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Cover Page Footnote

Dr. Katherine Echols is an instructional associate professor in the Department of Liberal Studies at Texas A&M at Galveston. Dr. Echols's areas of research include medievalism, adaptation theory, Arthurian and medieval literature to Chaucer, and the adaptation of literature to the aural medium of radio broadcast in the United States between the 1930s to mid-1950s.

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"We only consume the ones we love": American Radio Adaptation of the Female Vampire in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla*

Katherine Echols

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Tuning in to a radio horror program for an hour's entertainment is for the radio listener a deliberate act that satisfies a particular need (Rubin 167). Radio horror programs with vampires exploited narrative description, sound effects, and music to make listeners physically and emotionally react to a scene. Listeners experience dread and fear hearing but not seeing a monster's approach and recoil at the violence suggested in the vampire's piercing scream as the sound of the vampire killer's hammer drives a stake into its heart. Beginning in the 1930s, radio horror programs pushed boundaries in their presentation of the female vampire. Steve Dillon suggests that because listening to radio is an "intimate rather than spectacular," experience,

> [it is] centered on voice rather than image, it still maintains a system of gendered

> surveillance and appraisal. Women are not just heard on the radio, they are viewed; even if listeners cannot see them, female characters are judged by what they look like. Thus the potentially 'asexual' world of radio continues quite uninterruptedly the visual focus on sex and sexuality found in magazines and movies. (4)

A perception of the female vampire is shaped by the individual listener's experience with women and gendered stereotypes in media. Radio as an aural medium "followed the same patriarchal principles of visual assessment found in movies and magazines" (Dillon 4).

As an extension of visual culture, radio perpetuated social constructs and gender stereotypes in line with American popular culture. Early silent screen stars Clara Bow and Theda Bara played to their roles as vamps and informed the image of the female vampire on and off screen. Radio horror programs in a selection of American radio horror programs broadcast between the 1930s and 1980s feature female vampires with the same "sexual voracity" ascribed to the vamp of the silver screen. Clara Bow's "ambivalent dimension" as "a flapper. . . akin to a vamp," was as "a vamp . . . a step away from a literal vampire"; likewise, Theda Bara "emphasized the sexual voracity of the new woman and, like Bow, operated as Dracula's female proxy (Poole 89; Skal 93). This study considers the representation of the female vampire in radio adaptations of *Dracula* and Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" (1872). "Carmilla" and the odd vampire

tale broadcast between the 1930s and 1980s are available through internet audio databases.

Vampires "are almost pure creations of American popular culture, their titles and motifs lifted from European . . . legend and transformed into horrific celebrities" who represent what Americans most fear and desire (Poole 196-197). While Count Dracula became a "modus legend" born during an important "cultural moment" and a representative of Victorian societal anxieties (Cohen 3), the female vampire with her "dangerous sexuality" threatened conservative American values (Holte 163, 166; Poole 89). Instead of shying away from the overt sexuality or suggested lesbianism in Le Fanu's novella, radio scriptwriters adapting "Carmilla" for horror anthology programs "emphasize the seductive eroticism of the original, often making the lesbian elements of the novella the . . . focus" (Holte 166). Radio adaptations of "Carmilla" also emphasize the threat Carmilla the vampire has on her young female victims. Dracula's vampire brides also are played on radio as clearly sexual in their aggressive pursuit and seduction of their male victims.

Radio listeners imagine Dracula's female counterpart as charming, sensual, sexually aggressive and dangerous. Victims and victors alike in the episodes considered here are hypnotized by a vampire with the ability to "induce passivity" in both male and female prey (Demetrakopoulos 107). For instance, Johnathan Harker's seduction scene in the 1949 *Stage 49* adaptation of "Dracula" is suggestively erotic. The listener imagines being in the room with Harker and the vampire brides. Like

wolves circling their prey, growling, and the listener's imagine, gnashing their teeth, the vampire women argue over who will "kiss" his neck. Dracula intercedes on Harker's behalf, prompting the vampire with the golden hair to accuse the count of being ignorant of love. "Love" in this instance has a much different connotation as it is linked to the female vampire's penetration of Harker's neck to drain him of blood. The vampire's breathy, seductive, modulated tones and Harker's obvious struggle to keep her away make for an entertaining three minutes of radio. The female vampire of radio is predatory, bloodthirsty, and sexual. They are "Dracula's . . . seraglio of pale beauties, slaves to his superhuman will," and as "females, 'passive vampires in life, active ones in death" who "stand alone, a demonic force in her own right" (Carter 70).

Bram Stoker's Count Dracula and Tod Browning's 1931 film adaptation of the gothic novel *Dracula* (1897), with Bela Lugosi in the title role, are the standard by which to measure all other vampires in literature, on screen, stage, and on radio. Yet, the female vampire ruled the ether. Surprisingly, of the two classic vampire stories brought to radio, "Carmilla" seems to be the most popular. Radio horror programs aired dramatizations based on original scripts or adaptations of novels, short stories, and films, including Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1819), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and most of Edgar Allan Poe's work. One of the best radio adaptations of a horror novel is John Houseman's 1938 radio production of *Dracula*, presented as the inaugural broadcast of *Mercury*

Theater on the Air.[1] Orson Welles plays the dual roles of Dr. Helsing, the narrator, and Dracula. Even today, *Dracula* and "Carmilla" are still engaging audio productions.

Aural soundscapes and gothic tales

Radio employs powerful, manipulative tools. The intimate first person narrative technique relies on description and sound and is a method for bringing listeners into the story. Welles introduced this intimate narrative device in which the narrator of the radio drama speaks directly to the "individual" listener thus establishing a relationship between the two (O'Brien 132). Listening to radio is a subjective experience. Listeners take an active role and are challenged to "see" and imagine the scene. Shocking storylines using first person singular kept the distracted listener engaged. Welles uses the device as a framing mechanism for "Dracula." As Arthur Seward, he addresses his imagined audience and radio listeners at the beginning and at the end of the play with the phrase "ladies and gentlemen" and reads to them excerpts from Jonathan Harker's journal (Houseman "Dracula"). As the episode ends, Welles switches between dual roles, first as himself and then as Dracula. Speaking as himself, he reassures listeners that "Dracula" was all in good fun and they can "put out the lights and go to sleep" but then, and without cueing the listener, switches to the

[1] *The Mercury Theater on the Air* (CBS), a dramatic anthology broadcast from 1938 to 1946. *Treasure Island* was scheduled for the first broadcast of the program, but Orson Welles suggested *Dracula*.

voice of Dracula to repeat Van Helsing's line, "there are such things as vampires" (Houseman "Dracula"), leaving the audience uneasy.

Radio as an aural medium relies on description through narration and sound effects to convey a scene and provoke emotion. When radio is compared to visual mediums, critics find the aural medium deficient and call it a "blind medium"; however, "radio's 'imaginative spectacle presents a powerful dynamic'" and "facilitates a particularly rich way of seeing" (Hand 340-341). When Harker narrates his arrival at Dracula's castle, the listener sees in his mind's eye the "ruin" sitting on "the edge of a terrible precipice" (Houseman "Dracula"). Simultaneously, the listener and Harker experience fear and horror upon realizing that he is alone as he wanders the echoing hallways, observes the multiple locked doors, and experiences the dank cellar and hears the vampire bride's disembodied laugh. Narrative description provides the listener entry into the story while characters become the listener's emotional proxy (Carroll qtd. in Killmeier "Aural" 71-72). The imaginative and engaged radio listener is at once the vampire and the prey, which is the overall appeal of listening to radio drama.

In addition to the radio adaptations of "Carmilla," female vampires also feature in two other radio horror programs, "Graveyard Mansion" (1933) and "The Marquis of Death" (1953), though their prey is male rather than female. Radio scriptwriters freely adapted "Carmilla" by altering the setting and time period, and, in one instance, replacing the story of Helen's death for Laura's brush

with vampirism. Narratives are transported across time and space. In one adaptation, the setting switches to the twentieth century and the United States. Gothic settings for "Graveyard Mansion" and "The Marquis of Death" include a French chateau and a plantation in New Orleans, Louisiana situated near a cemetery and on a bayou, its trees heavy with "ghastly Spanish moss" that appear to "writhe with life" through "[c]louds of mist" and take "strange [half human] shapes" (Cole, "Graveyard Mansion").

Scriptwriters and sound effects artists translate gothic tropes to the aural medium by relying on narrative descriptions and sound. These gothic landscapes utilize a soundscape of howling winds, rumbling thunder, baying wolves, squealing bats, and disembodied laughter. Evidence of how deliberate narrative choices and characters function is also evident in a character's voice. Dracula's powerful, "magic voice" comes across on radio through Welles's gift for creating "direct form of contact" between the vampire, its prey, and the listener (Porter 71). Dracula's hypnotically powerful voice transmits through the air, and like radio, "communicates across time and space" (Porter 70). Though the vampire is physically absent from the scene, Dracula is present with his voice, interjecting at times and speaking slowly and deliberately, drawing out each word for full effect (Dracula to Lucy): "You are flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood" (Houseman "Dracula"). Similarly Seward's voice speaking in present tense as he enters Lucy's tomb and later encounters the vampire brings the listener into the experience:

> Now, we're in the tomb. There in the coffin, the thing lay. Like a nightmare of Lucy—the pointed teeth, the bloodstained mouth. Van Helsing never looked up. From his bag he took out a book, his operating knife, a heavy hammer, and a round, wooden stake—two or three inches thick, sharpened to a fine point and hardened over a fire. (Houseman "Dracula")

This scene closes with Van Helsing's "prayer for the dead" overlaid with the sound of Lucy's agonized expiration of breath as Seward drives the stake into her heart (Houseman "Dracula").

As this and other scenes suggest, radio scriptwriters and sound effects artists went about their business with intentionality. Employing the intimate first person singular technique, description through narration, and realistic sound effects, radio manipulates the listener's imagination and brings him to a particular experience and to a particular emotion. If the vampire is female, the radio listener was primed to be both horrified and possibly stirred or even titillated by her implied sensuality, as in the *Stage 49* production of "Dracula." The next section explores radio adaptations of *Dracula*, "Carmilla," and episodes featuring the female vampire.

"Dracula," *Mercury Theater on the Air* (1938)

"Dracula," adapted for radio by John Houseman, was the inaugural broadcast of *Mercury Theater on the Air* in the summer of 1938. Welles, known for distinguished film career, was a radio producer and actor who brought to American

audiences some of the most sophisticated dramas heard on the air and is still remembered for his Halloween narration of "The War of the Worlds" (1938), Howard Koch's adaptation of H. G. Wells's science fiction classic.

"Dracula" was Welles's experiment with the first person singular technique used to create a sense of intimacy between the narrator and individual listener. Through sound and description chilling incidents are transferred from the printed page to the air: Harker's imprisonment in Dracula's castle; the circumstances on board the Demeter, the death of its crew; and the staking of Lucy Westenra. These dramatic situations are punctuated by discordant music while the passing of time and new settings are indicated through narrated and dated journal entries and letters read by Welles playing the dual roles of Dracula and Arthur Seward, a compilation of Lucy Westenra's suitors, Arthur Holmwood and John Seward.

Using only dialogue and vocal intonation, listeners recreate in their minds the vivid image of Lucy's transformation from mortal "purity" into "voluptuous wantonness" (Hughes 199). Lucy's first encounter with the count is the blue light and sensation of feeling "something very sweet and very bitter around" her and as if she is "sinking into deep water" (Houseman "Dracula"). Seward narrates his final moments with Lucy, now transforming into a vampire, which for him is both horrifying and arousing, or at least monstrously beautiful. As the sun begins to set, light falls on her face, and a "strange change came over her": Lucy's "eyes grew

suddenly dull and hard—her breathing . . . heavy—her mouth opened and the pale gums drawn back, made the teeth look large and sharp" (Houseman "Dracula"). He next encounters the vampire clutching a child to her breast. On seeing Seward and Van Helsing, Lucy draws "back with an angry snarl," and Seward again focuses on her face and watches "[h]er lovely bloodstained mouth" grow "to an open square" (Houseman "Dracula").

Mina's experience with the vampire is brief but intense. Speaking to Harker, Seward, and Van Helsing, Mina describes looking out of the window of her room, of seeing a "silent thin streak of white mist moving across the ground and along the house," and sensing that the room had grown "heavy and dank and cold" (Houseman "Dracula"). Under hypnosis, Mina, in a voice that noticeably drops an octave, describes two red eyes shining at her through the mist. Dracula interjects himself into the scene. Speaking to Mina, his disembodied voice is suggestively sensual and sounds almost aroused as he draws out word-for-word the vow that binds Mina to him: "You shall be flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood" (Houseman "Dracula").

Eleven years later, the Canadian anthology series *Stage 49* broadcast a radio adaptation of *Dracula* based on selected scenes featuring Harker, Seward, and Renfield, the madman. More important, and surprising, is the erotically charged scene between the imprisoned Harker and Dracula's vampire brides.

"Dracula," *Stage 49, Item Thirty* (1949)

Stage 49's dramatization of "Dracula" (1949), adapted by George Salverson with screen actor Lorne Greene in the role of Count Dracula, focuses on different scenes dramatized in the 1938 adaptation. Time is allotted to the madman Renfield, who claims Dracula as his "lord and master," Dracula's lineage and his relation to Attila the Hun, and, more important, Harker's interaction with the vampire sisters ten minutes into the dramatization (Salverson).

To establish mood, Harker opens the episode with the lines: "When the spirit dies but the dead live, the dark god of the night is a beast" (Salverson). A wolf howls and Harker speaks again warning listeners that this is his last entry. The scene transitions to the coach carrying Harker to Dracula's castle. He narrates his trip, speaking rapidly and keeping pace with the sound made by the speeding wheels of his coach. Edgy, frantic, and rapid violin music escalate in volume as the scene transitions to Harker's seduction.

An evening shortly after Harker's arrival, and while he is writing in his journal, Harker hears a female voice. For this scene, Salverson relies on the radio technique of narrative description to cue the listener. The next three minutes of the radio play are dedicated to Harker's seduction scene. The first vampire to approach him is the "golden-haired" vampire who attempts and almost succeeds in seducing him. She speaks to him in a voice of honeyed sweetness with a hint of malice, carefully

emphasizing each word: "You are so young, so strong, so handsome" (Salverson).

Dracula interrupts in time to stop the vampires' attack on Harker. Angered at the interruption, the golden-haired vampire accuses the count of never having loved (Salverson). Dracula responds: "Yes. I, too, can love," a foreshadowing of his bond with Lucy and Mina. The vampire with golden hair, eyes as dark as rubies, rich, red lips, and sharp white teeth moves toward his throat to "kiss" him (Salverson). Before she delivers her bite, the sisters interrupt and move toward their prey, fighting over who will "kiss" him first. The golden-haired vampire tries to appease them with the promise that "[t]here are kisses for [them] all" (Salverson). A snarling Dracula intercedes and promises they can have Harker after he has finished with him. Harker, and listeners familiar with the source text realize Dracula will appease the vampires when they hear the wail of an infant. A musical bridge transitions to an obviously distressed mother shouting from the courtyard, accusing Dracula and his den of "thieves" and "monsters" of stealing her child: "You have her blood! Now give me my child!" (Salverson).

Lucy's monstrous vampirism is the focus of a later scene. As in the novel, Van Helsing and Seward see her clasping a child to her breast. Seward's attention is drawn to her face, which he describes as "beautiful," though with the sunrise it twists with rage and becomes beast-like (Salverson). Seward's attention is drawn to her blood-red lips and Van Helsing's to her pointed teeth and red eyes (Salverson). Blood-red lips promise sex. When

Seward realizes that the blood on Lucy belongs to the child in her arms, his desire turns to horror: "She was (pause) drinking that child's (pause)" (Salverson). Seward has another final encounter with Lucy shortly before she is staked. Lucy tries, and almost succeeds, in seducing him. Using the intimate form of his name, "Johnny," the vampire Lucy tells Harker, "My arms are hungry for you. . . .Come and we can be together" (Salverson). As Seward makes a move toward her, the sun rises, her face twists with rage at the interruption, and she escapes to her tomb. Van Helsing convinces Seward they must dispense with the vampire. Mina's escape from Lucy's fate is glossed over and only alluded to in her declaration that she is cold and exhausted. As in the Stoker's novel, Seward and Van Helsing kill Dracula.

Radio Representations of "Carmilla" and the female vampire

William Veeder considers "Carmilla" a "Victorian gothic masterpiece," a "tale of repression," and Le Fanu, a "master" of the gothic who "converts the discovery of the 'monster' into a revelation of human nature itself" (197). While Dracula embodies Victorian anxieties on matters of race and gender, the female vampires of radio are "'fiendish/diabolical' presences" who represent the "depravity of women" (Khair 57). The vampire woman, a libidinous, predatory creature who quite literally "loves her food," as is evident in the behavior of the *Stage 49* vampires in their encounter with Harker, share an affinity with the cinematic vamps Theta Bara and Clara Bow, presented as

wicked, conniving women who prey on men and behave as "sexual sociopath[s]" and who refuse to comply with conventions (Auerbach 11, 18). Radio adaptations of "Carmilla" broadcast on *The Columbia Workshop*[2] in 1940 and *The Sears Radio Theater*[3] in 1979 present slightly different versions of Le Fanu's novella but retain the characterization of Carmilla as a libidinous vampire.

Carmilla, *The Columbia Workshop* (1940)

Lucille Fletcher, a talented radio scriptwriter who authored the radio suspense play "Sorry, Wrong Number" (1948), adapted Le Fanu's "Carmilla" for a 1940 summer broadcast of *The Columbia Workshop*. Fletcher's re-visioning of the original text focuses on the death of Helen, Carmilla's first victim. Listeners familiar with the original text who expect this vampire tale to provide closure with the death of the vampire will be sorely disappointed.

Fletcher alters time and setting. Modern conveniences transport the novella to the twentieth century and a house located on a street called Maple Hill. A long black limousine replaces the carriage and a telephone replaces letter-writing. This dramatization opens with a panicked phone call from Helen's father J. Dodge to Reverend Witherspoon to help him save his daughter. Witherspoon arrives and visits Helen's room. She weakly calls for Carmilla.

[2] *The Columbia Workshop* (CBS), was an experimental dramatic anthology on air from 1936 to 1956.
[3]*The Sears Radio Theater* (CBS) aired beginning in 1979 and was renamed *The Mutual Radio Theater* in 1980. As *Mutual* the program lasted only one year (Dunning 603).

Dodge narrates the strange events that occur two months earlier and that led to this moment. Dodge begins his story with the arrival of a black limousine racing down the state highway and swiping a tree (Fletcher "Dracula"). Dodge helps a "tall woman dressed in black" and "poor little Carmilla" out of the car (Fletcher "Dracula"). Both girls, Helen and Carmilla, speak in voices that suggest their young age.

As Carmilla wakes late in the afternoon, to the listener's ear she almost purrs as she yawns. Helen gently fusses at her for sleeping in. Carmilla explains that the "real time to get up" is when "the light is soft and golden. And the sky is pale blue . . ." (Fletcher "Dracula"). Later Carmilla will adopt a suggestive, sensuous tone as she explains to Helen the meaning of the passion flower "as a symbol of human passion . . . and our love" (Fletcher "Carmilla"). Helen is visited in the night by a black cat and begins to waste away. Carmilla's behavior is bizarre and Helen finds her covered with blood. Dodge, adopting an authoritative tone, accuses Carmilla of sneaking into the village at night to meet a boyfriend, suggesting she might be sexually active and perhaps a negative influence on Helen. Dodge warns Carmilla that he has "a good mind to turn [her] over to the police . . . but . . . won't, for Helen's sake, provided she leaves at once" (Fletcher "Carmilla"). Carmilla scoffs at his accusation, which elevates Dodge's anger. He threatens to call the police and Carmilla tries to stab him with a letter opener. Listeners are treated to an audible scuffle between

the two while the shrieking and shouting alerts Helen.

Carmilla mocks Dodge for trying to get rid of her and implies a level of intimacy with Helen:

> You thought you could keep me out of here, didn't you? You thought Helen would let me be sent away. Do you think walls or doors or locks would keep me away from Helen? No, Mr. Dodge. She's mine. Do you hear that? Mine. Ohhh, see how beautifully she sleeps? She's happy now. Do you know what she's dreaming of, Mr. Dodge? I do. She's dreaming (pause) about a fountain (pause) an old stone fountain in the moonlight (Fletcher "Carmilla").

Carmilla threats that a "great black cat" will visit Helen and is interrupted by the sound of a clap of thunder. Dodge describes what he sees: "With one leap, she jumped on Helen's bed. I saw her teeth bared, like fangs, like the pointed fangs of a wolf. And then suddenly the room went dark. (Fletcher "Carmilla"). With Witherspoon's help, Dodge realizes Carmilla is a vampire and enlists the village sheriff to help him dispose of her. Opening the coffin of the three-hundred-year-old Mircalla, they find the corpse of a young girl with red hair (Fletcher "Carmilla"). Helen dies, and Dodge's surprise and horror are obvious when he sobs with the news that Carmilla is still in the house. The vampire lives to stalk her next victim, Carmilla.

***The Sears Radio Theater*, "Carmilla" (1979)**

"Carmilla" was adapted once again for a March 1979 forty-minute broadcast for the themed drama anthology program *The Sears Radio Theater*. Vincent Price hosts the themed "Mystery Night" and opens this episode with a stanza from Lord Byron's "The Giaour" (1813) and a short explanation of vampire lore to create mood:

> But first, on earth as Vampire sent,
> Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent:
> Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
> And suck the blood of all thy race;

The basic plot line follows Le Fanu's novella, with a few exceptions. "Carmilla" is set in a village on the outskirts of Vienna in 1922. Amy's young age is evident in her light, clear voice while Carmilla's voice is an octave deeper, more mature and a bit stilted. Amy identifies herself as eighteen years old and narrates her story as she writes in her journal. She believes fate brought Carmilla to her. Because the listener can only depend on sound to provide insight into the story and characters, the last few minutes of this drama leave the audience unsure whether their relationship is that of friends, lovers, or even more innocent, that of mother-daughter.

Early in the episode, Carmilla declares she will not love anyone else as much as she loves Amy and describes her kind of friendship as "selfish" ("Carmilla" *Sears Radio Theater*). Sensing that Carmilla has a secret, Amy asks about her background. Carmilla refuses to disclose information about herself stating she is "under vows" but promises to tell Amy, and the listener, everything,

leaving both to translate the final comment "blood is life" ("Carmilla" *Sears Radio Theater*). Amy suffers agonizing dreams of a monstrous cat morphing into a blood-drenched Carmilla. The voice of Amy's dead mother interrupts her narrative with the warning that an assassin is in the house.

The next scene is made more sinister with the obvious: Carmilla attacks Amy. That Amy is eighteen does not prohibit the listener from, perhaps, feeling slightly disturbed by the series of events. They take a taxi to the ruins of Karnstein to enjoy a picnic. As it grows dark, Amy suggests they return home, but Carmilla tells her, "Neither of us is going home. This is our home now" ("Carmilla" *Sears Radio Theater*). Amy is surprised by Carmilla's vice-like grip around her wrist and the "acrid" smelling cloth placed over her mouth and nose ("Carmilla" *Sears Radio Theater*). Amy awakens in a dark chamber to find Carmilla sitting next to her with "her once lovely face twisted in a diabolical grin" ("Carmilla" *Sears Radio Theater*). Amy is unsure whether she is dead or alive.

Carmilla, speaking in a seductive voice explains that "death is happiness" and promises to lead the younger woman to "a place of refuge," in other words, the sleep of the vampire, though she has yet to disclose her vampirism ("Carmilla" *Sears Radio Theater*). Amy's hysteria builds. Carmilla promises her that, "Before the night is over, I shall drain you to the brink. I have learned to be gentle. You need not be afraid" ("Carmilla" *Sears Radio Theater*). Amy's voice is confused, sad, and slightly hysterical during the rest of their exchange:

> Amy: I thought you were my friend.
> Carmilla: Always. You are the companion I have been seeking. You have seen your last sunrises. I will keep you alive as vampire. Tomorrow night you begin. Tomorrow night you make your first kill. ("Carmilla" *Sears Radio Theater*)
> Amy, in a voice filled with terror, pleads for "pity" but is told that they "must rest, while [they] can: Go to sleep my, precious child" ("Carmilla" *Sears Radio Theater*).

This exchange can be interpreted as the promise of a more intimate relationship or the innocent words of a mother to her child when Carmilla's voice assumes a maternal tone and refers to the younger woman as "child." At the conclusion of the dramatization, Carmilla, even with her staking imminent as Dodge rescues his daughter, promises never to be gone from Amy's memory, even in death.

"The Marquis of Death," *Hall of Fantasy* (1953)

"The Marquis of Death," written by Richard Thorne, aired on the horror anthology *Hall of Fantasy*[4] in 1953. This is a standard vampire tale featuring two brothers who encounter a seductive female vampire during their stay in France. David, a writer, and his brother Everett, ordered to get six months of rest, retreat to France for a holiday. David suffers from writer's block and Everett from an

[4] *The Hall of Fantasy* aired for a short time on the Mutual network (1952-1953). Richard Thorne both wrote and produced the program of "dark fantasy" (Dunning 307).

unknown condition. Andre de Couer, a local doctor, entertains David with the story of the mysterious Marquis in a heavy French accent. Everett never speaks. The Marquis of Death is described as a beautiful woman with "skin the color of pale ivory" and hypnotic eyes that seem to look through their victim (Thorne). David will experience the Marquis's hypnotic powers later in the play.

David needs material for a book, so Andre suggests a story featuring vampires and proceeds to tell the story of the Marquis of Death who has been dead for 150 years. Following her marriage, the Marquis disappeared for a month with her father, a man in black driving a carriage. This description and the words he exchanges with the Marquis suggest the possibility that he is Dracula. Father and daughter return, and he promises the Marquis that now she has what she "needs" to live as long as time "exists," a comment that suggests immortality (Thorne). The villagers notice the Marquis develops an aversion to sunlight and sleeps all day, has strange marks on her neck, which suggest incest if they were left by her father, and that those closest to her begin to die, first her husband and then, one-by-one, her servants. The villagers are convinced she is one of the undead. Years pass and the Marquis disappears but returns to haunt the riverbank.

David and Andrea see the Marquis dressed in a black gown walking along the river bank. They are startled by her great beauty—white skin and long raven tresses (Thorne). Later, Andre and David realize Everett has taken off for a walk alone. Anticipating danger, they follow him. David sees a

strange woman walking near the chateau, and the unidentified Marquis speaks to him in English with a heavy French accent. Her tone is seductive and suggests feigned innocence as she tries to seduce the second brother. David is jarred back to reality by the sound of Andre calling his name. Everett is found near the river with the mark of the vampire bat on his neck and nearly drained of blood.

A vampire bat flies into Everett's room, bites him, and he dies a short time later. David, nearly hysterical by this time, joins Andre and the doctor in their search for the vampire's cave. David encounters the Marquis again and persuades him to look into her eyes. Before she has any effect, Andre shouts at him, bringing him back to reality. The men notice a path in the woods and follow it into the Marquis's cave. Within seconds of spotting the coffin, a bat enters the cave and transforms into the beautiful Marquis. The sound of flapping bat wings and the slide of a coffin lid suggest the vampire has been found. As the sun rises, the episode comes to a climax. The discordant music and the vampire's screams mix with the yells of the men as they struggle to stake her.

"Graveyard Mansion," *The Witch's Tale* (1933)

Alonzo Deen Cole's *The Witch's Tale* (1933)[5] was the earliest radio horror anthology series

[5] *Inner Sanctum Mysteries*, a radio horror anthology produced and directed by Himan Brown, aired in 1941 on the Blue Network and later CBS until 1952. *Inner Sanctum* is remembered for its opening signature device, the creaking door (Dunning 346). Boris Karloff and Peter Lorre appeared on the program.

on American radio and was soon followed by other horror anthologies featuring monsters of all kinds. Cole's "Graveyard Mansion" is set on a gothic landscape—a plantation home in New Orleans, Louisiana. Brothers Alan and Curtis have inherited the property and arrive from the "North" to claim the property. Typical of these vampire narratives, the male victims, again two brothers, are seduced by and fall in love with a woman who they realize too late is a vampire.

Locals call the Tedgross plantation, owned by the Blanchard family, Graveyard Mansion because of the house's proximity to a cemetery and its reputation as "the house of the living dead" (Cole, "Graveyard Mansion"). Alan and Curtis unknowingly visit the vampire's tomb, a claustrophobic vault as "dark as a coal mine," and feel the flutter of bats' wings about their faces (Cole). On their first night in the house, the brothers are walking in the cemetery when they encounter the ghostly figure of a woman dressed in white who disappears into the mist. This encounter and their visit to the cellar spook the brothers. Alan voices concern that fear has emasculated him and apologizes for being afraid and "acting like a baby" (Cole, "Graveyard Mansion"). Curtis reassures him, and likely the listener, that fear is natural and admits to feeling "cold shivers . . . up and down [his] spine for hours after visiting . . . [the] burial vault" (Cole, "Graveyard Mansion"). Borrowing an episode from Le Fanu's "Carmilla," Curtis finds a miniature portrait of the estate's prior owner, a "beautiful woman" named Antoinette who has been dead for

more than one hundred years (Cole, "Graveyard Mansion").

While walking along the bayou in the moonlight, the brothers again encounter the phantom woman. On closer inspection, she appears to be "a knock out" and "a healthy-looking flesh and blood girl" (Cole, "Graveyard Mansion"). Netty introduces herself and suggests they might be distant relatives; however, their possible family ties do not stop Alan and Netty's quick engagement. Neither man is suspicious that Netty only goes out after sunset and prefers to walk along the bayou and in the cemetery. Listeners familiar with the vampire trope would obviously anticipate how this story will unfold. Soon after the engagement, Curtis recognizes a change in his brother. Alan, similar to the women in the dramatizations of *Dracula* and "Carmilla," sleeps too much and dreams deeply. He reports being visited in his room by an unnamed woman who kisses him on the neck. Alan begins to waste away, and the only evidence of something amiss is the strange mark on his neck. Dr. Brochard, a man of science and of superstition, identifies the site as left by "the fangs of some beast" (Cole, "Graveyard Mansion").

Alan dies, leaving Curtis alone with Netty. Curtis continues the narration of events while Netty remains silent. Brochard, Van Helsing's double, recognizes her as one of the undead and, for the listener's benefit, decribes the vampire as an evil spirit that "rises from their grave at midnight clothed in human flesh . . . controlled by blood drained by living bodies" (Cole, "Graveyard Mansion"). Curtis and Brochard track Netty to her tomb. Curtis refuses

to believe that the "girl" in the coffin is a vampire, but within the final seconds, the scraping sound of her coffin lid being removed suggests her fate. The episode climaxes with the sound of a hammer driving a stake into Antoinette's heart and the vampire's screams as she turns to dust (Cole, "Graveyard Mansion").

Conclusion

American radio's celebrated "golden years" spanned two of the most important decades in history. From the 1930s through the post war 1940s, radio was the most important media next to the newspaper. Despite the obvious limitations of radio as an aural medium, dramatists and special effects artists managed to work with the strengths of this somewhat restrictive medium by incorporating narrative techniques and sophisticated and realistic sound effects to manipulate the listener's experience of the story. At the height of its popularity, radio was innovative. Radio dramatists intentionally "g[a]ve plays emotional dimension," creating a suggestion of intimacy between the narrator, the character, and the listener (Verma 61), making the listening experience more intense. Female vampires in this selection of radio dramas are evidence of how well scriptwriters used the aesthetics of sound to draw in listeners and, to some extent, addressed the taboo. Radio dramas portrayed sensual vampires on a "sexualized quest for blood" and, as females, disrupted "culturally perceived . . . discrete patterns of sexual behavior (Hughes 199).

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