil, and to put out of order” (Angelides 164). To queer is to trouble, to complicate. As a noun, queer functions as slang to refer to homosexuality as derogatory. To be queer, to queer, is to be “other” in this formation. It is in this otherness that hegemonic norms are realized. The other becomes a tool to not only define norms but to enforce them (Ahmed 422). This is to say, even when defined, queer remains ambiguous. To attempt to define is problematic as its function rests in its indefinability. Angelides argues, “queer is therefore both known--in the sense that it is assigned a definition—and unknown—in that the very terms of its meanings suggest duplicity and dubiousness...queer exceeds any unifying definition” (164). The etymology of queer supports the purpose of queer as a theory. Its definition is contradictory and even when given a definition, it resists it. Queer theory functions similarly. It resists definition and depending on which theorist is using it, it becomes framed in various ways. One consistent theme across definitional attempts is queer’s oppositional capacity. It stands in opposition to norms. For this reason, queer theory is not limited to sexuality (though many foundational texts of queer theory remain fixed on queering sexuality or through sexuality). To queer is to deconstruct whether it be sexuality, gender, time, space, etc. As Sedgwick said, queer is “the open mesh of possibilities, gap overlaps, dissonances, and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning” (8).

As aforementioned, many foundational queer theorists built off Foucault, specifically his construction of *scientia sexualis*, rooted in psychoanalysis. Though Freud’s theories on sexual development as well as his psychoanalytic language are present, much of queer theory also blends with affect theory. The blurring of these two theories makes it difficult to distinguish between the two and the theorists themselves. The role of affect theory within queer theory is critical, as it is this area that I hope to situate my own work, particularly as I draw from Sara
Ahmed’s work on “Queer Feelings.” Affect theory deals not just with feelings, however, but draws on the relation of forces:

Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces--visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion--that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability. (Seigworth and Gregg 1)

To be affected is to be immersed in the world, and yet as Ahmed argues, not quite of it. This in-between area of being in, but not within the world, or rather the normative world, creates (dis)comfort for the queer body (Ahmed 424; Seigworth and Gregg 1-2). The queer body is unable to settle into normative spaces. I intentionally use “normative” in a general sense, as there exists both hetero- and homonormativity. Homonormative spaces allow some queer bodies to settle but not all. I will return to this idea of normativity later.

The goal of highlighting this blurring of theories is that many of the queer theorists I plan to draw from are also affect theorists. It is this combination of theoretical leanings that allow me to better integrate bisexuality as a theory into queer theory. With the aim of making a foundation for the stitching together of queer and affect theories with bisexual theory, I will begin by reviewing literature from foundational queer theory such as Butler’s “Critically Queer” and “Remarks on ‘Queer Bonds’”. This will lead me into discussing queer time from Elizabeth Freeman, queer space from J. Halberstam and queer feelings from Ahmed. Once I have established these theories, I will begin to bring in bisexuality theory using Steven Angelides, A History of Bisexuality, along with pieces by Jo Eadie, Marjorie Garber, Maria Pramaggiore, and Elisabeth D. Däumer. The overall aim is to examine how queer and bisexual theories overlap, differ, and function. The stitching together of these theories is a continual work in progress. This
examination of theory and the existing literature serves as the foundation for developing bi-
feelings.

**Queer Theories**

Judith Butler is one of the most known foundational voices of queer theory. In “Critically
Queer,” Butler examines the instability of gender formations, performativity, and the emergence
of “queer” as a discursive site. Gender performativity is a key aspect of Butler’s analysis across
most of her writings; however, in this piece she clarifies how performativity functions as a
“domain in which power acts as discourse” (19). As gender is performative, it is involuntary and
imperfect, and it involves interpretation from others. It is not isolated and solely determined by
the individual. Furthermore, the assignment of gender is never fully portrayed in a way that
achieves hegemonic expectations (Butler 23). Though Butler focuses on gender, her analysis of
performativity is still useful in examining (bi)sexuality. Sexuality and gender are distinct (and
should not be conflated with one another), however, they often function simultaneously.
Constructions of sexuality, what is seen as normal, is based on the subject’s gender and the
gendered object of their desire. Gender thus becomes essential in readings of bisexuality not only
because of how bisexuality is commonly understood, but also how bisexuality functions
critically. In many readings of gay or straight, sexuality is determined by the gender of the
subject’s partner at the end of the story. Do they end up with someone of their own gender or a
different gender? But what if they end up with neither or both? Why does the final partnership
determine their sexuality, erasing past experiences, desires, and intimacies? Moreover, why is
this determination rooted in a monosexual binary that leaves no room for those who exist outside
of the hetero/homo dyad?
Much of Butler’s analyses focus on the body (like performativity). In similar ways to Ahmed, who I will discuss later, Butler blends affect theory with queer theory to understand the existence of the (queer) body within a hegemonic world. Just as the performance of gender is not done in isolation, the body in general does not exist in isolation. The body is bound to other bodies and does not belong solely to the individual. The body behaves as a vessel for interaction, exposed to the world. Bodies are thus interdependent (383). Butler argues, “if one can speak about the ‘being’ of a body, it is a ‘being’ that is always given over to others, to norms, to social and political organizations that have developed historically and that allocate precariousness differentially” (382). The queer body (and thus the bi-body) exists in this in-between state of precariousness. The “condition of precariousness” is what binds bodies together. This binding occurs between bodies that are unfamiliar and bodies that may wish to not be bound. It is an affect of conditions (in this case, normative environments that unsettle the queer body). Butler writes, “the boundary of who I am is the boundary of the body, but the boundary of the body never fully belongs to me. Survival depends less on the established boundary to the self than on the constitutive sociality of the body” (386). The key to Butler’s analysis of the body becoming bound, is that the queer body (through sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, etc.) is precarious. This affect becomes not only the condition of survival but also survivability (Butler 386).

Queer time and space is a breakdown of normative time/space. It disrupts normative narratives of time, particularly the linearity of it, offering a reality outside of heteropatriarchal conventions of family and reproduction (Halberstam 152). Halberstam identifies queer time/space as a reality of queer bodies which are inherently outside of normative time/space. Their being binds them to an alternative time. Outside of normative time/space, the body has the potential to “morph, shift, change, and become fluid” (Halberstam 76). Ultimately it allows for
transformation beyond the norm, and a sense of fluidity. In queer time, the past, present, and future are blended (Freeman 95). The body functions as a methodological tool in which humans experience time and space (96). What does it mean to be bound in time and through time? In analyzing *Frankenstein*, Freeman writes, “the monster’s body is not a ‘body’ at all but a figure for relations between bodies past and present, for the insistent return of a corporealized historiography and future making of the sort to which queers might lay claim” (60). The monster’s body is a queer body outside of hegemonic norms. Thus, this analysis of the body as a figure for relations, applies not just to the monster, but to queer bodies widely. The monster is bound to time, as he is built from bodies throughout time. Each piece of him is stitched together, which stitches different points of time together. The stitching of time through bodies, particularly queer bodies, is a form of reproduction. Freeman argues that because queer bodies are unable to reproduce traditionally (normatively), they reproduce socially. Creating queerness is a social matter (60). Furthermore, queer bodies commit to a future in which they will not be a part of and cannot even guarantee its existence (61). To be bound in time is to go both somewhere and nowhere. The body is a site of hybridity between the past, present, and future (Freeman 61).

Sara Ahmed’s “Queer Feelings” situates the affect of queer bodies living a normative space(s). To live in spaces that enforce and produce (hetero)normativity, the queer body experiences an affect of melancholia and shame. Heteronormativity, specifically compulsory heterosexuality and coupling, works to shape “what it is possible for bodies to do” (Ahmed 423). The body is able to either fulfill what is expected (heterosexuality) or deviate (homosexuality). Ahmed argues, “compulsory heterosexuality shapes bodies by the assumption that a body ‘must’ orient itself towards some objects and not others” (423). The most critical aspect of how our bodies “orient” themselves to objects of desire, is that it expands. Your orientation does not
function in isolation, but rather creates ripples that “[affects] other things that we do” (Ahmed 423). Thus, what the body can do is impacted by how the body orients itself in a space of compulsory heterosexuality (Ahmed 423). When bodies reject the idealized narrative of heterosexuality, the body becomes affected, or as Butler would say, precarious.

Once the body is situated, precariously or not, it is affected by its surroundings. Ahmed describes these affects as queer feelings—sensations the body experiences when in normative spaces. The first sensation is (dis)comfort. When a body fulfills enforced norms, it is able to settle in. Spaces of normativity become comforting. “To follow the rules of heterosexuality,” Ahmed says, “is to be at ease in a world that reflects back the couple form one inhabits as an ideal” (425). This affect is subtle, and often unrecognized. To be comfortable is to fit, to settle. It is only when the body becomes uncomfortable that the affect is noticeable. Heteronormativity is the force that creates (dis)comfort. Not only does heteronormativity create spaces of comfort privately, but also publicly. So, queer bodies experience the disorientation of discomfort in both private and public. The queer body is pushed into an unsettled state. This again ties back into queer theory’s application outside of just sexuality. In any normative space, a body that exists outside of the norm is discomforted and thus queer. Furthermore, in situating spaces of comfort as normative, the concept of homonormativity is introduced. First conceptualized by J. Halberstam (2003, 331), homonormativity is a form of assimilation, one that desires families, marriage, etc. For many LGBTQ+ people, this assimilation process can occur on a subconscious level. Homonormativity is the centerpiece of gay liberation movements (from the 1970s to the push for marriage equality). While equal rights are critical, it is framed in a way that mimics heteronormative structures (Ahmed 426; Angelides 103). It is further important to note that this assimilatory goal is often an act of survival. Especially, when recalling Butler, the precarious
body is both a means of survival and of survivability. To be in/of a precarious or queer body, is to be vulnerable. The body does not blend into the surface of normative spaces, and the “stitches between bodies” (Ahmed 425) remain.

While Ahmed and Butler’s description of queer bonds, feelings, and bodies are visceral, I find that they are limited. In Ahmed’s framing on normative spaces, she relies on the idea of compulsory hetero(sexuality: normativity). I argue that the key component is not exclusively heteronormativity, especially when the conversation includes homonormativity, but rather, mononormativity. Monosexuality is the centerpiece to both hetero- and homonormativities. Thus, the queer feelings overlap with bi-feelings, which are unsettled by mononormativity.

**Bisexuality**

![Figure 1. Dani and Edmund at their engagement party in The Haunting of Bly Manor (2020).](image)

Bisexuality, as both an identity and a theoretical tool, has been historically marginalized. It was dislocated from gay/lesbian histories and studies as well as queer theory. In order to locate bisexuality epistemically, Angelides first constructs it historical beginning with psycho-medical
and psychoanalytic studies. Bisexuality was viewed originally in terms of sex, rather than sexuality. To be bisexual was to be both male and female, more closely mirroring early understandings of intersexuality (51-53). Freud was especially intrigued by the potential of bisexuality. However, he soon found it epistemically difficult in his construction of psychosexual development (Angelides 51). In its difficulty, bisexuality was seemingly pushed out of the present. For psychoanalysis and psycho-medical research, bisexuality was fixed as prehuman, as mentioned previously. Therefore, to be human, one would have to evolve past bisexuality and if they had not, they were positioned as subhuman. Not only did bisexuality function as a primitivity, but its expulsion from the present also allowed for heterosexuality to be naturalized and essentialized. In doing so, homosexuality was positioned as the pathological psycho-deviation from heterosexuality. Further, homosexuality was seen as curable through psychoanalytic treatment (Angelides). In shifting from psychoanalytic theory to gay liberation, bisexuality was further dislocated. Even in the process of liberation, bisexuality was firmly kept out of the present again. This time it was situated as a liberatory ontology of the future (though unlikely to ever happen). It was seen as the peak of liberation and open mindedness—a “utopic space that was a nowhere place” (Angelides 131). In the present, bisexuality was unnamed and nothing more than a “playful erotic experimentation” (Angelides 120). The namelessness of bisexuality during gay liberation was strategic. The movement believed that to claim bisexuality was to endanger the movement. Bisexuality could be used to support the idea of homosexuality not only being curable but being a choice (as it was framed ontologically as liberal and playful). This belief supported both “elite gay” and “radical lesbian” discourses that disavowed bisexuality for not being “homosexual enough” (Angelides 132). Jo Eadie centers this disavowal on the “definitional incoherence” of bisexuality (120). While I would assert that openness of
bisexuality’s definition is a theoretical strength, it is positioned as a political weakness. Bisexuality is defined in various ways creating a “range of sexual-political phenomena” (120). Depending on its uses, it applies to different groups of people. Like not being gay enough, bisexuals are seen as politically uncommitted to gay liberation. Eadie says, “bisexual people are said to have ‘heterosexual privilege': they are therefore assumed to behave in heterosexist ways” (Eadie 120). These discourses further pushed bisexuality out of the present. In the 1990s, with the revival of queer and the development of queer theory, bisexuality continued to remain absent. Angelides argues that bisexuality was less forcefully marginalized in queer theory, though noticeably absent or parenthetical. It is important to note that bisexual theories and constructs, much like queer theory, is situated in the West. Though both function deconstructively, the emphasis is on the deconstruction of normative life in the West, or Global North.

As bisexuality is epistemically dislocated and rendered out of (normative) time, it remains unsettled, and therefore unsettling. Marjorie Garber (re)locates bisexuality within its ambiguous nature. Bisexuality is “an identity that is also not an identity, a sign of the certainty of ambiguity, the stability of instability, a category that defies and defeats categorization” (138). Garber uses this (de)formation of bisexuality to articulate bisexual politics. These politics are constructed by three factors (1) biphobia, shaped by homophobia and heterosexism, (2) legalities that segregate the homosexuals from heterosexuals, and (3) eroticism. Building from these factors, Garber says:

A bisexual politics...is a model for understanding the overlap between political action and sexual desire. For as bisexuality, by its very ‘existence,’ unsettles ideas about priority, singularity, truthfulness, and identity, it provides a crucial paradigm...for thinking differently about human freedom. (140)
This conception of eroticization meshes with Freeman’s theory of eroticized time through the body which she names “erotohistoriography.” Elicit bodily responses create a form of understanding. As aforementioned, in this process of an intimate historical consciousness and (re)location, the body is a method in which queer time plays out (Freeman 95-96). To place bisexual politics as rooted in the erotics of everyday life, as Garber does, is to unsettle the ways in which bodies orient themselves. Bisexuality creates unpredictability (Garber 140).

Even in bisexuality’s political potential to destabilize normative forces, bisexuality has been framed as dangerous not only to gay liberation generally (see Angelides) but specifically to lesbian-feminist agendas. Sheila Jeffreys argues that bisexual (women) should not be allowed to claim “queer” as an identification. Jeffreys further states that bisexuals are not women-loving enough, greedy, and fundamentally heterosexual. From this perspective, to be bisexual, suggests a lack of commitment to feminism and the ending of sexism, however this is only one complication between lesbianism and bisexuality. Even in removing lesbianism from identity politics, gay/lesbian communities are as suspicious of bisexuals as heterosexuals are. San Filippo (2013) suggests this hostility and suspicion results from bisexuality’s destabilization of monosexuality as it acts as the basis for “the political rights and social recognition awarded [to] gays and lesbians” (28).

The lack of commitment bisexuals are accused of is not limited to romantic/sexual relationships, but additionally bisexuals’ commitment to queer politics. Bisexuals unlike their gay/lesbian counterparts are seen to “pass” and thus have less stake in political and social change. This assumption positions bisexuals as fickle and unreliable in terms of advocacy and activism. Passing is understood as the ability to appear in the identity of one’s choice, typically the dominant, socially accepted identity (Bornstein, 2016). This is often explored through race
and gender, where passing is not optional, but those who do pass can have a certain amount of privilege. This privilege typically manifests as a sense of safety from exposure. Bisexuality, though often critiqued as a temporary stage on the way toward one’s true sexual identity, is also seen as a privilege that allows bisexuals to escape the commitment required by gays and lesbians in fighting for political and social change.

Figure 2. Dani and Jamie in *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020).

In trying to situate bisexual epistemologies, Maria Pramaggiore uses the metaphor of the fence. To sit on the fence is to be in-between, not quite in one space or another. Pramaggiore writes, “fences dot the cultural landscape in this century and others: well-worn, splinted, and split, sometimes uncomfortable” (145). It is important to note that the (bisexual) epistemology of the fence holds some level of reclamation. To be “on the fence,” is to be indecisive, uncertain...or perhaps, confused. This is the power behind Pramaggiore’s epistemology of the fence:

Fence-sitting--an epithet predicated on the presumption of the superiority of a temporally based single sexual partnership-- is a practice that refuses the restrictive formulas that
define gender according to binary categories, that associate one gender or one sexuality with a singularly gendered object choice, and that equate sexual practices with sexual identity. (146)

The bisexual rests here, “precariously perched” on the fence. This placement allows bisexual epistemologies “to reframe regimes and region of desire by deframing and/or reframing in porous, nonexclusive ways” (Pramaggiore 146). The location of bisexuality and bisexual epistemologies are recurring themes. As Angelides argues, bisexuality was displaced from the present, seemingly lost in (or out of) time. Spatially, Pramaggiore locates bisexuels as precariously on the fence. The body, then, is forced to balance between two separated areas, never quite within one or the other. This location furthers the displacement of bisexuality, in which the bisexual body is further unsettled. This (dis)placement of bisexuality as being on the fence gives it epistemic power as constructive and simultaneously deconstructive. Bisexuality engages the monosexual world, challenging conceptions of eroticism, desire, object choice, and the “truth” of sexuality and gender. The epistemological location of bisexuels is significant. Not only has the bisexual been dislocated from the present, but the bisexual is also only able to exist in the in-between.

The issues of bisexual politics and epistemologies are bound, yet uncomfortably rub against each other. Bisexual politics as presented by Garber function similarly to Pramaggiore’s epistemology of the fence. Both function within ambiguity, utilizing its (de)constructive power. However, bisexual politics concerned with identity struggle to blend with these ideas. A unified bisexual identity, while useful to bisexual-identified people, is epistemically oppositional to Garber and Pramaggiore’s conceptualizations of bisexuality. Bisexuality when theoretically positioned in ambiguity and challenging monosexuality, resists unification. Furthermore, it actively deconstructs identity configurations Elizabeth Däumer points that one of the limitations
of bisexuality is its name. Linguistically, bisexuality, “rather than broadening the spectrum of available sexual identifications, holds in place a binary framework of two basic and diametrically opposed sexual orientations” (Däumer 158). It raises the question of identity construction, particularly when the identity in question is concerned with deconstructing the “immutability of people’s sexual orientations” (158). In this sense, bisexuality is less of an identity and more of a perspective, one which “appropriates bisexuality to critique monosexuality” (San Filippo 52).

Figure 3. Dani in *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020).

**So, What Now?**

I wish to return to the opening of the introduction. I began with the assertion that the bisexual is within and without, visible yet invisible. The bisexual theories I discussed support this, yet I turn (somewhat messily) to Ahmed. The bisexual experiences queer feelings of (dis)comfort, grief, melancholia, and shame. My aim in conceptualizing “bi-feelings” is not to say that bisexuals or the bisexual body/desire is separate from the queer body/desire, nor is it to say that bisexuals are not queer, and queer is not bisexual. Instead I hope to situate these feelings around compulsory monosexuality rather than compulsory heterosexuality. As aforementioned,
mononormativity is critical in both hetero- and homosexualites/normativities. Therefore bi-feelings are affects of compulsory mononormativity.

This idea of bi-feelings is what I intend to develop and theorize. In order to do so I plan to identify bi-feelings and then explore them through visual media analysis. One of the most useful texts on the application of bisexual epistemological thought comes from Maria San Filippo. *The B Word: Bisexuality in Contemporary Film and Television* blends bisexual theory with media and film studies. San Filippo identifies bisexuality as (in)visible through the naturalization of monosexuality as “innate and ubiquitous” (16). Returning to the theory of bisexuality proposed by Garber, Pramaggiore, and Dämmer, the aspect of ambiguity is critical to San Filippo’s analysis on bi-ness. Bisexuality, for this reason, is already present in visual media, yet it goes unnamed and “obscured...by modes of representation and reading confined within monosexual logic” (17). In its absence, San Filippo examines films for their bi-potentiality and bi-readability. This is what I will be attempting, though in a slightly different manner.

The bisexual/queer figures I am most drawn to are monstrous in nature. It may be clear, from what I have proposed, why the idea of a queer monstrosity is fascinating. In bisexuality being a source of (mis)alignment, the genres of horror and thrillers opens a site for exploration. Monstrous beings offer rich analysis in queer theory, and thus bisexual theory. It is easy for me to draw parallels between bisexuality and vampirism—a body that exists in both life and death—yet I am curious about many monstrous figures and the ways they exhibit bi-potentiality. Freud’s theories on the unconscious, the hysterical and paranoid, the melancholic, and the uncanny are experiences that come to mind when I think of “bi-sensations.” How do these psychoanalytic terms feel?
Further, many queer theorists (Freeman, Ahmed, Halberstam) have argued that failure is a critical aspect of queerness. Failure constructs the queer body, a body which must experience failure and thus, pleasurable failure. It is not unreasonable then to examine the idea of fear, paranoia, and haunting regarding the queer/bisexual body. If fear, like failure, exists in queerness, pleasurable fear must too. The idea of pleasurable fear comes from Sedgwick in a study of Gothic aestheticism. In essence, the Gothic simultaneously creates “fear of and desire for the other” (Halberstam 12). The reader of Gothic horror can explore/witness perversity while maintaining a morally upright positionality. The monster represents the perverse other. Sedgwick’s aesthetic of pleasurable fear “makes pleasure possible only by fixing horror elsewhere, in an obviously and literally foreign body” that must be destroyed (Halberstam 15).

Figure 4. Sarah and Miriam exchange a bloody kiss in The Hunger (1983)

As I will expand upon in chapter one, Gothic monsters are situated throughout time and different monsters represent different identities. In examining the Gothic as the first site of monstrosity, I will be examining various vampire through the ages. Utilizing Halberstam’s Skin Shows as a primary text, I examine the messy formations of vampires. First, I look to the heavily Gothicized Dracula, the most recent adaptation of the original 19th century novel. As the starting point, this version of Dracula introduces subtle changes. Gone is an emphasis on Dracula’s desire
to corrupt specifically women. Rather this Dracula seeks to simply corrupt England as a whole and in doing so, he begins with Jonathan Harker. The relationship between Dracula and Jonathan curiously shifts between predator and prey, to one of desire—of craving. Following this analysis, we jump forward to the late 20th century, examining vampiric figures of the 1980s goth-punk aesthetic. *The Lost Boys* (1987) explores the polymorphous hunger between the vampire David and Michael, who he hopes to initiate into his gang. As homosociality blends into homoeroticism, the two male leads struggle between companionship, intimacy, and mononormativity. Most noticeably, the affective sensation experienced through the vampire is that of craving.

Chapter two builds on the monstrosity of chapter one but shifts to examine the ghost. Through close analysis of Sarah Ahmed, Sigmund Freud, and Lauren Berlant, the ghostly beings of *The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020) begin to emerge. In order to focus on specific affective sensations, I closely read four key characters in the show, three of which are ghosts. To explore the lines been normative, queer, and bisexual grief, I examine the living bisexual Dani. As Dani navigates her time at Bly, she comes face to face with numerous ghostly beings, though not all haunt the manor. To highlight the sensations of haunting, I turn to Hannah (a ghost who doesn’t know she’s a ghost), Rebecca (a victim of her own attachments), and Viola (the original ghost). Each of the characters selected showcase the bisexual sensation of haunting, but more specifically, the sensations of grief, hysteria, attachment, and uncanniness.
CHAPTER ONE

BISEXUALS WHO BITE: THE VAMPIRIC MONSTER

Throughout a night without images but buffeted by black sounds, amidst a throng of forsaken bodies beset with no [longing] but to last against all odds and for nothing; on a page where I plotted out the convolutions of those who, in transference, presented me with the gift of their void.

—Julia Kristeva

At the intersection of pleasure, fear, and bisexuality, the monstrous figure of the vampire emerges. The vampire exists in the space between life and death, undead and desiring. The vampire as bisexual is nothing new. Associations between (bi)sexuality and vampirism have been noted academically and culturally, most often concluding the vampire reinforces harmful stereotypes of dangerous bisexuality. The issue of healthy representation, while important, is not my aim. The vampire is a multi-layered polymorphous desiring being. This opens a space to analyze the vampiric figure for sensations the bisexual body experiences.

The vampiric figure is one of polymorphous desire. The idea of drinking blood, consuming another, is heavily entrenched in sexual conversations. Blood commonly represents other bodily fluids in vampire narratives, signaling sex even without it occurring. The vampire consumes another, combining the two and blending the idea of individualism as they commingle and become one. The vampire and the consumed are stitched together, their bodies blending into each other and expanding. This happens regardless of gender or notions of sexuality. The interaction is based purely on desire, one that is unfixed and shifting. Desire becomes an open mesh, one that is not limited by mononormativity, but polymorphous and ever moving. As a
polymorphous desir(-ing/-ed) being, the vampire is full of bi-potential. Vampires, despite their polymorphism, are frequently read through mononormative lenses. Erasure of bisexuality is prominent in “Lesbian Vampire Theory,” in which bisexuality is rendered invisible. Often films featuring the “lesbian vampire” center on a love triangle where (typically) a woman must choose between a man or woman (Ritcher 275). Deemed “the bisexual plot,” the triangle is a rich site for examining polymorphous desire. Not only does the triangle accurately highlight simultaneous desire that the bisexual feels, but it further tugs at the edges monosexuality, “with its emphasis on the space between [it] and monogamy” (San Filippo 38). In other words, triangles are useful. The films examined in this section, and throughout the entire paper, often feature this triangulation of desire, complicating notions of temporal sexuality.

Figure 5. Miriam begins a sensual seduction of Sarah in *The Hunger* (1983)

To dissect the vampire, in particular the bi-sensations the vampire highlights, I will be analyzing three pieces of visual media. First, I will turn to the most recent adaptation of *Dracula* (Gatiss and Moffat 2020), a Netflix mini-series that maintains its Gothic roots with a twist. Then, I turn to a vampire film of the 1980s: *The Lost Boys* (Schumacher 1989). *Dracula* (2020) and *The Lost Boys* (1987) center of vampiric men as desiring beings, exploring the complexities of bi-hunger. The complex intimacies the masculine vampires exhibit extend beyond simple
homosociality or the notion of being an equal opportunity killer. In establishing the masculine vampire, we must first look at the gothic construction of him.

Gothic fiction, blooming from Western Romanticism, gained traction in the 19th and 20th centuries as a vehicle of capitalism. It indulged consumerism through curiosity, specifically regarding the gothic monster. The monster in gothic horror collapsed various identities, particularly those which were seen as threat to capitalistic patriarchy (Halberstam 3). The monster was constructed of deviant bodies, stitched together “put of the fabric of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (Halberstam 3). Nineteenth century gothic horror relied on a mixture of class, race, and gender, whereas gender and sexuality became the prime formation for the 20th century monster. As the pieces of the monster shift with time, it is clear than that fear of the gothic monster is historical—temporal and spatial—rather than universal. In particular, the monster of gothic horror during the Victorian period was heavily coded as a sexually dubious, foreigner. Halberstam writes, “where the foreign and the sexual merge within monstrosity in Gothic, a particular history or sexuality unfolds” (7). This history positions the (perceived) monstrous sexuality of the foreigner with the foreign sexuality of the monster. This then creates a sensation of paranoia in the consumer of gothic horror. Paranoia develops as desire (of the foreign) is turned into fear, transforming the “[desired]/fear object into [a] monster” (Halberstam 9). Already, the connection to queerness (and bisexuality) is clear. The gothic monster was simultaneously desired and feared, sexualized and sexually threatening. It is important to note, that while the stereotypes of villainous gays are clear to a reader interested in sexuality, the gothic monster (Dracula in particular), was often an anti-Semitic caricature. The foreigner travelled from the east to London, was wealthy beyond reason but saw no reason to share or spend any of it, preyed on white English women, typically of an upper class. The vampiric
monster was coded as a sexual threat while being feminized, incorporating threats of foreigners as predators and Jewish men as feminine. It cannot be ignored that the Victorian gothic sent very clear messages about who was to be feared, who was a threat to the English way of life. I wish to acknowledge this history for several reasons. First, it is critical to understand the formation of gothic narratives and aesthetics as rooted in anti-Semitism. The first piece of visual evidence I will examine is an adaptation of the original Dracula from Bram Stoker’s novel. The first episode of the mini-series takes place during the same period as the novel and closely follows the original narrative, firmly following the Gothic technology. Though the other two films discussed below are far more contemporary (made and set in the 1980s), they still share elements of the gothic narrative. The time and place of the monster largely affect its technology, as monstrosity is circumstantial and situational.

As a genre, horror toys with the notion of power: the monster overpowering the innocent, the righteous overpowering the monster, and the power to incite fear or pleasure or disgust. The contemporary horror genre often experiments with gender by coding who is victimized and why. Men are often placed in the position of “potency” or power, whereas women are situated as vulnerable. Yet, even privileged, men are not free from experiencing violence or degradation by the monster. In turn women may find themselves empowered. Gothic narratives, even if they have this element of gender, fail to neatly construct such identifications. Horror holds the power not only a tamper with notions of identification, but to mess them up—to complicate them. It’s the technology of the monster: a being constructed out of various, untidy identities in order to create something frightening. The power of horror resides in the creation of otherness—the creation of the monster—and the feelings that the other elicits. Dracula or any vampire is monstrous through this technology, but also as technology. Dracula represents all “other-ed”
identifies in one: sexually threatening, feminized, sexually ambiguous, racially ambiguous, non-Christian though specifically Jewish, the foreigner, a parasite, a hoarder of wealth, seductive, repulsive, and so on. He is contradictory and illusive (Halberstam 88-89). Dracula, thus, is perfect in all his imperfections. The perfect monster.

**Equally Delicious: The Flavor of Bisexuality**

As aforementioned, the Gothic vampire was stitched together through race, class, and sexuality. The figure was highly anti-Semitic, taking the place of the Eastern Jew who travelled to the West. As a suspect foreigner, Dracula was sexually deviant and threatening, though notably feminine due to his ability to reproduce. The primary concern of the novel was the corruption of the English way of life via upper-class white women. The vampire functions a parasite, feeding off the livelihood (or blood) of others. Further, parasitism represents deviant sexuality, a sexuality that is decidedly outside of marriage and unconcerned with reproduction (Halberstam 17).

In *Dracula* (2020), we arrive in Transylvania with Jonathan Harker (John Hefferman), an English lawyer. Jonathan. Our introduction to Jonathan is through Mina’s words, not unlike the novel. In a letter to Jonathan, Mina assures him that should he be tempted in his travels she will not be distraught. Their coming marriage is enough for her. Though, even as she writes this, she playfully jokes that should she find herself lonely, she has an array of men to keep her company in his absence, and even possibly his favorite barmaid. Jonathan finds Mina’s letter amusing, not at all unsettled by her casual suggestion of seducing another woman. As Jonathan arrives at Castle Dracula, he finds himself alone. No one greets him as he enters the dimly lit castle. When Dracula (Claes Bang) appears, he is a withered and weakened old man. Dracula urges Jonathan to eat and drink while he looks over the legal documents the lawyer prepared. The dialogue
closely follows the original text, with an exchange between the Count and Jonathan regarding the length of his visit. He intends to leave the next day, but Dracula insists that he will stay and teach him all he needs to know in order to “pass” among the Englishmen, to be indistinguishable from them. Despite Jonathan’s insistence that he is not a teacher, Dracula affectionately tells him, “There is no need to teach. Simply remain at my side and I will absorb you.”

In a departure from the original text, the show flashes between Jonathan’s stay at the castle to him finding refuge in a convent in Hungary. In the convent, Jonathan is questioned and forced to recount his time with Dracula to Sister Agatha (Dolly Wells). Agatha is brash and blunt, openly asking Jonathan if he had sex with the Count. When he asks why she would ask, she simply states that any contact he had with the count would be relevant as Jonathan has clearly been contaminated. Visually, this is clear to all. Jonathan looks dramatically different from his youthful appearance prior to his arrival in Transylvania. At the convent, Jonathan is hairless, pale, skin is taunt against his skull, and his body is covered in lesion like sores. His appearance and the question of sexual contact draw a clear parallel to the HIV/AIDS virus, visually marking Jonathan.

Figure 6. Dracula and Jonathan
After his first night in the castle, Jonathan wakes, already appearing thinner and tired. In comparison, Dracula looks healthier, and his thick accent has begun to fade. This trend continues with Jonathan growing weaker and sickly, while the count grows younger and decidedly more English. Jonathan begins searching the castle for a way to escape. In his search, he comes across crates full of personal belongings along with the corpse of its owner. Numerous beings begin to chase him. Though they are undead, they hold no resemblance to Dracula. They are closer to zombies than vampires. As the ghoulish beings chase him through the tunnels of the castle, they scream and begin Jonathan to kill them. In hearing this, Agatha explains that the undead lose the “divine ability to die,” and spend all of eternity consumed by hunger. Jonathan stumbles into Dracula’s crypt, finding the vampire resting in a stone coffin. In fear and exhaustion, Jonathan passes out and wakes at the large dining table. When he asks the Count if he will become one of the beasts below, Dracula responds casually. He assures Jonathan, now affectionately calling him Johnny (which only Mina does), that he will die or end up in a box. Throughout the conversation, the Count finds great amusement in letting Jonathan piece together his fate and how exactly it came to be. Dracula has been feeding on him during the night and curiously, during these events Jonathan always had sexual dreams of Mina. The image flashes between Dracula’s fanged visage to one of Mina, repeatedly.

Desperate to leave the castle before his death, Jonathan stumbles upon a secret room. Unlike the tunnels which held crates of personal effects and rotting beasts, this room is filled with three large crates that function as cages. Though the audience only sees one woman in one cage, it is implied that each one holds a prisoner. The woman Jonathan finds attempts to feed on him but is stopped by Dracula and killed. He begins to explain that she was one of his “brides.” His brides are experiments in reproduction and companionship, and though it is implied his
brides are women, this is never confirmed.

As Jonathan is too weak and near death, Dracula kills him quickly. The Count watches Jonathan’s body to see if he will become one of the undead, a mindless ghoul to be kept in the dungeon. When Jonathan returns to (un)life, Dracula is amused and quickly amazed:

You came back so quickly, that was impressive…you even have the beginnings of a will of your own. None of the others had much beyond hunger but look at you go! Well, don’t you see? This changes everything. Stay, stay. You could be my finest bride.

Dracula hopes to keep Jonathan not only as his bride/child, but a companion. Dracula so clearly craves Jonathan in this moment and when Jonathan throws himself from the tower, Dracula begins to search for him. The Count even chases him to the convent in Hungary, in search of his bride, describing his pursuit as “a bee [which] can always find nectar.”

Figure 7. Dracula faces Sister Agatha as he hunts for new bride

Dracula is clearly portrayed in the series as a polymorphously desiring figure. He keeps female brides, jokes about seeking out Mina, actively feeds on and pursues Jonathan, and upon meeting Sister Agatha, he is further drawn to her. His desire is framed as a hunger, a craving to have, consume, and understand. He is curious about those he craves, and so he pursues them if only to temporarily satisfy his hunger. Ironically, the creators of the series adamantly deny
Dracula’s bisexuality and argue that he is “bi-homicidal” (Milton). Yet, as already established, blood in vampire narratives represents the sexual exchange of bodily fluids. Blood, and the drinking of it, function as erotic and sexual. Even if it did not, we can examine the dynamics between Dracula and Jonathan through the bisexual plot. Dracula is a desiring/craving being of polymorphous perversity. He craves blood, intimacy, and control. In his attempts to feed this craving, he seeks out a multiplicity of beings.

Figure 8. The poly-triangulations of Dracula (2020)

Dracula’s “brides” are not limited to women. Early in the first part of the series, Jonathan is established as the object of Dracula’s desire. Dracula feeds on him, an act that not only drains Jonathan of his life, but also incorporates Jonathan’s essence into Dracula. Dracula does indeed “absorb” Jonathan. Through consumption, Dracula learns about Jonathan’s desires as much as he learns English. He arguably comes to know more about Jonathan than Mina does. Jonathan, despite being horrified by Dracula, still forms a connection. Dracula is in and of his mind. When being fed on, Jonathan confuses Dracula and Mina, mixing desire and repulsion, fear and pleasure, returning us to the aesthetics of pleasurable fear. Dracula emerges as a source of
contradiction not just as the vampiric other, but also the site of polymorphous desire for Jonathan. He certainly is bi-homicidal, but both Dracula and Jonathan are tangled in a web of ambiguous hunger.

C’mon Bro, just be Mine for all of Eternity

If Dracula, in all his iterations, flirts with bisexuality and homoeroticism, then the vampires of the 1980s take bisexuality by the hand and dance. Set in a decidedly remixed gothic, the vampires of the 80s toy with the 19th century Gothic vampire. The vampire actively showcases the temporality of the technology of the monster. As a Gothic monster, the vampire was an amalgamation of otherness, specifically centering on the (Jewish) foreigner out to destroy the English with perverse sexuality. The vampire was wealthy and parasitical. While the contemporary vampire still maintained its parasitism as a bloodsucking creature, emphasis on racial and ethnic monstrosity lessened. The vampire came to signal perverse sexuality and gender above all else. Further, the construction of sexuality also shifted. For the Gothic vampire, Foucault’s definition of the technology of sex was critical. Foucault identified the invention of sex as technology through four archetypes: “the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple and the perverse adult” (Foucault 105). The vampire was all of these in one, thus decidedly monstrous (Halberstam 88). The late 20th century vampire departs slightly from here, if only to emphasize the threat of non-heterosexuality.

The Lost Boys (1987) centers on brothers Michael (Jason Patric) and Sam (Corey Haim). Following their parents’ divorce, the brothers move with their mother to Santa Carla, nicknamed “the Murder Capital of the World!” Santa Carla features a colorful beach backdrop, a boardwalk filled with amusement rides and games. The bright and festive atmosphere is somewhat dampened by the littering of missing posters. The opening shots establishing this juxtaposition,
also establish key differences between the brothers. The younger of the two, Sam, dons a colorful, preppy fashion. His bright clothes contrast Michael’s decidedly monochrome ensemble. With longer hair, a leather jacket, and a motorbike (and later an ear piercing), Michael leans more into the goth-punk vibes of the 1980s.

Figure 9. Sam and Michael stumble across their grandfather’s taxidermy workstation

On the family’s first night in town, they head to the boardwalk. Watching a concert, Michael spots Star (Jami Gertz), who he immediately becomes infatuated with. He is captivated by her and watches as she departs on the back of a motorbike in a gang of four guys. Star joins the obvious leader: a leather clad, bleach blonde figure. When the leader notices Michael’s attention, he smiles before speeding away. The following night, Michael meets Star but the gang appears before they can have a moment alone. The leader introduces himself as David (Kiefer Sutherland) and quickly challenges Michael to a race. When Michael points out that David’s bike is superior to his David cheekily tells him, “You don’t have to beat me Michael, you just have to try and keep up.” The group take off into the night with Michael hesitatingly following. Though initially his draw was Star, his interaction with David is what motivates his chase. David
continues taunting Michael, asking him how far he is willing to go.

David and his “brothers” bring Michael back to their lair, a sunken decaying resort. Throughout the evening, the gang teases Michael and plays mind games on him. Even as this happens, there is a building comradery between the group. Star fades into the background, but remains on the peripheral as if to remind Michael and the audience his original reason for humoring David. Yet, there is something alluring about the group and David in particular. They act according to whim. They dress as they please, donning long hair, earrings, leather jackets, and crop tops. They are fairly glamorous, and Michael is lured in. It’s David (not Star) who effects Michael the most. David offers him wine and almost seductively says, “Drink some of this Michael. Be one of us.” The invitation is accepted and despite Star telling Michael that the wine is David’s blood, Michael drinks. As Michael consumes the blood, he experiences a hypnotic series of senses and the screen fills with overlapping images of Michael, David, and Star but notably prioritizes the image of David over Star, with David’s voice gently (and lovingly) echoing, “come with us Michael”. The scene changes to the guys on a bridge. As a train approaches, the group of four climbs down, hanging from the platform urging Michael to join them. He does and as the train passes overhead, one by one the guys release their hold and fall into the misty darkness until only David and Michael remain. The entire time, David has his eyes locked on Michael and before letting himself fall David tells him, “You’re one of us, let go. Michael, you’re one of us.”

In the days following, Michael spends his time sleeping through the day. He grows uncomfortable in the sunlight and steadily becomes more irritable. As he begins his transformation, Michael seeks out David. He finds the group near the beach, watching a group of partyers. He joins them and quickly things turn upside down. Michael watches as the group
attacks, kills, and feeds on their prey. Though they beckon him to join them, he resists. He is torn between horror and desire, craving the blood they so easily take. Following the attack, they approach Michael, covered in blood with windswept hair.

Figure 10. The “lost boys” pose in all their glamour

Michael refuses them and flees. In his moment of distress, he seeks out Star. He asks her to tell him what is happening to him and to help him. She says she can’t, that she and Michael are in the same position. Both drank David’s blood but haven’t killed. Star tells Michael that David intended for her first kill to be Michael (though its later revealed that David had no intention of letting Michael die, positioning Star as the sacrifice for Michael). In the background of this drama, Sam has been keeping tabs on Michael’s progressively odd behavior. He meets two other teens, the Frog brothers, who insistently tell him that vampires are real. The brothers, using comic book vampire lore, aim to become vampire hunters. When Sam begins to suspect Michael is a vampire, the brothers tell him he should kill his brother. Sam is unwilling to hurt
Michael, so he along with the brother devise a plan to find the leader of the vampires. Based on their “research” they believe if they kill the leader, those who have not fully transformed will be set free while all the full vampires will die. Once Michael has confirmed Sam’s suspicious, they decide to work together to bring down David. While Michael is saving Star from the lair, Sam and the brothers go find the group. Unfortunately, the three of them have no idea which is David and end up staking Marko (Alex Winter). The trio barely escapes when the vampires awaken, finding their “brother” dead. David is furious but noticeably distraught—he grieves for his lost companion.

In the final showdown of the film, the vampires descend upon Michael and Sam’s home. The remaining three vampires split upon in order to exact revenge. Even in his fury, David is unwilling to kill Michael. He urges Michael to stop fighting him. His tone shifts between arrogance and sincerity, implying he feels a genuine connection with Michael. It’s David’s attachments that make him vulnerable. The two fight as Michael remains determined to regain his “humanity.” In Michael’s triumph, he impales David on a collection of antlers. He watches as David dies, torn between relief and conflict. He looks far from pleased at the outcome.

Figure 11. Michael watches as David dies

It is interesting how strongly emphasized David and Michael’s dynamic is, even as Michael has sex with Star or tries to save her. Their relationship takes a back seat to David and
Michael. The film could easily be read as a bromance, with David seeking to initiate Michael into his brotherhood. Echoing the dynamics of frat culture, Michael is hazed. He is tricked into believing he is eating maggots instead of rice and worms instead of noodles. The gang puts him in risky situations like racing motorbikes to the edge of a cliff while taunting him to see how far he will go. They encourage him to fall from the bridge into the unknown and to partake in killings, to complete his initiation. It is not an unreasonable reading. Homosociality and heteroflexibility often overlap with “homosexuality [as] an often invisible, but nonetheless vital ingredient of heterosexual masculinity (Ward 5). In this construction of straight (white) masculinity, homoeroticism serves as a bonding agent. The intimacy experienced between men is denied as sexual (even if it is an explicit sexual act). Rather, this intimacy, which often features undertones of violence, establishes the “straight-ness” of masculinity (Ward 5).

I hesitate to define the dynamic of David and Michael as strictly straight, masculine bonding. There is a level of eroticism, desire, and soft intimacy between the two that push forward the events of the film. I turn toward Donald E. Hall here. Hall explores intimacy between men through three complicated terms: bisexuality, libertinism, and polymorphous perversity. Bisexuality, here, functions as the desires and (not always) bodily enactments that occur outside of the hetero-/homosexual binary (Hall 102). Bisexuality itself functions an affective force, orientating bodies towards their objects of desire that lie outside of binary sexuality. Libertinism, a Victorian practice (which we see with Gothic literature), allowed for the sexual experimentation and play among socially privileged men, though Hall notably detaches the requirement of privilege in order to flexibly use the term. Of the three, this possible term most closely mirrors the heteroflexibility as bonding proposed by Ward. Finally, polymorphous perversity is the most fluid of the three, defined as “an ideal, impossibly extradiscoursive erotic
freedom” (Hall 102). Polymorphous perversity, which I had already accredited to Dracula, undoubtedly matches the dynamics in The Lost Boys. Furthermore, the film also follows the bisexual plot: establishing Michael as torn between Star and David, even as his relationship with David is narratively prioritized. The death of David perhaps falls into the trap of stabilizing a monosexual resolution (San Filippo 125). However, the vampire already is (un)dead so even as they “die,” death is messy and incomplete. Even in death, the (bisexual) vampire remains, causing uneasy contradictions.

**That Really Sucks!**

Crave (*verb*) – to feel a powerful desire for (something); to ask for (beg, demand); to want greatly (need); to yearn

The vampire as a polymorphous desiring being, a being which resides in the ambiguous space between life and death, certainly brings forth particular feelings. As highlighted above, vampires (and the Gothic monsters as a whole) inspire a pleasurable fear—a dark desire. The reader/viewer can distance their desire for the creature from themselves, allowing for two decidedly different sensations to interact. As pleasure and fear intermingle, a new sensation emerges. The vampire brings about (in their own bi-potentiality) the sensation of craving. To crave is to desire, but a craving is much more visceral and carnal. Craving indicates that one has an object(s) of desire and *is* a desiring being. In chapter two I explore the relation of attachments the subject has with their object of desire; here however, I wish to center the act of desiring above desire itself. It is a push and pull, a force which constantly (re-/dis-)orients the body. Yet, craving is not simply a want or wish or even an acknowledgement of the subject’s proximity to the object. It is a gnawing hungry mouth, one which can only find temporary satisfaction.

To crave is to seek to consume, to indulge one’s sense of taste—of hunger. Perhaps to
crave is to consume, to feast on the object of desire. Perhaps the sensation of craving is no better illustrated then the fangs of a vampire sinking into the flesh of their prey. Craving can be quite literally a hunger, but a hunger for what? It is the ambiguity of such a hunger that brings forth bi-potentiality. Hunger, for the vampire and the bisexual, is multiple. It is a mess of blood and guts, sinew and marrow.
CHAPTER TWO
LINGERING LOVE: THE HAUNTING AFFECTS OF BISEXUALITY

Dead doesn’t mean gone.
—The Haunting of Bly Manor

The bisexual, as a figure on the fence, both haunts and is haunted. The bisexual haunts where it cannot enter, it looms over the realms of heterosexuality and homosexuality, simultaneously within and without. The bisexual shimmers on the edges, unable to fully enter one sphere or the other. It haunts monosexuality as an uncanny figure that is somehow familiar yet unknown, concealed. It pushes against the boundaries of monosexuality, seeking visibility. Just as it haunts monosexuality as an uncanny specter, monosexuality haunts bisexuality. The nature of mononormativity looms over bisexuality. It pushes back, known and normalized. If bisexuality haunts, it does so as an open mesh of potentiality and possibilities—it is polymorphous. In turn, mononormativity haunts as a specter of singularity, it is not open, but closed and restricted. The potentiality of bisexuality is limited as an either/or rather than an both/and.

In order to explore the affects and effects of bisexual haunting, I will analyze The Haunting of Bly Manor (Flanigan, 2020) through theorists such as J. Halberstam and Sara Ahmed, along with affect theorists and psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud. In particular, Halberstam’s text, Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters (1995), provides a basis for the construction of monsters within gothic literature. Starting with queer grief and the sensation of uncanniness, I argue that the ghosts that haunt Bly Manor represent the specter of
mononormativity. The bisexual body is haunted, stripped of multiplicity and stitched into mononormative roles, which ultimately work to kill polymorphous desire (and the bisexual).

Ahmed’s essay, “Queer Feelings,” is critical in understanding the way queer bodies experience particular feelings such as (dis)comfort, but also the way feelings are constructed through the body. In this chapter I will be intertwining Ahmed’s construction of queer grief with bisexuality in order to examine what a bisexual grief looks and feels like. This also brings in psychoanalytic terminology such as: uncanny, melancholia, and reminiscences. For that reason, Freud will be utilized to explore particular sensations. Finally, I will be bringing in affect theories (in addition to Ahmed) that speak to affective sensations and spectralities.

My analysis of the bisexual haunting/-ed will be divided into three key sections that examine different figures in *The Haunting of Bly Manor*. The first section will examine the relationship between bisexuality, grief, and haunting through the main character, Dani (portrayed by Victoria Pedretti). Section two will shift to the idea reminiscences, which Freud argues is the symptom of hysteria/paranoia. Here, the ghosts of Bly become critical as they are not only haunting the manor but are haunted themselves. I will look at the character of Hannah (T’Nia Miller), as she is more haunted than haunting, as well as Rebecca (Tahirah Sharif). The third section will explore another Freudian concept: the uncanny. The uncanny has become a recurring theme for bisexuality and gothic narratives. As a concept, the uncanny creates sensations that are unsettling in their familiarity, yet unknowability. To examine the uncanny, we turn to look at the original ghost of Bly Manor, the Lady in the Lake (Kate Siegel). This section will combine the ideas proposed in sections one and two, intertwining the idea of what a ghost is and does, with bisexuality and mononormativity.

*The Haunting of Bly Manor* (2020) is the most recent cinematic adaption of Henry James’
The Turn of the Screw (1898). The show is a loose adaption of the novella. It takes key features of the original story to establish the premise of the show while building out a much more nuanced and exploratory narrative. The show and novella both feature a governess being hired to care for two orphans whose previous governess died. Where the stories differ is the ghosts. James’ novella follows the unnamed governess as she begins to see apparitions and attempts to protect the children from them. Yet it is unclear if the ghosts are truly there or if the governess is simply a hysterical woman. The governess’ protection of the children, in particular of the boy, Miles, becomes smothering. In the end, it is the governess’ fear and the fear she causes the children that leads to Miles’ death (Nemerov 529-532). Overall, the novella ends unresolved. It situates the governess as unreliable, hysterical, and unlikeable. Whether or not the ghosts are real is not addressed and the reader is left to consider whether the novella was a condemnation of “hysterical,” emotional women or a ghost story. The Haunting of Bly Manor, by comparison, is a ghost story in the sense that there are ghosts which inhabit the manor. The ghosts are not imaginary, and while I resist the idea that the ghosts are a manifestation of insanity, there are several ghosts which manifest as personal hauntings rather than social hauntings.

It is important to note that while The Haunting of Bly Manor is a contemporary ghost story (released in 2020 and set in the 1980s), it has its roots in gothic literature, in particular gothic horror. The source material for the show is a Victorian gothic horror novella. As explored in the previous chapter, monsters and monstrosity are temporally constructed. So, while the story maintains gothic undertones, the ghostly beings hold different meanings than those of the original novella. The monster is pieced and stitched together differently according to the temporal and historical location. Though ghosts function as a gothic monster in many ways, I am
unsure that they share the same technologies. Ghosts typically exist in a queer time, of the past and present in the same moment. If the technology of the monster is temporally specific, what of the ghost? If time has less effect on the construction of the ghost, perhaps space is more critical. The genre of the story, of the ghost, arguably shifts the ghostly construction.

The show, in its formation of the ghost, highlights the overlap between English romanticism and gothic literature. As I said above, it is a ghostly love story. Romanticism was a prominent artistic and literary movement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It developed as a reaction to the Enlightenment. The gothic was an off-shoot of romanticism in the English-speaking world, utilizing the romantic ideals of imagination and the beauty of nature, with a twist. The gothic peered into the unknown darkness—the paranormal and supernatural. The gothic relied on evoking emotions in the reader, just as romantic literature did. However, the type of emotions differed—the affect shifted. *The Haunting of Bly Manor* resides in the space between romanticism and Gothicism, relying heavily on atmosphere to elicit certain feelings in the characters and the viewers. The space of the romantic and gothic genres work to shape the technology of ghosts far more than location, time, or history.

Finally, before diving in further, I wish to discuss the idea of “ghosts.” Definitions of ghosts, what/who they are, are numerous. Much like queer, ghosts have many different meanings. It is a flexible category. Ghosts, commonly, are the souls of the deceased, an apparition or shade of what someone once was. María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren suggest that a ghost can be both non-figurative and figurative. The non-figurative ghost is the aforementioned souls of the deceased. The figurative ghosts are featured in numerous disciplines and categories from biology to metallurgy to theatre. They write, “the ghostly can be said to refer to that which is present yet insubstantial (the spirit rather than the body), secondary rather than
primary (a faint copy, a trace, a ghost writer), and potentially unreal or deceptive (a spurious radar signal)” (Blanco and Peeren x). The ghost, non/figuratively “hovers between different realms and meaning” (xi), this hovering is similar to how the bisexual resides on the fence. It is certainly fair than to argue that bisexuals are ghosts which haunt monosexuality. Utilizing Blanco and Peeren’s conceptualization of ghosts, perhaps bisexuals are the figurative ghosts, and mononormativity is the non-figurative ghost—or mononormativity pushes the bisexual from the figurative to non-figurative. Or, perhaps the bisexual is simultaneously the non/figurative ghost, perpetually existing (and haunting) in a multitude of ways.

**Loss Which Lingers**

*The Haunting of Bly Manor* centers on Dani (Victoria Pedretti), a young American currently residing in London. Dani interviews for the position of a live-in tutor and governess to two children who reside in the countryside of Bly. As soon as Dani is introduced, it is clear that she is desperately running from something—something which haunts her in reflective surfaces. In windows and mirrors, Dani catches glimpses of a shadowed figure with bright circle glasses. Once hired, Dani moves to Bly. She meets the children she’ll be caring for: Miles and Flora. She also meets the housekeeper Hannah Grose, the cook Owen, and the gardener Jamie. Throughout the first and second episodes, it’s made obvious that something is off about Bly. Flora is often seen talking to someone who is not there, Miles’ personality seems to shift from caring brother to predatory. Hannah is never seen eating or drinking and often seems dazed. She keeps noticing cracks in the wall that disappear when others look for them. Dani notices a man on a balcony that is inaccessible. Most unsettling however is Flora’s dollhouse and dolls. The dollhouse is a replication of the manor, and Flora appears to have made dolls for everyone in the house (along with other figures Dani doesn’t recognize). The dolls also seem to move around the house as
their counterparts do. Flora seems unbothered by this but tells Dani that she should stay in her room at night. The strangeness, the uncanniness of Bly continues throughout the series. Ghosts are ever-present.

Figure 12. Flora’s (Amelie Bea Smith) dollhouse in The Haunting of Bly Manor

In the other sections of this chapter, I will detail the diverse ghosts of Bly, but for now I am going to focus on Dani’s character. At Bly, Dani seems immediately flustered by Jamie (Amelia Eve). She finds herself smiling and laughing with her, and when she’s upset Jamie is one of the only people who can calm her down. Despite their obvious attraction, Dani holds back. In episode four, titled “The Way it Came,” we finally begin to explore Dani’s personal ghost. Through a series of flashbacks, we see Dani as a child with Edmund, her best friend who happens to wear circular glasses. They are childhood sweethearts and after asking her to marry him (starting at the age of ten), she finally says yes. In the scenes leading up to the wedding Dani is shown to be reluctant and seemingly detached. Finally, she admits to Edmund that she doesn’t want to be married and that while she loves him, it’s not the same as he loves her. As they’re breaking up, he gets out of the car and is immediately hit by a bus and killed. His specter is this final image Dani sees—standing in the dark, only his glasses light with the reflection of the bus’s headlights. Dani’s grief over Edmund is entangled with guilt over their relationship, but more
critically, guilt that she is not straight (enough) and thus unable to fulfill the expectation of a heterosexual wife. It is as Dani shares this secret that her lifelong friend is brutally removed from her life. Edmund’s ghost is a manifestation of Dani’s grief, a personal ghost that exclusively haunts her. Unlike the ghosts of the manor, Edmund is tied to Dani—to the bisexual figure. He is not one of Flora’s dolls.

Grief as an emotion, sensation, affect, and concept, has been studied in a variety of fields. In this section, I will be examining grief through a queer, psychoanalytic lens. Grief functions as an umbrella terms for two primary feelings of loss: mourning and melancholia. Freud first comes to mind when discussing grief. Freud establishes mourning and melancholia as similar affects of loss, yet distinct. Mourning is described as the “normal” response to lose. Though mourning causes a disruption to “normal” life, it is not considered pathological as it is (culturally) assumed to be overcome. As mourning is seen a temporary, there is no need to interfere with the process (though, it is important to note that Freud does not specify an “appropriate” time frame for mourning). In introducing melancholia, Freud notes that it is a slippery term in psychoanalysis as its definition is “fluctuating” (243). In an attempt to secure melancholia, Freud lists its symptoms as nearly identical to mourning—loss of interest in the outside world, loss of the ability to love, inhibition to activity, and painful dejection—with one key difference. Melancholia includes the symptom lowering self-regard. Freud writes that melancholia (uniquely) features “a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (244).

In furthering the distinction between mourning and melancholia, Freud describes them as reactions to the loss of one’s libidinal object choice. In mourning, the subject temporally rejects reality in order to maintain their libidinal attachments. Freud argues that, in general, “people
never willingly abandon a libidinal position,” regardless of if there is a substitute available. This is why, despite disruption to life and rejection of reality, mourning is not pathologized. It is normal for the subject to resist releasing their libidinal attachments. However, it is critical that the subject does eventually let go. Mourning must conclude, and in doing so, the ego is able to recalibrate and release the lost libidinal object so that the subject/ego may form new attachments. It is here that Freud makes another clear distinction, mourning is a reaction to loss through death. Melancholia, however, may be a reaction to death, but also to loss outside of death (244-245). A common affect of melancholia, then, is the inability to clearly understand what has been lost to the subject. This, in particular, is what pathologizes melancholia—the shift of loss from the conscious (mourning) to the unconscious (melancholia).

When queer theorists approach these categories of grief it is often to determine the ethics of grief: who is grievable? What bodies are grievable? Figures such as Judith Butler, Sara Ahmed, and Jasbir Puar come to mind for discussion of ethical grief. While certainly a critical conversation, my interest in grief is centered on not simply how the queer body grieves/is grieved, but the sensation of grief. In particular, is the bisexual affected by grief? In order to begin this exploration, I will be turning to Ahmed’s “Queer Feelings” as a launching point.

The question of grievability begins with Freud’s constructions of mourning and melancholia. It would seem obvious that the pathologized melancholia is most often associated with a queer grief. Ahmed reiterates that the “psycho-social process of coming to terms with loss” is constructed around the idea of “letting go” of the lost object (433). As mourning is seen as the “normal” process of grief, it is categorized as the ethical way to grieve. Yet, Ahmed also presents arguments that center melancholia as the most ethical due to its refusal to let go. For Freud, as much as the unconscious disruption was critical in pathologizing melancholia, further
problematized melancholia due to its affects on the ego. The melancholic subject, in their low self-regard, attempts to preserve the lost object inside itself. In order to do so, the subject causes damage to their own ego to maintain such attachments (Freud 245; Ahmed 433). Ahmed describes this process as a form of assimilation. Though it does not involve the queer body assimilating into normative spaces, “the object persists, but only insofar as it is taken within the subject, as a kind of ghostly death” (433). Arguably, the affective result of melancholia is the creation of ghostly figures, figures between the space of life and death. To clarify, this configuration of melancholia is Ahmed’s analysis of Freud’s definition. This means that the assimilation process described in unconscious. Ahmed goes on to deconstruct and refigure this idea. In order to assimilate the lost object, the object must have been external to the subject. Thus, the process of assimilation brings the external object into the subject (compromising the ego, as Freud argues). Ahmed argues, “for the object to be lost, it must already have existed within the subject” (433). Rather than assimilating for a likeness, “‘insideness’ [has] an effect of the ‘withness’ of intimacy” or rather, being affected (433). In “being with” others, we are impressed upon by them. These impressions, which may be memories or dreams, thoughts prompted by others or some visual cue, are more forceful—they actively shape our bodies (the way we move and speak). These impressions, much like affect, while forceful can be subtle and function less as a sameness to others, but as a process of “perpetual resurfacing” (434). The impressions of the object are not merely reflections of that object. Ahmed writes:

The parts of me that involve ‘impressions’ of you can never be reduced to the ‘you-ness of ‘you,’ but they are ‘more’ than just me…taking you in will not necessarily be ‘becoming like you’ or ‘making you like me,’ as others have also impressed upon me, shaping my surfaces in this way and that. (434)
Ahmed is positioning Freud’s distinctions of mourning and melancholia as almost irrelevant. Melancholia is not simply taking the object into the other and mourning is not simply letting go, for how can you let go that which has already impressed upon you? Rather, Ahmed is suggesting that a queer grief it not simply mourning or melancholia. Furthermore, melancholia (in the sense that is a preservation of an attachment) is not the creation of a ghostly being, but an acknowledgment of that which already lives on. The ghost already lingers, having impressed upon you, your maintenance of those impressions, simply recognize that which haunts. Utilizing this queer grief, I argue that this also lends itself to constructing a bisexual grief (as experienced by Dani). A grief that is neither melancholic nor mourning, but also is—a grief that finds itself in the murky in-between. It is both and neither simultaneously. This is also why I hesitate to classify these impressions, this bisexual grief, as conscious or unconscious. Rather, I think it is the relationship between the conscious and unconscious that works to maintain those impressions.

This is where we return to Dani. In her grief, she slides between mourning and melancholia, very much embodying the bisexual grief we just established. She feels guilt but not regret, and her experience of loss is not just the loss of Edmund’s life. She also loses a friendship and her ability to fulfill a “normal” life. Edmund’s impressions linger as does his ghost. Yet, unlike many of the ghosts in Bly, he is attached to Dani. He is a ghostly figure but exists in silence, a mere shade of who he once was. Dani’s attachment to Edmund is conflicted. One could easily argue that her process of grief closely matches Freud’s initial assessment: she briefly ignores reality to maintain her attachment before finally letting go in order to form new attachments. However, this analysis lacks the nuance of bisexual grief. Dani’s distress after Edmund’s death is not a refusal to release their attachments, but an inability to. Her desire to
move forward becomes categorized as “running away.” Her guilt and grief rub uncomfortably, as her grief moves between the conscious and unconscious. He moves around her peripheral, only occasionally glimpsed. In episode four, “The Way it Came,” Dani struggles with her grief visibly. After the death of Owen’s mother, Hannah, Owen, Jamie, and Dani gather to remember those they’ve lost. Dani, still struggling to process her grief and guilt, is unable to share until she and Jamie are alone. As the sit in the greenhouse, Dani painfully shares what happened before admitting that she sees him. She is initially ashamed, and quietly asks if she’s crazy (or, hysterical). In reassuring her, Jamie kisses Dani and again, Edmund appears. Despite her desire to move on and form a new relationship with Jamie, Dani is unable to.

Figure 13. Dani and Edmund face off

In the final moments of the episode, Dani sits alone. Edmund stands before her, silently staring. This is the first time that Dani is not afraid or anxious at the sight of him. Rather, she is tired. She says, “it’s just you and me then.” I bring attention to this moment because it is the
final time Edmund haunts her. He stands still and silent, and she sits, resigned. This moment highlights the bisexual grief. She is no longer hoping to let go of him but recognizing him as part of her—as impressed upon her.

If a queer grief is a refusal to let go, to maintain those impressions, what exactly is the sensation of bisexual grief? Perhaps a bisexual grief is that of partial objects. It is not mourning, it is not melancholia, and yet it is. Bisexuality fails to fit the dichotomy of heterosexual and homosexual, so it unsurprisingly fails to do the same with mourning and melancholia. As much as Edmund is impressed upon Dani, so is heterosexuality. Edmund (the heterosexual and promise of a heteronormative coupling) literally haunts Dani (the bisexual). A bisexual grief, one which mixes mourning and melancholia, acknowledges and maintain impressions, is without a home. It perches on the fence with the bisexual, ever lingering and haunting.

The Makings of a Trap (or, a Haunting within a Haunting within a Haunting)

Reminiscence, simply, is a remembrance—the act of remembering that which happened in the past. That which is reminiscent, is similar, familiar, yet not quite the same. To reminisce is to indulge in such a recollection. This indulgence is curiously defined as enjoyable or pleasurable. The trouble is, however, when reminiscences are not pleasurable or willing. The ghosts of Bly are trapped to the grounds, trapped in space, but not time. They are temporally pushed from past to present to future, so much so that their future becomes their past. As much as they haunt the grounds, they too are haunted.

The ghosts in the manor don’t actively haunt the living, but rather feature in the background. For this section I will be turning to three ghostly figures who move into the foreground, actively interacting with those who live in Bly. In order to examine the complexity
of each ghost, I will be using two main theories. First, I will be returning once more to Freud and his theory on reminiscences. Then, I will turn to Lauren Berlant to explore cruel attachments.

To be haunted by memory is to be hysterical. In Freud’s theories of repression and hysteria, he works to define hysteria as a psycho-social affliction, rather than an innate, natural pathology. As an effect of nature, hysteria was an exclusively female disease. Though Freud shifts to nurture in order to examine hysteria, he is unsuccessful in detaching gender. The theory of repression, in particular, is central to hysteria (though, it is central to most pathologies according to Freud). Repression occurs when we cannot deal with an event in our conscious minds, or it is “too distasteful.” Yet, Freud makes a clear distinction between repression and memory loss. Repression is both active and purposeful, rather than passive. It is when the repressed returns that psychological distress occurs. The pathway to hysteria is as such: some kind of sexual trauma occurs during childhood, the mind represses this event, at some point there is a trigger, which finally leads to either hysteria (female) or obsession (male). It is once we reached this point that a haunting of reminiscences begins as a symptom of hysteria/obsession. In an attempt to remove gender as an innate factor in the type of pathology experienced, Freud categorizes gender as a mental state. Thus, nurture proves to be the cause rather than nature, and it shifts hysteria from a physiological illness to a psychological one (Gray). Regardless, gender is still critical as it becomes a “factor” which determines which neuroses the subject experiences. The pathology is determined by the “attitude” of the subject at the time of the infantile sexual experience. For those who experienced the event actively and with pleasure, obsession occurs. Freud determines that primarily men suffer from obsession as men are “active partners” in sexual activities. In turn, those that suffer from hystericics were passive in the experience and felt disgust/displeasure. Hysteria then is most common in women as Freud classifies women as
passive partners in sexual activities. I will, for the sake of my argument, be strategically utilizing this theory. I fundamentally find Freud’s theory misogynistic and overly focused on sex, especially sexual acts between children. I will be dropping the root cause of sexual trauma from my analysis as it is primarily irrelevant. While Freud would counter that the afflicted suffer from something other than hysteria/obsession, the established structure of a traumatic event causing repression causing hysteria and finally, causing reminiscences is applicable. In removing the sexual aspect of trauma as well as the required infantile experience (which is not to say that none of the characters experience childhood sexual trauma), the return of the repressed becomes more flexible, more malleable, and thus more useful.

When the repressed returns, hysterics suffer from reminiscences, incomplete memories which haunt the afflicted (Halberstam 18). As the unconscious and the conscious minds rub against one another, there is a hybrid of memory and loss, a partial remembrance. The memories than haunt the afflicted, seeking resolution. The vestiges of memories become ghosts of their own. It is interesting then that the conscious mind is situated in time, whereas Freud argues that the unconscious mind is timeless. In the unconscious, time is no longer linear or finite, but expansive. It stands to reason that should one be unable to uncover the unconscious even as it haunts their mind, they shift into a limbo between normative and queer time. A limbo state that somewhat resembles a fence.

In *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, it is revealed that the ghosts are trapped in an endless loop of memory. Their ghostliness becomes a sort of hysteria in which they too suffer from reminiscences. The ghosts are locked in space but shift through time. They become “tucked in” to their memories, losing sense of (linear) time, space, and reality. The ghosts “dream hop” from memories, but they rarely are in order or complete. This cycle continues, trapping the ghosts in
their own memories until they begin to fade, and as their memory fades, they too fade, losing complexity. They lose their multiplicity, becoming forces of singularity.

Figure 14. Hannah interviews Owen, finding herself trapped in a loop of memories

Hannah Grose is introduced as the housekeeper of Bly Manor. She doesn’t live on the grounds (so we are told) and she is in charge of maintaining the manor. Hannah immediately is surrounded by a sense of unease. It is clear within a few moments of her meeting Dani, that something is a bit off. Hannah is kind but stern, she has a begrudgingly flirtatious relationship with Owen, and has a soft spot for the children. She regularly rejects offers of food or drink, and in the scenes where she does have a plate or a glass, she never actually consumes anything. As early as the first episode, Hannah begins to see unexplained cracks in the walls that aren’t visible to anyone else. Despite something being very clearly wrong, it’s chalked up to her being distracted or tired. It isn’t until episode five, “The Altar of the Dead,” that Hannah’s state begins to unravel. Though she is still unaware, the audience quickly come to realize that Hannah is a ghost and has been since the first episode. Throughout episode five, Hannah is jolted through time, reliving her own memories. Every time she begins to adjust to the time she is in; she rounds
a corner and is suddenly somewhere else. She begins each new memory slightly confused, but quickly adjusts. Yet, as the episode progresses, she becomes more unsteady, beginning to realize that something is definitely wrong. As her disorientation increases, so does her distress. Hannah becomes close to figuring out what has happened, but each time, she is shunted into another memory.

Hannah begins to even stumble into other memories. She finds herself witnessing the demise of Peter by the hands of the Lady in the Lake. Then, she is once again with Owen. Each time she returns to Owen, she gets closer to understanding what’s happening. He acts as her grounding force and the force trying to push her to remember what happen. In one of the final scenes of the episode, Hannah returns to Owen a final time. He is exasperated, her memory of their first meeting shifting to match her current state. Her frustration and hysteria take his shape.

He urges her to remember, to put the pieces (the reminiscences) together.

Hannah: You see, um, I’m having the strangest of dreams.
Owen: Are you?
Hannah: Yes, I am, but…they’re so strange. I’m having someone else’s dream.
Owen: To sleep, to sleep perchance to dream. Ay, there’s the rub. For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil. What dreams?
Hannah: Oh, well, of Peter. And, of, um… I don’t know actually, um, a woman. Okay. So, a woman in bed with him.
Owen: Oh my!
Hannah: This woman I’ve not met before, have I?
Owen: Haven’t you?
Hannah: Oh…Rebecca.
Owen: It’s two years away. Not yet, huh? Needs to cook a little longer, I think. All right then. One more time. You are Hannah Grose. The year is 1987. You’re at Bly. Dominic is dead, Charlotte is dead. Rebecca is dead. Peter is missing. You think. Flora is eight. And Miles…something is wrong with Miles.

The trouble is, Hannah has repressed her own death. Even as Owen urges her to remember where and when she is, he does not tell her that she is among the list of dead. He cannot tell her. She must realize it herself. She sees glimpses of it as she moves from memory to memory. Even so, she is unable to reconcile her death with her current state. Though she does not fully understand her death until later in the series, the episode closes with her death at the hands of Miles (who is “possessed” by Peter). Moments before Dani arrives at Bly Miles/Peter pushes Hannah into the well and in her final moments, she sees the crack in the stonework. This crack haunts, popping up in every memory she is haunted by. It is pushing on the repression, causing her hysteria. Just as Hannah dies, she experiences her first disorienting affect, as she is suddenly peering into the well, unsure what she is looking for.

Figure 15. The cracks in the well signal the cracks in Hannah’s memory.

“Boo” Who: Cruel Revelations (or Relations)

Rebecca Jessel was the previous governess to the Wingrave children. One year prior to Dani’s arrival, Rebecca lived with and cared for Flora and Miles. It seemed that everyone that met Rebecca was quickly taken with her. The other staff found her friendly and charming, the children looked up to her, and yet, it is the relationship to Peter Quint that most strongly impacted her. Upon their first meeting, they are attracted and curious about each other. Peter
works for Henry Wingrave, the children’s uncle, and is responsible for hiring Rebecca. Peter finds excuses to visit the manor, claiming to be doing work for Henry. Though Peter is initially kind, insightful, and observant there is an undertone of resentment and rage to his being. He identifies with Rebecca, as both have struggled to move up the capitalist hierarchy. Rebecca is just as taken with Peter.

When the audience is first introduced to the couple, it is through several offhanded comments made by Henry, Hannah, Owen, and Jamie. Peter is missing, having stolen from Henry, and on the run. Rebecca, in his absence, committed suicide. In episode three, “The Two Faces, Part One,” Jamie tells Dani:

The wrong kind of love can fuck you up. Follow you. Make you do some really stupid shit. And those two, believe me, that was the wrong kind of love…I saw how he twisted himself into her. Burrowed in deep. I know why so many people mix up love and possession, but guess what that means? He didn’t just trap her. He trapped himself. And I hope she haunts that fucker forever.

Figure 16. Rebecca and Peter in episode three, “The Two Faces, Part One”

This specific comment from Jamie is relevant in several ways. First, it is the first real hint that Peter is not missing but trapped in Bly as a ghost. It also indicates that Rebecca and Peter
continue to haunt each other in death, in a maze of their own memories. Yet, the part that stands out most to me is the comment on the wrong kind of love, a love that regardless of how badly it was, endured. The notion is “romantic”—the endurance of love—yet, for Rebecca and Peter, this love led only to death. Much like Hannah, Rebecca is a hysterical ghost, haunted by her memories. The difference lies in her attachments. Where Hannah was so attached to life that she repressed her death, causing the haunting of reminiscences, Rebecca is fully aware of her situation. Further, Rebecca also mimics Dani’s grief. She mourns, she is melancholic, but these feelings begin even before she loses anything. In this space between grief and reminiscences, Rebecca is haunted by her attachments.

Building off Freud’s construction of attachments revolving around grief, Lauren Berlant reexamines the relation of the subject to their object of desire in order to establish a new psychoanalytic attachment style. Berlant begins by shifting the object of desire into a “cluster of promises” (93). As a cluster of promises, the subject is drawn to the possibility their attachment offers them. This reframing highlights the endurance the subject has in maintaining their attachment, even when the attachment is detrimental to the subject. The object of desire is now a site of potentiality and possibility. Berlant suggests that by situating the object as “the cluster of promises,” it allows us “to encounter what is incoherent or enigmatic in our attachments” (93). The cluster of promises provides reasoning to the affects which push and pull us towards our objects of desire, whether they be other people, institutions, or a feeling. It provides a certain flexibility in not only understanding desire, but also why we persist in maintaining proximity to our desire. Our attachments are tied to optimism—the promises we seek. Berlant makes a clear distinction between optimism as the feeling of positivity and optimism as a type of endurance. Attachments are optimistic in the subject’s endurance of proximity to their cluster of promises,
regardless of how it feels. In fact, the feeling of such an attachment could be the opposite of optimistic. Berlant defines this attachment as such: “‘cruel optimism’ names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic” (94). Even as the subject’s attachment is compromised, they are unable to end it. The cruelty of the attachment is this, the destruction of the subject in order to maintain a threatening attachment to their object of desire. The subject’s sense of self and sense of preservation become entangled with their object of desire. In many ways this attachment mimics Freud’s construction of melancholia. The subject attempts to preserve the object inside itself, regardless of the harm done to the ego. Where cruel optimism differs however, is that this internalization to preserve the object occurs prior to loss. This process is prompted primarily by fear of loss. The maintenance of the attachment becomes equal to the continuation of life. The loss of the compromised object of desire is the loss of hope (Berlant 94-95).

The idea of cruel optimism is easily embodied in a toxic relationship, specifically that of Rebecca and Peter. Peter is possessive and unrelenting. He hates the idea of sharing Rebecca’s attention or affection, even with the children. He regularly pulls her away, attempting to isolate her. Rebecca notices these behaviors, but quickly dismisses them, either unwilling or unable to recognize them for what they are. Every sweet moment they have is tinged with a sense of unease. Peter is kind then aggressive. He gives her gifts before slut-shaming her. He adores her before berating her. It is constant whiplash and indeed, the audience watches as Peter burrows himself into Rebecca. Even with all the signs, Rebecca loves him. She seeks him out. She continues in enduring their attachment for the possibilities he represents—love, trust, security, but also the potential of climbing through the social ranks, securing her dream job, and moving
up in the world. The potential he offers her allows her to endure the very clear issues between them.

Their twisted attachment becomes much clearer in episode seven, “The Two Faces, Part Two.” By this point, the audience knows that Peter was killed by the ghost known as The Lady in the Lake, a haunting figure that only emerges during the night. We also know that Peter and Rebecca have been possessing Miles and Flora. Though this word is never used, the two ghosts occasionally enter the bodies of the children, “tucking” them away into their own memories. This explains Flora’s occasional black outs and Miles’ bizarre mood swings. Throughout the episode, both Peter and Rebecca are pulled into their memories, unable to escape. Peter repeatedly returns to one of his final days where his mother visits him. In the memory, she blackmauls him for money which prompts him stealing from Henry and attempting to leave the country with Rebecca. He returns to this memory repeatedly, each time pulling him apart a little more. This memory is very telling of Peter’s actions, not only his criminal activities, but how he treats Rebecca. It’s alluded that his father physically abused him, and likely also sexually abused. His mother did nothing, leaving him alone as a child. It’s the loneliness that Peter fears above all else.

Rebecca is shunted through several memories in the time Peter relives one continuously. When see Rebecca being interrogated by the police, unable to accept that Peter abandoned her. It is at the height of her distress that her memory shifts, pushing her into a new moment. She is distracted and lonely. When Peter returns to Rebecca as a ghost, she is furious. She does not understand he is dead, only that he left her. He tries to explain and it’s only when she attempts to touch him that his ghostliness is revealed. Despite her distress, Rebecca is insistent that they can still be together that they could leave Bly, but Peter tells her he cannot leave the grounds. They
argue about the situation and Peter unintentionally possesses her, putting himself inside her body. When he is shunted out, Rebecca immediately asks where she was (which the audience knows as being tucked away or dream hopping). The two attempt to leave the grounds with Peter in Rebecca’s body but are still unsuccessful.

Peter returns to Rebecca after some time, disappointed with their failure. He tells her he figured out a way for them to be together, to “touch each other and taste each other.” Rebecca is hesitant but is unable to let go of him. He tells her she must invite him in and decide that they will be together forever, that they are permanent. He describes the process as “it’s just you and me…becoming us.” She then responds with the words that haunt the series: “it’s you. It’s me. It’s us.” Suddenly Rebecca returns to the memory of Peter gifting her the coat. It begins as it originally had but Rebecca quickly realizes she is in a memory. In her body, Peter walks into the lake. In her memory Rebecca can tell something is wrong, she is unsettled and suddenly she is shunted back into her body as she drowns. Below her she can see Peter’s decaying body, unable to escape the water around her. As her dead body floats to the surface, her ghost stands at the edge of the lake sobbing.
In life Rebecca was trapped in her cruel attachment to Peter, so much so that it led to her death. Her inability to lose him, pushed her to endure, to preserve their attachment. Certainly, Peter’s attachment killed him too, but it is Rebecca who is the most interesting. She is haunted by her attachment to Peter, an attachment that steadily destroyed her life and death. She is further haunted by her memories, memories filled with cruel optimisms.

**Something’s Not Quite Right**

The uncanny as a sensation is common in the horror genre. It’s used to signal to readers/viewers that something is not quite right. It creates sensations that are unsettling in their familiarly, yet unknowability. The uncanny comes from the merging of aesthetics (of literature) and psychoanalysis, centering on the feeling of the fearful and frightening. The psychoanalytic concept comes from Freud, who synthesized it as “the class of frightening things that leads us back to what is known and familiar” (Freud 193, Gray). The key to understanding his conception is in the etymology of the German words *heimlich* (canny) and *unheimlich* (uncanny), both having dual meanings. *Heimlich* means first, the known and familiar, and second, the secret and unknown. *Unheimlich* is the unknown and unfamiliar, and the revealed and uncovered. *Unheimlich* as the revealed refers to that which is supposed to be kept secret by is revealed inadvertently. This connects with Freud’s idea of “parapraxis, the inadvertent slip of the tongue that reveals a hidden truth” (Gray). Freud identifies the uncanny as a revelation of what is private or hidden, not only from others but also from the self. Elizabeth Freeman, in constructing queer temporality, examined Freud’s uncanny. The uncanny is yet another symptom of repression, something (un)familiar and (un)known, surfacing the edges of the conscious mind. Freeman
identifies the uncanny as a “dialectic between bodily feelings and temporal alterity,” however, the feelings are “unpleasant and…[removed] from the body” (59). Further, Freeman argues that Freud’s uncanny does little to challenge chrononormativity of heterosexist modes of life. Similarly, I find Freud’s understanding of the uncanny limited. In the process of the uncanny revealing what is known but hidden, time/reality becomes realigned, or reoriented. To reorient is to “straighten any queer effects” (Ahmed 66). It is helpful to turn to Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology*. Queer (or bi) moments appear “slantwise” on the vertical-horizontal axes of normativity. To reorient is to realign with the normative axes. This realignment in Freud’s conception of the uncanny is a revelatory moment—identifying that which was unsettling, cured of repression and psychosis. This process is also outlined in the phenomenology of anxiety and fear. In analyzing the uncanny in film, Daniel Bradley identifies fear as definite whereas anxiety is produced from “nothing” or rather, the open mesh of possibilities. Where the uncanny is resolved with the familiar, phenomenological anxiety is more evasive but also resolvable (Bradley 181). If we detach the notion of resolution from the uncanny, it’s bi-potentiality maintains through (mis)alignment of space and time. It centralizes ambiguity, destabilizing mononormativity.

The ghost is quite uncanny in its resemblance of humanity, yet lack of life. The ghosts that haunt Bly exist within and outside of time. They are trapped to the grounds, locked in space. The ghosts are “half-glimpsed objects,” beings that fade into the background features of the landscape. Even as they vanish, they are integral. The ghosts are figures which exist in the background of the space they inhabit yet cause (dis)orienting affects on all those around them. The body, which is already impressed upon, reacts to the uncanny by attempting to (re)orient itself in time and space. The ghosts of Bly are unable to (re)orient, trapping them in a perpetually
queer timeline. To further explore the uncanniness of the ghosts at Bly, I turn to the original ghost: the Lady in the Lake.

In episode eight, “The Romance of Certain Old Clothes,” we are introduced to the character of Viola Willoughby (Kate Siegel), the original resident of Bly Manor. Viola and her sister Perdita (Katie Parker) lived in the 17th century. Following the death of their father, they were forced to seek out marriage in order to maintain his finances and control of the Manor. Determined to keep the Manor in their family, they sent for a distant cousin, Arthur Lloyd, who would marry Viola. Their initial interactions established Viola as willful, stubborn, and witty. She was smart and determined. Following the wedding, Viola found herself restless: “she would sleep. She would wake. She would walk. She would sleep.” In her marriage, she found companionship, and eventually had a daughter. Following the birth, Viola cradles her newborn daughter tells her: “It is you. It is me. It is us.”

Shortly after giving birth, Viola grew ill with tuberculous. She was forced into near isolation, unable to be around her family or her daughter for fear she would pass her sickness to them. With no solution, they prepared for Viola to die. Yet, as she was read her last rites, Viola refused to accept her imminent death. She refused to repeat her rites, openly refusing to die. Despite her illness, she continued living for nearly five years after her refusal. At night she would walk the house, following the path to her former room. Viola filled a trunk with her finest dresses and jewels and covered them with rose petals. She asked her husband to swear that he would only allow their daughter to have them, that he would keep them locked away until she grows into them. He promised to keep it locked away for only Isabel. Tired of Viola’s sickness and the meanness that came with it, Perdita smothered her until she finally died. Arthur kept his word to Viola, locking the chest in the attic and hiding away the key until he could pass it on to
his daughter. After her death, Perdita and Arthur married quietly. Perdita was unable to become a mother and unable to fulfill the role of a mother for Isabel. As time went on, Perdita began to resent the trunk of Viola’s fine clothes. She pushed Arthur to open the trunk and sell the items within to provide them with stability and security as they struggled to maintain the Manor, but he refused. He had made a promise. Unwilling to accept his answer, Perdita stole the keys and went up the attic.

Following Viola’s death, she awoke to find herself locked in a room, unable to escape. Inside the room she found rose petals, the jewels she had loved in life, and all her beautiful gowns. She was locked away in her own trunk with nothing to do but sleep, wake, walk, and wait—wait for her daughter to open the trunk and be reunited. There was no sense of time and no space but the room she was in. Perhaps it was her refusal of the last rites, or her sheer will to be reunited with her child. She knew she was dead and that her family was moving forward without her. Then, Perdita opened the trunk and with it, Viola’s rage. Perdita was killed by Viola’s ghost and setting forth both of their trappings. Superstitious due to the inexplicable circumstances of Perdita’s death, Arthur and Isabel threw the trunk into the lake on the grounds. She was officially abandoned and, in her anger, and hurt, she refused to go. Her rage became a sort of gravity at Bly. She would sleep, she would wake, and she would walk, walk back to her home. She would go to her room, looking for her husband and daughter. She would only remember that they were gone when she saw the empty bed, and so she would return to the lake. Each time she woke, she felt fresh heartbreak. In her ceaseless routine, Viola would wake to remember her family and forget them in her sleep. Any person that came across her in her walk, her rage would take them, trapping them at Bly with her. They were stuck in her well of gravity. In the constant state of forgetting and remembering, over and over, Viola began to fade. With each memory that faded
away, so too did her sense of self. She forgot her name and the reason why she walked, only

driven by her anger and her search. The Lady of Bly faded into nothingness, and as she forgot
her essence slipped away. She was now the faceless Lady in the Lake.

Figure 18. The Lady of Bly becomes the Lady in the Lake

Viola’s ghost is the epicenter for all the uncanniness at Bly. Her existence is uncanny and
she causes uncanniness. Viola’s lived for years out of spite and in death, her spite continued. Her
uncanniness, arguably, is as a specter of mononormativity. Once beautiful and witty, Viola
becomes singular. She wants only one thing, she does only one thing. Her rage has consumed
others, turning them into ghostly beings. Her rage trapped all those who die at Bly, not only
those she kills. Just as Peter is trapped by her rage, he traps Rebecca and Hannah. It continues,
erasing multiplicity—erasing possibilities.

Beyond the figure of the Lady in the Lake, the uncanny is a uniquely bisexual sensation
at Bly. Its key feature is ambiguity, existing in the space between the conscious and unconscious.
If ghosts too are figures of bi-textuality, haunting functions uncannily, blurring the lines between
life and death, reality and nightmare. This misalignment of reality disrupts (hetero)normative
timelines, causing the haunting affects. As past and present blend, the conscious and unconscious
minds rub against each other. Outside of normative time/space, the body has the potential to
become fluid, its edges also blurring and blending, creating half-glimpsed object. Despite the
distress caused by misalignment (and in turn grief, hysteria, reminiscences, etc.), the uncanny
also opens space for unknown potentiality. Much like queer, the uncanny is an open mesh of possibilities, feeding on ambiguity and resisting re-stabilization.

**Mononormativity Kills!**

As *The Haunting of Bly Manor* comes to an end, Dani comes face to face with the Lady in the Lake. In an attempt to spare Dani from the ghost’s rage, Flora presents herself. The Lady in the Lake seems her own daughter in Flora and gladly takes her into her arms, returning to the lake. All the living figures as well as Rebecca and Hannah attempt to stop the Lady in the Lake unsuccessfully. Sensing it to be hopeless, Rebecca offers to tuck Flora away so that she won’t have to feel anything, Rebecca will feel it for her, as Peter once offered her though it is clear Rebecca has no intention of leaving Flora alone like she was. Dani chases them into the lake and screams for Viola’s ghost to stop and in an act of desperation, Dani utters those haunting words: “it’s you. It’s me. It’s us.”

Dani did save Flora, now the one holding onto her as she climbs from the lake. Yet, Dani has taken the Lady in the Lake into her. Where Peter or Rebecca would tuck away the consciousness of the living, Viola has faded so much that she is a mere whisper in the back of Dani’s mind. Even as a whisper though, Dani already feels the edges of her rage and pain. With Dani’s invitation, the ghosts of Bly are freed from Viola’s gravity. They can rest.

It would seem that this is a moment of resolution, a realignment of what was slantwise. The grief as mourning and melancholia, hysteria as reminiscences and cruel optimisms, and the uncanniness of it all…has been revealed, resolved, cured. However, the story does not end. We watch as Dani and Jamie leave Bly together. Dani is terrified that Viola will consume her, but Jamie, not fully understanding what happened, reassures Dani that she will stay with her until the end. And so, they stay together. They spend years living and building a life together. Even as
they grow happy and a sense of security falls, Dani begins to see Viola’s uncanny visage in reflective surfaces—another internalized ghost. Dani slowly begins to lose blocks of time and she tells Jamie that she can feel Viola pushing against her. As Dani begins to fade and Viola becomes more present, Dani decides to return to Bly to avoid hurting Jamie. When Jamie realizes Dani is gone, she returns to the grounds as well. She rushes to the lake and dives in, searching for Dani. Dani’s lifeless body floats below the surface—the new Lady in the Lake. Jamie begs her to take her with her, to keep her, Dani does not. She would not.

![Figure 19. Dani becomes the new Lady in the Lake](image)

The moment of Dani inviting Viola into her is a unique one because of its implications. At first look, it’s a moment of active multiplicity and a sort of queer reproduction. Dani effectively stitches her mind and soul with another, creating a site of potentiality. However, that is not the actual result of the act, but the opposite. In her ghostliness, Viola has become reduced to a single thing, a single feeling. All she is, is rage. Her rage drives her forward, it was her rage that trapped all others at Bly, including herself. In her faded, Viola consistently lost her multiplicity, becoming a specter of mononormativity. If Dani represents the bisexual and Viola represents mononormativity, then act of taking Viola into herself is the act of the bisexual internalizing mononormativity. In accepting Viola, Dani’s truly became a half-glimpsed object. The grief she spent so long trying to ease, the failure to be what she was expected to be—
heterosexual—returned. Viola’s spirit had long since been reduced to singularity. The bisexual body is haunted by mononormativity, and once internalized it slowly kills them.

In examining the ghostly figures of Bly, we begin to see clear sensations that they evoke, sensations that the bisexual body experiences. The affect of these half-glimpsed objects haunt and are haunted. In a broad sense, haunting itself is a bi-sensation. Yet, just like the bisexual, the haunting is full of multiplicities. It is haunted and haunting, layered with different feelings. Haunting is a bisexual sensation, but so is the uncanniness it evokes, and the hysteria. Haunting occurs spectrally and mentally, reminiscences causing (mis)alignments. Bisexual grief, too, lingers as a sensation that openly blends mourning and melancholia. I said above that this bisexual grief was one without a home, but one that nests itself on the fence. Perhaps bisexuals and their grief do have a home, a home in a haunted house.
CONCLUSION: GETTING OUR HANDS DIRTY

Behind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting memory of ‘contagions,’ of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder.

—Foucault, Discipline & Punish

I wrote my thesis during a global pandemic. That is a weird thing to think or say, but it’s the truth. Prior to the shut-down back in March of 2020, I had loose ideas of what my topic would be and who would sit on my committee. I had just started to feel settled in Chicago and graduate school. I had made friends and was having experiences I never expected to. I don’t think there’s anything I could say about the pandemic and quarantine that hasn’t already been said before. It was isolating, depressing, stressful, and just generally terrible. Many people had these experiences. Many people experienced worse. When I think about this time period, I think of my bi-sensations—sensations I felt and saw others feel. Craving: a deep piercing hunger to be among the living. Haunting: grief and hysteria as loss became inescapable.

Mostly, I am intrigued by the effect of contagion and isolation on my writing. I did not seek out topics that were reflective of the world around me, and yet it happened anyway. In the final moments of this thesis, I want to speak on feelings less as an affective force. I want to talk about what I felt—the isolation and depression, but also joy and excitement. I was and am exhausted. I did and do grieve. Even in those moments, I found companionship. I discovered. I flickered between appearance and disappearance during a time of contagion, as Foucault would say. This was something many people did simultaneously and historically. I found friends in my present and in the past—haunted by contagion and pandemic.
The aim of this project was not to explicitly identify bisexuals in film and television, nor was it to discuss the validity of any specific representations. In examining the bi-potentiality of monstrous figures, the questions I hoped to answer were so simple yet so complex. I wanted to know what it felt like to exist bisexually. In the opening of this essay, I said that I wondered what it feels like to exist or to not. This question was directed both at the literal feelings of my own bisexual body and affective sensation that the bisexual would experience. Monsters, much like bisexuals, exist in the in-between, perched atop fences or crouching in alleyways. The bisexual is the monster and the monster, the bisexual. This is not a new analysis. LGBTQ+ Studies and Queer Theory have thoroughly examined the ways in which monsters function as metaphorical queers. Yet, in saying that the bisexual is monstrous, I do not demonize the bisexual and I do not equate monstrosity as exclusively metaphorical of bisexuals. That would be both lazy and dull. Really what I am saying, and questioning, is the role of humanity. I am less curious about what makes a monster and more about what makes a human. Life is full of ambiguity and ambivalences. Any queer theorist can tell you that the norm is established through the other. The other is defined first—it exists prior to the normal. Certainly, you could say that in knowing our monsters, we know our humans. Halberstam highlighted the technologies of monsters, the blending of “othered” identities to create a monster, yet what distinguishes humans from monsters? It is certainly fair to argue that humans are monsters, monsters which attempt to not be monsters through creating new monsters. Further, where do we draw the line between what is a monster and what is simply monstrous? Is there a line? Is the monster simply the other? The unknown? If so, what do we do when we know the monster? Does it remain a monster?

The specific sensations I have identified circled monsters: vampiric and ghostly. Those vampiric sensations were entrenched in want—the ways in which a body is oriented towards
what it desires. The first specific sensation is craving, a deep powerful wanting. A hunger that awaits its prey with fanged teeth. We see this as Dracula hunts Jonathan across countries and in David’s pursual of Michael (Dracula 2020; The Lost Boys 1987). Both Dracula and David are literally and figuratively hungry for their prey. Those ghostly sensations dealt with disorientation and loss—a haunting and the features of it like grief, reminiscences, and the uncanny. These sensations are depicted in The Haunting of Bly Manor (2020) through numerous characters: Dani grieves, Hannah and Rebecca are hysterical, and the Lady in the Lake is a vortex of uncanniness.

Already we see how hunger and haunting are two primary sensations, yet even so, they are multiple. It is not a single hunger or even simply just hunger. It is not just haunting. It is complex and messy, and even the pieces that make up haunting are layered. As I’ve shown, even the word “grief” has numerous, overlapping meanings. Multiplicity blends into each and every sensation of the bisexual.

What I enjoy about these bi-sensations (and those I still seek to uncover) is the inherent messiness of them. No sensation is unique to the bisexual or even to the queer body, they are human, even if I am unsure what that means. There is no neat analysis or conclusion to be drawn. This messy (perhaps bloody) examination of bi-sensations resists neatness. It resists being known—firmly remaining atop the fence in an ambiguous state. There is no sensation that will be singular to the bisexual body, as the bisexual body resists all singularity. Certainly, the accusation of bisexual as confused holds some weight. But, where this confusion is typically seen in the identification of sexuality, I appropriate it. Rather than the bisexual as a confused hetero-/homosexual, the bisexual embraces the uncertainty and the ambiguity of their existence and feelings. Like those ghostly beings trapped within/without themselves, the bisexual is equally confused and confusing. This is the epistemic strength of bisexuality theory; the aim is
not to disambiguate but to acknowledge those messy entanglements. In maintaining ambiguity, bisexuals as queers further queer queer theory, resisting binary divisions as it questions them.

In pushing forward (and against), I still seek out monstrous bisexuals. I turn towards those beings that live in alleyways and on fences. I seek monsters which bring about the question: what does it mean to be more human than humans? The cyborg, a modern Frankenstein, pieced together of humans and monsters with carnal—fleshy and erotic—and plastic technologies until they are uncanny in their resemblance of humanity. Yet, even plastic, cyborgs/androids certainly feel. Films such as the Blade Runner duology (1982, 2017), I, Robot (2004), and the series Black Mirror (2011-present) examine the mess of wires and veins, memories and emotions, between synthetic and natural life. These visual texts put forward the question of what it means to be human. The alien too, is a being beyond human and perhaps too human. The blend of science-fiction and horror is filled with stories of aliens as monstrosity, yet not all cinematic aliens are easily confined to the category of monster. I think to classic films like Alien (1979) and Predator (1986) in which aliens certainly are vicious monsters (perhaps mononormative in their singular desire to destroy). However, I also turn to films which complicate the notion of alien as monster such as the Men in Black series, Arrival (2016), and even Venom (2018). Much like cyborgs, aliens force the question of what humanity is and what it means to be human.

I seek out that which terrifies. I seek beings that bring about new, equally messy feelings, creatures that move in the night and bring about uncanniness and pleasurable fear.
EPILOGUE: WHAT AM I?

they said your body is a temple
if it is, it’s been forgotten to time
crumbling pillars and ivy covered stone
but no, that’s not quite right
they said your body is a home
a place of refuge but one that
can be burgled, the windows shattered,
and the rooms ransacked
if my body is a home, whose home is it?
can i really say it is my own?

is my body even a body? what is a body?
is it simply a mess of arteries and blood?
marrow and fat? is it a layer of skin,
one which forms over day old milk?
is it a collection of stars and planets?
is it the absence of life? the void of space?
perhaps it is a bog, a mossy green cover
hiding the depths beneath
or a moist gully filled with the hums of cicadas
maybe it is a cavern of screeching bats and brittle crystals

or, maybe, when all is said,
the body is nothing, my body is nothing
my body is deconstructed, unarticulated
perhaps i have no body
i am no-body


VITA

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