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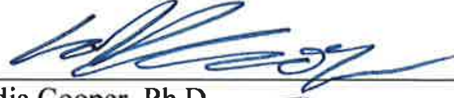

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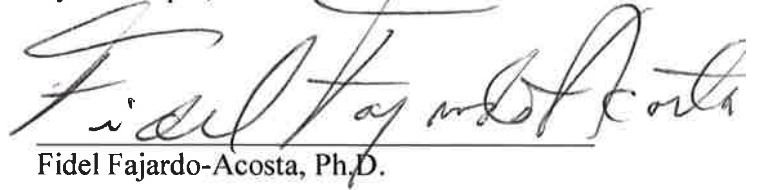

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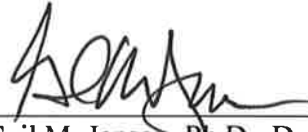

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J. SHERIDAN LE FANU'S *CARMILLA*: A TRI-PART EXPLORATION OF THE VAMPIRIC NOVEL

By
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A THESIS

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Abstract

This thesis presents three new interpretations into *Carmilla* scholarship. This thesis moves away from the current interpretations, which use queer theory with Laura and Carmilla and an Anglo-Irish context, by looking at characters largely ignored by current scholarship and by engaging politics in countries other than Ireland and Britain.

My first chapter proposes a different relationship than one of potential lesbian lovers for Carmilla and Laura. I propose that the characters need to be read in terms of a familial and sisterly relationship. By altering the common reading of Laura and Carmilla, I bring the focus of the chapter to the character of Laura's father and demonstrate that, in addition to embodying the nation of England, he and England are at fault for the ruin of their daughters.

My second chapter examines General Spielsdorf and proposed that he performs the hero role in a novel that notably lacks such a character. I look specifically at his surname and how he often parallels, in both appearance and actions, the novel's Styrian setting. Then, I build a case for the General representing the Austrian side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and performing the heroic deed of building a diverse army that fights for under him and for one purpose, defeating the vampire. By doing so, I claim that the General is a wish fulfillment for the Austrian side of that empire and becomes the hero of the novel.

My final chapter looks at Bertha Rheinfeldt's character and the cautionary tale that she presents simply with her name. I draw parallels between her character and that of Bertha Mason both in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. By engaging these outside texts, I propose that Bertha Rheinfeldt's cautionary tale is one that warns father's of losing domestic control and that such a warning can be expanded into a warning for empires and their ability to control their colonies. Therefore, with these chapters I broaden current scholarship from the gender and queer theory that currently dominates it as well as introduce a more global reading of the text.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Matthew Reznicek for his amazing guidance and support throughout this process. Without your vast knowledge of Irish literature and politics, I never could have completed this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Lydia Cooper and Dr. Fidel Fajardo-Acosta for the advice and criticism they gave me as members of my committee. The three of you have been managed to be both advisors and cheerleaders for me, and I can never thank you enough for that. Thank you, Jill Dickey for always being the glue that keeps Creighton's English Department together as well as providing me with technical support in the final stages of this project. Finally, I would also like to thank the Creighton's English Department for the support that each professor gave me throughout this process.

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Introduction

The Construction of an Idea

The topic of this thesis arose out of frustration in finding sources for a conference paper on Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. I was initially interested in a topic extremely similar to the one discussed in chapter one, but upon the beginning of my research, I discovered that the majority of sources covered the same characters from the same theoretical standpoint, Carmilla and Laura using queer theory and generally in regards to the political tensions between nineteenth century Britain and Ireland. While the Anglo-Irish context being examined through the potential lesbian relationship that appears to develop between Carmilla and Laura certainly has its merits, I believed then, as I believe now, that this specific point of view was not the only way to examine Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. In fact, I find that, when novels can easily be interpreted through the a gender or queer theoretical position, these text often have little other scholarship besides those ones, and I find that very limiting in research material but also acknowledgment of the complexities of a text. Thus, out of this frustration began a research process that has led to the creation of this master's thesis.

While the chapters of this thesis certainly build off one another, the readings and interpretations presented in each of them cannot be read concurrently. The goal of this body of work was to extend *Carmilla* scholarship beyond that of gender and queer theory, and I do this by examining the familial relations over the romantic ones, while also engaging the politics of nineteenth century Europe and not merely Britain and Ireland. Le Fanu himself was particularly involved in the politics of nineteenth century

Ireland, as can be seen from various newspaper articles he wrote for the newspaper that he would eventually own, the *Dublin Evening Mail.*[1] Therefore, the ability of *Carmilla* to be interpreted in terms of politics and empires of the nineteenth century is the most telling feature of his novels. Though he appears to try to hide political motivations through engaging characters and plots, he hides such messages behind a "transparent veil," and uncovering the political tensions present in his novel has become a common theme of *Carmilla* scholarship, though often the scholarship only engages the British and Irish political tensions (Le Fanu 13).[2]

However, my research veers off this common path, as the characters discussed are those overlooked by many scholars. Furthermore, two of the three chapters engage political tensions that are not British or Irish, which is an attempt to reveal the aspects of the novel that span the globe and cannot be interpreted within an Anglo-Irish reading. Additionally, none of the research that follows analyzes the novel's characters through the potential lesbian relationship between Laura and Carmilla, nor do I use a queer theoretical standpoint in any of my chapters. The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate the possibility and need for scholarship to examine *Carmilla* as more than a lesbian vampiric novel but instead as a complex work of art that layers geography and politics on top of one another, which must be disentangled.

Yet, despite this goal, the research performed by previous scholars into this particular area have greatly influenced my own work, especially the ones that use the Laura-Carmilla as a way to read the relationship between the Anglo-Irish and the

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[1] Examples of Le Fanu's political writings in that newspaper are discussed at length by Matthew Gibson (2006).

[2] My third chapter discusses the implications of the "transparent veil" within the Styrian setting of the novel and in regards to General Spielsdorf.

Catholic Irish.[3] While few of them are cited in the chapters that follow, I do want to mention a few works that either have great significance in Carmilla scholarship or greatly influenced my own interpretations.

The Scholarly Tradition

Tamar Heller's 1996 article, "The Vampire In The House: Hysteria, Female Sexuality, And Female Knowledge In Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' (1872)" finds its way into nearly every works cited or reference page for articles that engage *Carmilla* from any theoretical standpoint. This early article displays lays a lot of the ground work that scholars such as Marilyn Brock (2009) and Ana Gratiela Gal (2008) use to build not merely queer readings but maternal ones as well because she engages several aspects of femininity and sexuality in this article. Heller essentially creates an early foundation, which generates much of the gender and queer discussion that is found in current scholarship. Though I never cite Heller within the chapters of this thesis, her examination of the female characters certainly influenced how I interpreted the novel, even though I diverged from her sexual reading of the novel.

Another scholar that greatly contributes to *Carmilla* scholarship is Marilyn Brock. As one of Heller's successors, Brock engages the feminine elements within the novel, specifically the idyllic "good English mother" (Brock 120). She connects ideas of reverse colonization with the purpose of marriage being "to control female sexuality" (Brock 121). Much of her article examines the nuances of Carmilla's ability to lure Laura "a potential good English mother" with her "aggressive sexuality" (Brock 122). I nearly

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[3] My first chapter looks directly at the Anglo-Irish perspective but through a familial and sisterly relationship as opposed a romantic one.

used Brock's discussion of female sexuality and the need to control it in my examination of Bertha Rheinfeldt. However, because so much of her argument was premised on the "good English mother" and my reading of Bertha Rheinfeldt falls into the Austro-Hungarian context and, like the other chapters, examines her character through a familial lens. Therefore, Brock's scholarship accurately cannot be used within my own chapters. However, her article also demonstrates a another trend in *Carmilla* scholarship to engage both Le Fanu's novel as well as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.[4]

Yet, out of all the scholarship that exists on Le Fanu's *Carmilla,* the scholar that I most directly took inspiration from was Renee Fox and her essay "*Carmilla* and the Politics of Indistinguishability." Here, Fox looks at the many issues and limitations that reading the novel solely through the Anglo-Irish and queer perspectives. The one aspect in particular that Fox brings up the nineteenth century's disbelief of a lesbian relationship. According to Fox, "passionate friendships between women" were common in the nineteenth century, and they were not considered "lesbian" relationships (Fox 114). With this knowledge in mind, I initially turned towards an interpretation that favored the dysfunctional familial relationship over that of the potential lesbian lover because it appears to be more historically accurate, particularly with texts like Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*.

Ultimately, I respect and acknowledge the previous scholarship on *Carmilla*, and in many ways, all of it influenced my research in one manner or another, whether it led me to completely disagree with their findings or, as is the case with Fox, created a desire to answer the questions and complexities that arise in that piece of scholarship. However,

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[4] Scholars that look at both *Dracula* and *Carmilla* include: Elizabeth Signorotti (1996), Benson Saler and Charles A. Ziegler (2005), Paul E. H. Davis (2013), Robert A. Smart (2013), and Shirley Ibach (2014).

my thesis is meant to deviate from the normal *Carmilla* scholarship, and as the chapters continue, I veer into examinations that have fewer and fewer prior scholars delving into a similar or even remotely related interpretation. Therefore, my first chapter engages an Anglo-Irish reading but from a familial and paternal mode as opposed to a sexual one. My second and third chapters deviate even further by looking towards a more global interpretation of the text, making use of the novel's Styrian setting and the use of the name Bertha to make a connection to the West Indies.

Chapter one

The first chapter, I propose that, instead of the lesbian lover relationship, the relationship between Carmilla and Laura resembles that of adoptive sisters. After stating this conclusion, the chapter moves to engage the little studied character of Laura’s father, and therefore engages the familial perspective of the novel, specifically through a paternal lens. By examining *Carmilla* through this paternal mode, Laura father’s embodiment of England becomes starkly clear, and the aspect of failure on the part of Laura’s father as well as the nation of England are revealed and explored.

This chapter has three goals. The first of which is to lay the groundwork for a familial analysis. This proposed family tree leads directly into the argument that I make in the two chapters that follow, and therefore, providing a clear understanding of this family tree is crucial to the entirety of my thesis, even though the chapters cannot be read concurrently. While the second and third chapters do alter the family tree explored in the first chapter; however, the idea of the family unit and the domestic sphere carries through each chapter as they each engage character that have previously received little attention.

The second goal of this chapter deals directly with the issues laid out by Fox. I hope to address and fix the inconsistencies that arise from looking at the novel through solely a gender or queer theoretical reading. This includes problems such as "uncertainty" in Laura's identity and Laura's complicit role and also dismal of Carmilla's advances. By moving the relationship away from purely lesbian advances and into one of sisterhood, specifically when one sister is adopted, the grievances that Fox highlights in her essay are acknowledged and answers to Laura's strange actions and identity explored.

The final goal of this chapter is essentially to follow through with the thesis that the struggles and ruin of the daughters, adopted and biological, arise from the father's failure to protect them. To accomplish this, I look to the political tensions between Britain and Ireland during the nineteenth century and draw connections specifically to the Fenians. I also look to Laura's father's overuse and over reliance on the natural and the rational and how this extreme reasoning leads to the destruction. I eventually make the claim that the ruin that arises in *Carmilla* resembles the potential ruin of the Anglo-Irish in regards to Britain's failure to answer the Irish Question and fully control the conquered Ireland.

Chapter two

My second chapter builds off the idea of the family tree; however, it does not directly address the family tree itself. Instead, the goals of this chapter center on the character of General Spielsdorf and his connection to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The General has received very little scholarly attention, despite that fact that he learns goes in search of the necessary knowledge in order to learn how to kill a vampire and he is

responsible for assembling the team that brings about Carmilla's destruction. General Spielsdorf, for all intents and purposes, is the hero of Carmilla, but Laura merely summarizes his glorious climax because she does not attend the vampire's execution. Thus, this chapter aims to give the General's character some much-deserved scholarly attention.

I do this by looking at the General in terms of the Styrian, or Austro-Hungarian, context and this chapter breaks down into three parts. The first of these is linking the General to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Styrian setting. I do this by using his surname as the basis for my reading. His surname translates from German to "play village" or "game village," and this use of "village" alludes to the connection that General Spielsdorf will develop with the Styrian land as he moves from a cosmopolitan man to one that full accepts and acknowledges his heritage, while also resembling the Styrian land and its culture through his appearance and actions.

Therefore, the chapter proposes that the General grows to become like the Styrian land, and by becoming essentially one with the land he is finally able to defeat the vampire and have his vengeance. The second, and largest, part of this chapter looks specifically at the growth in General Spielsdorf's character towards an embodiment of the Styrian setting. By examining the actions, appearance, and mental state of the General in accordance with his location with the novel's setting and the novel's actions, I draw a correlation between the Styrian land and the General that develops as his story presents itself in the novel. While he ultimately failed to save his own adoptive daughter, through his work, growth, and search for information, he does manage to save Laura's life and also free Styria from a plague of vampirism, which alludes to a heroic characteristic that

is noticeably missing from all of the novel's other characters.

The final aspect of this chapter attempts to demonstrate how such actions on the part of the General is almost a form of wish fulfillment for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or, at least the Austrian section of that empire. Here, I examine the *Ausgleich* of 1867, specifically the creation of separate armies for the both the Hungarian and Austrian halves, and how the General becomes a figure that brings people together in order to destroy common enemies. The General here fulfills a heroic role in his ability to assemble men from various parts to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the world and have them fight a vampire instead of one another. This heroic role is one that is completely unexplored in the General's character, and this element to the character can only be revealed through an Austro-Hungarian context, which is another area of current scholarship that few have attempted to explicate.

Chapter three

The third and final chapter presents a reading that engages the character Bertha Rheinfeldt. Like the other characters this thesis presents, Bertha receives little scholarly attention, and the attention she does receive simply engages her as a parallel to Laura and the Anglo-Irish. While I do acknowledge that Laura and Bertha have a lot of similarities, this final chapter attempts to engage Bertha as her own character and not merely the doomed subplot version of Laura, while also removing her from a British and Irish reading that she cannot fully conform to.

In a similar fashion to how my second chapter begins, I attempt to parse out the oddities of Bertha's name. Bertha is one of two characters that possess both a first name

and a surname; Carmilla is the other character. Therefore, from the revelation of Bertha's full name in the General's first letter, Bertha is marked as distinctly different from the other characters and not merely because she is dead. This final chapter therefore seeks to highlight the differences within Bertha's character, which ultimately leads to the reveal of how Bertha functions as a cautionary tale for domestic spheres, the familial and imperial alike.

The discussion of Bertha begins will acknowledging the peculiar choice in her first name as the name Bertha evokes the image of Bertha Mason from *Jane Eyre.* The first half of my argument, therefore, addresses how Bertha Rheinfeldt both fits and shuns the connection to Bertha Mason, and this discussion leads to the contribution of Jean Rhys to the character of Bertha Mason by giving her a voice. Using Rhys's version of Bertha Mason and the hybrid identity of a Creole woman, my third chapter reveals that the cautionary tale in the name Bertha Rheinfeldt does not relate to vampires, but instead to the ability of fathers and nations to both exert control over and fully understand the people and land within their domestic spheres. With the following three chapter and their introductions of scholarship into new characters and nations, I hope to achieve the goal of my thesis and broaden the prospects of *Carmilla* scholars.

Chapter One:

Failure of the Father: The Familial in the Irish Question of *Carmilla*

As Luke Gibbons in *Gaelic Gothic: Race, Colonization, and Irish Culture* states, “The Gothic [. . .] can be seen as following through the cultural work of the Glorious Revolution of 1688-91, expunging the traces not only of feudalism but also its archaic Catholic remnants from the social order” (Gibbons 10-1). Therefore, the Gothic novel is often interpreted as a political novel, and the Irish Gothic novels of the nineteenth century generally do not deviate from this norm.[5] The nation of Ireland, particularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century until 1916, was a nation full of political unrest as tensions between the Anglo-Irish ruling minority and the majority Catholic Irish rose and climaxed with the Easter Rising (1916), and this political tension created the perfect storm for authors to find inspiration for their novels, particularly Gothic novels. In this climate of civil and political unrest, though specifically during the peak of the Fenian movement, J. Sheridan Le Fanu wrote and published *Carmilla* (1872). Notably, Le Fanu “was required early in his publishing career to abandon Irish settings” so as not to “call to mind” the political unrest in Ireland or the Irish Question, and following this rule about his writings, *Carmilla* takes place in Styria, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Smart 15). Yet, despite the novels Styrian setting, *Carmilla* unsurprisingly is often interpreted and examined in terms of the chaotic political landscape between Britain and Ireland or more specifically the Catholic Irish and the Anglo-Irish.[6]

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[5] In addition to Gibbons, other notable scholars who interpret the Gothic novel as a political novel include Roy Foster (1995), Vera Kreilkamp (2006), and Jarlath Killeen (2006, 2013).
[6] See Aintzane Legarreta Mentxaka (2008), Martin Willis (2008), and Smart (2013)

Le Fanu's novel tells the story of a vampire attack from the narration of the vampire's victim, a nineteen-year-old half-English girl named Laura. Laura, her father, and her governesses live in an isolated castle in Styria, and by the second chapter of the novel, the small party adds another member to their group, Carmilla. While Carmilla appears to be "the prettiest creature" as well as being "gentle" and "nice," she later reveals to be a vampire that spent her entire stay at the castle feeding upon her host's daughter (Le Fanu 21). Between her arrival and the revelation of her demonic identity, Carmilla often makes advances upon Laura that appear to a contemporary reader to be overtly sexual. Carmilla often embraces Laura and places "soft kisses" on Laura's cheek (Le Fanu 29). These "foolish embraces" caused Laura to "wish to extricate" herself, but instead she finds herself "soothed" and put "into a trance," whenever she tries to struggle (Le Fanu 29). Carmilla also exhibits many other signs that mark her as odd, such as not leaving her bedroom until the afternoon, leaving a room locked from the inside, and her general languor. However, until the arrival of General Spielsdorf, no one questions Carmilla's innocence or her odd behaviors. The General, who is a friend of Laura's father, reveals that he lost his niece to a vampire attack, and as just prior to his story Laura's father learns that Laura too has been the victim of a vampire's feedings, Laura's father believes the General's incredible story. The novel ends with one last failed attempt to kill the vampire himself before the General, with the help of Laura's father and an Upper Styrian Baron, destroys the vampire and saves Laura's life, though she never fully regains her health.

With such a plot and the use of a vampire and her seduction, scholarship has primarily focused on the novel in one of two ways: 1) the homoerotic relationship

between Carmilla and Laura and 2) trying to relate Ireland to the Styrian setting of the novel with the former being the most common method of analysis.[7] However, many scholars use a queer theoretical lens to address the homoerotic tensions in terms the socio-political issues at play in nineteenth century Ireland, essentially combining the two types of scholarship. Scholars following this trend such as Renée Fox and Tamar Heller, link the homoerotic tensions displayed between Laura and Carmilla in terms of the competing Anglo-Irish and Catholic Irish respectively. Still others, such as Ana Gratiela Gal, see the relationship between the two female characters as maternal as opposed to homosexual with Gal relating the maternal relationship to the Anglo-Irish and Catholic Irish dichotomy.[8] Despite different avenues of inquiry in the scholarship, *Carmilla* appears to be almost inseparable from the political climate of nineteenth century Ireland.

While these scholarly thematic approaches, both queer and maternal, address the Irish political climate extensively, they are limited in their examinations because the scholarship and the various discussions of the characters and the spaces the characters inhabit and embody almost solely address the female protagonist and antagonist. The potential homoerotic or maternal relationship between the vampiric Carmilla and the isolated Laura certainly appears to have implications concerning the national and political spaces they occupy, particularly when juxtaposed with the marriage trope used in almost all national tales that promote the union of Britain and Ireland. Yet, the national tales by authors such as Maria Edgeworth largely had faded from the literary sphere by the 1820s as the Act of Union firmly had taken hold in Ireland, even with occasional uprisings.

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[7] Scholars who engage in the potential homoerotic relationship between Laura and Carmilla include but is not limited to Elizabeth Signorotti (1996), Tamar Heller (1996), Ardel Haefele-Thomas (2012), and Steven Bruhm (2014).

[8] Other scholars that follow Gal's line of inquiry include Angelica Michelis (2003), Marilyn Brock (2009), and Jarlath Killeen (2011).

Therefore, many of these analyses do not and cannot present a version of the novel that is historically correct.

The limitation to those arguments, however, may simply be the reliance on those characters that scholarship has deemed worthy of studying. By focusing entirely on Carmilla and Laura, the novel's other characters and their roles within a theory of their relations to national and political spaces are granted little to no attention, but these characters enable historical accuracy in the political reading of this novel. Such characters include Laura's father, General Spielsdorf and Bertha Rheinfeldt, and through an analysis of these neglected characters and their relationships with Laura and Carmilla, these characters take on crucial roles in representing national and political spaces. They can be seen as part of the complex relationship between England and Ireland, while also suggestive of fault or blame upon a specific nation, England.

This fault can only be seen by examining one particular type relationship that Le Fanu scholarship has generally neglected to analyze: the paternal relationship. While familial relationships are not completely neglected in scholarship, the paternal and the father characters as a whole have been neglected. Reading the novel in terms not merely of the familial, but specifically the paternal, shifts the anxieties away from a purely Anglo-Irish and Catholic Irish conflict and focuses attention on England, as a father figure, which, in his ultimate failure to understand, control, and protect his daughters, both the Anglican and Catholic Irish, causes the destruction of both. Ultimately, this analysis argues that the novel places blame upon England for the conflicts in Ireland as well as for the inability to repair the damage to the Anglo-Irish created by England's neglect because of its focus on reason and the rational.

This chapter first aims to disentangle the familial relationships of the novel's characters and the national and political spaces these characters occupy. Once these relations, both familial and spatial, have been established, explicated, and justified, a discussion will be offered regarding how the faults and tragedies of the novel fall not on the vampire Carmilla, who causes the conflict and sets the plot into motion, but instead on the fatherly figure, or, rather, the country of England that he represents. Finally, this chapter argues that *Carmilla,* when read through a familial lens focused on the paternal relationship, demonstrates England's failure to control its wild daughters in Ireland, and its neglect, specifically in regards to England's focus on the rational, has led to irreparable damage upon the Anglo-Irish Union.

The Fathers

Beginning with the father figures makes the most sense, as these characters quite obviously play this role within *Carmilla*. These characters are, of course, Laura's father and General Spielsdorf, but seeing them as direct correlations to the nation of England is not so obvious or easy. Ana Gal's 2008 essay "Re-Inventing Irishness in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*" provides the most extensive research into General Spielsdorf and Laura's father, and here, Gal arrives at the conclusion that "Laura's father and General Spielsdorf […] clearly become the embodiment of the Oppressor, of the absolutist" (Gal). While Gal does not expand upon this concept as her argument hinges solely upon the maternal relationship between Laura and Carmilla, her claim speaks to the colonial themes and elements that arise in *Carmilla.* Gal briefly addresses the concept of the "absolutist," the colonizer, but she never states exactly who these "Oppressors" are (Gal).

Yet, even in her brief discussion of these two characters, Gal notes some that the General Spielsdorf has a surname that is "most probably of German origin," while she, as well as the novel itself, refer to Laura's father as an Englishman (Gal). While the General Spielsdorf's character will be more thoroughly discussed in chapter two, here, a discussion of his character is necessary to that the novel addresses two separate empires that each proposed family tree resembles. Gal never explicitly states what country each father figure could embody; however, Laura's father appears to be the embodiment of England, while the General Spielsdorf resembles the "Oppressors" of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or the Austrians.

In addition to Gal's analysis of Laura's father and General Spielsdorf as "Oppressors," Robert A. Smart's "Postcolonial Dread and the Gothic: Refashioning Identity in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" is perhaps the only piece of scholarship that directly addresses England. Smart's essay falls strictly in the category of scholarship that looks to place the Styrian setting into an Irish context, and he looks specifically at the character of Laura to complete his analysis. His essay connects the "blood-drinking" story to "specific cultural and historical contexts" that lead to "a single, orphaned young woman" searching for her identity as an Anglo-Irish woman (Smart 11). While Smart's article, like Gal's, focuses primarily on Laura's inability to forge and solidify an identity for herself, he does so by examining the "cultural and historical parameters of Ireland's tenure as England's oldest and most contentious colony" (Smart 12). Therefore, Smart explicitly identifies the colonizer as England; however, he never directly correlates the colonizer to a specific character before moving into his discussion of "the fraught relationship between the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and

the Catholic majority" (Smart 13). Thus, Smart's article is essentially the other side of the coin in comparison to Gal's.

While Gal's argument is limited in its description of only Laura and Carmilla, Smart's article also has limitations such as not directly relating England to Laura's father. Smart also incorrectly labels Laura as an orphan, citing her father's certain death in the prologue and conclusion. Yet, Laura never acknowledges the death of her father in either the prologue or the conclusion, and throughout the actual plot of Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, Laura's father is alive and cannot even be said to be absent, as he continuously dotes on his daughter. Laura's father, though never actually given a name, is a dynamic character whose commitment to natural law and to Enlightenment empirical reasoning continues the conflict of the plot, as his obsession with the "natural" does not allow him to embrace or even consider the "supernatural." Another flaw in Smart's argument is his claim that Bertha Rheinfeldt is Laura's "closest and only real friend in the neighbourhood," despite the novel stating that Laura "had never seen Bertha Rheinfeldt" and the need for Bertha and her guardian and uncle, General Spielsdorf, to travel a great distance to visit Laura's castle (Smart 19, Le Fanu 12). Yet, despite the inaccuracies and limitations of Smart's article, the combination of Gal and Smart's articles is helpful in stressing the necessity of discussing the father, as well as General Spielsdorf, as the embodiment of the "absolutist," the colonizer, and perhaps England.

One of the characteristics that distinguish these two men is their complete focus on the rational. These two men opt to fall back upon science as opposed to listening to the supernatural possibilities that many people, including men they respect such as doctors and clergymen, bring to their attention. Their continued focus only on the rational and

natural world makes them unable to accept or even consider supernatural elements. This pure focus on rationality and reason, which is seen as a trait common among colonizers, is the greatest piece of evidence supporting the idea that Laura's father and General Spielsdorf embody England and Austria, respectively. Both characters are driven by the rationality that dominated the age of Enlightenment and continues into the ages of their respective empires.

Across Europe, philosophers and scientists began to acknowledge the importance of reason and the natural world. The Enlightenment led to the creation of ideas on liberty, separation and church and state, and the scientific method. With Francis Bacon's creation of the scientific method, experimentation became almost standardized, allowing for retesting of results. The method has specific steps: 1) observe, 2) question, 3) develop a hypothesis, and 4) test. The method can be expanded to include steps such as gathering additional information and retesting before the creation of theories and laws. This method was particularly influential in all parts of Europe, England and the Austro-Hungarian Empire included. Through the scientific method, which led to advances in the sciences, European began to focus on reason, rationality, and the natural world that could be observed, questioned, and tested to reveal universal theories and laws as opposed to superstitions, religious and cultural, that could not be proven or tested by the through the scientific method. This shift in focus not only existed in the countries that would later dominate through imperialism but became one of the reasons for such imperialism, in addition to expanding a country's colonial power and resources, of course. Those countries that believed to have a greater amount of reason sought out to civilize the savages that did not possess or value reason and the natural world in the same way or, at

the very least, used the spread of reason to gather support of imperial conquests. Therefore, countries steeped in superstition or that held religion in high regard, such as Ireland and Styria, were often conquered, settled, their resources taken, and new governments favoring the ideas of the Enlightenment put in place of the previous ones.

Laura's father particularly displays this rationality, associating him with the intellectual tradition of the colonizer. Of the many impossibilities that he encounters, his response to Carmilla's disappearance from her bedroom most clearly demonstrates the father and colonizer's devotion to reason. After Carmilla disappears, she reappears inside her bedroom's dressing room, despite the windows being "secured," the dressing room being locked from the outside, and the bedroom locked from the inside as well (Le Fanu 55). This puzzle causes Laura's father to take "a turn up and down the room, thinking" as "Carmilla's eye follow[s] him for a moment with a sly, dark glance" (Le Fanu 57). Laura's father almost follows the scientific method as he begins with thinking up a hypothesis and observing as he paces up and down the room. He even says he "risks a conjecture" and therefore requires more information from her before he proposes a "theory" (Le Fanu 57). He then asks her if she ever had been "suspected" of sleepwalking, and when she replies in the affirmative, Laura's father then announces, "what has happened is this" (Le Fanu 57, 58). In these moments, Laura's father rationally tries to arrive at a solution through Sir Francis Bacon's scientific method. However, despite following a national tradition of reasoning, Carmilla with her "sly, dark glance" illuminates that his reason will not show him the truth.

Carmilla ultimately proves correct. Laura's father's conclusion that Carmilla must have been sleepwalking arises because of his focus on the rational and known world,

which sleepwalking is a known part of. Therefore, he is willing to accept and arrive at a conclusion that, even though such a feat would be incredibly elaborate, fits within the reason and ration of his world. In terms of her sleepwalking, he claims that she

> got up in [her] sleep, unlocked the door, not leaving the key, as usual, in the lock, but taking it out and locking it on the outside; [she] again took the key out and carried it away with [her] to some one of the five-and-twenty rooms on [that] floor, or perhaps up-stairs or down-stairs. There are so many rooms and closets, so much heavy furniture, and such accumulations of lumber, that it would require a week to search [that] old house thoroughly. (Le Fanu 58)

While Laura's father has no evidence to contradict his claims, the sheer unlikelihood of such an elaborate sleepwalking and then a return to the dressing room could appear almost as unlikely as Carmilla being a vampire. However, the difference is that sleepwalking was a known phenomenon in the nineteenth century. Laura's father looks for the most rational solution that does not involve "drugging," "tampering with locks," "burglars, or poisoners, or witches" and sleepwalking is the "most natural explanation" (Le Fanu 58). Laura's father's rationalism blinds him to any supernatural possibility and forces him to not question that which appears to be solved through the scientific method. The General will later tell Laura's father that he "believe[s] nothing but what consists with [his] own prejudices and illusions," which hints that Laura's father's reason does indeed blind him in such a way that his reason has created prejudices against any supernatural solution. However, this quote also links him to colonizers, who often had prejudices and illusions, particularly in regard to the savagery of the people they

colonized such as the Catholic Irish, Native Americans, Africans, and Indians. Therefore, his focus on rationalism is Laura's father's identifying English trait, which, when coupled with his actual role as a father within the novel, hints at his embodiment of the nation of England, as England would be seen as a rational, ruling father figure to the colonies it possesses.

The General demonstrates this same faith in the rational as well, both in his recounting of Carmilla's visit and in Laura's father calling him a man that "generally require[s] proof for what [he] believe[s]" (Le Fanu 66). In fact, General Spielsdorf arrives at a similar conclusion, that "she walked in her sleep," to that of Laura's father when his then visitor, Carmilla, then called Millarca, "was repeatedly seen from the windows of the *schloss*," while "looking like a person in a trance" and her bedroom door "locked on the inside" (Le Fanu 79). Much like Laura's father, General Spielsdorf exhibits the signs of an overly rational man, and again this rationality can be seen as an English trait. However, due to the lack of specific English qualities that appear in the character of Laura's father, such as drinking tea and quoting Shakespeare, but not in the General as well as in conjunction with his surname being German and Gal's analysis of "Oppressors," the General likely resembles the Styrian or Austrian side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This conclusion will be discussed in the second chapter, but the close correlations his character has to Laura's father helps reveal how Laura's father will embody England and fail to save his daughters. Therefore, while the General does embody England, his and his niece's role within the text illuminate the roles of Laura and her father.

One such correlation is that the General appears as a paternal figure within the novel. Despite not actually being a father within the novel, the General is an uncle, a male familial figure of authority, and calls his niece/ward his "child" (Le Fanu 11). He desires to protect his niece Bertha because to him she is a daughter, and the best method he knows to accomplish this task is through a focus on reason. Therefore, while the reader never actually sees the General arrive at the same sleepwalking conclusion but does learn that he came to the same conclusion, one can surmise that the General probably also followed some form of the scientific method. Thus, in addition to being paternal figures, both men demonstrate what is commonly seen as an English trait, though it truly applies to all colonizers, a need for a rationality and reason. This very trait drives their worldview and arises when seemingly supernatural events occur. Yet, their rationality ultimately causes the downfall of both of their daughters, and because this search for reason and rationality is such a colonizer trait in the nineteenth century, this rationality creates a parallel between the two father figures as well as England and Austria.

While a desire and search for a rational world is certainly an imperial trait that is seen in Laura's father and General Spielsdorf, Laura's father truly embodies the national space of England. His very description does not merely hint towards such an association but is abundantly filled with characterizations and habits that distinctly point towards England. Laura's father, who "is English," continuously and purposely reasserts his Englishness (Le Fanu #). He "insist[s] that the national beverage," tea, "make its appearance with [their] coffee and chocolate," while he and Laura "added English" to the several languages spoken by the governesses out of "patriotic motives" (Le Fanu 4, 20, 6,

6). One of these motives in speaking in English appears to be "to prevent its becoming a lost language among" them, meaning that the language itself is threatened in this colonized place, and Laura's father attempts to combat that potential loss through continued speaking the language and "quoting Shakespeare," the national poet of England (Le Fanu 6). However, he incorrectly quotes the lines of *The Merchant of Venice*, excluding "found it" from the line and stating instead, "But how I got it —came by it" (Shakespeare 1.1.3, Le Fanu 14). The incorrect line alludes directly to his "patriotic motives" and belief that he must preserve the English tradition even as he lives in Styria. Therefore, Laura's father actively asserts that he is not only an Englishman by birth but also in his habits and behaviors, and he possesses a focus to preserve England and English traditions in that foreign land. This acknowledgment also demonstrates why Laura's father clings so desperately to the known, rational world because he knows that even he has the potential to "forget" and lose that connection with his homeland (Le Fanu 14). He is the embodiment of England in a colonial context, meaning that the lands that he colonizes, such as Styria in the novel, do influence him.

As it shall be seen in General Spielsdorf's chapter, he too embodies a colonizing nation. With his German surname, the General Spielsdorf in his few appearances and other characters' descriptions of him shares the similar ideas and values as Laura's overtly English father, which matters, demonstrating that the act of imperialism had similar rationales no matter which country was the colonizer. Much like his English counterpart, the General cannot initially accept the superstitious and supernatural that arise from the colonized land they occupy. While his beloved ward/niece falls ill with a mysterious disease, he turns first to a physician, who "fail[s] to produce the slightest

impression upon her disease," and when the doctor from Gratz proclaims Bertha to be suffering from vampire bites, he is "wholly skeptical" (Le Fanu 84, 86). Continually, General Spielsdorf refuses to accept the "supernatural theory," and in its place, he insists on science and the natural and rational laws of the world as the only possible explanation for observed phenomena. While arguments insist that Le Fanu molded Styria to stand for Ireland, it becomes clear that both father figures present in the novel can be interpreted as embodiments of different colonizers, England and Austria. Therefore, the Styrian setting cannot simply be a mold for Ireland but functions as an example of a colonized land, with Styria resembling Ireland and Laura's father embodying England in the main plot, while Styria function as itself and the General as the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the subplot.

The Daughters

As the father figures embody England and Austria, the novel's protagonist, Laura, embodies the political and national space associated with the Anglo-Irish. Fox's "*Carmilla* and the Politics of Indistinguishability" also makes just such an assertion. While Fox ultimately explores the complexities that arise in labeling Laura as the embodiment of the Anglo-Irish in a queer reading of the novel, the essay does state, specifically in its discussion of Robert Tracy's work in the late 1990s, that "Le Fanu's 'monstrous' characters represent Catholic power of old returning to annihilate the Protestant usurpers who once crushed them" (Fox 112). The first chapter of the novel unquestionably spends a great deal of time both establishing Laura as a descendant of English heritage but simultaneously not from the country itself. Laura states, "I bear an English name, although I never saw England," and similar statements continue to appear

as Laura describes the setting or is in her father's presence. She is both from England and distinctly not, and the novel demonstrates this in her narration of the tale by using the phrase "your English" as opposed to any phrase that would imply any form of English identification by the protagonist (Le Fanu 5). Yet, Laura also follows her father's lead when it comes to his "patriotic motives" (Le Fanu 6). She joins him in his "dish of tea," and she states her "father and I added English" to the party's conversations (Le Fanu 43, 20). Therefore, while she may not have seen England nor been born there, she carries out the traditions of England in a colonized and foreign land, just as the Anglo-Irish did.

While half of Laura's heritage comes from her Styrian mother, Laura and her father both perceive Styria as the colonized other. To them, the country is, moreover, less developed than England as the they live in a "feudal residence," which only adds to "the appalling superstition" that arises in both "Upper and Lower Styria" as well as other locations within the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Le Fanu 4, 91, 91). Yet, even though she is only half English and is in a superstitious setting, Laura, like her father, attempts to rationalize events. When she attempts to rationalize Carmilla's advances, she "[strives] in vain to form any satisfactory theory," but notably she attempts to create a "theory," which echoes to one of the final stages in the scientific method that her father uses (Le Fanu 30). This connection furthers as she ponders if Carmilla is a disguised "boyish lover," who "sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade" (Le Fanu 30). Yet, she finds "many things against this hypothesis," using the exact scientific term from Francis Bacon's scientific method (Le Fanu 30). Therefore, despite her half-blood status as an Englishwoman, her Englishness is evident in her speaking of the language and her own belief and focus on rationalizing the fantastic events around her.

Yet, Laura's mixed blood is perhaps what allows her to internally question the rational as she begins to be attacked by the vampire. Following the first attack, Laura wakes "with a sense of lassitude and melancholy" that is quite unlike the girl seen in previous chapters (Le Fanu 50). Carmilla reveals that the amulet purchased from the hunchback saved her, and Laura's initial question is "what do you think the charm is" as opposed to asking for a rational or scientific reasoning for Carmilla to draw such a conclusion (Le Fanu 50). When Carmilla takes the more scientific route, claiming the amulet to have been "fumigated or immersed in some drug" to fight "against the malaria," Laura wishes she "could have quite agreed with Carmilla" but Carmilla's argument was "losing its force" (Le Fanu 50). Here, Laura begins to turn away from the "simply natural" rationalization, though she never arrives at a supernatural or superstitious conclusion on her own (Le Fanu 50). This turning away from reason could be seen as part of her Styrian or colonized heritage, but such a change also comes only after Laura's first vampire attack, when an outside force quite literally brings forth that colonized identity. Thus, Laura is what Fox describes as "a proper English Protestant and dutiful daughter," but she is also undoubtedly only half English (Fox 120). This fragmented identity allows for her to be the embodiment of the Anglo-Irish, who are both English and distinctly not English because of their home in Ireland and who are also threated by the Catholic Irish with the rise of Irish nationalism and the Fenians. Therefore, Laura becomes the victim of the novel, just as Smart discusses with the Anglo-Irish as becoming "victimized" and possessing a "tentative identity" because they "stood between England and native Ireland" and never fully conformed to either side's "stable identity" (Smart 12, 13, 13, 13).

A similar characterization to that of Laura is found in the unseen character of Bertha Rheinfeldt, General Spielsdorf's niece and ward. Though her family background, apart from the General, is never revealed, Bertha can arguably be seen as another example of the embodiment of the Anglo-Irish, specifically within the subplot that the General also occupies. However, given that she fits in the General's subplot, Bertha's character most efficiently fits in an Austro-Hungarian context, which will be more thoroughly explored in chapter three. Consequently, this claim is amplified by General Spielsdorf's insistence of calling her "my child" throughout his story as opposed to his niece or ward, which creates the same father-daughter connection between the General and Bertha that exists between Laura and her father. As his niece, Bertha has a blood connection to the General, and coupling this blood connection with the General's insistence on calling her his "child" leaves Bertha to be considered a biological daughter and not merely an adoptive one or a ward. By viewing Bertha's familial role in such a way, the family tree for Laura's family mirrors that of the General's. Both have no present wife and one daughter related by blood. Yet, by the end of the novel, each family tree will add one adoptive daughter, Carmilla.

As stated earlier, most scholarship has interpreted Carmilla in terms of her relationship with Laura and, very occasionally, Bertha. Gal interprets her as a substitute mother for Laura and Fox examines the homoerotic relationship between Carmilla and Laura. However, there is a need to read Carmilla in terms of her relation to the family as a whole, particularly since Carmilla literally fills in vacant spaces in family structures by becoming not merely a companion to the daughters but a sister, or perhaps to be more exact, an adopted sister.

While there is without a doubt plenty of textual evidence for both a substitute mother and a homoerotic reading with Carmilla's "kisses" and "embraces," there is also plenty of evidence to support the reading of Carmilla as adopted daughter, and not merely a ward of the families, as well as treating an adopted daughter in a similar fashion to a biological one (Le Fanu 29). The novel sets up the ability to treat and love one's ward as one's child with General Spielsdorf and Bertha. His insistence on calling her daughter and his child, despite her actually being his niece, demonstrates that men's female wards, within the context of the novel, were treated like biological daughters as the General Spielsdorf provides and cares for Bertha the same way Laura's father cares for Laura. Both fathers become "thoroughly frightened" as their daughters, adopted and biological, begin to deteriorate before their eyes, and they seek out similar scenarios in trying to find a cure to their daughters' diseases (Le Fanu 79). While it is clear that General Spielsdorf treated Millarca/Carmilla as a daughter as he worries over losing her the night of the masquerade, Carmilla is also treated as such at Laura's father's castle. Not only is she adored for she is "the prettiest creature" and "so gentle and nice," but, upon her brief disappearance in chapter eight, a manhunt ensues, and Laura describes her father as experiencing great "agitation" (Le Fanu 21, 21, 56). This paternal protectiveness demonstrated by leading "the whole household" on the manhunt as well as later concern for her health are present from the very moment he rushes to her overturned carriage (Le Fanu 56). Even when Carmilla no longer wishes to intrude on Laura and her father's hospitality but set out to find and meet her mother, he will not hear of it. He says, "We can't afford to lose you so, and I won't consent to your leaving us, except under the care of your mother" (Le Fanu 43). This refusal to allow custody to anyone but the biological

mother builds a sense of paternal instinct and protection on the part of Laura's father, which further allows for Carmilla to be read as his adopted daughter and Laura's adoptive sister. This proposed family tree, therefore, mimics the imperial domestic household, which would align the biological daughter as the settlers coming into a colonized land and the adoptive daughter as the native inhabitants of that land. Therefore, Carmilla creates two images of an imperial domestic household, one of England and Ireland and one in the Austro-Hungarian Empire with Styria.

By interpreting a sisterhood within the novel, this raises several questions, the least of which is what do you do with all the homoerotic material clearly present in the text? As Fox states while discussing Tracy's work, "studies of relationships between women in nineteenth-century Britain have pointed out that 'the lesbian was not a distinct social type during the years of 1830 to 1880, although male sodomy was a public and private obsession'"(Fox 113-4). Fox continues on to claim the "passionate friendships between women" that "pepper the most canonical Victorian texts (e.g., *Jane Eyre,* "Goblin Market")" were not viewed by "the Victorians … as 'homosexual' or 'lesbian'" (Fox 114). The comparison to "Goblin Market" is particularly interesting because the poem is often discussed in terms of what sisterly affection allows within a Victorian mindset, and, as stated by Fox, the idea of a homoerotic love existing between two women is not understood as an issue in Victorian society, particularly when it is contained within a sisterly relationship. By looking at Carmilla as Laura's adopted sister, the romantic tension that Laura both resists and responds to problematizes Fox's conclusions because Laura is not wholly "innocent" in the affair, which creates a series of tangled knots, resulting in difficulties in a queer theory reading (Fox 115). Carmilla being

an adopted sister as opposed to a biological one allows for Laura to rightfully feel awkward about Carmilla's homoerotic advances because Carmilla falls somewhere between blood and friendship, meaning, like her familial status, her actions are in limbo, creating the confusion and discomfort felt by Laura but allowing her to respond to those advances as well.

So then where does Carmilla fall on the political and national space? Scholars such as Tracy, Howe, and Fox have aligned Carmilla with the Catholic Irish, just as they have often decided that Laura embodies the Anglo-Irish. However, as Fox's article discusses at length, problems and contradictions arise by reading the novel from a queer theoretical standpoint with these national and political spaces in mind, as Fox and most of *Carmilla* scholarship does. Laura's complicity creates further entanglements in the reading that Fox argues:

> The attraction and affinity between Laura and Carmilla functions not to demonize the Catholic Irish, but to express an "atrocious" […] cycle of political vampirism in which Protestants and Catholics make monsters of each other, reproduce each other's aggressions, and ultimately become indistinguishable from one another. (117)

Certainly, the Anglo-Irish and Catholic Irish relations were far more complex than a feudal layout of the society allows for a description of, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet, for the purpose of this article, Carmilla does embody the Catholic Irish, though, as it will be seen in chapter three, Carmilla does possess qualities that enable to embody nearly every colonized land and people within the age of imperialism. Carmilla is a pureblooded Styrian, as she truly belongs to the ancient family

of the Karnstein. Therefore, when her character is read within and engages with the main plot, Carmilla embodies the Catholic Irish, but she also can embody colonized other in the General's subplot.

Paternal Failure

While Fox teases out the complexities and problems of Laura embodying the Anglo-Irish and Carmilla the Catholic Irish in a queer reading, the familial relationships and their political and national appear to mend these issues, and this reading also particularly illuminates the problems in the actions, or rather inactions, of the father figures, who embody the colonizers or "Oppressors" and the specific trait of rationalism. The political nature of each character's embodied space is particularly relevant to the 1872 publishing date of *Carmilla* that falls directly in the time period, when the Irish Question, which tried to resolve the political unrest in Ireland, was being debated in British Parliament. These debates resulted in little or no action on the part of the English that appeased either side, the Anglo-Irish and the Catholic Irish.

The years prior to Le Fanu's publication of *Carmilla* gave way to the rise and peak of the secret society of the Fenians in the nineteenth century. The English response to the appearance of this group that "believed in the force of arms" and their efforts to turn people away from the Fenians attempted to appease the Catholic Irish and their complaints, instead of protecting the Anglo-Irish (Killeen 201). The British government in Ireland also had difficulty in punishing those involved in the Fenian movement, whose goal was to "overthrow" British rule in Ireland and establish "an independent Irish republic" (Killeen 201). While the police did arrest the founder, James Stephens, and

several other members of Fenian leadership in 1865 as well as stop an uprising they had planned for that year, two years later the group "entered the apostolic succession of Irish rebellions" with the success of a "feeble uprising" (Killeen 202). While three of the uprising's leaders were arrested and hung, they came to be known as the Manchester Martyrs. Therefore, the attempts to put down the Fenian movement, only served to marshal support for their cause. This increase in support was later revealed as a bomb was set off at Clerkenwell House of Detention to free the imprisoned Fenian leader, Richard O'Sullivan Burke. The death toll of this bombing "outraged British public opinion"; yet, the British Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone, "reacted more thoughtfully" to this demonstration of growing Irish unrest than the majority of his peers (Killeen 203).

Gladstone attempted to strengthen the ties between Britain and Ireland "by addressing legitimate grievances" and "attempting to "conciliate Irish Catholics" (Killeen 203, McCaffrey 73). In 1869, his first act was the "disestablishment" of the Church of Ireland, giving significant acknowledgment to the Catholic Church as the majority of the population's religion. The following year he "pushed a Land Act through Parliament," which aimed to "guarantee the security of tenant farmers by making landlords" pay their tenants in the case of improvement on the land as well as other occurrences (McCaffrey 73). However, despite such attempts to pacify a nation heading towards rebellion, Gladstone's efforts were "too timid" for Irish nationalists and "too radical" for British Conservatives, while the disestablishment and prospect of new payments to tenants angered the Anglo-Irish (McCaffrey 74). The Catholic Irish began to push for home rule,

and in this climate, where the British government attempted only to appease the Catholic Irish instead of controlling them, Le Fanu published *Carmilla*.

This inability for England to respond to the pleas and concerns of the Anglo-Irish as well as fully appease the Catholic Irish, who were growing towards the desire for home rule, can be seen specifically in Laura's father's inability to completely save his daughter from ruin, and his inability to perform any action is a direct result of him attempting to apply English reason to supernatural events. While both the General and Laura's father are so focused on the rational that they are unable to see, until it is too late, the chaos of the vampire, the chaos in the main plot rises because of Laura's father's inability to look past beyond the rational and known world, specifically in regards to the tenants and villagers that are attacked and the strange symptoms exhibited by Laura. In "'Through Every Door and Passage:' A Liminal Reading of *Carmilla*," Mark Hennelly notes "the General's initial structuralism and Laura's father's rationalized sleepwalking solution to the mystery of Carmilla's disappearance … ironically suggests that he has been one of life's sleepwalkers in trying to deal rationally with a vampire," or again, the focus on rationality has hindered their inability to see and deal with the true situation at hand (Hennelly 108). The actions of the British Prime Minister's also reveal an inability to fully see the picture and threat occurring in Ireland. Once, he gave some allowances, the Catholic Irish pushed for home rule and even larger step towards eventual independence. Gladstone also underestimated the anger that would arise from the Anglo-Irish, as they forced to see many of their privileges fall away. Ultimately, the Prime Minister did not fully grasp the complexities of the colonization in Ireland, and Laura's

father performs similar actions, which leads to his daughter never truly healing from Carmilla's attack.

Indeed, both father figures in *Carmilla* fail their daughters; however, the General's failure is perhaps the most straightforward as his inability to act results in Bertha's death. He is unable to kill the vampire in his own home, despite his use of sword: "Horrified, I pursued, and struck again. [Carmilla] was gone; and my sword flew to shivers against the door" (Le Fanu 87). His failure to put down the chaos and death that erupt from Carmilla's presence results in the death of his ward/niece, Bertha, and this faltering in his use of weapons happens again in the Karnstein chapel, where he again sees Carmilla, and again fails to decapitate her and save Laura from later harm. Yet, the general's failure is not merely the result of being a poor swordsman, but of his inability to look beyond the natural world of reason and rationality. He only agrees to follow the letters instructions to watch over Bertha's sleeping body because he would "rather than try nothing" (Le Fanu 86). He has not accepted or even fully considered the possibility of Bertha being attacked by a vampire because, to him, such demons do not exist in the rational world. However, he cannot simply sit and watch his "child" die. Therefore, he watches her sleep, and when confronted with the "black creature," the "palpitating mass," he stands "petrified" and cannot act (Le Fanu 87). The rational world he clung to with his English reason shatters, and the horror at this shattering of his rational world causes him to pause, which allows for Millarca/Carmilla to escape. The General fails, when he cannot protect not only one but both embodiments of the colonizing settlers. Even more taxing is the General's failures come when he possesses readily available weapons that are brought for that specific purpose, but he cannot stop the vampire. This aspect of his

failure demonstrates that even with weapons, colonizing countries like England and Austria have difficultly in controlling and putting down rebellions within those conquered countries.

In exactly the same manner as General Spielsdorf, Laura's father ultimately fails in protecting his daughter, and again his English rationality is what continually stands in opposition to discovering and then protecting his daughter from the threat of the vampire, Carmilla. However, bodily protection is not the only failure on the part of Laura's father. In addition to being rather unobservant to evidence that reveals that his ward, or adoptive daughter, is the cancer afflicting his biological daughter, what is just as damaging is his complete lack of attention about the shared bloodline between his adopted and biological daughter. Chapter five reveals this bloodline through a restored portrait, which looks eerily like Carmilla, and both Laura and Carmilla admit to being distant descendants of the Karnsteins, though the novel later reveals that the painting is actually of Carmilla prior to becoming a vampire.

Yet, this picture reveals a bloodline that goes back at least to 1698, and even though Carmilla only initially acknowledges a distant descent, it seems odd that Laura's father would pay no attention to such a revelation, especially as Carmilla's explanation of also being of Karnstein heritage seems a reasonable way to answer the portraits being an "effigy of Carmilla" (Le Fanu 39). However, Laura's father pays no attention to any of this discussion, and Laura notes that he seems "little struck by it," which "surprise[s]" Laura (Le Fanu 39). Again, Laura's father demonstrates that he willingly accepts the rational answer, even if the odds of the rational answer are infinitesimally small. He refuses to question the natural and rational order of the world, and this failure in the

rational being of Laura’s father by ignoring a puzzle, which would be the very clue that would allow his reason to accept the possibility of vampires and save his daughter, creates the very reason she will never truly heal. By embodying England and the reason it attempts to export through colonialism, Laura’s father struggles and actively resists thinking outside the rational box, and therefore, he cannot save his daughter from the trauma of Carmilla’s attack because the notion of a vampire never occurs as a possibility.

However, Laura’s father’s faults continue after the eventual defeat of Carmilla by the General with the Baron and representatives of the government. Following the events, Laura falls under some distress both physically and mentally, and in an effort to comfort and heal her, her father takes her on year long “tour through Italy (Le Fanu 96). Such a location is shocking, particularly as Italy was a Catholic country. Instead of taking Laura, the embodiment of the Anglo-Irish, to his Protestant dominated home, England, the land he devotedly tries to bring to Styria, Laura’s father takes her to a very place that is almost entirely full of people of the same religion that Carmilla embodies. In other words, England expects its daughter the Anglo-Irish to heal from an attack by the Catholic Irish by touring potentially the most Catholic nation at the time. Therefore, Italy is an environment, which would not allow Laura to heal and would serve as a constant reminder to the terrors she had previously faced. Thus, along with the described lasting effects of a vampire attack, Laura’s father appears to be the reason that Laura is still clearly ill after ten years.

Indeed, Laura’s illness appears to continue for the rest of her life, and she did not even wish to narrate her story. She attempts to “write all this … with composure,” but she cannot think of the events “without agitation” (Le Fanu 93). In fact, without the “earnest

desire" that was "repeatedly expressed" by Doctor Hesselius, Laura could not have been "induced … to sit down to a task that ha[d] unstrung [her] nerves for months to come" (Le Fanu 93). Laura appears to have been tortured about the vampire attack throughout her life "which years after [her] deliverance continued to make [her] days and nights dreadful," and she cannot even bare to be in "solitude" as she finds it "insupportably terrific" (Le Fanu 93). Therefore, after many years, Laura still finds herself terrified and plagued by "the unspeakable horror," and her father's actions are at fault because he never truly gave her a chance to heal (Le Fanu 93).

By opting for Italy over England, Laura's father created a scenario that his daughter that is a national and cultural hybrid could never engage any part of the English part of her identity. Instead, Laura and the Anglo-Irish she represents are left to the mercy of foreign and colonized powers, and the mercy given to Laura is nonexistent. Laura's father and England ultimately fails his daughter, the Anglo-Irish, by his inability to take responsibility and protect her from the adopted or rather colonized sister, the Catholic Irish.

A counter to these dooming qualities placed on both the father figures textually and England metaphorically could be that because both men, or embodiments of England, do eventually kill the vampire and the result is "that territory has never since been plagued by the visits of a vampire," and therefore, they do not ultimately fail in protecting or controlling their families (Le Fanu 92). However, by the time their rationalities allow for such an action to occur, the damage to both biological daughters, the national and cultural hybrids, is complete and irreversible. Bertha dies before the novel even begins, and the novel ends with Laura still ill, tortured, and "fancying [she]

heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing-room door" (Le Fanu 96). General Spielsdorf, Laura's father, and, metaphorically, the empires they represent allow for their colonial focus on reason and rationality to dominate and narrow their worldview. They become incapable of perceiving, and thus responding to, the supernatural elements around them, which has disastrous consequences both in terms of the novel's families and the imperial families they embody.

Conclusion

By examining *Carmilla* through the familial context, the complexities that remain unresolved in queer and maternal readings of the text are accounted for. Laura dislikes Carmilla's advances because they confuse the border between blood and friendship as opposed toward hinting at an impossible marriage or lover relationship between the two female characters. The shared bloodline between the two characters reveals not a maternal relationship but merely the hybrid identity of Laura. However, most importantly, reading through not merely the familial context but the paternal one brings previously under studied characters to the forefront, specifically Laura's father, the General, and Bertha. This particular chapter engages the role and failure of one such character, Laura's father, the embodiment of England and all its colonial power and limitations, and the date of *Carmilla*'s publication plays a crucial role in developing this analysis.

Le Fanu published the novel right in the heart of the Irish Question debate and the peak of the Fenian movement, but more importantly during a time that literal figures in the British government, Prime Minster Gladstone, attempted to intervene in the unrest

and rebellions of nineteenth century Ireland, only to make the political situation worse. Of course, looking back historically at *Carmilla*'s 1872 publication date, today's audiences are aware that forty-four years remain until the Easter Rising and that in those forty-four years the British Parliament failed to calm the Catholic Irish or protect and aid the Anglo-Irish. Just as the British Parliament was too busy trying to create a rational solution to the Irish Question to actually create effective change that would benefit the Anglo-Irish, Laura's father, the embodiment of England, fails to rescue and truly heal his biological daughter from his adopted one.

Laura's father simply holds this Enlightenment given and colonially driven reason and rationality so highly that he becomes blind to the supernatural havoc raging around his household and any potential solutions to this chaos. This perspective is mirrored in Britain's inability use the full image Ireland's government and religious problems to create a solution to the Irish Question. The answer is not a question of marriage or lovers but the ability to control families through rules or laws that either benefits both the Anglo-Irish and Catholic Irish or for Britain to simply pick a side to fully stand behind. By reading *Carmilla* from a familial, specifically paternal, lens, the complications of a queer reading with Laura not being "innocent" are resolved, and the fault of her chronic illness at the end is placed upon the hands of her father, not Carmilla. Ultimately, just as England historically fails many of the Anglo-Irish, Laura's father, the embodiment of England, fails his biological daughter, Laura, by allowing her to remain permanently damaged at the hands of his adoptive daughter, Carmilla.

Chapter two:

Wild, Isolated, and Superstitious: the Land of Styria and General Spielsdorf

As stated before, *Carmilla* generally has been studied within the confines of the Anglo-Irish perspective. Chapter one discussed my theory that looks at Laura and Carmilla's relationship as a sisterly relationship as opposed to a sexual one. The resulting family tree illuminates the father figures within the text, and by interpreting the novel through the actions of the paternal figures and in accordance with the nations these figures represent, the father figures reveal to be the ones at fault for the trauma their daughters experience. While my first chapter presents a different interpretation of *Carmilla* compared with available scholarship, the chapter does little to engage the novel's actual physical setting, Styria, and also examines characters that *Carmilla* scholarship has given the bulk of attention to. Therefore, while the previous chapter focused almost entirely on Laura's father and his family members, this chapter aims to specifically discuss the character of General Spielsdorf, who despite playing a crucial role in the conclusion of the novel as friend, informant, and soldier for the living, has received a small amount of scholarly discussion. My previous chapter draws a connection between the General and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and this chapter serves to flesh out the argument, specifically in regards to the General's place within the Styrian setting. While the argument perhaps does not perhaps appear political until the end of this chapter, the full connection between the General and the Styrian land and the process to reach that connection must be drawn out, as such a connection has yet to be made and

this connection reveals the heroic qualities of Spielsdorf's character that are absent in other readings, including the first chapter of this thesis.

In regards to the Styrian context, Matthew Gibson is perhaps the only scholar to attempt a reading of *Carmilla* through the historical context of the novel's actual setting. In the essay, "J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* (1867)," Gibson proposes that Le Fanu's novel "is heavily influenced by the politics of Middle Europe," and he looks specifically at the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Gibson argues that the selection of Styria was not a mere "fashionable location" nor was it "a mask for Ireland" (Gibson 44). Instead, Gibson suggests that the novel actually "is commenting upon recent politics in the region itself," specifically the *Ausgleich* of 1867 (Gibson 44). Much like Ireland, the Austro-Hungarian Empire also was home to uprisings within its state during the nineteenth century and, thus, Le Fanu's lifetime. In fact, the middle of the nineteenth century saw an "increased Hungarian nationalism" (Gibson 46). This growth in Hungarian nationalism led to several uprisings during the nineteenth century. One 1848 uprising led by Kossuth "was so successful as to secure virtual independence for Hungary," though this independence only lasted a single year before being "brutally crushed" (Gibson 46). Despite failure of the 1848 uprising, the Hungarians' wish to govern themselves held strong until 1867, when Hungary received its wish and no longer was subservient to the Austrian Empire. In 1867, a peace agreement titled the *Ausgleich* of 1867 was formed and signed by the Austrian Empire and the Hungarian Empire. The agreement gave "Hungarians separate citizenship, their own power of taxation, and the withdrawal of imperial patent over conscription" (Gibson 46). Furthermore, the agreement also gave the Hungarians "the ability to block reforms in

the entire Dual Nation," and Gibson stresses that the Hungarians "frequently asserted this power" (Gibson 46). The power struggle in Hungary very closely resembles the power struggles in Ireland, and Gibson's article generally follows the same format as the scholarship, which looks to the Styrian setting as a mirror for Ireland, meaning Carmilla takes on the role of Hungarian vampire and Laura is of mixed blood.

While Gibson's article certainly opens the way for scholarship about the Austro-Hungarian context of the novel, his argument contains a few major flaws. One that Gibson openly acknowledges is that Styria is not and never was a part of Hungary, and as his entire argument is premised on the Styrian location being Hungarian, this flaw nearly dooms his argument. Since 1519, the Austrian Empire held Styria, but prior to that date, "German and Slavic language communities" controlled Upper and Lower Styria (Gibson 47). Gibson even admits "the inclusion of a Hungarian dynasty like Carmilla's in a Styrian village in the late 1690s is frankly unlikely" (Gibson 47). Yet, he brushes off this gaping flaw in his article by saying that it was a "minor error on Le Fanu's part" and a result of possibly reading the travel book *Schloss Hainfeld; or, a Winter in Lower Styria* (Gibson 47). While Gibson never addresses how he knows that Le Fanu read this exact book, he uses references to this book to drive the rest of his article. Perhaps one of the most far-reaching instances of this is when he specifically notes that one of the book's characters is named Cranstoun, a Scottish name, but Gibson insists that "the teutonic basis of the name … makes it far easier to convert to a German language," such as Karnstein, "than anything Hungarian" (Gibson 59). He insists that Le Fanu wished to honor the Countess Purgstall, whose maiden name was Cranstoun. However, this also seems far-fetched as there are probably much better ways to honor someone than to link

them to a blood thirsty fiend, who undergoes staking, mutilation, and burning at the end of the novel, which even Gibson admits as he states, "whether Countess Purgstall would have appreciated such a coded homage is perhaps open to question" (Gibson 59).

Perhaps second flaw in Gibson's article is his own admittance that "there is nevertheless an Irish political parallel to the Austrian situation" (Gibson 62). Though he stands by his reading, stating, "allegorically Carmilla's vampirism relates to Hungarian history rather than to Ireland," Gibson also admits that the Irish situation "may have governed Le Fanu's attitude to the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich*" (Gibson 62). By doing so and by admitting that the Irish Question influenced his reading of the Eastern Question, Gibson only acknowledges the validity of Anglo-Irish readings and downgrades his own with that admittance that Le Fanu's Irish politics influenced his thoughts on the Austro-Hungarian ones. While an Anglo-Irish reading and an Austro-Hungarian reading are not necessarily mutually exclusive and Gibson is not incorrect to see these two Empires colliding in the novel, the fault or, rather, limitation in Gibson's interpretation is his complete neglect of characters whose surnames imply that they are actually from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Instead, Gibson focuses on Laura, Carmilla, and Laura's father and attempts to force them to fit into Austro-Hungarian molds. Therefore, instead of engaging the General and Bertha Rheinfeldt, Gibson attempts to fit the name Karnstein into the Hungarian language and notes that Laura's father "is an Englishman," which "rightly reflects … that many of the Austro-Hungarian officers were foreign recruits" but ultimately fails to note any significance of this historical accuracy (Gibson 51). He attempts to create correlations between the characters and their settings, but he is unable to flesh out these parallels or state their significance.

Perhaps the largest limitation in Gibson's essay is his insistence on only the political. The drive behind his essay is to demonstrate that the Austro-Hungarian politics supersede the Irish ones, and yet, he fails to address anything but a similarity in politics. While Gibson's article creates an excellent basis for a political argument, his insistence on bringing several puzzle pieces together sometimes simply does not work or occasionally comes out with an almost moot point or one that is impossible to prove. An example of this occurs when he asserts that a name with German root words such as Cranstoun is easier to convert to German than Hungarian, and therefore, in his opinion, Le Fanu simply did not attempt a conversion.

Gibson misses an opportunity to read the novel beyond mere dates and names and see the implications of analyzing it with the Styrian context and power struggles at the forefront. His focus appears to be solely extending scholarship of this novel into its Styrian context, but he fails to demonstrate the benefit of such an examination. Gibson's article does not provide any significant changes to power-structure analogies other than to replace Catholic Irish with Hungarian and England with Austria. After all, Gibson notes that the year 1867 played a significant role in both the Hungarian and Irish nationalism, though he fails to mark out the difference in these roles. For the Hungarians, 1867 led to their independence, while 1867 merely sparked a desire for home rule and pride in the Manchester Martyrs, as seen in the first chapter. Gibson literally swaps out one nation's history for another, but does not acknowledge the difference in power struggles or how characters functioning within these power struggles are read differently in the different geographies.

Of course, such changes do occur by altering the location of the novel from Ireland to Styria, specifically with the character of General Spielsdorf. In an Anglo-Irish context, scholars have almost unanimously decided that Carmilla is linked with the land of Ireland and the Catholic Irish; however, the Austro-Hungarian context introduces the correlation between General Spielsdorf and the Styrian land. He and Carmilla are the only characters that possess surnames that match with the Styrian setting. As part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Styria has two official languages: German and Hungarian. However, as Gibson stated, "German and Slavic language communities" settled in Styria and the existence of Hungarians was unlikely, as Hungarians are neither German nor Slavic (Gibson 47). Therefore, Le Fanu's Styria should primarily speak German, as the nation falls in the Austrian half of the empire.

While such a correlation never finds its way into Gibson's article, Ana Gal's "Re-Inventing Irishness in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*" (2008) does hint towards it. Gal notes that Spielsdorf's surname is "most probably of German origin," and she is correct (Gal). In German, Spielsdorf translates to "play village" or "game village." His name even alludes to a connection to land with the word *dorf* meaning "village," though grappling with the aspects of "play" or "game" is more difficult to comprehend. The word simply could allude to the fact that the work is fiction, and that no such village or atrocities actually occur, or the name could hint towards the connections between Styria and Ireland, specifically that the Styrian location truly does stand in for Ireland. However, the use of the German language in an Austrian setting to convey this messages demonstrates the need to study the Styrian context of *Carmilla*, and research should pay particular attention to General Spielsdorf and his German surname.

Yet, despite the fact that his name is of German origins, General Spielsdorf initially does not resemble what reveals to be the wild, isolated, and superstitious land that he calls his home. Instead, he resembles Laura's father, an Englishman. The novel never states whether or not General Spielsdorf was a hired soldier as Laura's father was, but the two seem to share similar ways of acting and reasoning as well as common desires for companionship and cosmopolitan culture. In terms of reasoning, Laura's father finds himself "very strongly predisposed to respect [his] conclusions" because he knows that, like himself, General Spielsdorf "generally require[s] proof for what [he] believes" (Le Fanu 66). This statement is later proven, when General Spielsdorf sends for a second opinion, following his first physician's visit, and then attempts to have the two combine their efforts to diagnose and save his beloved Bertha. Therefore, Spielsdorf, even in his more desperate moments, requires a certain amount of evidence before he "generally" accepts something as true and acts upon it. Laura's father is seen reasoning and acting the same way. His reasoning is demonstrated during his attempt to rationalize Carmilla's disappearance as sleepwalking, which is a conclusion that General Spielsdorf also arrives at, and he also requires a great deal of evidence from Laura's doctor as well as a view of Laura's own wounds before he can accept that a vampire might be the cause of her illness.

The two also initially share a love of companionship and culture, specifically a cosmopolitan one. Laura depicts her father's love of culture as resembling "patriotic motives" such as when he reads Shakespeare or takes a "dish of tea," but his patriotism should be questioned (Le Fanu 6, 43). Laura's father seems to enjoy the culture of England—its tea, its dramas, its language—but he appears to not have a particular

fondness, preference, or patriotic motive for the English land itself. After all, Laura never sees the country, and he fought for another country's army. His inclusion of two governesses who are believed to be most likely at least partly French, given the surnames De Lafontaine and Perrodon and their ability to speak that language, also demonstrates his desire of a cosmopolitan community over that of a strictly English one, even in his own home. It should be noted that De LaFontaine did have a German father, which explains why she does speak German. However, of the two, only Madame Perrodon speaks English, and it is "broken English" (Le Fanu 6). Laura even describes their conversations as a "Babel," or a mixing of different languages (Le Fanu 6).

Laura's father certainly seems to enjoy the mixing of cultures, and he also has a love of companionship. His primary companion is his daughter Laura, who calls herself "a rather spoiled girl, whose only parent allowed her pretty nearly her own way in everything" (Le Fanu 6). Indeed, throughout the text, Laura's father is seen to give his daughter almost everything she desires, but he keeps additional company as well and is known to invite guests into his home, most notably Carmilla and General Spielsdorf. Yet, perhaps the best example of Laura's father's desire for company comes in his continued employment of Madame Perrodon. Instead of dismissing the first governess when Laura has need of a finishing governess, he keeps her in his service. She simply serves as another seat at Laura and her father's "little dinner party" (Le Fanu 6).

General Spielsdorf shares these same desires for companionship and culture. The first chronological event that he takes part in is the "series of fetes" held by Count Carlsfeld in honor of Grand Duke Charles. The General calls the festivals "princely" and the count's hospitality "quite regal," and he clearly on the onset greatly enjoyed the

splendor that surrounded him, all of which are distinctly not from within the Austro-Hungarian Empire but from various European origins. The fireworks were such as “Paris itself had never witnessed” (Le Fanu 69). His “weakness,” music, was “ravishing” and came from the “finest instrumental band, perhaps in the world” with the best singers “from all the great operas in Europe” (Le Fanu 69). The images are distinctly European, certainly not limited to only those countries that fall within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Yet, General Spielsdorf, the only character with a surname matching that of the country’s language, is “carried back into the romance and poetry of [his] early youth” by all the grandeur, demonstrating that his love of cosmopolitan, or even basic European, culture has existed for a great portion of his life (Le Fanu 70). While this perhaps does not take away from his Styrian ancestry, his focus and love for the cosmopolitan does separate him from the Styrian land that is described as isolated.

The Count Carlsfeld’s festival also demonstrates the General’s love and desire for companionship that mirrors that of Laura’s father. The festivals are held by his “old friend,” and the mysterious countess he encounters also engages him on the premise that they too are old and great friends (Le Fanu 69). The text’s descriptions set out to make him a worldly man, who makes and enjoys friends and companions wherever he ventures. However, his greatest companion is his niece and ward, Bertha Rheinfeldt, and she accompanies him to the event. General Spielsdorf and Bertha’s relationship appears to be much like Laura’s and her father’s with the General doting on his ward and loving her as he would a daughter. Also like Laura and her father’s relationship, when the two are home, Bertha appears to be one of the General’s few companions. For when Millarca, an alias of Carmilla/Countess Mircalla, comes into their lives and eventually their home,

Spielsdorf dreams of "what life she would give to [their] sometimes lonely evenings at home" (Le Fanu 77). This dream appears to demonstrate that the General has a desire for a larger amount of companionship for both himself and his daughter/niece. Ultimately, the combination for both men, who place too much trust on the natural and desire companionship and a cosmopolitan culture, creates the chaos that consumes their lives. After all, the two men willingly invite a vampire into their households without even knowing the girl's surname. The festival in all its cosmopolitan luxuries is where General Spielsdorf agrees to take the demon into his household, while Laura's father's desire to please his daughter and have company becomes the reason that Carmilla is allowed entrance into their *schloss*. Both are so desperate for companionship and a cosmopolitan environment that they literally bring someone completely unknown to themselves into their homes to fill this void.

Finally, it must be noted that these similarities serve to create the connection discussed in my first chapter with Laura's father functioning in the main plot as a representation of English authority, while Spielsdorf occupies in the subplot. In addition to a love and desire for companionship and cosmopolitan culture, both men also prove to be "not such a dogmatist" as they initially appear, although both men require vast amounts of proof before accepting the supernatural over what they are predisposed to view as natural (Le Fanu 66). However, to kill the vampire they do not only need to accept the existence of the supernatural creatures. If this was the case, General Spielsdorf should have been able to kill Carmilla when he first saw what she truly was in Bertha's bedroom. Instead, his sword "flew to shivers against the door," the vampire lived to threaten Laura, and Bertha died (Le Fanu 87). Only when General Spielsdorf, again the

man who bears the proper surname, truly reflects and knows the wild, isolated, and superstitious land that the novel takes place in can he, as well as the other men who join him, kill Carmilla.

The Land

However, if General Spielsdorf can only defeat the vampire when he becomes like Styria, what is Styria like? The only description given is by Laura and for the most part it consists of her *schloss*, Karnstein, and the road in between them. Laura's description of this land is one of overwhelming loneliness. In the first paragraph of the first chapter, Laura describes it as a "lonely and primitive place" before continuing on to describe the land as "picturesque" and "solitary" (Le Fanu 4). A forest that extends "fifteen miles to the right, and twelve to the left" surrounds her home (Le Fanu 5). The nearest inhabited town is seven miles away, but there is a "striking and melancholy" and "ruined village" three miles to the west that once was ruled by the Karnsteins that met their ruin at the hands of vampires, though, of course, Laura does not know that in the opening moments of the novel (Le Fanu 5).

General Spielsdorf's residence is twenty miles to the right of Laura's home, meaning that Spielsdorf's own home does not lie within a forest. However, he most likely lives in a remote area as well, especially coupled with his remark that he has "sometimes lonely evenings" (Le Fanu 77). Additionally, the land does not appear to suffer from war. The "ruined village" was ruined many years prior and the drawbridge at Laura's *schloss* was "never raised" while Laura lived there, implying that war ended before Laura's birth (Le Fanu 4). Therefore, Styria is a land at peace from human warfare, though the land

certainly once hosted some form of war as Laura's father, and likely the General, "retired upon a pension" from the Austrian service (Le Fanu 4). However, this land at peace also alludes to the actual Styrian location, which having never been in the Hungarian section would have faced little warfare, but also as the novel was published in 1872, the war in the Austro-Hungarian Empire would have ended prior to the novel with the

Ausgleich of 1867.

This remote and isolated land is also wild, as could be expected from the forest that surrounds Laura's *schloss* and the ruined town of Karnstein. The signs of untamed land are found throughout the text. Carmilla's carriage crashes because of "projecting roots" in the road, demonstrating a lack of upkeep of the roads, including ones close to prominent locations such as a *schloss* (Le Fanu 15). A similar picture of the road, and the land in general, is picked up later when Laura and her father travel to Karnstein. Laura points out just how beautiful that land is because it lacks "the comparative formality which artificial planting and early culture and pruning impart;" therefore, Laura directly states that the land has yet to be put to agricultural use and remains in the shape nature first saw fit to give it (Le Fanu 63). Moreover, the ground has "irregularities" and sometimes ventures "out of its course," and "the varieties of ground" are "almost inexhaustible" (Le Fanu 63). All of this is said of the land between Laura's own *schloss* and that of the ruined village. Only three miles from what is presumably the slightly tamed land of the *schloss*, the land becomes totally wild, and roads are forced to give way to nature.

Of course, the novel's peasants presumably have attempted to tame parts of the Styrian land, and these people also serve to reveal the superstitious tendency that run rampant throughout this country. Superstition belongs as much to the land as loneliness and wildness, and its appearance comes as early as the novel's first chapter. When Laura is no more than six, the vampire, Carmilla, first attacks her. However, because of the actions of a few superstitious servants, a priest, and a doctor, she escapes the demonic fate that nearly dooms her later in the novel. Following her cry of pain, three servants appear to help the girl. They examine her chest, where Laura "felt the puncture" and tell her that they see nothing (Le Fanu 7). Despite this and telling her that she just dreamed the occurrence, the housekeeper and two other servants remain with her that night, and from that night "a servant always sat up in the nursery," until Laura turned fourteen (Le Fanu 7). Unlike the superstitious servants, however, Laura's father laughs "very heartily" at one of the servant's expressions of concern that night, an action that he later repeats when a doctor visits to discuss the "plague" that is killing off peasant girls (Le Fanu 8, 80). However, despite her father's disbelief, a doctor and a "venerable old man, in a black cassock," presumably a priest, arrive the next day to deliver both medicine and prayers over Laura (Le Fanu 8). Therefore, while her father may not have been convinced of a vampire attack, someone within the household was superstitious enough to bring these healers to the *schloss*.

This superstition continues throughout the novel with servants, peasants, and other locals openly discussing and fearing vampires, ghosts, and other demons. Mademoiselle de Lafontaine, who is known to be half German and presumably half French and is said to be "something of a mystic," tells Laura and Madame Perrodon

about a servant, Martin, who claims the lime tree walk is haunted, having seen a "female figure walking" there (Le Fanu 49). Later, a visiting hunchback sells both Carmilla and Laura amulets that are supposed to protect them "against the oupire, which is going like the wolf, [he] hears, through these woods." (Le Fanu 34). His inclusion of such an amulet in his wares implies that he at least believes enough of the demon to try turn a profit, but also it also demonstrates this superstition and belief is passing from one peasant to another at a fast enough rate that he can make a profit from such amulets.

Perhaps the most telling of just how superstitious the land truly is arrives in the form of the trusted doctor, a local to the area. Laura's father had laughed at this doctor for the same superstitious advice earlier, when it merely applies to the peasants. However, when Laura falls ill, her father, in much the same way General Spielsdorf did, opens his mind to the possibility of the supernatural. The doctor warns Laura's father that Laura's disease is truly the result of a vampire attack, and this time, he provides Laura's father with enough evidence, specifically the puncture wound on Laura, for him to begin to believe in the existence of such demons. Therefore, superstition regarding vampires comes to be believed by every person in this part of Styria, including Laura's overly rational father.

Le Fanu's Styria sometimes is described as beautiful and serene. However, more often than not the land proves to be isolated and wild, while superstition finds its way into the heart of its inhabitants from the peasants all the way to the most pious and rational men. General Spielsdorf must accept these characteristics of the Styrian land before he and the few men he assembles are able to defeat the vampire plague that has been afflicting Styria for over a century and a half.

Spielsdorf's First Letter

General Spielsdorf is first mentioned in the novel's second chapter, and as early as this first discussion of him, the novel begins to demonstrate how closely tied the man will become with the Styrian land. The tone and implied mental state of his letter reflect the events, scenery, and atmosphere of the entire chapter. The chapter opens sadly with Laura's father presenting her both the news of Bertha Rheinfeldt's death and General Spielsdorf's letter. The mood is somber and the land reflects this as the sun sets in "all its melancholy splendor" (Le Fanu 11). The term melancholy continues to be applied to the land and the moonlight by both Laura and her father, and Laura also notes a "ruined tower," which no longer serves any purpose (Le Fanu 12). The scene mixes beauty and sadness as Laura and her father try to grope for the meaning behind General Spielsdorf's "distracted" and occasionally "self-contradictory" words (Le Fanu 12, 11).

This early atmosphere of the scene corresponds to the melancholy tone of Spielsdorf's opening lines: "I have lost my darling daughter, for as such I loved her. During the last days of dear Bertha's illness I was not able to write to you" (Le Fanu 11). The General's early words reveal the true extent of his heartache. He does not mourn a niece or a ward, despite that being Bertha's actual connection to him. Instead he mourns for a daughter and a "darling daughter" that he "loved" (Le Fanu 11). These few words mirror Laura's own description of the land. She calls it "no softer, sweeter scene," but then a sentence later, she continues to take note of the "melancholy" nature of the scene with a "character of profound serenity" (Le Fanu 13). While Laura uses these images to describe the Styrian land that she gazes at, they also can be used to describe the death of

beautiful girl, which would be soft, sweet, and serene as well as melancholy. This image particularly works with the death of Spielsdorf's daughter, who is described as "darling" and "quite beautiful" as well as possessing an "unspeakable charm" (Le Fanu 11, 70, 70). Therefore, not only do Spielsdorf's calm, sweet, and terribly sad words reflect the scenery Laura describes as she initially reads his letter, but also the reflects reason behind those words.

However, as the chapter continues, the scenery changes and continues to match with the progression of mood within Spielsdorf's letter. Mist begins "stealing like smoke" across the grass, becoming a "transparent veil" over the land (Le Fanu 13). While Martin Willis in "Le Fanu's 'Carmilla,' Ireland, And Diseased Vision" (Date of Publication) examines this exact mist as an unrecognizable danger and "a portentous symbol of miasma from which the disease of vampirism emerges," the mist and its "transparent veil" quality also aligns directly with the next section of General Spielsdorf's letter (Martin 116). Spielsdorf writes, "Before then I had no idea of her danger. I have lost her, and now learn *all*, too late … what a fool have I been!" (Le Fanu 11). To be a transparent veil, the object under the veil must be able to be seen, meaning that a slight covering does exist but can easily be seen through. Once the text actually introduces General Spielsdorf, it becomes clear how big a "fool" he was because Carmilla, or Millarca as she was called in his household, barely hid her true identity (Le Fanu 11). Her languor, her attachment to Bertha, and her ability to leave locked rooms all pointed towards, if not directly supernatural, something suspicious, but his inability to look past the natural world blinded him to quite literally a transparent veil.

Following this cursing of himself for his foolishness, Spielsdorf begins to explain his plans erratically and interlaces them with insults of himself before becoming too "distracted" to continue:

> I devote my remaining days to tracking and extinguishing a monster. I am told I may hope to accomplish my righteous and merciful purpose. At present there is scarcely a gleam of light to guide me. I curse my conceited incredulity, my despicable affectation of superiority, my blindness, my obstinacy--all--too late. I cannot write or talk collectedly now. I am distracted. Soon as I shall have a little recovered, I mean to devote myself for a time to enquiry, which may possibly lead me as far as Vienna. (Le Fanu 11-2)

Undoubtedly this section of the letter is what Laura means when she calls the letter "vehement" and filled with self-contradictions so that she cannot fully comprehend the letter's meaning (Le Fanu 11). He claims he was told he "may hope to accomplish [his] righteous and merciful purpose," but also says he has "scarcely a gleam of light to guide" him (Le Fanu 11-2, 12). At the same time, he knows where he must go because he may have to travel "as far as Vienna" (Le Fanu 12). All of these instances contradict one another as the General appears unable to comprehend if he can possibly achieve his vengeance and where he must go to do so, and in between these contradictions are curses of his "conceited incredulity," "despicable affectation of superiority," "blindness," "obstinacy," and "distraction" (Le Fanu 12). The letter that began so melancholy and sweetly has devolved into a chaotic mix of plans and insults upon its author. Laura and

her father's conclusion that "grief had unsettled his mind" comes as no surprise given the abrupt changes in the last half of his letter (Le Fanu 11).

Yet, such a change in the land occurs almost directly after the misty "transparent veil" appears (Le Fanu 13). Laura's father says, "I feel as if some great misfortune were hanging over us," and instantly their attentions are "arrested" by the sound of a horse and carriage (Le Fanu 14). Laura, her father, and her two governesses watch the "unwonted" sight as the horses break "into a wild gallop," swing the carriage into "projecting roots," and overturn the carriage (Le Fanu 14, 15, 15). The scene becomes one of "utter confusion," the same kind of confusion that Laura and her father find in the last half of Spielsdorf's letter (Le Fanu 15). In this confusion, all of the curses General Spielsdorf lays upon himself in his letter pass to Laura's father. Laura's father becomes unable to see the strangeness of both the mother and daughter, who have crashed outside his *schloss*. Therefore, despite the mother giving her daughter a last look that is "not quite so affectionate as one might have anticipated" and the strange story that makes her daughter unable to divulge any information of her family, Laura's father takes in the young, injured girl, who is truly a vampire (Le Fanu 17). The chapter ends much like Spielsdorf's letter with the woman leaving after she has "recovered" from her upturned carriage, the same way Spielsdorf will leave once he has healed from his distraction and agitation (Le Fanu 12). In this very first acknowledgement of General Spielsdorf's character, the information provided by himself in the letter appears to directly correlate to the land and scene on the same chapter.

Seeking Isolation and Knowledge

The General's story is revealed out of chronological order with the rest of the novel. He sends his first letter to Laura and her father midway through his own subplot storyline, which is just before he ventures off to find answers to his enquiries. Of course, for the majority of the text, General Spielsdorf is absent as he devotes himself to finding answers about vampirism and defeating the vampiric plague that runs "like the wolf" through Styria (Le Fanu 34). While the land has already been established as being wild, isolated, and superstitious, Spielsdorf has not truly become those things until arrives at Karnstein. However, he must have taken steps towards becoming that man during his absence from the text. While he never divulges exactly where he traveled to in his quest for answers, his "manifest delight" at the sight of Baron Vordenburg at Karnstein indicates that not only have they met previously but may have become good friends or, at the very least, allies in the fight against vampirism (Le Fanu 89). This alliance is revealed as the General knows the man on sight, calls him "my dear Baron," and immediately knows the reason for the man's appearance and sets to working with him (Le Fanu 89).

The audience is led to believe that the Baron is the man "curiously learned" upon the subjects of vampires, who the second and "abler physician" from Gratz recommended to the General (Le Fanu 85, 84). While never directly stated, the fact that the Baron "had taken his abode in Gratz" implies that it is in that same city that the physician came upon him, and through their acquaintance, the physician learns the truth about vampirism and how to diagnosis and treat it (Le Fanu 93). With Gratz's reputation as an old university town, the exchange of crucial knowledge occurring in such a setting is unsurprising as well as the city being the residence of two characters, the second physician and the Baron, who are knowledgeable in little known information and arts. However, due to the

location of Gratz in the southern area of Styria, the words in General Spielsdorf's first letter come into question. The letter suggests that the General will head northwards towards Vienna, but he instead travels south towards Gratz. While this could be seen as perhaps the General originally did not know where he might find answers, the initial letter could also be read as having been written in sheer panic and perhaps wildness over the loss of a "darling daughter" (Le Fanu 11). His desperation and not wildness, belief, or hope drove him to follow the second physician's advice, but upon learning that supernatural entities like vampires exist, the General becoming temporarily mad and wholly wild would not be surprising as his overly rational world would have been shattered. In such a case, the first letter indicates not only that the man will one day reflect the Styrian land around him, but also that his journey to become that man has already begun. However, until he arrives at Karnstein, the General cannot join all of his new found attributes into a force to take out the vampire plague and receive his vengeance. He certainly has the wildness and has undergone the isolation and seems to prefer it now, but until he meets with the Baron at Karnstein, he does not fully embody the superstition of the land because he does not know the entire story of Mircalla Karnstein and why vampires so heavily plague this particular land.

The Real General

General Spielsdorf finally appears in the novel at the end of chapter nine, where he joins Laura and her father in their carriage that is headed to the village of Karnstein. As stated above, the General has undergone many changes since the "ten months since [they] had last seen him" (Le Fanu 65). He has grown thinner, echoing back to the

hardships that the man has undoubtedly faced in his quest for answers. He has an aura like "something of gloom and anxiety," where there used to be "cordial serenity" (Le Fanu 65). His eyes, which Laura characterized as "penetrating" before, "now gleamed with a sterner light," which suggests that has he lost his peace of mind and moved into a more determined wildness (Le Fanu 65). To Laura, "it was not such a change as grief alone usually induces, and angrier passions seemed to have had their share in bringing it about," which simply highlights that he has been living a difficult life in his search for revenge (Le Fanu 65). He is a man that has been broken bodily, mentally, and, perhaps, spiritually, and he can never be whole again until he has his vengeance.

This broken image of a man once characterized as great and joyful reflects the image of the ruined village of Karnstein. The village was once a "palatial residence" and was ruled by the powerful, rich, and titled family of Karnstein (Le Fanu 80). However, the village has suffered much the same fate as General Spielsdorf. The Karnstein of Laura's time is "the ruined village" with a "dismantled castle" that has "dark corridors," while trees and vines have become overgrown (Le Fanu 80). The entire village has become a shamble and a ghost town, since Karnstein "was troubled by revenants," or vampires, over a century before Laura's time (Le Fanu 82). Just as the General breaks down after losing Bertha to the vampire attack, the village, too, died because a plague of vampirism. The General in a way resembles the town of Karnstein, though in a human body.

Information about the village's destruction is provided to the three by a woodman, who had lived his entire life near the deserted village. His information appears to be new to Laura and her father, but the General seems to have expected many of the woodman's

answers as he only asks how the townspeople rid themselves of the fiends. The woodsman explains that several vampires "were tracked to their graves, there detected by the usual tests, and extinguished in the usual way, by decapitation, by the stake, and by burning" (Le Fanu 82). However, the immortal enemy was not vanquished until "many of the villagers were killed," which ultimately doomed the village and its population (Le Fanu 83). However, this all appears to be information that the General already was aware of, especially the information on how to kill a vampire; for earlier in the scene, the General claims that he plans to "strike her head off" to the great astonishment of Laura and her father (Le Fanu 81). Therefore, when the General arrives at Karnstein, his familiarity with the village's ruin cannot be doubted. However, he does not know the "local traditions" and instead must ask the woodsman for "the information of which [he is] in search," which is the location of the Countess Mircalla's tomb (Le Fanu 81). However, the woodman is unable to reveal any information that the General did not already seem to possess.

This lack of information is the reason why the General cannot kill the vampire both times he crosses her path before the arrival of the Baron, who truly has the answers the General requires. Therefore, the first time he attempts to kill Carmilla, he acts more out of desperation and misery, while also being "wholly skeptical" (Le Fanu 86). Upon actually seeing the doctor's "supernatural theory" come to actualization, the General "stood petrified" as the "black creature" fed upon Bertha, and as those "few moments" pass, the general's lack of knowledge and fear destroy his chances of saving his ward (Le Fanu 86, 87, 87, 87). When he comes to some form of comprehension of what sort of danger he has placed his ward in, he swings his sword at the vampire and misses twice,

striking once upon the air and the other on the door. In this first encounter, the General's surprise and his own admittance demonstrates that he had not yet accepted this superstition and did not possess enough information to kill the demon effectively. Therefore, after this horrific failure, he goes out to seek that information and understanding that he did not possess during the progression of Bertha's illness, and the Baron Vordenburg becomes that source of information for him.

Yet, upon his next encounter with Carmilla, he fails again, despite the later hints that he has indeed met and learned from the Baron. He lets out a cry, and despite all the knowledge and comprehension over the superstition as well as a readily available hatchet, the General again misses the vampire. However, this time, Carmilla goes on the offensive. She catches him "in her tiny grasp by the wrist," allowing her to work a numbness into the limb," which is later revealed to "slowly, if ever, [be] recovered from" (Le Fanu 86, 96). She then flees, leaving the General "agitated" and looking "as if he were at the point of death" (Le Fanu 88). In the reality, Carmilla has effectively left a curse on the General and his arm, and the novel never reveals whether or not he fully recovers from this numbness.

Nonetheless, Carmilla cursing of the General creates another parallel between the General and the land. Almost directly after this second battle between the two, the General tells Laura to "depart from this accursed ground" (Le Fanu 88). The superstitious land is cursed because Styria has been plagued with vampirism for over a century, and with his arm suffering from supernatural numbness, the General, too, has been cursed by a vampire, even by the very vampire that plagues the Styrian land. Subject to her curse, the General only becomes one step closer to becoming the living embodiment of the

Styrian land in all its wildness, isolation, and now, even more so superstition, but his transformation is not fully complete, resulting in an inability to defeat the vampire.

His final transformation occurs with the arrival of the Baron, who carries the crucial piece of information into understanding the superstitious history of the Styrian land. The Baron Vordenburg knows the location of the Countess Mircalla's tomb. With his "plan of the chapel," "dirty little book," and "measuring distances by paces," the Baron leads the General Spielsdorf and Laura's father to the "broad marble tablet" that marks the Countess's grave (Le Fanu 89, 89, 90, 90). Here, the General receives the final scrap of information and will be able to kill Carmilla, and his reaction demonstrates that he knows this to be true. As the group finds the grave's inscription he "raised his hands and eyes to heaven, in mute thanksgiving for some moments" (Le Fanu 90). In this moment, the General obtains some form of peace as he now possesses all the tools necessary to almost become one with the land, achieve his own peace by avenging his ward, and also rid Styria from the vampire plague, thus also giving the land peace as well.

This moment of thanksgiving is truly the climax for this particular character as he literally regains his selfhood. His eventual act of vengeance is merely summarized as Laura does not attend, and therefore, whether he or someone else stakes and decapitates the vampire is uncertain. Yet, this moment where the General finally knows he can and will defeat the vampire, he fully reflects all the wildness, isolation, and superstition that is the land of Styria, and in doing so, he is able to save the territory from vampires. While the first chapter and the Anglo-Irish perspective show the General as failing his

niece/daughter, the Austro-Hungarian context demonstrates the heroic qualities within the General and quite literally the hero's journey to become that figure.[9]

The General Leads

Of course, one could argue that the Baron may be the ultimate hero because he brings the information that leads to the location of the vampire's grave. Only with this information are the men able to kill Carmilla, and because the vampire's death occurs without Laura's presence, the identity of who drove the stake in her heart, struck off her head, and reduced her to ashes remains unknown as Laura only "summarized" her father's copy of the Imperial Commission's report in her narration (Le Fanu 92). Therefore, since the Baron performs the last great act of finding the tomb, he could potentially be read as the hero of the story.

However, the General is the character that brings all the others together to defeat the vampire, Carmilla. He goes out to search for the information on how to kill a vampire. He is likely the man that asks the Baron to not only find the information on the tomb's location but also to travel to Karnstein to help in the demon's destruction. He calls for the visit of the Inquisition, so the destruction is done fully and in accordance with the law. Ultimately, the General is the character that enables the destruction of Carmilla by bringing together a team that shares that same desire, and as he completes this hero journey, he also becomes one with the Styrian land. The only character seen in the novel to hold a surname in the appropriate language, not only parallels the land itself, but also saves the Styrian land from a vampiric plague.

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[9] See Joseph Campbell's *A Hero with a Thousand Faces.*

The Styrian Land, the General, and the Political Hero

The next chapter will reveal that character of Bertha Rheinfeldt presents its readers with a possible political cautionary tale, and in many ways, the character of General Spielsdorf presents a political hero within the Austro-Hungarian context. His actions and leadership within the novel notably lead to the destruction of the vampire, Carmilla, which cures the vampiric plague that had troubled Styria for over a century. The General does this by shedding his cosmopolitan identity and accepting that of the Austrian or the Styrian but also through his ability to gather support to fight in his cause.

This ability to essentially create an army to fight for his cause is precisely the dilemma that arises from the *Ausgleich* of 1867. When the peace agreement allowed Hungary power of “withdrawal of imperial patent over conscription,” the Austrian Empire, and Emperor specifically, stood to lose a lot of military power (Gibson 46). Gibson claims that the clashing over the “army question” was “the most serious problem” during and after the creation and signing of the *Ausgleich* (Gibson 63). As the Hungarians wanted full independence, their “main target” within the negotiations was for a “Hungarian Ministry with its own minister of war in a separation constitution,” but the Emperor and his ministers were “determined to maintain power over a combined army” (Gibson 64). The fight over this specific element within the peace agreement led to continued fighting and uprisings until the Emperor agreed to allow a split army.

Yet, the General appears to be the solution to this political catastrophe. He not only lives up to his surname but also his title of general. Spielsdorf essentially brings together an army that consists of the Baron, Laura’s father, and the “two medical men,”

and then, he leads them into battle against the undead. With his army and his leadership, General Spielsdorf manages to defeat what has been an undefeatable foe prior to their coming together (Le Fanu 92). They are the "united Austro-Hungarian army," and this army is led by an impressive general, who is not merely a man and a leader but also the embodiment of the wild, isolated, and superstitious land that the army will save (Gibson 65).

Chapter three:

A Loaded Name and a Cautionary Tale: Bertha Rheinfeldt and two Bertha Masons

Like her adoptive father discussed in the previous chapter, Bertha Rheinfeldt is another character that current scholarship has largely neglected. The lack of individual analysis of the character, however, is perhaps expected, as she never appears within the text because her death occurs prior to the events of the novel. Furthermore, Bertha's place within the political geography that concerns Le Fanu is difficult to parse, and in a novel that appears to be driven by nineteenth-century politics and rebellions, much of the scholarship on the novel has examined the novel in regards to those politics. In the few pieces of scholarship that do address the character of Bertha, her character is solely regarded as a parallel to Laura but working within the subplot, and, while there certainly is a correlation between Laura and Bertha Rheinfeldt, Bertha on her own is just as interesting and complex a character as the far more widely studied Laura and Carmilla. Without ever actually appearing in the novel, the reader not only knows her and her story but also emphasizes with her. This empathy implies that novel presents enough information about the character to feel something towards her, which certainly makes the character worthy of attention.

However, fitting Bertha into the political setting is difficult, especially if that political setting remains focused entirely on an Irish parallel. The first chapter of this thesis discusses Bertha Rheinfeldt as an adoptive daughter to the General, and she certainly has that specific role within the text. Yet, neither my first or second chapter addresses what political or cultural body the character could possibly embody. This

chapter will engage the question of the purpose of Bertha, specifically in regards to her name, as well as the associations of her character to specific cultural and political bodies. For Bertha's origins, other than being the General's niece, are never revealed and her surname is ambiguous, but she appears to parallel Laura, as discussed in the first chapter. However, Bertha does not fit into an Anglo-Irish context, and as her adoptive father functions in the Austro-Hungarian context, it would seem that she would fit into this European context as well. However, upon closer analysis, Bertha proposes a different and more expansive literary geography than we have previously seen. Therefore, what purpose could the girl whose death occurs prior to the events of the novel serve within *Carmilla*?

Bertha's role reveals itself entirely through the voice and letters of General Spielsdorf. As General Spielsdorf describes Bertha's character and her death, she comes to be seen as a sort of cautionary tale or warning, specifically for those characters whose family tree falls within the Anglo-Irish context, though she herself does not entirely fit within that imperial sphere. From the General's first letter in chapter two of the novel, the characters and the audience know something terrible has killed the girl; following the General's initial appearance in the novel, his explanations reveal that Bertha suffered from not only the same illness as Laura, vampirism, but also from the same source of the contagion, Carmilla. Yet, his explanations of Bertha's fate and illness appear late in the novel, and thus, Bertha and her tale cannot function as a sort of forewarning of vampirism. By the time the General meets Laura and her father and mentions the existence of vampires, Laura's father has already accepted that a vampire has targeted his daughter. Bertha's tale provides neither a warning nor a potential antidote to heal Laura

because, by the time the General appears, Laura's illness has progressed too far in the disease to ever truly heal, despite what the doctor says.

For a character that appears to only serve as cautionary tale and an early example of a woman in a refrigerator, why would the explanation of the true danger that befell her come so late for both the characters in the novel as well as the novel's audience.[10] How can she even function as a cautionary tale, if vampirism is not what her story and death are supposed to instruct Laura and her father on? A cautionary tale is supposed to warn of danger or, at the very least, do a bit of foreshadowing towards the true menace of a tale. Yet, all this crucial information regarding Bertha's fate comes too late. Laura has already been attacked and permanently damaged, and therefore, what purpose does Bertha Rheinfeldt add to the story? Is she merely a woman in the refrigerator, a plot device meant to spur the General into action? If so, why would she be written to inspire empathy, when empathy for the General would suffice? Le Fanu's novel is simply too complex for Laura to serve such a trivial purpose. Bertha's character seems to function as a cautionary tale, but what if what she warns not merely of vampirism but something else. The first mention of Bertha within the novel can and does serve as a cautionary tale, but current scholarship has neglected to see a connection between Bertha Rheinfeldt and the ideas circling around the British and Irish literature. These connections provide a broader and fuller understanding for Le Fanu's marginal figure, allowing us better to understand her complex role in the novel.

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[10] A woman in the refrigerator is a term created by Gail Simone in which a female character serves as a plot device to further the plot of a male character. The term was originally used specifically for females within comics, but has since expanded into other areas including books, television, and film. See the website *Women in Refrigerators* created by Gail Simone.

Le Fanu's peculiar choice in the name Bertha Rheinfeldt is of particular note. As stated in the last chapter and in accordance to what Gibson attempted to demonstrate in his article on the *Ausgleich* of 1867, the names selected within *Carmilla* appear to possess specific meanings. In particular, surnames in Le Fanu's novel reveal connections to specific political allegiances or leanings; these connections specifically apply within the Austro-Hungarian context. The reason for surnames seeming to apply only within an Austro-Hungarian context is because Laura's family has no surname. After all, Laura's father does not even possess a first name or title. Therefore, as seen in chapter two, the Spielsdorf surname aligns the General with the Austrian side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the land itself. Yet, his ward and closest relative possesses a surname that cannot be fixed upon a specific side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland. While this ambiguity in her surname certainly must and will be discussed below, her first name is also significant because it can, all by itself deliver a cautionary tale. When coupled with her surname, Bertha's character ultimately reveals a distinct message that goes beyond the vampiric novel and into the real, political world Le Fanu knew.

The Loaded Name of Bertha

In regards to the function of names, Bertha is almost the antithesis of her uncle. He possesses a very distinct surname but no first name, while Bertha has a culturally and nationally ambiguous surname but the novel gives her a clear first name. General Spielsdorf's distinct surname aligns him directly with the Styrian land, and the lack of first name seems to give him an expansive quality rather than a limiting one. Therefore,

the General embodies Styria and possibly all of the Austrian controlled lands within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, Bertha's name reveals quite the opposite. Bertha Rheinfeldt is one of two characters given a full name with the rest simply called by a surname and a title, just a first name, or no name at all. Therefore, the novel marks Bertha's name as different from the others the moment she goes from the potentially cosmopolitan character of "Mademoiselle Rheinfeldt" to the revelation of her full name in the General's first letter (Le Fanu 10). Unlike her uncle, her name specifies a particular person but with political associations that are hard to detect. Initially, Bertha's name seems to imply that she stands alone as a character and in terms of her situation, and the use of the first name Bertha would serve as evidence to that reading. Today, the name Bertha may not seem a cautionary tale on its own. Yet, in the nineteenth century, the name Bertha would have been a loaded choice, as the name would conjure a connection between Le Fanu's character and that of the antagonist, Bertha Mason, from Charlotte Brontë's popular novel, *Jane Eyre* (1847).

Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is a Gothic novel that features the apparently insane antagonist, Bertha Mason. The novel "was an instant success" upon its first publication in 1847, and while Le Fanu would not publish *Carmilla* for another twenty-five years, *Jane Eyre*'s popularity and the reputation of Bertha Mason's character, and specifically her madness, lingered (Davies xi). Bertha Mason earns her lasting reputation by being the character that burns and literally haunts the mansion's third story room at Thornfield Hall. According to Thornfield Hall's housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax "if there were a ghost at Thornfield Hall" those rooms "would be its haunt" (Brontë 100). Different characters in the text usually refer to her in terms of "ghost" or "demon"; however, the novel's

eponymous protagonist sees her as something else (Brontë 100, 199). Bertha Mason appears in Jane's room the night before her first wedding to Mr. Rochester and tears Jane's wedding veil in half, while Jane looks on in fear. While Jane initially imagines this interaction to be a nightmare, she wakes to find her veil shredded and later describes the woman to Mr. Rochester as "tall and large" with "thick and dark" hair that hangs "long down her back" (Brontë 265). She is "[f]earful and ghastly" with a "discoloured" and "savage" face that held "red eyes" (Brontë 266). Ultimately, Jane claims that the figure she saw reminds her "[o]f the foul German spectre—the Vampyre," the same form of demon that plagues Le Fanu's Styria in *Carmilla* (Brontë 266).

While Bertha Mason is not truly a vampire in *Jane Eyre,* her appearance, actions, and final destruction do resemble those of Le Fanu's vampire, Carmilla. In terms of appearance, Carmilla and Bertha Mason have a close resemblance with dark eyes and long, curly, dark hair. Carmilla's hair is a source of wonder for Laura as she calls it "magnificently thick and long" as well as "exquisitely fine and soft" and in "a rich very dark brown," and in many ways Carmilla's hair and appearance are what drive Laura to Carmilla as Bertha Mason's "majestic" appearance lured in Mr. Rochester (Le Fanu 27, Le Fanu 27, Brontë 286). Additionally, both Carmilla and Bertha Mason go haunting at night and their victims believe their visitations to be merely dreams, until they wake up to find physical evidence, a shredded veil or "a small blue spot" from where blood was sucked (Le Fanu 61). The two characters also meet similar violent ends the decapitation and burning of Carmilla's body and Bertha Mason's death from jumping from Thornfield Hall after she set the mansion on fire. The similarity in the mutilated and then burned

body is hardly a coincidental parallel, as, particularly in the nineteenth century, the name Bertha would call *Jane Eyre*'s antagonist to mind.

Yet, despite the name's loaded nature and the resemblance between Brontë's Bertha and Le Fanu's Carmilla, the *Jane Eyre* character does not truly parallel Le Fanu's Bertha Rheinfeldt, even at the moment of her demise. The General's descriptions of his beloved ward create empathy with Bertha Rheinfeldt, which does not exist with the "cunning and malignant" madwoman of *Jane Eyre* (Brontë 290). Her name may conjure up images of the woman who resembles the "German spectre," but Bertha Rheinfeldt herself does not (Brontë 266). Bertha Rheinfeldt was not a "lunatic" and was not "pronounced … mad" by "medical men" (Brontë 275, 288, 288). The doctors the General brings to see her "failed to produce the slightest impression on her disease," and she is plagued by "appalling dreams" and fatigue but not irrational and violent behavior (Le Fanu 84, 80). While her name would have brought forth parallels to *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Mason and could have hinted towards Bertha becoming a vampire, this connection cannot be the cautionary tale the novel sets up because at the novel's first mention of Bertha Rheinfeldt, in the General's first letter. In his letter, the message specifically notes that she died and did not truly succumb to the illness that plagued her, allowing Bertha to have a burial and not various mutilations and a final burning.

The General actually is grateful for her way of dying, despite being incredibly upset about the girl's death. He says she "died without a suspicion of the cause of her sufferings" and she never understood "the nature of her illness" nor "the agent of all this misery," which all essentially boils down to Bertha Rheinfeldt died ignorant of her disease and its cause (Le Fanu 11). In other words, Bertha Rheinfeldt never became the

vampire that Bertha Mason so clearly resembles, but instead she "died in the peace of innocence" and did not rise again as a monster (Le Fanu 11). Therefore, a potential cautionary tale that warns of Laura potentially becoming like Bertha Mason and a vampiric demon falls apart directly from the first possibility of it.

A Domestic Cautionary Tale

Yet, this destruction of the potential cautionary tale only applies to the specter of the vampire. While a vampire will be the very beast that must be defeated at the end of the novel, General Spielsdorf's letter reveals that he does not intend to tell Laura's father about the existence of vampires until after he has had his vengeance against the demon that killed Bertha as well as some evidence to prove of their existence. This intent is stated outright in his letter as he writes, "Some time in autumn, two months hence, or earlier if I live, I will see you -- that is, if you permit me; I will then tell you all that I scarce dare put upon paper now" (Le Fanu 12). The General is not in the frame of mind to adequately or rationally explain to his friend the existence of the supernatural. After all, he notes that he "cannot write or talk collectedly" at the moment, and he knows Laura's father will find him mad, if he cannot provide sufficient evidence to support such a strange claim (Le Fanu 12). Therefore, his letter provides no warning of the existence and potential plague of vampirism nor does it become a form of cautionary tale against such supernatural entities. Yet, the letter does provide a form of a cautionary tale. This letter, which is the first place to name Bertha and set her apart from all other characters excepting that of Carmilla, presents a cautionary tale simply through the loaded nature of

Bertha’s name in correlation to the other information the General provides to Laura and her father.

While the letter never reveals the actual source of his misery, the General does allude to how such misery befalls him, and this information forms the cautionary tale that ties into Bertha’s name. The letter speaks of a “fiend” who “betrayed [his] infatuated hospitality” (Le Fanu 11). While the “fiend” undoubtedly points to Carmilla, the General’s focus turns to this betrayal within his house as the source of his loss and need for vengeance. The letter continues to note that the General “thought [he] was receiving into [his] house innocence, gaiety, a charming companion for [his] Bertha,” but he was “a fool” to have done this (Le Fanu 11). His letter’s warning and cautionary tale does not once address the existence of vampires or anything supernatural; instead, his letter speaks to a betrayal within his own household or mismanagement within his own domestic control, which comes from a source that he allowed into his home.

The General curses himself as blind and obstinate among other things, but the truth becomes evident later on that he greatly regrets letting the demon into his home more so than the actual existence of the beast. When he appears later within the novel, he states “at another time” he would have told Bertha “to wait a little, until, at least they knew who they were,” but instead he finds himself “overpowered” and he “submitted” to the vampires requests (Le Fanu 75). While the General has no love or respect for a vampire, he believes the moment he agreed to take in Carmilla was the same moment that he truly damned his ward. For in this moment, he loses complete control over his own household because he could not stop the unknown girl from entering into his home or from preying on Bertha once her stay has begun. Therefore, the warning or cautionary

tale that the General's letter initially appears to provide is the avoidance of welcoming the unknown into one's home. Yet, like other evidence that appears within the novel, Laura's father immediately overlooks such a caution in the General's letter and welcomes the apparently stunned Carmilla into his home without so much as knowing her family name. Laura's father's inability to heed the General's warning sets off the chain of events that bring forth disorder and destruction within Laura's father's household.

How does this cautionary tale tie into the near prophetic quality of the name Bertha and how can that be the cautionary tale if it appears to require the general's tale over how he was "overpowered" and lost control of his home (Le Fanu 75)? The answer to the second question is the answer to the first. The cautionary tale does not need to be fleshed out later in the novel because Bertha's name and its correlation to Brontë's Bertha Mason reveals the disorder and chaos that can result from welcoming an unknown person into one's household. *Jane Eyre* presents Bertha Mason as an unredeemable monster. As Laura E Ciolkowski notes in "Navigating the *Wide Sargasso Sea*: Colonial History, English Fiction, and British Empire," Bertha Mason was constructed by Charlotte Brontë to demonstrate "the moral recuperation" of a person or family involved in the slave trade, which the "common English people" saw as "convenient symbols of evil and immorality" (Ciolkowski 342). Therefore, the audience is not meant to empathize with *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Mason because her father and stepfather made their wealth from the slave trade; however, Rochester, who by marrying Bertha Mason does in fact marry into the slave trade, becomes a character that a reader sympathizes with because he suffers so much at the hands of his father and his mad first wife. Additionally, Bertha Mason's ghostlike or

vampiric appearance should also not be surprising given that she is meant to embody what was seen as an unforgivable evil.

Ultimately, Brontë wrote Bertha Mason to appear as a taint or a plague on the English domestic sphere. Following his marriage, Mr. Rochester is forced to face that he will "never have a quiet or settled household" because his wife has gone so entirely mad that "no servant would bear the continued outbreaks of her violent and unreasonable temper," meaning Bertha Mason literally brought on so much destruction and misery to his household that Mr. Rochester could not assert his authority or gain control of it (Brontë 287). Mr. Rochester eventually makes the decision to leave the domestic sphere and travel throughout the Continent, while his insane wife remained confined to a room in Thornfield, which only serves to demonstrate his complete inability to control his own household in a similar fashion to the General's struggle. While *Jane Eyre* truly is a Gothic story that focuses on the breakdown and mismanagement of a household, this disorder in the domestic still does not fully align with the cautionary tale laid out in the General's first letter and in the character and name of Bertha Rheinfeldt. While Thornfield Hall certainly suffers from mismanagement in its household with a madwoman stalking the halls at night and occasionally burning the master's bedroom, this cautionary tale still relies upon the loathed Bertha Mason as the story's villain, and, as stated above, Bertha Rheinfeldt is no Bertha Mason.

In fact, there is another side to Bertha Mason's story seen as she grows from the unknown to the monster that haunts Thornfield Hall. Doing so, allows the audience to empathize with Bertha Mason and, to create that cautionary tale, Bertha Mason has to be a character that an audience can be empathetic towards. In other words, Bertha Mason

needs to be put back into the context of how she arrived at her madness and seen outside of the view of her husband who hates her and put back into the context of how she arrived at her madness. Le Fanu's cautionary tale shows a progression where the General "learn[s] all" but "too late," and Bertha's illness had "last days" implying a gradual increase in the illness prior to her death (Le Fanu 11). Therefore, for a cautionary tale involving the Berthas to parallel each other, some form of progression into Bertha Mason's madness must be acknowledged, as is the case with Bertha Rheinfeldt. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) provides this backstory that fleshes out the parallel between Bertha Mason and Bertha Rheinfeldt, while also illuminating exactly how this cautionary tale plays out in *Carmilla* as well as the political atmosphere that surrounds the novel's first publication.

Bertha, Bertha, and Bertha?

Though Rhys's novel was written over ninety years after the publication of Le Fanu's *Carmilla,* the West Indian context that the novel provides is relevant as both novels engage the construction and issues within colonialism or the creation of an empire. Both of these novels reveal the disorder and chaos within empires and in the identities of characters whose national or cultural identities come into question as new borders are drawn and new laws formed. This creation of new laws specifically draws a connection between the Bertha Rheinfeldt of Le Fanu's 1872 novel and that of Bertha Mason of Rhys's 1966 one, which the Bertha Mason of *Jane Eyre* does not explicitly state. This connection flings both Berthas into cultural and national identity crises because of the creation of new laws, which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter as it

demonstrates the suffering that results from an inability of the empires to fully control their new lands or, the imperial domestic sphere. However, prior to discussing that topic, the parallels between the two characters, in terms of plot and other novelistic traits, must be acknowledged first. For without such similarities, the mere sharing of a name reveals almost nothing about the cautionary tale Le Fanu's Bertha reveals through her own name.

To begin, the characters share many of the same traits prior to falling ill, particularly in terms of beauty. While the General never fully describes Bertha Rheinfeldt's physical appearance in ways of hair or eye color, the girl is described to Laura "as a very charming girl," though Laura never acknowledges who provides this description (Le Fanu 10). However, given the extreme isolation and loneliness in which Laura spends her life, she most likely heard this from her father, who later admits that Bertha was "quite lovely" in regards to her appearance (Le Fanu 67). Both Berthas will literally attract their own doom with their beauty. Bertha Rheinfeldt's beauty and the "excitement and delight" that brought an "unspeakable charm to her features" grabs the attention of "a young lady, dressed magnificently, but wearing a mask" (Le Fanu 70). This masked young lady turns out to be Carmilla and the contagion that will eventually kill Bertha. Therefore, her own beauty seems to be her own undoing, and the case is similar for Rhys's Bertha Mason.

Even within *Jane Eyre*, Mr. Rochester reveals that his agreement with the marriage his father proposed arose mainly out of Bertha Mason's beauty and charms. Bertha was "splendidly dressed" and "flattered" and "displayed … her charms and accomplishments" for Mr. Rochester (Brontë 286). In both of the nineteenth-century texts, beauty and the watching of that beauty is what brings the Carmilla and Mr.

Rochester to their Bertha, and this trend appears to be the case with Rhys's Bertha as well. Mr. Rochester finds her beautiful and, just as Carmilla meets Bertha Rheinfeldt, he meets Bertha Mason at a party. Here, he "bowed, danced, smiled, kissed her hand, danced with her," and while Mr. Rochester hints that he was merely going through the motions, he also notes that he "realized how beautiful she was" (Rhys 45, 47). Therefore, just as Carmilla finds Bertha Rheinfeldt, Mr. Rochester finds his first wife to be beautiful and entertaining in both texts concerning Bertha Mason, and that beauty is what leads him to desire her.

While their beauty brings about the Berthas' dooms, their appearance also becomes a sign of the progression of their illnesses. During the initial meeting with Laura and her father, the General deems that "[n]o creature could have been more beautiful" than his ward, and he adds that "only three months ago" no other girl was "more blooming" (Le Fanu 67). This continuation of the description of his niece could simply mean that her beauty has passed now that she has died. However, through Laura's story, the novel acknowledges a physical change in the vampire's victims. Laura catches her father "contrasting" Carmilla's beautiful looks with her own, and soon after he does this, he brings the doctor into their *schloss*, who successfully diagnoses Laura prior to even seeing the fang bites on her chest (Le Fanu 58). Therefore, Bertha likely went from "quite beautiful" to "pale" with "dilated and darkened underneath" the eyes, just as Laura did (Le Fanu 70, 52, 52). Her loveliness was no longer in its peak but instead decayed as the vampiric illness took over her, demonstrating a threat to femininity and thus, the domestic sphere.

Rhys's Bertha Mason's beauty shares a similar fate to Bertha Rheinfeldt's; her beauty fades as her illness or madness takes over. While Rhys's version of Mr. Rochester also claims Bertha "is beautiful," he is also wary of her almost as soon as their marriage ceremony has ended. Her "pleading expressions" begin to annoy him, and he begins to find her eyes "[l]ong, sad, dark" and "alien" (Rhys 41, 39, 39). However, despite his misgivings, the couple does manage to have a "married couple's brief erotic happiness," according to Jennifer Gilchrist in "Women, Slavery, and the Problem of Freedom in *Wide Sargasso Sea*" (Gilchrist 476). However, this happiness does not even last their entire honeymoon and, to Gilchrist, is the result of Rochester's "struggle between the rational restraint" that he learned in England and "the sensual lure of Antoinette [or Bertha] and the West Indies" (Gilchrist 476). Gilchrist later comments on the downfall of their marriage and Bertha's sanity, linking it to Bertha's "slave-like" tendencies and her "enjoyment" of "[h]is Obeah drug-induced, sexual domination of her," which Gilchrist sees as "sadomasochistic" (Gilchrist 463, 478, 478). Mr. Rochester's total rejection of her and renaming of her from Antoinette to Bertha bring about her loss of sanity and beauty.

By the time Rhys's Bertha has been forcibly relocated to the third story of Thornfield Hall, she avoids looking at herself for she does not "want to see that ghost of woman" and when she does see herself in her prophetic dream, her appearance of "streaming hair" causes her to drop the candle and set the mansion on fire, which she then finds to be her purpose once she wakes up, and she heads down "the dark passage" (Rhys 112). Rhys's Bertha loses her beauty and appears like the "Vampyre" that Jane Eyre believes to have seen in Brontë's novel, and she becomes aware of it just as her madness peaks and she sets out to burn the mansion (Brontë 266). Therefore, like Bertha

Rheinfeldt, the loss of beauty becomes a symbol of their illnesses completely taking over them and presaging their looming death.

In addition to the loss of beauty playing a significant role in the progression of their illnesses, both characters experience nightly visits by creatures. Carmilla, of course, feeds upon Bertha Rheinfeldt, which ultimately leads to her death. However, the notable aspect of these deadly visits is that they solely occur at night, which allows Bertha to suspect that they are merely nightmares. The small amount of specific information about Bertha's unwanted and nightly visitations demonstrates that her suspected dreams are almost exactly like the ones that Laura encounters. That is to say that, a "black creature" or a "specter" that "sometimes resembl[es] Millarca [or Carmilla]" enters her room and attacks her, and she feels "something like a pair of large needles pierce her," followed by a "sense of strangulation" (Le Fanu 87, 80, 80, 80). The animal form that the vampire takes with Laura resembles "a monstrous cat," and therefore, the "black creature" that haunted Bertha at night likely also resembled a cat, despite the General never specifically describing it in that way (Le Fanu 46, 87).

While a vampire never attacks Bertha Mason within either of her novels, she too encounters a beast, or rather rats, within her bedroom in Rhys's version. When Bertha Mason sleeps with the window open in her room, two large rats appear on her windowsill as she stirs in the night. The rats are described "as big as cats" and it is stated that they "star[ed] at her" (Rhys 49). Thus, like the nightly terrors that visit Bertha Rheinfeldt, the rats that visit Bertha Mason are also described in relation to a cat, though this is only said to be in their size. Also similar to Bertha Rheinfeldt's encounter with her beast is that both end in a form of "unconsciousness" with Bertha Rheinfeldt fainting and Bertha

Mason simply deciding to sleep through the ordeal (Le Fanu 80). Bertha Mason "turned over, pulled up the sheet and went to sleep instantly" (Rhys 49). However, like Bertha Rheinfeldt and Laura, Rhys's Bertha Mason wakes up in fear, and just like these nightly visits lead to the illness in Bertha Rheinfeldt and Laura, Bertha Mason's madness, if not begins here, is foreshadowed. Her maid, Christophine, "was angry" that she slept "in the moonlight when the moon [was] full" (Rhys 49). A footnote by the editor points out that the anger "[r]efers to the belief that looking at the full moon for extended periods or sleeping under the full moon will cause madness (Raiskin qtd. in Rhys 49). However, prior to the novel's second part, Bertha Mason does not seem to demonstrate any signs of madness. Therefore, these nightly terrors mimic each other, but Bertha Mason's marriage to and eventual shunning by Mr. Rochester are the cause for her madness and loss of identity.

Family Matters

The most significant commonality, for the purpose of this paper, between the two Berthas though is that of their broken and dysfunctional domestic settings. Both characters find themselves in households that the supposed head of the household, the father, lacks complete control and knowledge over his home. Very broadly, General Spielsdorf's inability to manage his household arises as he cannot stop a vampire from entering his home, does not identify the threat to Bertha until it is too late, and fails to defeat the vampire even with a sword dedicated to that specific cause. In the case of Mr. Rochester, his failure to manage his own household arises from his attempt to control his wife, which results in her madness and aggressive behavior towards him. However, in the

case of Mr. Rochester, Rhys makes a case for him to be just as screwed over by his own father, demonstrating a Rochester lineage of failure to control a household that perhaps is not present within Le Fanu's characters.

While the failure of the father is directly addressed in the first chapter of this thesis, the idea comes to play once again in the case of Bertha Rheinfeldt and Rhys's Bertha. The General's early insistence on following Sir Francis Bacon's scientific method as well as other Enlightenment modes of rationalizing the world, lead to his inability to see the vampire and true threat within his household. The General calls himself a "fool" for not detecting Carmilla's true nature sooner (Le Fanu 11). Like Laura's father, he too went to extreme justifications to try and fit Carmilla's strange symptoms into the natural world, such as believing in her suffering from sleepwalking. While this thesis's second chapter finds redeemable and heroic qualities in the General following his niece/adoptive daughter's death, his extreme prioritization of reasoning does lead to the downfall of his niece.

Mr. Rochester appears to be the cause of Bertha's madness in much the same way that Carmilla is Bertha Rheinfeldt's. The initial dysfunction in Bertha Mason's story is the arranged marriage between Mr. Rochester and herself. Therefore, in a way, Bertha Mason's stepfather and Mr. Rochester's father, who make the initial arrangements for the marriage, perhaps are the cause of both characters sufferings. In *Jane Eyre*, we know that Mr. Rochester particularly blames his own kin, his father and older brother, for the arrangement and believes them to have been fully aware of his wife's madness prior to creating the match. He claims they "thought only of the thirty thousand pounds" of

Bertha Mason's dowry, and he sees it as a "plot" against him (Brontë 286, 287). This anger and belief carries through to Rhys's novel.

Rhys's Mr. Rochester is hesitant to write to his father prior to and following his marriage because he simply does not know where to begin with his anger and suffering. He repeatedly thinks "Dear Father," sometimes followed by ellipses, before alluding to dreams or mentally plans that he wishes he could say in his letter (Rhys 39). While the eventual letter that he does send to merely mentions his "approaching marriage," which he deems as "hardly news," these mental letters reveal a deep anger towards his father (Rhys 45). In the most telling of these mental outlines, he admits that with this marriage he "will never be a disgrace to [his father] or to [his] dear brother, the son [he] love[s]" and that he feels as though his brother or his father had sold his soul, simply to rid themselves of the nuisance of a second son (Rhys 41). He continues on in this section to wonder if it was "such a bad bargain" as his wife is "beautiful," but he finishes the section with "And yet . . ." as if he feels that something within his wife or his marriage is off (Rhys 41). Mr. Rochester in both novels blames his father for his unhappy first marriage, as he believes that both his father and brother knew of his wife's insane mother and the likelihood of her following down the same path.

On the other side of this arranged marriage, Bertha's stepfather, Mr. Mason, almost comes off as a good man for setting up the match. He tells Bertha, who at the moment is still Antoinette, "I want you to be happy, Antoinette, secure, I've tried to arrange" before he claims that that moment is not the time to discuss her impending marriage (Rhys 35). Mr. Mason appears to truly care for Bertha and want her in a happy marriage that would fulfill the expectations of an idyllic English household. Yet, by the

time that Bertha's marriage takes place, Mr. Mason has passed away and his son, Richard, has come in control of Bertha's affairs. In many ways, Mr. Mason, who admittedly Bertha never seemed to have much love for, appears to act in a similar fashion to General Spielsdorf. He attempts to provide the best company and life for his stepdaughter, going as far as to pledge £30,000 as her dowry as well as sending her to a convent for her education. Yet, his actions ultimately lead to the union that causes her so much strife that she becomes insane.

Additionally, Bertha never outright blames Mr. Mason for her unhappiness in marriage. Later in the novel, Richard Mason, her stepbrother, appears to receive Bertha's blame and anger, as demonstrated as she attacks him with a knife. She seems to particularly blame him for her captivity in her marriage. In her madness, Bertha says, "Dear Richard please take me away from this place where I am dying because it is so cold and dark," while she cries and looks for a letter that she believes that she wrote, though whether she truly wrote the letter can never be known (Rhys 108). Bertha, of course, also blames Mr. Rochester for her unhappiness. In the third part of the novel, she solely refers to Mr. Rochester as "that man" or "the man," demonstrating a total disconnect from the man that she once desired so much she risked using Obeah to make him love her, despite Christophine's warnings that Obeah "is not for" white people because it causes "bad trouble" for them (Rhys 110, 112, 68, 68). Bertha Mason's life is torn apart because of failures of men to control the domestic sphere that they are supposed to lead, and much like Bertha Rheinfeldt, any savior comes far too late to actually save her. Just as the General cannot save Bertha Rheinfeldt when he hid in her closet, no character, including Grace Poole, who like the General stays within Bertha's

same room as she sleeps, can control or save Bertha Mason. The households of each have fallen into chaos.

Names, Nations, and a Cautionary Tale

So what do connections between two characters that share a name and share in death and misery in dysfunctional households reveal as a cautionary tale for the characters within *Carmilla* and in the real nineteenth century that Le Fanu occupied? Again, the first thing that this all leads back to is Bertha Rheinfeldt's name.

As stated above, Bertha Rheinfeldt's surname is ambiguous. Unlike the name Spielsdorf, Rheinfeldt cannot be traced to any particular state within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, despite the surname being very German. However, Le Fanu's choices in first names and surnames appear to adhere to certain political groups of geographical locations. Thus, Spielsdorf, a German name, creates a correlation between the General and the Austrian section of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Yet, his niece's name conveys none of this. Her surname translates to the Rhine River from "Rhein" and fields from "feldt" or *feld*, which would seem to point to Germany because those would be the fields by the Rhine River. Yet, Germany does not fall within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Le Fanu never makes any explicit references to Germany in any of the cosmopolitan scenes or elsewhere in his novel. Additionally, the reader is never made aware of how Bertha is specifically related to the General. Did the General have a wife and his ward came from that side of the family? Is she the daughter of the General's sister? How much of her blood, if any, is Austrian, like the General's, is completely uncertain because their familial relation could be from two completely different bloodlines. Therefore, unlike

Laura, no definite blood identity can be named or associated to a specific political or national group. Her identity is in limbo, which is extremely similar to a group of people after the signing of the *Ausgleich* of 1867.

The *Ausgleich* was the peace contract signed by the Austrian Empire that created the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While the role of this document is discussed at length in the second chapter, it should be noted that this contract created a dual monarchy that worked together to rule the empire, and this hierarchy gave the Hungarians significantly more power than they had prior to their uprising. However, the *Ausgleich* also greatly divided the empire and in one specific way that seems to account for the ambiguity of Bertha Rheinfeldt's near lack of political identity. Citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire could only be Austrian or Hungarian but not both. For some, a singular citizenship within the empire would have been confusing and identity shaking. Did it solely rely on the location of their homes? What if they moved lived in the Hungarian controlled section but were originally Austrian or vice versa? For these people, their literal national identities had become complex and confused, which is much the same as Bertha's surname. The "Rhein" syllable seems to calls to mind the to the German river, the Rhine, and Germany, but Germany is never brought up within the novel of *Carmilla*. Therefore, while her name does correlate to one of the two official languages of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, German, her national and political identity remains a complete mystery. Her surname alludes to her as a character out of place, meaning that she seems to allude to the families that fall somewhere in between the two groups of citizenship. Therefore, Bertha Rheinfeldt does resemble the character of Laura, who is similarly in

limbo culturally and nationally in an Anglo-Irish context, but she also resembles Rhys's Bertha Mason.

Rhys's Bertha Mason identifies herself as a Creole woman in the West Indies. The Creole identity itself is a hybrid identity, combining one's geographical location at a moment in time, one's nationality and cultural affiliations, and one's race. At its core, the identity itself is a combination of a white European ancestry combined with some form of a West Indian location, which is precisely the case of Bertha Mason, whose family was European but she lives in and follows many of the customs of Jamaica. Vivian Nun Halloran attempts to parse out the complex and disorderly identity of being a Creole in "Race, Creole, and National Identities in Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Phillips's *Cambridge*." For Halloran, the problem lies in how *Wide Sargasso Sea* questions not only Creole identity but English as well, through issues of race and a person's location within the world. Halloran questions whether an English "national and cultural identity" is "dependent upon race" but admits that historically an English identity saw "the Creole as an identity subordinate in status to that of European" (Halloran 87). This English view of the Creole identity is partially what leads Bertha Mason to appear twice subordinate to her English husband, Mr. Rochester, because she is both a Creole and a woman. This subordinate nature of her identity is what enables Mr. Rochester to literally change her identity by forcing her to respond to Bertha Mason as opposed to her true name, Antoinette Cosway. By forcing her to accept a new Anglicized identity, Mr. Rochester essentially begins her fall and destruction into madness.

To add to this political complexity, Rhys's Bertha Mason must confront her identity crisis following the introduction of British law that abolished slavery. As the

daughter of a former plantation owner and slaveholder, the after effects of this law create confusion not only in her national identity but also in her racial one. Bertha is Caucasian, but her family's lack of wealth and power following the abolition of slavery creates a source of confusion in this aspect of her identity as well as nationally and politically. The color of her skin once meant power and freedom, but throughout Bertha's time in the West Indies, it has become almost a source of disgrace as she is called "white nigger" and "white cockroach" numerous times throughout the novel. Bertha not only has no power over any of the people in her life, but she also has no power over her own life, until her final moments when she "know[s] why [she] was brought" to England and "what [she] ha[s] to do" (Rhys 112). In other words, almost nothing about Bertha Mason's identity is solid, and she has little agency to alter that fact up till a few short moments before she burns Thornfield Hall and takes her own life. Her identity functions in a limbo state because nothing within her own domestic sphere or the politics of the British Empire allow her to form a solid identity. When Rochester finally asserts his full power over her and forcibly relocates her to England, her mind snaps, and Bertha Mason goes mad and becomes the demon that is seen in *Jane Eyre* that so resembles Le Fanu's vampire.

Therefore, both Berthas have identities that essentially float in limbo in terms of national or political affiliations, and both girls meet their doom at the hands of men being unable to control the domestic sphere. Yet, these two problematic sides to each Bertha's identity truly is one in the same. The girls embody that colonial space that is in fluctuation, specifically in terms of colonial settlers. These characters are essentially at the mercy of the colonial power, which is demonstrated in the men who control the domestic spheres the Berthas occupy. This loss of control in Bertha Rheinfeldt's familial

domestic sphere as well as the political domestic sphere she inhabits, is illuminated by the use of Rhys's Bertha Mason, who literally suffers a total loss of identity because of these exact reasons. Therefore, as General Spielsdorf's domestic sphere features Bertha Rheinfeldt and he belongs to the imperial domestic sphere of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the failure of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to control its individual colonies and states creates the uncertainty in Bertha Rheinfeldt's identity. The cautionary tale that the name Bertha Rheinfeldt brings to *Carmilla* does not simply warn of vampires, but points directly to the total loss of domestic control, both familial and imperial, as such a loss leads to the allowance of potentially destructive unknowns, which Carmilla embodies, into these spheres.

While the Austro-Hungarian Empire did not fully take into account the ramifications of allowing only singular citizenship, the British Empire's abolishment of slavery did not take into account the effect on its West Indian colonies and its colonizers. This inability to assert a full sense of control over the empire is truly what the General Spielsdorf's letter cautions, and the cautionary tale plays out as the similarities between the Berthas becomes evident. The cautionary tale at the end of the day is that the nations bringing in an unknown, or empire conquering and settling unknown land, must exert some form of dominance and control, or the results can be deadly for those settlers. In the Austro-Hungarian context, the knowledge of this necessity arrives too late, the Austrian Empire fell and split into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in the context of the novel, Bertha Rheinfeldt dies. Therefore, the cautionary tale does speak to Laura to warn her of a potential vampire attack. The cautionary tale is for her father. After all, the letter is addressed to him. Bertha Rheinfeldt's name becomes a plea to Laura's father and the

nation he embodies, England, to exercise some control over the conquered land of Ireland, and England can save the Anglo-Irish.

Conclusion

Where does *Carmilla* go from Here?

The goal of any piece of scholarship should be to generate conversation surround that topic, but in the instance of this particular thesis, the entire goal was to demonstrate the variety of areas that *Carmilla* scholarship has yet to explore. The hope is that each chapter in this thesis brought a new perspective to Le Fanu's vampiric tale but also opens the door for other scholars to comment and adapt the interpretations to form new scholarship. Therefore, I want to close this thesis with brief discussion on how my chapters expand *Carmilla* scholarship on their own, but also potential avenues of research that these chapters reveal.

My first chapter introduced the idea of reading the characters in *Carmilla* in a completely different manner than before, though familial relationships. Though the chapter demonstrated how such a different reading alters the perception in the character of Laura's father and provides him with some scholarly attention, perhaps the largest change to current *Carmilla* scholarship deals directly with the two most commonly analyzed characters, Laura and Carmilla. While my own chapter alluded to how the move from lover to sister alters current perceptions of the novel, the change generates such a vast amount of questions that the topic requires more scholarly attention. One such area is how does sisterhood engage other literary works of the time and can a connection be formed between different works. Personally, I think the novel must be engaged with both Rossetti's "Goblin Market" as well as Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* because these works blend the lines of sisterhood and lover in much the same that Le Fanu's novel does.

My second chapter opens up not merely a discussion of the General's character but also the Styrian context. Scholarship has largely neglected to account for the novel's Styrian setting other than to see it as a parallel for Ireland. However, as can be seen from my chapter, the Styrian reading presents not only potential into character analysis but also political and historical analysis. How Laura's father fits into this Styrian context and the historical information that surrounds his presence in the nation's army is one area that I would like to see scholarship engage. I also believe the scholarly discussion could benefit from engaging the novel with German Romanticism and German philosophy.

In my final chapter, I again broaden the discussion of characters that scholarship currently looks at, but I also demonstrate that the novel can be put in global terms, through its connection to imperialism. Both of these areas I think could be greatly developed through further scholarly examination. By moving towards a global and imperial reading, questions of race and power structures must be addressed through historical and postcolonial readings, and while my chapter attempts to answer a few of the questions that are brought forth by the move, it cannot account for all of them. Therefore, while my chapters do broaden the currently scholarship, the discussion must remain open. By moving to a familial and more global context, many more questions arise that require answers that only a more diverse scholarly discussion can generate.

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