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The Outcast Children of the Queer Gothic and the
Supernatural

May 2026

Fine Art

[DOI 10.15132/30000125](https://doi.org/10.15132/30000125)



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The Outcast Children of the Queer Gothic and the Supernatural

By Poppy Mitchell

**A Standard dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement
of a
Bachelor of Art (Hons) degree in Fine Art.**

**Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design
University of Dundee
2025**

Word count:6,347

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated to my partner Kirsten, in which our joint love for the queer Gothic began our relationship.

To my family, I am forever grateful for the love and support I have received throughout my studies and beyond. Especially during this last year, as it has been tough on us all.

Through this labour of dedication, I hope to show how meaningful it all has been.

Positionality Statement

This dissertation is a love letter to the queer gothic community, being an extension of my queer centred art practice as a butch lesbian.

Abstract

'The Outcast Children of the Queer Gothic and the Supernatural' is an in-depth investigation into the relationship of the queer community with the Gothic and horror genre. With this standard dissertation examining the impact of the unconventional horror on the LGBTQ+ community by delving into the expansive use of media, such as film, literature and art. With the genre having a complex and expansive history that leads to many different ideologies and methods being used towards an expansion of representation in an age where boundaries are pushed.

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Introduction

The Gothic is an adjective of all things “macabre, mysterious, or violent” (Merriam Webster, 2019) as the genre of media is used as a defiance against the norms of gender and sexuality. Gothic media handles many abnormal topics, diving into sadism and masochism, romantic companionships, masculinising women and feminising men. Exploring the identity of gender and the eroticism of sexuality and its often-queer subtext. All topics and more lead into the beginnings of queer theory as the perverted content deviates from society’s heteronormative ideology (Haggerty, G.E, 2006 pg.2).

The word queer has had a variety of meanings over history. However, by the late 19th century, it had become a consistent use as an umbrella term for a person who identified with the LGBTQ+ community. Although the early use of the word to describe the LGBTQ+ community was a derogatory slur towards same-sex relationships, it has become a reclaimed statement by a percentage of the community, but continues its hurtful definition, determined by context (Jones, T.W, 2023). When the word queer was first used in the 16th century, it was defining something out of the ordinary and freakish (Cambridge Dictionary 2020), creating a bridge towards the supernatural. The term supernatural has been phrased to describe entities “that transcends nature, as that of divine, magical, or ghostly beings; attributed to or thought to reveal some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature” (Oxford University Press, 2023).

Queerness and its presentation in the supernatural and the Gothic has enabled individuals to reflect heavily on how the queer community has been viewed throughout centuries. Society’s negative opinion of homosexuality has stemmed from the belief that same-sex attraction goes against our innate human biology, queerness as something that strays from society’s belief in heterosexuality to be the only pure form of instinct between human beings. Queerness has for a long time been associated with sexual deviancy, a perverted demonic possession that the LGBTQ+ community needs to be saved from (Copes, C, 2021). Therefore, we are given the concept of the “bizarre” or as Julia Kristeva puts it “the abject”, a being that does not fit the acceptable mold of heterosexuality. The “abject” can be further applied to the queer bodily experience, something cast out and extracted from society as it does not fit the binaries of heterosexual man or woman (Kristeva, 1982). Overall, the gothic and the queer community’s erotic interest in the supernatural, due to otherworldly association and the love for the twisted supernatural is something that many queer people have delved into to find an answer to this isolation in society. Much like Mary Shelley’s monster in the Gothic novel *Frankenstein*,

1818 (Godwin Shelly, 2013) queer people were viewed as “uncanny” monsters who were doomed to roam the earth in isolation.

The first chapter opens this dissertation with discussion of the queer community’s fascination within the Gothic and supernatural, as it investigates into queer profitability within literature and film, delving into the novella ‘*Carmilla*’ by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, 1872 (Le Fanu, S, 2020), movies ‘Interview with the Vampire’ [Movie], 1994, an ‘*An American Werewolf in London*’, [Movie], 1981. Discovering how fearmongering directed by heterosexual society, villainises the LGBTQ+ community out of fear, as they are depicted as unmoral creatures with perverted intentions to strike against the heterosexual norm (Ferrall, M, 2025). While in Chapter Two I delve into how the perception of media is dependent on its audience. Work undetermined by what audience it was curated for can still be viewed as queer through a queer lens of the material’s subtext and chosen direction, even when that wasn’t the original intention (Nationalgalleries, 2025). To conclude this dissertation, Chapter Three will display how the queer community’s enjoyment for horror and the Gothic is still rampant in the present day and captivates a large queer audience through more obvious homosexual representation, as media is no longer confined as it was in the days of the trials of Oscar Wilde, due to years of protest, work, and liberation. Queer people no longer must read between the lines and hide behind layers of subtext to be visible!

Chapter 1

What is the concept of the queer gothic within the supernatural and its relevance to the queer community?

Queer individuals throughout time have been made outcasts and therefore shunned to the borders of society for their differences. These differences were greatly opposed due to them straying from the boundaries of accepted portrayals of heteronormative sexuality. Therefore, the queer community has always resonated with the supernatural – something that also breaks the boundaries of what has been deemed normal and acceptable for people to consume (Nationalgalleries, 2025). Tales of mythical creatures that were hunted and killed for their unnatural appearances and abilities are resonant with the existence of queer people, many who have suffered for their sexuality despite being greatly benefitable to the advancement of our world. Take for example, Alan Turing viewed as the father of modern computer science and the person to decode the encryption of the German enigma machines during the second world war. Turing was eventually arrested for his homosexuality which was considered a crime of “gross indecency” in 1952 and overshadowed his great work (Hodges, 2013). Queer people are easily identified as supernatural creatures, such as vampires, werewolves and cryptids. Society has made them feel threatened, or a rare, monstrous species: the same way these creatures have been villainised and used as fictional props of terror and uncertainty (Jayy, A, 2022).

One of the earliest forms of the Gothic to indulge in queer horror is ‘*Carmilla*’ by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu written in 1872 (Le Fanu, S, 2020), one of the first known pieces of writing to include a vampire, written 25 years before the most well know vampire novel, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, which has taken certain influences from *Carmilla* (Ed, U, 2025). The novella holds numerous homoerotic depictions in the bond between *Carmilla*, the vampire, and *Laura*, our protagonist, as Le Fanu writes about female sexuality, a taboo for the era. *Carmilla*’s need for blood is blended into homosexual desires toward *Laura*, twisting the relationship between the characters into a threatening eroticism as *Carmilla* haunts *Laura*. The tragedy of creature and victim is exhibited in *Carmilla*’s desires for *Laura*, written as a romantic distress, as the homosexual tones were so heavily believed to be something forbidden in the Victorian era, deemed as a way against nature. However, this was far from the truth, as even though it was forbidden queer people still lurked in the corners of society

protecting themselves from being hunted for simply loving the same sex. Le Fanu goes on to display Carmilla to be a creature outcasted for her displays of female sexuality alongside her supernatural threat towards society (Ed, U, 2025). It is never declared that the relationship between Carmilla and Laura is something more than a friendship; however, with Laura's confusion toward how she feels about Carmilla it is clear that she is fully enamoured by her, feeling such an intense pull towards her. Something that was completely new to Laura, due to having a lack of interaction with other, unnerving her emotions as an intimate attraction pulls her towards Carmilla (Farinet-Brenner, C, 2017).

This torment surrounding Carmilla causes her, by the audience, to be seen as a cautionary tale about predatory lesbianism, which is only pushed by the negative perception of same-sex relationship of the time, especially when involving the female sexuality. Homosexuality was believed to be impossible between two women, and in fact that women had no sexual desires at all, their only purpose in nineteenth century society was believed to be creating a family. Although the book can be perceived in that way it is also argued that due to the emotional depth to the characters and their romantic complexity it reflects its roots in queer gothic literature as the story follows the popular plot point of dark forbidden love. With Sheridan's darkly poetic writing about the supernatural it is not hard to see why it has its popularity in the queer gothic to this day after 153 years. Many indulge themselves in the romantic tragedy, seeing their experiences of queer sexuality reflected in the erotic desires between Laura and Carmilla. Through the secrecy and craving for one another, which speaks to many readers through the novella use of the universal emotions sheltered under the disguise of the supernatural horror (Ed, U, 2025).

When Hollywood began reaching screens across America in 1934 leaders became panicked to what the American public could be exposed to. Terrified of moral corruption, the Hays Code was created, a form of censorship that rid film of "immoral activity". This would create a shield to 'protect' audiences from society's interpretation of the perversion of homosexuality, only allowing queer characters if they are killed off by the end of the film or outwardly villainous. The requirement to kill off queer characters started the beginning of the infamous "bury your gays" trope that is still used regularly in LGBTQ+ media to this day (Ferrall, M, 2025). The only other way to get around the rule and have a queer character pass through censorship was by what has now been called as queer coding, a term that is "used to say that characters were given traits/behaviours to suggest they are not heterosexual/cisgender, without the character being outright confirmed to have a queer identity" (Grant, I, 2022). Queerness obvious

to a queer audience searching for evidence in small resemblances of themselves on screen, all the while remaining disguised to a heteronormative collective. This queer subtext reflects the restrictive boundaries for the horror genre as it too disturbs society's standards. As even though the Hays Code ended in 1968, a new moral panic began, in the form of the AIDS/HIV crisis which was on the rise in the 1980s. However, this time the panic did not cause complete censorship, it would change the way the LGBTQ+ community, especially gay men were portrayed. The AIDS epidemic would be embedded in the subtext of queer coded horror in instances where homosexuality is portrayed to possessive and villainous intention that they must be cured of (Ferrall, M, 2025).

A supernatural embodiment of this trope is the vampire, which saw a rise in its involvement within media during the crisis. With movies such as *'The Lost Boys'* (The Lost Boys [Movie], 1987) and *'Interview with the Vampire'*, (Interview with the Vampire [Movie], 1994), depicting modern-day tellings of the queer coded vampire, as their queerness is blended with a deadly infection (Clark, I, 2022, pg. 29). Combining the subtext of AIDS into the corrupt nature of vampires' exchange of blood to turn others into a desperate need for corruption, as the vampire's relation to queer people reflect how their blood is deemed contaminated and something to avoid (Nationalgalleries, 2025). Perpetuating the morbid curiosity, from the heteronormative viewer, that surrounds vampires as it villainises the 'gay disease' through the depiction of the supernatural embodiment. Installing fear in order to uphold heteronormativity and societal order, which proved to be a worrying indicator of society's stance against the queer community and disregard in their time of need, as they already were struggling against the epidemic (Clark, I, 2022, pg. 30). Example of this is reflected in *'Interview with the Vampire'*, 1994, as Louis is resentful towards his creator Lestat, loathing him for infecting him with vampirism, while Lestat has fully embraced his own vampire reality. Louis is presented as the heteronormative ideal that is then contaminated by Lestat's homosexual threat, being displayed as the predatory gay that is invading heterosexual society. As a result of this the relationship between the two characters is filled with homoerotic hatred fuelled by Louis' struggle to comprehend what he sees as a corruption of nature caused by his transformation. However, the erotic hatred cleverly characterises the film's vampires as a villainous other that indulge themselves in homosexual behaviour allowing the villainisation of queer people within a time of fear toward homosexuality (Clark, I, 2022, pg. 38).

This is also seen in media depictions of werewolves, as the canine creature is established as a monster who aggressively scares and interrupts heterosexual society through its terrorism against the 'norm', being cursed through forcible transformation into a monster. This is often reflected into a queer allegory as the werewolf is villainised and killed for its involuntary existence much like queer people marginalised for an identity they cannot choose. *'An American Werewolf in London', 1981* (An American Werewolf in London [Movie], 1981) links to the supernatural nature of the expansive depictions of AIDS, as the main character David is forcibly diseased with lycanthropy through his werewolf attacker's bodily fluids that also killed his best friend Jack, who's death he is tormented by, as his own werewolf transformation approaches (Fischer, E, 2025). The creature of the werewolf further villainises the nature of queer people and the AIDS disease just like the depiction of vampires has done within society, as queer people are inherently outcasted further during a time the community desperately needed allyship and protection. However, if you trace back the folklore of the werewolf, the story about Bisclavret included in *'The Lais of Marie de France'* (Kline, A.S, 2019) from the 12th century describes a Barron who changes into a werewolf each week and must reunite himself with his clothes to turn back to human or he would forever be trapped a werewolf. Upon his wife learning this she no longer wants to burden herself with him and with plans to sabotage her husband when falling in love with another she convinces this other to steal her husband's clothes to confine him to his canine form, so she can get rid of him. Bisclavret is forced into hiding until he is discovered by the King, who, impressed by the canine's intelligence makes him his trusted companion even when by the end of the story, Bisclavret has reverted to his human form once again. He ultimately then gains justice as his wife and new lover are reprimanded for their actions (GradeSaver, 2012). This exhibits that werewolves, as a supernatural creature weren't always made out to be the monster when desirable to heterosexual domestication but viewed as an extraordinary fear as they blur the lines between man and animal in a powerful display of strength and loyalty (Giacopasi, 2011).

However, as the age of cinema progressed, especially the horror genre, werewolves were demonised into the perverted beast that belonged with the unnatural, long forgotten were the stories of companionship between man and werewolf. The expansion of the horror genre saw the once devoted creature turned into a ravenous beast that only seeks to mutilate and kill the ideal presentation of society, causing the plots of these films to illustrate the eradication of the primitive supernatural with no other option, or no thought for any other outcome (Fischer,

E, 2025). This reflects on how progressively the LGBTQ+ community has been victim to the decrease and increase of scrutiny and violence due to their nonconformity towards sexuality and gender. As explained by Stonewall.org in 2023 transgender hate crimes in the UK have increased by 186% in the last half of the decade, while hate crimes due to sexuality were inflated by 112% in the last five years, and that was only reported cases. This comes after an increase in anti-queer rhetoric, much like the increase of the monster-ification of violent werewolves in media. However, this is affecting real human beings with serious outcomes, as more are acting out violent actions towards queer people as they fall influenced by misinformation from media and politics (Stonewall, 2023).

Chapter 2

Challenge what you are meant to find frightening.

Currently there is a lot of contemporary queer horror created for a queer audience, displaying that work can be dictated by its intentions towards a curated audience, however it doesn't always have to be specifically created for a certain audience as often it is left to the interpretation of the audience. Work can be made for the queer audience in mind or be assigned to a queer audience through a work's use of subtext although that may not be the original intention for the work (Nationalgalleries, 2025). This is evident in Bram Stokers *'Dracula' 1887* (Stoker, B, 2024), where from a white writer to a white reader's perspective Dracula is described as a foreigner that should be feared for his evident cultural difference as that was something rarely experienced by a British audience (Wester, M, 2021). However, Stoker knew as an Irish individual the extent of pain that British colonisation had caused for Ireland. Irish individuals were also deemed as "primitive" and unruly, a race that needed to be properly educated by English society. Therefore, England's depictions of Ireland throughout history as "the other" can relate to Dracula's depiction as a terrifying foreigner ready to unleash hell on the shores of respectable English society. Then if you look at a heteronormative focused perspective, Dracula is further perceived as the villainous other that has been previously mentions in the description of *'Interview with the Vampire' 1994* when we see him interact with the character of Jonathan Harker. Harker becomes his innocent male victim, with a beautiful wife waiting home in civilised England, as Dracula the outsider with homosexual tendencies prays upon him to satisfy his perverted vampiristic hunger, which queer audiences indulge in (Marshal, G, 2023).

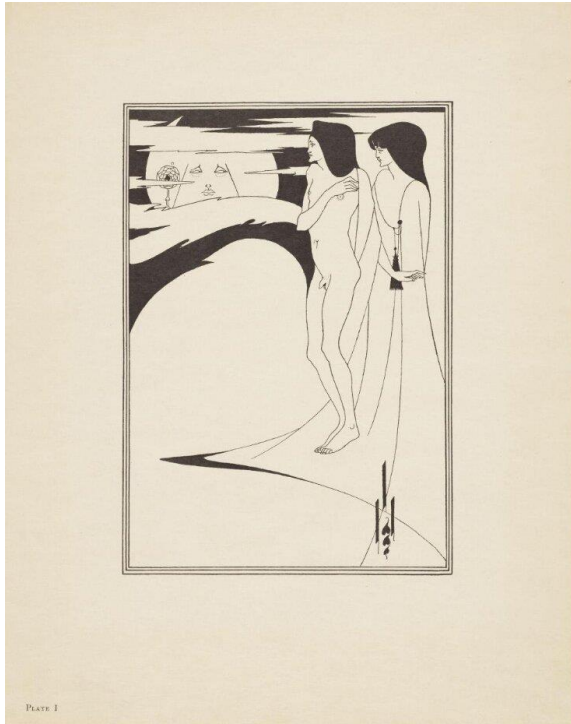


Fig. 2.1 Aubrey Beardsley, (1894) 'The Woman in the Moon' [Line Block Print on Japanese Vellum].



Fig. 2.2 Aubrey Beardsley, (1896) 'The Lacedaemonian Ambassadors' [Pen and Ink over Pencil on Paper].

Artists such as Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) also show that suspected “danger” could have existed within the respectable English society of the nineteenth century. Beardsley an English illustrator who rejected conventional aesthetics and favoured erotic perversion in his titillating nude artworks which blended the human with grotesque creatures, caused uproar from the prudish bourgeois audience that shied away from his indecent imagery, while queerness was drawn to it. Beardsley describes his work to be completely personal as people "appear differently to me than they do to others; to me they are mostly grotesque and I represent them as I see them", explaining, "Surely it is not my fault if they fall into certain lines and angles" (Marsh, J, no date). Beardsley had links to notorious writer Oscar Wilde, as in April 1895 Wilde was arrested for gross indecency, due to his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas, which had captivated Victorian society due to its scandalous nature, challenging societal norms (McKenzie, 2024). Upon Wilde’s arrest moral panic arose, as he was found with a yellow covered novel on his person that was mistaken for ‘*The Yellow Book*’, a magazine of which Aubrey Beardsley has his illustrative works included in. This caused Beardsley to be dropped by the publishers and dismissed as art editor of the publication due to his connection to Wilde through this instance and his past commissions for Wilde’s play ‘*Salome*’, 1894 (Marsh, J, no date). Work that had previously faced publicity and success through scandal, as

it had featured illustrations of nude figures, most notably the provocative display of nude males with extravagant and sensual line work that reflected the writing of Wilde in illustration form: *'The Woman in the Moon'*, originally called *'The Man in the Moon'* by Beardsley (Beardsley, 1894)

Beardsley's sexuality has been much debated over history, much due to the company he kept, such as André Raffalovich, poet and writer on homosexual 'inversion' and Leonard Smithers a bookseller with an interest in classical pornography. As well as his literary and theatrical tastes and his artwork, in the context of 1890s culture, this would all certainly point to homosexuality in the opinion of the respectable Victorian gentleman, but as poet W.B Yeats claims, Beardsley, while looking at his own reflection in a mirror, stated "Yes, yes, I look like a sodomite. But no, I am not that". However, many believe that can remain up to debate as homosexual acts in the 1800s were condemned and were illegal therefore many would not want to risk conviction especially after the arrest of Oscar Wilde (Marsh, J, No date). But no matter the argument of Beardsley's sexuality his work is still deemed as unapologetically queer by its perception from a queer audience and the queer context that surrounds his work, allowing queer audiences to recognise themselves within it (nationalgalleries, 2025) Wilde noted Beardsley's illustrations to be "the naughty scribbles [of] a precocious boy" such as obscene graffiti etched on walls and in toilets, described by Edward Burne-Jones as "detestable ... more lustful than any I've seen – not that I've seen many such." (Marsh, J, no date) Which can be visible in the work *'The Lacedaemonian Ambassadors'*, 1896 (Beardsley, 1896). With the provocative nature Beardsley can blur the line of horror and sensuality using elongated and exaggerated proportions with his beautiful bold use of line and the reflection of Aubrey's love for Japanese shunga, a form of erotic art, woodblock art and James Whistler's *'The Peacock Room'* 1923 (*The Peacock Room*, 1923), which has an intricate display of avian motifs with colours inspired East Asian art, which are clearly evident in Beardsley's figures of human and beast-like creatures, and backgrounds that surround them. Queerness is presented in these beings, human or not, their presence questionable, as they divert from society's norm for the conventional and what is deemed aesthetically attractive to a viewer of an obeying society. However, this unconventional has appealed to an unconventional

audience as evident through Oscar Wilde’s involvement and André Raffalovich’s companionship to Beardsley due to an interest in his work (Marsh, J, No date.)



Fig. 2.3 James Whistler, ‘The Peacock Room’ (1923)

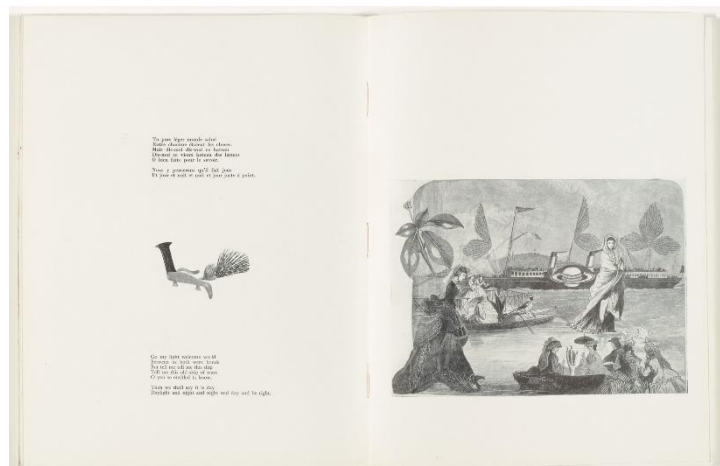


Fig. 2.4An Excerpt of Valentine Penrose, and Pablo Picasso, (1951) Dons Des Féminines [Illustrated Book with 27 Relief Halftone Reproductions after Photomontages by Valentine Penrose and 1 Drypoint with 2 Supplementary Variants by Pablo Picasso]

Continuing forward to French surrealist Valentine Penrose (1898-1978) who’s writing was described to be a perceivable descriptor of hallucinations that reflected like Penrose’s collage work that ran alongside her poetry included in ‘Dons des féminines’ 1951 (Penrose and Picasso, 1951). These featured a strong aesthetic use of steampunk with a blend of outer space and the seaside, that commonly featured female characters within (La Beaumelle, 2013). This constant use of women figures in her collages reflects the narrative of lesbian

love and Penrose's lesbian relationships she was involved with after she left her husband in 1936 as some of her relations with the same sex would present themselves in her other writings (Rolle, 2025). However, Penrose's most notable work is '*Erzsébet Báthory la Comtesse sanglante*' translating to '*The Bloody Countess*', 1962 (Penrose, 2000) an obscure half fictional and half biographical novel about Hungarian noblewoman Erzsébet Báthory. Where Penrose writes about the countess as a female Vlad the Impaler, as she is described as a serial killer who feeds from the blood of young women, in the belief that it will gift her everlasting youth and existence (Stent, 2022). Just like her poems, it was believed that Penrose had inserted her queer interest for women within '*The Bloody Countess*' (La Beaumelle, 2013) with the inclusion of the dark unconventional themes in the novel as the Countess' lesbianism is reflected in her preference for young women as victims. However, although the violence would install fear, Penrose reverses this negative notion and presents the question, what would happen if you gave women an unyielding amount of power and control? In a time period where women's liberation movement was on the rise it proves the novella to be a powerful piece of literature, as the Countess is sexually liberated as she bathes in the blood of her victims, empowered and almost mocking society's distaste for liberated women (nationalgalleries, 2025). With her writing, Penrose has continued to inspire other artist, with the likes of Meret Oppenheim's creation of '*Fur Gloves with Wooden Fingers*', 1936 (Oppenheim, 1936) where Oppenheim creates a sculpture inspired by Penrose's repeated mention of lunar depictions within her writing to relate to femininity proving Penrose to be an influential writer. However, '*The Bloody Countess*' is proved to be the most influential work as it stands as a trademark Gothic novel with the involvement of vampires, necromancy and occultism, going on to inspire future gothic media with the likes of '*Countess Dracula*' 1971 (*Countess Dracula* [Movie], 1971), directed by Peter Sasdy (La Beaumelle, 2013). Proving that even though the novel is not as well-known as other Gothic novels it remains a strong inspiration to queer audience through its depictions of social liberation for women and the queer community as it relays a sense of powerful salvation,

originating during the 60s, when the women's right movement was on the rise (nationalgalleries, 2025).



.Fig. 2.5 Meret Oppenheim, (1936) Fur Gloves with Wooden Fingers [Wood and Fur].

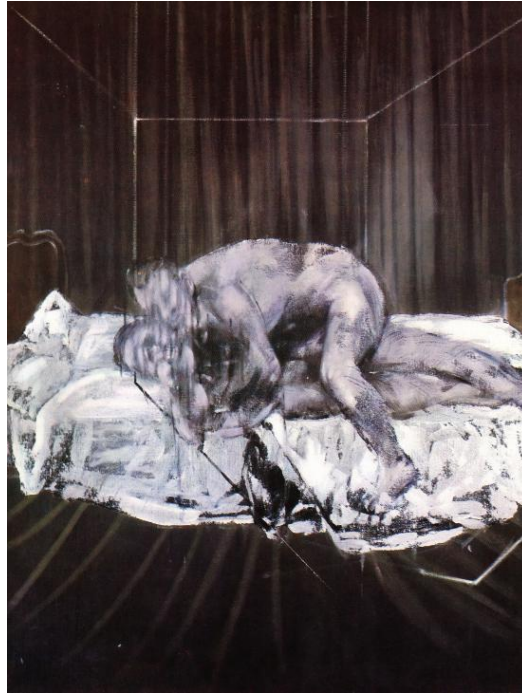


Fig. 2.6 Francis Bacon, (1953) *Two Figures*
[Oil on Canvas].

Francis Bacon (1909-1992) was an openly gay figurative painter during a time it remained illegal. Leading him to be outcasted by his parents at the age of sixteen causing a negative impact on Bacon which may have linked to his fascination of animals, becoming apparent within his work, as he blends the distortion of the human body and the movement of animals, creating a being barely recognisable as human or beast (*Francis Bacon: Man and Beast / Exhibition / Royal Academy of Arts, 2022*). Francis Bacon has always been a controversial artist, which was evident upon the display of '*Two Figures*' (Bacon, 1953) over its homosexual overtones. Inspired by anatomical drawings and Eadweard Muybridge's photography in which Bacon stated, "The thing is, unless you look at those Muybridge figures with a magnifying glass, it's very difficult to see whether they're wrestling or having sex." The figures lay tangled together captured in intimate movement within solitude, as they lay partially covered by a curtain of faint parallel lines in a room of darkness. In what could be considered as an intimate romance is proven sinister due to the heavily dark surroundings of the figures and with the context of Bacon's experience of abuse from his father and past relationship with men it's evident that Bacon was a masochist feeding off cruel attentions from partners and translating it into his works (The Art Story, 2010). The discussion of Bacon's abusive relationships inclusion in his work shows the connection to why Francis' triptych '*Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*' (Bacon, 1944)

was used in the, openly queer, series version of ‘Interview with the Vampire’ 2022-Ongoing (Interview with the Vampire [TV Series], 2022) where this artwork hung in the home of Louis de Pointe du Lac who as a queer black vampire is repeatedly abused mentally and physically over the course of his vampire life time in the series. The paintings being included in the series displays the queer importance of Bacon’s work for it to be included in gothic horror media as recently as 2022 (Dobрева, 2024). This triptych is one of the first paintings of Bacon’s distorted hybrid creatures, but the inclusion of the paintings in the series displays there is something fascinating about them. As the large beast presents their contorted mix with familiarity of human features, reflecting Bacon’s pain and torment from relentless abuse that proves to draw in its audience through a wonder to understand the human form (Epps, 2021).

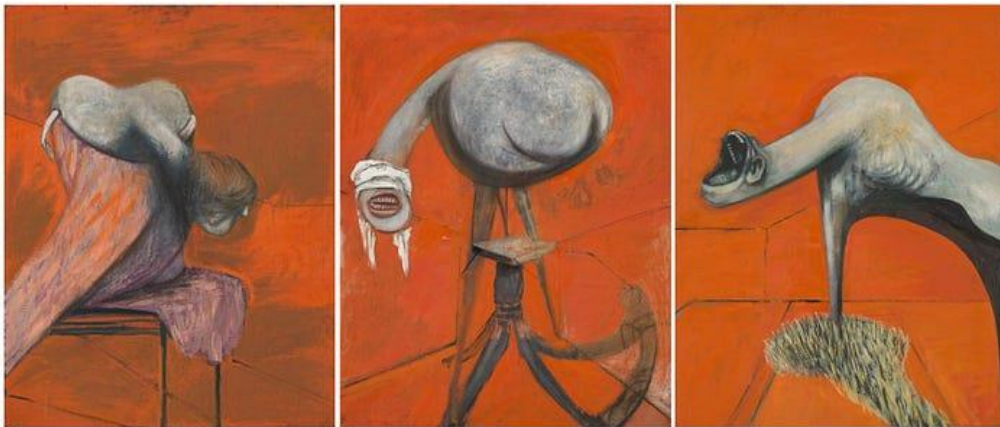


Fig. 2.7 Francis Bacon, (1944) Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion [Oil on Canvas].

Chapter 3

Resurgence of the queer gothic

As history has progressed the queer community indulges in the Gothic which is still present to this day and captivates a large queer audience as boundaries are able to be pushed further, as there is a broader insistence for contemporary work due to a large and visible queer audience to support the progression of LGBTQ+ centred horror. Including the expansion of the online space anyone of any discipline can contribute, whether it be their own work or their viewership of others, as queer people can easily access inclusive spaces for the unconventional interest in the queer Gothic and horror (Gay, 2025). Especially in a time where the misinformation of the politically far-right is growing it proves that now it is needed more than ever for members of the LGBTQ+ community to be unapologetically queer and protect one another (Stonewall, 2023).

The most notable modern contemporary art form held in high success in the present day is drag. An artistry that became to solidify between the 1960s and 70s in the Black and Latino stemmed, ballroom subculture of New York City. Where marginalised queer people of colour felt excluded in predominantly white queer spaces that were already scarce enough. So Black drag queen Crystal LaBeija (1930s-1990s) established the 'House of LaBeija', inviting other people of colours to participate in elaborate "balls" that would remove queer people from the scrutiny of heterosexual authority. These "balls" would transform the drag scene drastically, as they would give the LGBTQ+ community a haven to embrace their identities through makeup, dress and dance. (Fraga, 2024) Going on to transform and inspire what we know drag to be today.



Fig. 3.1 Abhora (2025) *The Plunge* [Makeup]

The reality show competition ‘*The Boulet Brother’s Dragula*’ 2016-present (*The Boulet Brothers’ Dragula* [TV Series], 2016) based off the hosts, Dracmorda and Swanthula Boulet’s, long term night club competitions is a strong example of unapologetic drag queerness and its relationship with horror and supernatural, as the contenders embraced their weirdness while diverting from the mainstream concept of drag artistry. Which typically presents to follow society’s standards for a conventional and attractive societal heteronormality. ‘*Dragula*’ embraces eroticism and the foreboding as the drag artists create looks to blend glamour and freaky supernatural features to bask in the contemporary drag art world (Jones, 2019). The show has featured drag artists with the likes of Abhora who participated in season 1 and 2, winning 4th place during the 2nd season (Abhora, 2019). Abhora blends numerous horror features into their work, creating hybrids between clowns and vampires or completely original extreme drag looks, visible in their drag look ‘*The Plunge*’ (Abhora, 2025). Which under analysis includes Gothic influence through the macabre use of the tragic bride that, given the context of the given title, could have been shackled and drowned under accusations of blasphemy, possibly being a witch. However, this

character has a conflicting masculine appearance with a long twisting moustache that boasts about the unconventional the presents of Abhora's look.

Local presentation of this inclusion of the unconventional is 'Climax', a local monthly drag events organised and hosted by drag artists St Salvatore and Eden Spaghetti (Climax. Firewater, Dundee. 15 February 2024–Ongoing). An organisation that holds various themed events however, this year's Halloween event 'Climax: Phantasmagoria the bizarre, occult and supernatural', 2025 is the most recent of their events to show such as bold display of the morbid curiosity in horror and Gothic themes. The event featured the hosts St Salvatore and Eden Spaghetti as well as participants Azura Saint, Transhausen and Jude. Azura Saint and Transhausen having their artistry focused on horror and the supernatural, creating a cross



Fig. 3.2 Spaghetti, E. (2025) *Psychic Wound* [Makeup and Props]

between the devilish and alien performance. While on the other hand, Eden Spaghetti's performance '*Psychic Wound*', 2025 (Spaghetti, 2025) focused on Gothic controversial themes of AFAB (assigned female at birth) bodily autonomy and abortion, as a transmasculine individual. Displaying the discomforts of the human experience as a transgender man in a period where transgender members of the queer community are losing bodily autonomy, as their rights are being stripped away while the political far-right debate their existence. Visible in the recent ruling by the Supreme court on April 16th, 2025, stating that UK law must refer to a person's biological sex when defining one's gender (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

This shows the importance in the rise of contemporary art as art forms like drag have the freedom to indulge in the playful nature of the supernatural while remaining political devices when voicing the troubles and experiences of queer people to reiterate the continuation of societal change. Drag culture proves to be a welcoming one with its vast mix of mainstream and niche forms that includes as sexualities and identities to create a sense of belonging that empowers. With its beginnings in “cross-dressing” being deemed as “*immoral acts against nature.*” (Joseph, 2023). However, it has grown to be so much more, gaining traction to even end up within the mainstream media with the likes of ‘RuPaul’s Drag Race’ 2009-present (*RuPaul’s Drag Race* [Series], 2009). Taking on a much more conventional approach to drag in comparison to ‘*The Boulet Brother’s Dragula*’, however, Drag Race when it was first released was a niche reality show for 2009 and as the seasons of the show have gone on it has taken a large incline in popularity. Spreading worldwide and sensationalising drag within the mainstream of society and bringing the much-deserved recognition of drag as an art form (Lord, 2024). With this growing recognition you see other drag shows, like ‘*The Boulet Brother’s Dragula*’ make its way out of the underground drag scene as ‘*Dragula*’ progresses with its series and popularity much like ‘*RuPaul’s Drag Race*’ had done to televise a demand for queer voices and in *Dragula*’s case voices for unconventional and paranormal queerness.

The queer community is persistent and determined for the access to representation to avoid the constant erasure and discrimination that has been caused over history to conceal the existence of queer individuals. With the nuance for a push toward more representation, it has positively benefitted the communities moral, as reflections of a queer individuals experience with in media has progressively lifted the pressure of isolation and internalised homophobia that has been previously placed on them due to the constant negative perception through the extensive use of fearmongering and blatant lack of visibility of the queer community (‘The Importance of LGBTQ+ Representation’, 2023).

Conclusion

It is evident that over the course of history the relationship of the queer gothic and the supernatural has had powerful influences on society and culture, as human nature is examined and given voice to understanding unconventional queerness (Arkenberg, 2015). The horror genre being a reflection of self-expression through identification with media and also displaying real world fears through devilish storytelling (Gay, 2025), as the LGBTQ+ community thirsts for representation in a time where boundaries for queerness in the mainstream have been broadened. Having queer inclusion be turned into positive recognition and authenticity, deterring from the fearmongering that would have historically been used within horror, like previously mentioned in films, *'An American Werewolf in London'*, 1981 (An American Werewolf in London [Movie], 1981) and *'Interview with the Vampire'*, (Interview with the Vampire [Movie], 1994) (Spelling, 2024). This proves that the genre of the queer gothic and queer horror is a complex device to articulate the queer experience, as it embeds the existence of the LGBTQ+ community in a heteronormative dominated society (Harper, 2025). However, while there is room for exploration it still proves a delicate line between what is positive and negative representation to be presented in media as it is dependent on viewer interpretation and understanding of the genre. Even still, it is proven that as time continues, representation is important in progress to acceptance and celebration (Spelling, 2024).

Something as simple as converting the stereotypical 'final girl' character into a trans woman fighting for her existence in a world that doesn't traditionally want her, or the escape from a haunted house being interpreted as a euphemism for need to come out (as queer) to experience true freedom (Harper, 2025). These interpretations can be placed on already existing horror classics, informed by queer experience and compared to rejected monsters. Creatures as such as the one in Mary Shelley's novel *'Frankenstein'*, 1818 (Godwin Shelly, 2013) where Frankenstein's monster is created without procreation, causing the creature to become blasphemous creation that yearns for love, as he is outcasted as 'The Other' due to his unchosen existence. Faced with this narrative, queer people can't help but see a reflection of their experience as they are forced to avoid convention due to the sex, as they cannot love and procreate the same way heteronormative society can (Ferrall, 2025).

The horror genre has seen an increase in traction as queer horror and Gothic has become bolder within the late 20th century, becoming a present genre in media. Visible through the

previously mention movies in the mainstream like, *'Interview with the Vampire'*, 1994 but also with the likes of *'A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge'*, 1985 (*A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge* [Movie], 1985). Where the monster is interpreted to be a stand in for queer repression, as the male lead Jesse is possessed after failing to court the female love interest. This failure in masculinity can be read as queer subtext directed towards the character and is only amplified when Jesse takes on the role of 'the Final Girl' as he combats his possession of the undetermined supernatural, who is later revealed as the film's villainous antagonist. Jesse is only then saved by a kiss from the female interest which restores his heterosexuality as he is freed from possession (Ferrall, 2025).

All proving how thorough queer people will strive for the ability to create the desired authentic representation. No matter how unconventional and unsettling, much like the supernatural characters, there is a need to consume queer media.

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