

Vampires are Gay: A Collective Case Study and Close Play
Analysis of Queer Representation through Vampires in Western
Video Games

Georgie Shepherd-Bell

2023

A dissertation submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of English and New Media Studies (MENMS)

School of Language and Culture

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
List of Figures	iv
Attestation of Authorship	v
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Literature Review	3
2.1 A Short History of the Origins of Vampires	3
2.2 The Queerness of Gothic Vampires.....	5
2.3 The Queerness of Modern Vampires.....	8
2.4 Vampires in Games.....	14
2.5 Queer Video Games.....	16
3.0 Methodology	19
3.1 Case Study	19
3.2 Close Play.....	19
3.3 Video Game Selection.....	20
3.4 Video Game Analysis.....	20
3.5 Summary.....	21
3.6 Author Positionality	22
4.0 Case Studies	23
4.1 Explicitly Queer Games.....	23
4.1.1 First Bite.....	23
4.1.3 Monster Prom.....	33
4.1.4 Conclusion	37
4.2 Non-Explicitly Queer Games.....	41
4.2.1 Vampyr	41
4.2.2 Castlevania: Lords of Shadow – Series.....	45
4.2.3 Conclusion	51
5.0 Conclusion.....	54
References	58

Abstract

The queerness of Western vampires was cemented during their gothic origins in the early 1800s with Coleridge's 1816 poem *Christabel* and Polidori's 1819 prose *The Vampyre*. Their undoubtedly queer origins have continued into their inclusion in contemporary media. While research into how vampires represent queerness in television and movies, research into the queerness of vampires in the popular industry of video games is lacking. Vampires have been included in video games as main antagonists and protagonists, as well as minor non-playable characters and enemies. Their continuous inclusion in the fantasy role-playing genre of video games has cemented them as a staple fixture. This study examines the inclusion of vampires in ten video games that centred vampires as a primary narrative element and were developed in America and Europe and within Western culture. The games were separated into two categories, one where the narrative was explicitly queer, and the other was not explicitly queer. The games were analysed with close play methodology and compared to each other, first within their respective groups and then all together.

Vampires in video games that were explicitly queer showcase queerness positively and prominently within the confines of mainstream Western heterosexual beauty standards. They perpetuate hetero-hegemonic archetypes of queerness. Vampires in non-explicitly queer video games showcase queerness as a dangerous sexual deviancy, more in line with Byronic representations of queer vampires. Both types of video games used vampirism as a symbol of self-acceptance and as a form of wish fulfilment for queer players but did so through the lens of conventional attractiveness. All of the games analysed used vampires to explore many contemporary queer experiences and societal fears and anxieties surrounding queerness.

List of Figures

Figure 1. <i>Screenshot of Ilyas (left), Valeria (centre), and Laurel (right) from First Bite Game.</i>	24
Figure 2. <i>Screenshot of Liam (left) with Scott Howl (right) in Monster Prom Game</i>	34
Figure 3. <i>Dmitri Promotional Image</i>	36
Figure 4. <i>Carmilla Vampiress Form</i>	48

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Georgie Shepherd-Bell

26 July 2023

1.0 Introduction

Vampires have represented societal fears since their gothic literary debut (Jones & Harries, 2016). Their monstrous otherness and position on the outskirts of society allowed authors and readers alike to use them to project and personify culturally significant fears. One concept that vampires have always been intrinsically tied to since their addition to Western literature and culture is the societal fear and experiences of queer people. Western culture refers to the conglomeration of cultural ideas of countries within and colonised by Europe (Bonnet, 2017). Vampires have continued to represent these fears and anxieties as society and culture change and evolve. Since their inclusion in gothic literature, vampires have continuously been used to personify and explore societal and cultural fears and anxieties of queerness while also being used to explore queer experiences within society. Throughout contemporary media, vampires have continued to be used as a vehicle for exploring the complex themes and experiences of queerness. While ample scholarly literature examines how this occurs in modern television, films, and literature, how vampires represent queerness in video games is significantly under-researched.

They also provide a unique mechanism where the audience actively participates in the narrative. 'Choose-your-own-adventure' books and television shows have aimed to attain an audience experience close to this, but their static, often clunky, and narrow range of choices leave the audience still lacking the same amount of agency received when controlling the protagonist to the extent that occurs in video games. The audience is not just watching a character make their choices but actively making them. Thus, it encourages players to feel completely immersed in the world and narrative and connected to the player character as, often, players have spent hours with the character levelling them up and building skills. Players are promoted to form a closer connection to the main character of a video game than a character from another more passive form of storytelling.

As video games continue to grow dramatically in popularity, academia is beginning to pay more attention to queer and LGBTQ+ representation. Shaw et al. (2019) examined 163 video games published between 1985 and 2005 and analysed their LGBTQ+ representation. Shaw found that LGBTQ+ characters were "largely neutral and inconsequential" (p. 1564), appearing essentially by themselves in the narrative. They also found that nonhuman characters more likely took the role of enemy and most often had more implicit non-hetero sexualities. Chess (2015) explains that games have always had the potential to be queer yet have typically kept to heteronormative narrative structures. Ruberg (2019) states that LGBTQ+ history has been one of "absence" (p. 1), and explicit queer representation in video games was practically non-existent until the early 2010s; this is despite video games also being inherently queer.

This study seeks to understand how the historically queer vampire symbolises queerness in the contemporary medium of video games to fill the gap in queer video game studies literature.

Beginning with an exploration of the historical birth and context of the vampire myth, this study will then delve into how the vampire became an icon of the queer gothic and its continuous use as a metaphor for queer themes and experiences in modern Western media. This paper will then examine ten video games that use vampires as their protagonists and player characters with close play narrative and comparative analysis to understand how vampires continue to be complex and effective tools for exploring queerness while adapting to contemporary societal conflicts and mediums.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 A Short History of the Origins of Vampires

The undead has been a prominent theme in myths, legends, and folklore since the dawn of ancient human civilisation (Groom, 2018a.). While many of these fears appeared in the form of undead, demonic gods and goddesses – such as the ancient Mesopotamian demon-goddess Lilitu (McLeod, 2010a.) – the vampire, as modern Western culture knows it, was “effectively discovered” (Groom, 2018a., p.5), during the European Age of Enlightenment. Unlike other undead creatures common within European folklore, vampires do not have a basis in biblical antecedents (Groom, 2018a.).

Entities with vampire-like traits date back to ancient civilisations of Sumer, Akkad and the Indus Valley, with Lilitu evolving into the better-known Babylonian proto-succubus demon Lilith. Many vampiric entities had fang-like teeth and drank blood (McLeod, 2010a.). Lilith’s allusions to early vampirism began in the Middle Ages (Gaines, 2001) with ‘midrash’ – a specific biblical interpretation method and a name for the texts containing the interpretations (Schept, 2021). Gaps in rabbinical biblical texts and the Talmud led to the midrash of Lilith being the first woman and Adam’s first wife instead of Eve. Lilith saw herself as Adam’s equal, and when he disagreed, she left him. After leaving and fornicating with a demon, Lilith swears to harm infants or everyone, depending on the midrash. She was a representation of the dangers of dominant, sexual females. (Shapiro, 2019; Walton, 2011; Dennis & Dennis, 2014). The earliest European vampire-like creature was the Hellenistic female entity, the lamia from ancient Greece. (Melton & Hornick, 2015a.; Groom, 2018a.; Gelder, 1994a.) The lamia, Gelder (1994a.) argues, was “simultaneously indigenous and introduced” (p.39), believing that the lamia was an amalgamation of “reasonable human *revenants*” (p.40) and Slavonic “brutish, inhuman vampires” (p.40). Ancient vampiric entities were often portrayed as ugly, feminine creatures (Melton & Hornick, 2015a.) until Christianity travelled to medieval Ireland. This intermingling of Gaelic legends with Christian beliefs led to Celtic vampiric entities – such as the dearg-dur – being portrayed as beautiful and seductive temptresses (Groom, 2018a.).

One thing that these vampiric creatures had in common was that it was believed that the humans these creatures once were died a horrific death or committed cultural evils and misdeeds which caused them to turn into a vampiric entity; and they had to drink the blood from their living family members or wounded person to survive (Melton & Hornick, 2015a.; Groom, 2018a.). These ancient vampire-like entities were used as both a personification of culture’s fear of the returning dead and as an explanation for “certain unexplainable evils” (Melton, 2022a., para. 2). Groom (2018a.) notes that the vampire “should not be too closely tied to a bundle of generalised fears about the dead, the undead, contagion or death,” (p.12) as vampires are used as a being to project specific culturally significant fears.

Aspects of Slavic and Eastern European vampiric folklore also influenced the gothic characterisation of vampires before combining with the Grecian lamia. Slavic vampires can be created through violent deaths – like Celtic vampiric entities – but people can also be predestined or cursed to become one (Carlisle, 2018; Dynda, 2017). In Macedonian tales, vampires are often described as victims of witchcraft, and vampires and victims of vampires sometimes sought out exorcisms, for lack of a better translation (Siegel, 1996). Many of the attributes that are associated with gothic and contemporary vampires can be traced to Slavic folklore. Eastern European vampires often must return to their graves to sleep during the day, turn into bats, and during nightfall, leave their graves to drink blood, eat flesh, or have intercourse (Oinas, 1998; Carlisle, 2018). Returning to their graves to sleep slowly morphed into needing to sleep in their native soil (Carlisle, 2018), an idea that is shown in the film *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922) and the mockumentary television show *What We Do in the Shadows* (Clement et al., 2019-present). Slavic vampires are traditionally described as bloated with receding hair and gums, resembling an early-stage decomposed body with fangs (Carlise, 2018; Oinas, 1998). Macedonian folklore is where the idea that vampires need to be invited inside private residences originated (Siegel, 1996), and has stayed a staple in vampire lore. Slavic vampire folklore was heavily utilised in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* in characterising the namesake character (Kirtley, 1956; Groom, 2018b.; Melton, 2022b.; Melton, 2022c.). Stoker was also influenced by historical figures likened to, or alleged to be, vampires. These figures also influenced subsequent gothic literature. The most prominent ‘vampiric’ historical figures were Elizabeth Bathory – The Blood Countess, who was rumoured to bathe in the blood of young girls to retain youth (Groom, 2018b.; Gelder, 1994a.) – and the “Wallachian warlord” Vlad Tepes – Vlad the Impaler, (Groom, 2018b.; Melton, 2022d.) whose influence can be seen in the video game franchise and television series *Castlevania* (Konami, 1986; Sankar et al., 2017-2021).

In the 18th century, the idea of the undead coming back to the world of the living to feast upon the living was so tangible that a Vampire Plague broke out in Austria in 1718. While modern-day scholars argue if this was a mass hysteria or a widespread illness, this was not the first or only ‘Vampire Plague’ that occurred during this period (McLeod, 2010b.; Melton & Hornick, 2015b.). During this time, the first recorded and formalised use of the term ‘vampire’ was used. The academic formalising of the vampire thrust the vampire into eighteenth-century mainstream (McLeod, 2010c.; Melton, 2022e.). This caused the vampire to morph from a ‘real’ creature to the metaphorical one being used to represent wealth, authority, and capitalism (Melton, 2022e.; Groom, 2018c., Gelder, 1994b.). The capitalist vampire metaphor continued into the nineteenth century when it combined with the antisemitism that was prominent during this era. During this time, tales of medieval blood libel accusations were revived. Blood libel accusations and racial stereotypes of greed provided a connection between Jewish people and vampires, leading to the concept of the ‘Jewish Vampire’ (Groom, 2018d.; Melton, 2022f.; Gelder, 1994b.). Later

referred to as the 'Foreign Vampire,' this concept included manifestations of current ideals surrounding capitalism, Jewish people, and ideals around Orientalism. The imagined European image of the 'Eastern world' being hypersexual and laden with excess was an eroticised imagining of Asian cultures and civilisations (Gelder, 1994b.; Goddu, 1999; Melton, 2022g.). This concept encapsulates Stoker's characterisation of Dracula – an aristocratic foreigner who feasts on people's blood that one must fear (Melton, 2022c.).

As cultures and their fears and social anxieties have morphed and shifted, vampires have continued to have these fears and anxieties projected onto them. They are "rich enough a metaphorto adapt to culture's changing worldview and interests" (Clements, 2011 a., p. 7). More contemporarily, they have been used as a metaphor for queerness and queer desire (Khader, 2013); they have been humanised and sanitised enough to become a plausible and desirable romantic interest in popular media (Clements, 2011b.). In the 1980s, vampires began to be representative of the AIDs epidemic due to their intrinsic sexual fluidity and link to blood (Whitesell, 2022; Ritchie, 2021). As Ritchie (2021) explains, during this era, blood, transmission, and male queerness converged; "the vampire has new frightening connotations beyond just Byronic bisexuality" (16:22-16:26). 'Real vampire' subcultures have also appeared in the last four decades. In these subcultures, people claim to be real vampires and will drink consenting individuals' blood (HISTORY, 2020) or 'feed' off their energy. Scholar Joseph Laycock (2010) explains that the real vampire community is an identity community similar to 'otherkin' and 'therians' – identity communities predominantly originating from the social media site Tumblr. Laycock explains that the real vampire community use the vampire identity to actualise their sense of identity (Laycock, 2010; Melton, 2022h.).

2.2 The Queerness of Gothic Vampires

Monsters are uniquely queer. They exist outside of the hegemonic heteropatriarchy and counter "cis-heteronormative standards... rejecting both assimilation" (Eklund, 2021, p. 80) and accepted ways of existing. They have been a prevalent part of queer and trans studies (Whitesell, 2022) as they offer representations of society's contemporary ideas of race, gender, ability, class, and sexuality (McFarland, 2016). Horror has always expressed the fears and anxieties of the time (Romano, 2016; Park, 2018), and its monsters have been vehicles for those fears and anxieties; "the monster is the abject, terror-inspiring receptacle for social fears and deep personal revulsions" (Jones & Harries, 2016, p. 520). The monster's hideousness and otherness ostracise them from any kindness or consideration from the hegemonic hetero-patriarchal society that it exists within, a feeling and experience familiar to many queer and non-cis-heteronormative people (Stryker, 2015; Block, 2018; Muñoz, 2015). Much like monsters disrupt the norm, queer expressions and queerness disrupt "the heteronormative centre in productively

monstrous ways” (Jones & Harris, 2016, p. 519), connecting them in ways that are intrinsic to their existence. Monsters attract queer audiences because, like queer audience members, they “repulse” (Eklund, 2021, p. 85) and exist outside of cis-heteronormative standards and social order. Composed of queerness, vampires have historically and contemporarily been used as a metaphor for queer people (Lau, 2018).

Vampires are often queer coded (Stuart, 2018; Abdi & Calafell, 2017). Queer coding in media and literature is when characters are not explicitly stated as queer or veering from cis-heteronormativity but are associated with characteristics and stereotypes of queerness (Kim, 2017). Villains and outcasts are typically more often queer coded than protagonists (Kim, 2017; Svobodová, 2022). Svobodová (2022) suggests that the prevalence of queer coded villains helps maintain the dominant heteronormativity of mainstream movies. The origins of queer coding in modern media date back to the introduction of the Hays Code in the 1930s, which restrained the making of films that were believed to lower the audience’s moral standards; this prohibited the explicit showcasing of queerness (Hutton, 2018). Hutton (2018) and Svobodová (2022) agree that this encouraged the belief that queerness is immoral and aided in the phenomena of implicitly queer villains and monsters.

Vampires have been innately linked to an “open secret” (Lau, 2018, p. 4) of queerness. The queer male vampire, as it has come to be understood, originated in 1819 with John Polidori’s prose, *The Vampyre* (2012; Ritchie, 2021). Unlike the mythological vampire characterised by its pale and decrepit flesh, Polidori’s vampire was “suave, elegant, aristocratic, aloof and handsome” (McLeod, 2010d., p. 112). *The Vampyre*’s vampire, Lord Ruthven, exudes traits common with Byronic heroes of the time (Groom, 2018d.); a melancholic outsider to society who, despite their capacity for revenge and moroseness, is also capable of intense affection and love (Palfy, 2016). The vampire combined the Byronic hero with the Victorian fascination with blood and violence (Howell, 2021; Groom, 2018d.). *The Vampyre* romanticises Lord Ruthven’s bloodlust and amorality, beginning the trend of Byronic vampire anti-heroes (Groom, 2018d.).

The prose’s narrative is speculated to be based on the supposed relationship between Polidori and Lord Byron (Ritchie, 2021), with the storyline centring on a young man infatuated with Lord Ruthven (Lau, 2018). The two engage in a homosocial relationship (McFarland, 2016), one that is heavily queer coded (Artt, 2014). Homosocial relationships are relationships between two people of the same gender – typically men – that are platonic but have the foundation of “homosexual desire” (Sedgwick, 2015, p. 1), never crossing into being romantic or sexual as homosexuality and queerness are used as a threat for maintaining platonic boundaries (Sedgwick, 2015; Maddison, 2015; Galea et al., 2022). They often are portrayed as just as emotionally intimate as traditional relationship structures (Silverio et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2019). The beginnings of the sympathetic vampire, like other monsters, Polidori’s vampire “remains ugly in a way that is never merely skin-deep,” (Eklund, 2021, p. 81); its very nature

is amoral and depraved, not eliciting a sympathetic response that is common towards more contemporary vampires (Groom, 2018d.).

Arguably the most influential work in creating the modern vampire is Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*. An epistolary novel, the narrative details the story of Johnathan Harker and the novel's namesake, the vampire, Count Dracula. Explicitly Christian in tone and message, Count Dracula is representative of the demonic forces that Christianity can defeat (Clements, 2011c.). While *Dracula* "subsequently inspires a mania for sexualising the vampire" (Groom, 2018e., p. 183), Stoker's vampire is not the Byronic hero that Polidori's Lord Ruthven is; Count Dracula is deathly pale and primal in appearance, a less humanised vampire than contemporary audiences are accustomed to (Clements, 2011c.). Despite the inhuman and unnaturalness of Count Dracula, sexuality and eroticism are still intrinsic aspects of Stoker's narrative (Stevenson, 1988). There is a juxtaposition that exists within Stoker's *Dracula* where strict heteronormative gender roles are enforced when vampires are feeding – sucking the blood of men was described almost medically while feeding on the blood of women was erotic (Melton, 2022i.) – Count Dracula's attachment to Harker was presented with queer undertones (Stuart, 2018). Count Dracula, saving Harker from the highly erotic and sexualised Weird Sisters, tells the sisters that Harker "belongs" (Stoker, 1897, p. 18) to him and scolds them for feeding on him. Stoker's novel uses the homosocial relationship between Count Dracula and Harker not to dismiss the homoeroticism present but to "diffuse and displace it" (Craft, 1984, p. 111) within heteronormative stasis.

Blood in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is also a vehicle for homoeroticism and queerness. "Blood means many things in *Dracula*; it is food, it is semen" (Stevenson, 1988, p. 144), and it is a medium for homosexual contagion (Clements, 2011c.). The blood loss from Lucy Westenra is sexualised, and thus so is her transformation into a vampire (Clements, 2011c.). This loss of blood from Count Dracula feeding on her makes her "unclean" (Stoker, 1897, p. 135), and while blood transfusions from Abraham Van Helsing make her feel better, it does not stop her descent into impure vampirism. This infection of vampirism is representative of not only Victorian fears of same-sex relations and attraction (Groom, 2018e.) but also more modern fears. Recently scholars have equated the contagion of queerness via vampirism to the HIV/AIDS epidemic; the rhetoric of infected blood infecting a "poor innocent victim" (Abdi & Calafell, 2017, p. 359) was common during the height of the epidemic (Abdi & Calafell, 2017; Clements, 2011a.; Howell, 2021).

During the period of Byronic male vampires, narratives involving female vampires were also prominent. In J. Sheridan Le Fanu's 1871 novella *Carmilla* (2021a.) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1816 poem *Christabel*, lesbian coded vampires are at the centre of the narrative. Coleridge's *Christabel* was the first English poem to thematically concentrate on a lesbian-coded relationship (Melton, 2022j; Melton, 2022k.). The poem's namesake confirmed Victorian

fears of the “sexually aggressive” (Clements, 2011a., p. 7) female predator and what it stood for; “a challenge to marriage, social stability and child-bearing – a threat to young women” (Groom, 2018f., p. 136). *Carmilla* affirms this fear with the relationship between the human protagonist Laura and the vampire Carmilla. The homosexual subtext is prominently displayed when Laura remarks that Carmilla’s behaviour is ‘queer’ enough to wonder if the vampire is a boy (Gelder, 1994c.). While Gelder notes that *Carmilla* is “merely replicating a heterosexist representation of the lesbian” (1994c., p. 62), the author also explains that the novella defied Victorian conventions. The belief of the era was that same-sex attraction and relations were unnatural (McFarland, 2016; Gelder, 1994c.; Groom, 2018f.), yet *Carmilla* argues that “all things proceed from Nature – don’t they?” (Le Fanu, 2021b., para. 207), asserting *Carmilla* as both a queer and ‘queer’ (unconventional) narrative.

2.3 The Queerness of Modern Vampires

In more contemporary texts, homosexual coding and subtext have remained essential in vampire literature and media. As vampire paranormal romances have dominated literature (Melton & Hornick, 2015c.), popular franchises such as Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* (Jordan, 1994; Jones et al., 2022) and *The Vampire Chronicles* (1976), television series *True Blood* (Ball et al., 2008-2014), and Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight Saga* (Meyer, 2005; Hardwicke, 2008) retain – and are often more explicit with – their queerness.

In Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles*, the main protagonists, vampires Louis and Lestat, have formed a queer family. Louis and Lestat “are a kind of demonic (but not demonised) gay couple, queer male parents competing with each other for ‘our daughter’ Claudia” (Gelder, 1994d., p. 113). Unlike the vampires in *The Vampyre*, *Dracula*, *Christabel*, and *Carmilla*, Rice’s vampires have explicit humanity. They are capable of empathy, guilt and self-reflection (Clements, 2011d.). Their evilness is no longer per their interaction with Christian doctrine but by how they interact with 1970’s society and their own conscience (King, 1993). Rice puts traditional morals into question through the character’s vampiric existence.

Louis and Lestat also deviate from the stereotypical appearance of Victorian vampires; while still pale, they are beautiful and more perfect than typical human men. (Clements, 2011d.) While heavily queer coded in their characterisations, Melton (2022l.) believes that Rice was not trying to explore contemporary questions with queer relationships and sexuality; instead, it is an exploration of gender and issues with androgyny. Louis and Lestat take stereotypical feminine and masculine roles in their queer dynamic, with Louis inhabiting the feminine role of being pursued and Lestat being the pursuer (Gelder, 1994d.; Melton, 2022l.). Despite Lestat taking on the dominant and masculine pursuer role, he is the more expressively emotional and overtly homosexual of the pair, personality traits that Rice expresses in juxtaposition to his masculine

qualities (Melton, 2022l.). Although Melton (2022l.) argues that Rice is more concerned with exploring gender issues through Louis and Lestat's queer relationship, Rice thoroughly incorporates an examination of queerness and homosexuality. King (1993) argues that Rice is undermining the masculine and feminine binary that the characterisations juxtapose through their melding in Lestat and the inclusion of male homosexual relationships.

Much like Victorian vampire literature, the intrinsic queerness of Rice's vampires is strengthened through a vampire's inability to procreate – much like the cisnormative idea of same-gendered couples that was prevalent during this era (Stuart, 2018; Block, 2018). In *The Vampire Chronicles*, “male vampires could not have “normal” inter course, their sex organs being dysfunctional” (Melton, 2022m., para. 6), yet Rice shows Louis and Lestat engaging in sucking blood from one another, an act that Rice makes more significant and more intimate than cis-heteronormative intercourse (Melton, 2022m.; Haggerty, 1998; “Vampire,” 2022). Louis and Lestat can also ‘reproduce’ through mutual blood-sucking with the five-year-old child Claudia, creating their queer family (Gelder, 1994). Rice also innately ties being a vampire with queerness when Lestat changes bodies with a human and loses his overt homosexual behaviours. While the lead-up to Lestat changing bodies is heavily intertwined with longing for another man's body, once human again, Lestat is filled with anxiety and a need for “heterosexist power” (Gelder, 1994d., p. 122). The first thing he does is graphically sexually assault and rape a young woman and nun. By doing this, Rice links heterosexual relations with acts Lestat describe as “monstrous” (Gelder, 1994d., p. 122) and queer relations and intimacy with intimacy and consent – both a crucial aspect to mutual blood-sucking (Gelder, 1994d.; Haggerty, 1998).

Through their interactions with androgyny and queer coded homosexual relationships, Louis and Lestat struggle with the morality of their vampiric – and therefore queer – existence, wanting to find meaning in it (Haggerty, 1998; Clements, 2011d.). Louis and Lestat reconcile their struggle with morality and meaning in different ways. Louis finds meaning in his realisation that vampirism has no meaning (Gelder, 1994d.). Lestat finds meaning in his romantic love with Louis and the other vampires he loves. The act of loving Louis helps Lestat find meaning and solace in a world where he struggles with “an angst-filled existence” (Clements, 2011d., p. 32).

The HBO series *True Blood* (Ball et al., 2008-2014) – based on *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* series (Harris, 2001) – is based in a world where vampires “came out of the coffin” (Ball et al., 2008a., 15:26-15:27) two years ago. It follows protagonist Sookie Stackhouse, a telepathic waitress in southern Louisiana, and her encounters in the supernatural world after meeting the vampire, Bill Compton. Vampires are considered a legally recognised minority, and both the television show and the book series focus on vampires' place in society (Clements, 2011e.). Vampires are able to coexist alongside humans due to the invention of synthetic blood called ‘Tru Blood’; this blood replacement is not as satisfying as drinking human blood (Ball et al.,

2008a.). Many vampires still choose to drink synthetic blood in an attempt to integrate into human society (Kirkland, 2012). In *True Blood* and Harris' book series, vampires' feelings of hunger and being sexually aroused are both signalled by their fangs extending, something they cannot control. In doing this, Harris and the television show make vampires' survival and bloodlust synonymous with intercourse and arousal (Clements, 2011e.). This connection is further amplified during Sookie's first visit to the vampire bar 'Fangtasia' (Ball et al., 2008b.) when reading the minds of the humans there; all of them are lusting after having their blood sucked, some offering themselves to vampires both sexually and as food. Vampires are typically shown only drinking blood from members of their preferred gender unless absolutely necessary.

There is a moral difference between vampires who are "mainstream" (Ball et al., 2008c., 0:53) and those who indulge in their 'authentic' vampiric lifestyle. Mainstream vampires are represented as the morally righteous, the 'good' type of vampires. Vampires that live outside of human society are the 'bad' type of vampire (Leavenworth, 2012; Dhaenens, 2013; Newitz, 2008). Being a vampire is a "lifestyle choice" (Groom, 2018g., p. 199), echoing contemporary lived queer experiences. People who fall outside of the cis-heterosexual norm are more accepted in mainstream society when they are 'palatable.' Presenting oneself as the 'right kind of' queer person and not too different from the cis-gender heterosexual mainstream is the morally and socially good way to present yourself. Being too different from the hegemonic heteropatriarchy is deemed as socially alienating and morally wrong (Brewer, 2003; El Hazzouri et al., 2018; Fernández & Parsa, 2022; Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005; Encarnación, 2021; Fitch, 2015). Humans who consensually engage in sexual relations with vampires, or let vampires drink their blood, are discriminated against, and looked down on. 'Fangbangers' is used as a derogatory term for those humans. Being a 'fangbanger' is deemed so debauched that the first season's main plotline is trying to find who is murdering women who engage in human-vampire relations (Clements, 2011e.).

The metaphor for queerness in *True Blood* does not stop with parallels to morality and mainstreaming; vampires also face religious persecution and bloodborne pathogens that directly refer to HIV/AIDS (Clements, 2011e.; Faucon, 2019). The 'Fellowship of the Sun' is one of the main antagonists in season two and is a prominent and militant anti-vampire protestant cult (Clements, 2011e.). The Fellowship of the Sun acts as a parody of anti-LGBT+ religious fanaticism. Members are against the existence of vampires for purely religious reasons and – like anti-queer churches – use fear-mongering and moral panics to aid in political lobbying against legally recognising vampires (Clements, 2011e.; Faucon, 2019; Cohen, 2023; Schlatter, 2010; Melton & Hornick, 2015d.; Elliot-Smith, 2012). The Fellowship believes that they are morally and spiritually superior to vampires, believing their mere existence to be sinful and immoral (Faucon, 2019). Vampires in *True Blood* also have to navigate the world where bloodborne pathogens that target them are prevalent. A direct allusion to the HIV/AIDS

epidemic (Elliot-Smith, 2012), Hep-V and the lesser Hep-D are viral strains of hepatitis that only affect vampires. Vampires can get infected by drinking the blood of a human carrier. While Hep-D is non-fatal, merely weakening the vampire for a short time (“Hepatitis D,” 2019; “Hepatitis V,” 2017; Ball et al., 2008d.), Hep-V is a government-engineered strain specifically meant to target and kill vampires (Faucon, 2019). Referred to as “Vampire AIDS” (Ritchie, 2021, 16:55-16:56) in the show, this direct and overt allusion to an epidemic that primarily affected the queer community cements the vampires in *True Blood* as a critique and exploration of issues of queer acceptance and assimilation (Elliot-Smith, 2019; Boyer, 2011; Fitch, 2015).

Successful franchises *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon et al., 1997-2003), the *Twilight Saga*, and to a lesser extent, *True Blood*, comment on and explore the Victorian idea of the soul – or lack thereof – of vampires. Having a soul is analogous to having the ability to be a moral being. Vampires without souls are, by default, immoral; at least, that idea is explored in many vampiric texts. While *True Blood*’s Bill Compton routinely questions whether he has a soul, and the Fellowship of the Sun is confident that vampires lack a soul (Clements, 2011e.; Chaplin, 2017), the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* answers this question directly. In the show, a vampire is “simply a human body taken over by a demon soul” (Clements, 2011f., p. 35); *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* makes the soul a foundational element to ethical behaviour and morality (Jones, 2012).

Many of the vampires are soulless creatures, killed only moments after appearing on-screen (Melton, 2022n.), but two stand apart from the rest – Angel and Spike. Angel is a vampire who was ‘cursed’ with a human soul (Erickson, 2023). Only with a human soul can Angel have a conscience and is different from the mindless and inhuman vampires Buffy so often slays (Melton, 2022n.). He lives his life similar to the tortured Byronic heroes of vampire literature’s past, on the outskirts of both vampire and human society. He is tormented, and the curse ensures that. Only after achieving a moment of pure happiness – a moment without torment – is his curse lifted, and he transforms back into the indiscriminate, brutal killer he once was (Jones, 2012; Kowalski, 2018). A tragic, sympathetic vampire, Buffy must kill Angel once the curse is lifted as he can no longer be trusted to make the morally ‘good’ decision. He can no longer control his urges and is no longer the ‘good’ kind of vampire (Kowalski, 2018; Fall, 2018a.).

Spike was the second sympathetic vampire shown on the show. For a time, he could control his urges, not because he wanted to like Angel, but because he had a behavioural modification chip that would not allow him to behave in a way that would cause harm (Fall, 2018a.). While trying to find a way to remove the microchip, Spike fell in love with Buffy and sought to regain his human soul. Once he had regained it, he fought alongside Buffy and sacrificed himself to save the world. Without the behaviour modification chip, Spike could not act in a moral and ‘good’ way; he still tried to feed on and kill humans but was completely unable to (Fall, 2018a.; Melton, 2022n.). Any vampire of any narrative importance ends up dead in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

(Clements, 2011f.), a common theme in queer representation in contemporary media. Many explicitly queer and LGBTQ+ characters exist in narratives to die or have a tragic ending resulting in the 'Bury Your Gays' trope and 'Dead Lesbian Syndrome' (Hulan, 2017; Waggoner, 2018; Bridges, 2018).

The *Twilight Saga* films and books also pose the question of vampires having a soul. Bella's love interest, the vampire Edward Cullen, insists his soul is damned purely due to his vampiric existence. Edward's character is preoccupied with trying to spiritually redeem his existence – something he believes to be impossible but still worth trying (Meyer, 2020; Wright, 2014). Vampires in *Twilight* are portrayed as “camal, sinful,” (Riess, 2009, p. 142) yet having free will like other contemporary literary vampires (Clements, 2011g.; Riess, 2009). Cullen patriarch, Carlisle's entire vampiric existence is based on him choosing to go against the inherent bloodthirsty nature of a vampire and attempts to kill himself through starvation to rid him of his sinful vampiric existence; Carlisle then finds out that he can survive by drinking the blood of animals, living as a 'vegetarian' vampire (Wilson, 2011a.; Clements, 2011g.; Donelan, 2015).

Every member of the Cullen family adheres to this rigid morality. Meyer's vampires are innately sinful and without a soul; because of this, they are fundamentally immoral creatures that must fight against their nature to achieve a form of redemption (Wilson, 2011a.; Riess, 2009; Clements, 2011g.). The Cullens are outsiders in human society due to their vampire-ness, and they are outsiders in vampire society due to being vegetarians (Clements, 2011g.) The Cullen family are another rendition of the 'good' kind of vampire. They choose to act against their nature, further enforcing the parallel between being a 'good' vampire and being a 'good' and 'palatable' queer person (Brewer, 2003; El Hazzouri et al., 2018; Fernández & Parsa, 2022; Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005; Melton & Hornick, 2015c.). McFarland (2016) argues that the Cullen's vegetarian 'lifestyle' is representative of 'in the closet' queer people – denying themselves “pleasures, desires, and experiences” (p. 15). In contrast, non-vegetarian vampires “epitomize the self-identified, out and proud queer” (McFarland, 2016, p. 15).

The Cullen family actively acknowledges their vampiric queer beginnings by fighting against it. Meyer's vampires “clearly and firmly refuse the queerness typically associated with” (Kane, 2010, p. 103) vampiric figures with rigid heterosexuality and acceptance of the heteronormative (Wilson, 2011b.). The Cullen family is the epitome of patriarchal, heteronormative nuclear family archetypes (Priest, 2012); while Carlisle and his wife Esme are unable to reproduce, they 'adopt' – make – teenage children that partner with another family member of the opposite sex. All the Cullen siblings – including Bella – are in a monogamous heterosexual relationship with one another (Wilson, 2011b.; Clements, 2011g.).

Despite Meyer adhering to rigid, Mormon ideals of heterosexuality, some academics maintain that there is still an underlying queer tonality to the *Twilight Saga*. Bella lacks agency, despite

being the protagonist. Her character can only do what Edward permits; she cannot have intercourse or be a vampire until she marries him, and when she is pregnant, she has no option but to be a mother. She happily accepts her lack of agency (Firestone, 2014; Silver, 2010; Eichmiller, 2020). The *Twilight* franchise is more heteronormative than other vampire media, yet the loss of agency that female characters experience is representative of the understood contemporary queer experience (Lau, 2018). This “mandatory heterosexuality” (Firestone, 2014, p. 54) in Bella and Edward’s relationship – something that Edward believes to be incompatible with his vampiric existence – creates a queer dynamic (McFarland, 2013; Sommers & Hume, 2011).

Edward and his perfectly coifed hair and sparkling, diamond-like skin are “overtly metrosexual, effortlessly fashionable” (Limpár, 2018, p. 273); Edward “appears to be gay” (Sommers & Hume, 2011, p. 155). This is something audiences and academics have picked up on describing him as “the gorgeous gay guy” (Marche, 2009, para. 4) and the perfect yet unobtainable boyfriend “and thus is classed as ‘gay’” (Sommers & Hume, 2011, p. 159). Audiences made memes about Edward being in the closet based on his portrayal and characterisation (McFarland, 2013), signifying that there is something intrinsically queer about the strict heterosexuality Meyer’s vampires portray. McFarland (2016) also notes that the shift towards more explicitly heteronormative vampire portrayals could be a reaction to contemporary society’s more accepting attitude towards people who are LGBTQ+ – especially cis, white, wealthy, non-disabled gay men. They also note that the rigid heterosexuality in the *Twilight Saga* is notably queer itself as it strays so far from the overtly queer coded vampire norm. Coupled with the feminine coding of many contemporary vampire characters, the *Twilight Saga* adheres to similar concepts of anti-heteropatriarchal paradigms (Khader, 2013).

Contemporary vampire media’s concern with morality and being the ‘good’ kind of vampire echoes arguments against queer and LGBTQ+ acceptance (Brewer, 2003; El Hazzouri et al., 2018; Fernández & Parsa, 2022; Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005; Melton & Hornick, 2015e.). While many queer scholars disavow moral arguments and theories against queerness and queer acceptance (Sandel, 1989; Wang et al., 2019; Schotten, 2018; Taylor, 2020), it is still prevalent in conservative cultures and Christianity. An argument common within Christian Rights groups is that being gay or queer is immoral; they “strongly align their frames with religious and cultural definitions of the immorality of homosexuality” (Miceli, 2005, p. 598) to position queerness and queer acceptance against morals and values of society. Communities that retain this belief often believe queer people, in particular gay men, to “threaten traditional sexual morality” (Wang et al., 2019, para. 25), believing it to be sinful, immoral, and unnatural (Whitehead & Baker, 2012), and an act that goes against public decency (Cocks, 2016; Halman & van Ingen, 2015; Sandel, 1989). These beliefs helped create an environment where hierarchies of homosexuality thrive (Creighton, 2022). Queer people and homosexuals are

encouraged to behave in a way agreeable to traditional moral and heteronormative sensibilities (Brewer, 2003; Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005; Lamont, 2017). Performing within normative expectations of how homosexual people should behave is received more positively by those within the hegemonic heteropatriarchy; they are the ‘right’ and ‘good’ type of gay (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005; Brewer, 2003; Lamont, 2017). The contemporary vampiric predisposition towards being concerned for their morality echoes queer concerns of wanting acceptance while not being able to change their sexuality, just as vampires cannot be more human.

As Lau (2018) states, “vampirism unmoors from heteropatriarchal gender paradigms” (p. 7); there is intrinsic queerness in the birth of modern vampires. Vampires in contemporary media live relatively normal lives, and their monstrosity not affecting their ability to function within society reflects the emerging homonormative queer (McFarland, 2016). As Vincent (2015) states, vampires are “capable of instigating introspection” (p.6) into society’s condition. How vampires are represented in media can represent societal attitudes towards queer people. Therefore, understanding how vampires are represented in media can give a further understanding of society’s attitudes (Khader, 2013).

2.4 Vampires in Games

Vampires have been included in video games since their conception. As there is very little academic literature on vampires and their intersection with video games (Melton, 2022o.), games journalists and community and fan-made media and websites fill the gap. The first vampire-orientated and widely available computer game – *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* – was released in 1990 (Melton, 2022o.), and one of the most prominent vampire-orientated franchises – *Castlevania* – first being released in 1986 on the MSX2, an 8-bit computer (Konami, n.d.a.). While familiar narratives, such as Stoker’s *Dracula*, are influential in video games (Haddad, 2022), vampires are often underutilised, considering the symbolism and nuance they are capable of (Dillon & Lundberg, 2017).

Vampires’ existence in video games has largely been one of representing the immoral and villainous (Dillon & Lundberg, 2017). The *Castlevania* franchise best represents this. Similar to the antisocial and inhuman Victorian vampire, the villain of the series is (typically) Dracula (Haddad, 2022) and the playable character and protagonist is one of the many members of the vampire hunting Belmont family (Melton, 2022o.). The *Castlevania* franchise has thrived and flourished over the years, releasing 36 games – as of 2023 – on over 20 different platforms (Konami, n.d.b.). The 2010-2014 trilogy *Castlevania Lords of Shadow* (Konami, n.d.c.), *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow – Mirror of Fate* (Mercury Steam, 2014a.), and *Castlevania Lords of Shadow 2* (Konami, n.d.d.) attempt to make a more nuanced reboot of the franchise’s narrative. Focusing on Gabriel Belmont and his eventual turn into Dracula, the trilogy seeks to

give players an opportunity to play as the franchise's villain while providing more understanding of the character. While the franchise reverted to its formula of the Belmont family trying to kill Dracula, other games focused on playing as vampires.

Video game development company, Crystal Dynamics, developed the influential *Legacy of Kain* series in 1996 (Crystal Dynamics, n.d.a), with the last game released in 2003 (Crystal Dynamics, n.d.b.), where the player played as either the antagonist, vampire Kain, or protagonist, former-vampire Raziel. The *Legacy of Kain* series allowed players to embody the vampire and the vampire hunter. Kain is characterised very similarly to Polidori's Lord Ruthven or Stoker's Dracula, an aristocratic and ruthless villain, but as the series progresses, his personality is given more depth as the character develops and changes with the story ("Kain," 2022; "Legacy of Kain," 2023).

The *Vampire: The Masquerade* video game franchise – based on the highly influential and prominent table-top role-playing game of the same name (Melton, 2022p.; Fielder, 2020; Simón, 1998) – centres on vampires and their "struggle between humanity and monstrosity" (Fielder, 2020, n.p). It differs from other mainstream vampire-orientated video game franchises as it has always maintained moral complexity within its narrative and gameplay mechanics (Dillon & Lunberg, 2017). From its most basic mechanic, *Vampire: The Masquerade* sets this standard; the vampires – and thus the player – need to feed on human blood to survive, but doing so could cause players to tip the scale further into a monster (bad/evil) than human (good) (By Night Studios, n.d.). While the first video game in the franchise was released in 2000 (Nihilistic Software), *Vampire: The Masquerade* video games rose to mainstream popularity with its 2004 game, *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* (Troika Games, 2004; Dillon & Lundberg, 2017). The franchise has had much success recently, releasing a series of interactive and visual novels, a multiplayer battle royale, and a new role-playing video game released in 2022 and another on the way (World of Darkness, n.d.a.).

Based on more contemporary renditions of vampires, vampires in both the *Vampire: The Masquerade* franchise's video games and table-top role-playing are social, human-like creatures. They can make choices about what they do, although their chosen clan influences this. For instance, if a player chooses for their vampire to be a part of the 'Brujah' clan, they are compelled to rebel against the status quo, or if they choose the 'Nosferatu' clan, the player's vampire is physically deformed (Dillon & Lundberg, 2017; World of Darkness, n.d.b.). The clan system directs players on how to act and behave while giving challenges through the clan's 'banes.' It not only provides various gameplay and narrative differences from other vampire-orientated video games but also increases depth in the world and characters that players may interact with, and it does so in a structured way (Dillon & Lundberg, 2017; Fielder, 2020).

Vampires have also made appearances in non-vampire-orientated video games. Vampires appear as enemies in games like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Labre & Duke, 2004), *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (Stang, 2018), and *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Melnic, 2018), and as friends or love interests in games like *Monster Prom* (Beautiful Glitch, 2018), and *V Rising* (Stunlock Studios, 2022). While there is variety in how vampires are portrayed in different video games, they typically fall into stereotypical, hegemonic heteronormative gender binaries (Stang, 2018). Male vampires are depicted as strong, dominant, bloodthirsty pursuers of violence (Švelch, 2013). Female vampires are hypersexualised and lethally sexual (Tompkins et al., 2020), often weaker than their male counterparts. Stang (2018) explains that female vampire enemies in video games are representative of female rejection of “normative, dominant social reason” (p. 19) and heteropatriarchal expectations. Yet despite this representation, they are still sexualised to appeal to a male audience (Labre & Duke, 2004). Vampires also have continued to be representative of contagion. *Plague Inc.*, for example, allows players to create a vampiric virus (Haddad, 2022), and in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, non-playable characters are infected with the disease ‘Sanguinare Vampiris’ that eventually turns them into vampires (Bethesda Game Studios, 2011; “Skyrim:Vampirism,” 2023; “Skyrim:Vampire,” 2022). This heteronormative and contagion-based type of representation is largely absent in dating simulators and visual novel games containing vampires.

2.5 Queer Video Games

As video games continue to grow dramatically in popularity, academia is beginning to pay more attention to queer and LGBTQ+ representation. Shaw et al. (2019) examined 163 video games published between 1985 and 2005 and analysed their LGBTQ+ representation. Shaw found that LGBTQ+ characters were “largely neutral and inconsequential” (p. 1564), appearing largely by themselves in the narrative. They also found that nonhuman characters more likely took the role of enemy and most often had more implicit non-hetero sexualities. Chess (2016) explains that games have always had the potential to be queer yet have typically kept to heteronormative narrative structures.

Queer video game studies is a relatively new area of scholarly study and is ever-growing and changing. Explicit queer presence is rare in high-profile, high-budget (AAA) video games – especially narratively impactful presence (Pelurson, 2022; MacDonald, 2022). AAA video games that do contain narratively meaningful queer inclusion are often met with combativeness and harassment for “forcing gay politics and agendas down their throats” (Mejeur & Ho, 2022, para. 3). This is something that has been well-documented in mainstream and independent games journalism, and video game players (Greene, 2020; Reymann-Schneider, 2018; Heritage, 2021; Villemez, 2020; Bowers, 2014). Even when mainstream AAA games have queer and trans

inclusion, it is often constructed from the points of view of people in positions of power that are not queer or trans (Heritage, 2022). Because of this, queer and trans characterisations are often fraught with stereotypes, and they exist to be victims and serve as an impetus for cis-heteronormative character's "advancement, aggrandizement, or moral redemption" (Koscieszka, 2023, p. 203). They are often relegated to non-playable characters (Koscieszka, 2023). More recently, prominent and diverse queerness has been explicitly represented in the indie game (independent game developers) community (Pelurson, 2022).

Queer video game studies typically fall into two – often interrelated – areas of study, queerness via narrative inclusion and queerness as a mechanic. Queer game mechanics are playable and interactive elements of video games that "resonate with non-heteronormative experiences of sexuality or gender" (Ruberg, 2022a., p. 108). Games with queer mechanics can be interpreted as having queerness through abstracting the mechanics (McClure, 2020) and the mechanic's outcomes directly representing elements and experiences of queerness (Ruberg, 2022a.; Ruberg, 2022b.) Narrative and character queerness is something that – while historically ignored for cis-heteronormative narratives and characters (Pelurson, 2022) – is being included more as the conversation around representation and inclusion in video games gain greater mainstream prominence (Salter et al., 2018).

With mainstream AAA video game titles, recent games like *The Last of Us Part II* (Naughty Dog, 2020) feature explicitly queer playable protagonists (Granger, 2021; Koscieszka, 2023), and *Dragon Age: Inquisition* (BioWare, 2014) and *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (Bethesda Game Studios, 2011) allow players to have heterosexual or queer romances with specific non-playable characters (Ogilvie, 2021; Koscieszka, 2023). Some scholars argue that the act of even playing a game is an act of queerness, embedding queerness in both video game mechanics and narrative (Chess, 2015; Books, 2020). Chess (2015) argues that video game narratives often diverge from traditional narrative formulas. Their mechanics are part of the narrative imbuing queerness in all aspects of video games.

While there is no specific scholarly material on the amount of queer game content, it is generally accepted that indie game studios have led the way with queer representation and inclusion (Catterton, 2022; Hagen, 2020; Hansaruk, 2022). Visual novels have been one of the leading genres of video games that indie developers have used to tell queer stories; it is "cheap, personal, and democratized game-making" (Salter et al., 2018, p. 4). Visual novels often take the form of 'dating simulators,' the gameplay includes a branching narrative driven by the player's choices. They typically follow a single point of view and are a more passive and straightforward type of gameplay that does not rely on skill (Sousa, 2020; Kretzschmar & Salter, 2020; Salter et al., 2018). Many games in this niche contain explicitly sexual and often pornographic material, being regressive and heterosexist in their overly sexualised representation of women and relationships. Queer representation in this genre often coincides with increased narrative

complexity by challenging heteronormative power structures and relationship dynamics. (Kretzschmar & Salter, 2020; Ruberg & Phillips, 2018) Games like *Dream Daddy: A Dad Dating Simulator* (Game Grumps, 2017) and the *Monster Prom* series (Beautiful Glitch, 2018) are popular games that follow the visual novel, queer dating simulator format (Kretzschmar & Salter, 2020; Whittaker & Bonanno, 2017). Both games exemplify the genre's subversion of compulsive heterosexuality and 'queering' of game mechanics through self-referential irony and outside internet in-jokes built into dialogue and avatar choice. Player avatar choice is a common mechanic in this niche genre of queer visual novel dating simulators to allow players to pick their avatar design and pronouns. This immediately destabilises and un-centres defaulting to cis-heteronormative expectations and portrayals (Kretzschmar & Salter, 2020; Whittaker & Bonanno, 2017; Rivers, 2019; Schaufert, 2018).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Case Study

The research will explore how vampires, and subsequently vampire lore, are symbolic and representative of queerness in modern Western video games. Research is done through close play and analysis within a collective case study. Case studies analyse and examine an instance of a specific phenomenon that occurs in its natural environment. Single case studies have been criticised for being an unreliable source to base generalisations and conclusions, as one instance of a phenomenon does not mean a generalisation is validated (Flyvbjerg, 2006). To remedy this, the study used a collective case study approach. A collective case study includes many instances of the phenomenon. A collective case study approach increases the validity of conclusions drawn due to the analysis of many instances (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Swanborn, 2010). Within case studies, empirical research approaches are applied to the instances to gain an “intricate, in-depth and a meaningful” (AlBalushi, 2019, p. 325) understanding of a phenomenon.

3.2 Close Play

Close play is a form of textual analysis inspired by close reading. A video game’s mechanics, mise en scène, and diegetic aspects are analysed to understand how certain concepts and ideologies are expressed (Interactive Digital Narratives, n.d.). Diegetic aspects in video games are the characters, characterisations, narrative, and mechanics – aspects of the game that can be viewed and experienced. Analyses from close play are often independent of the context it is played; the researcher focuses on the formal elements of the game and its gameplay (Lankoski & Björk, 2015). Close play analysis helps researchers understand how the game’s narrative and mechanics are interconnected with the context in which they are created and played. The purpose of close play is to unpack “the meanings embedded or encoded in mediated content” (Stang, 2022, p. 231) and is – ideally – done through multiple playthroughs of a game (Bizzochi & Tanenbaum, 2012; Carr, 2019).

The close play analysis conducted in this research follows the textual analysis frameworks described in articles by Carr, 2019, and Bizzochi and Tanenbaum, 2012. Throughout this close play analysis, the video games were played multiple times, and notes were taken during each playthrough on the game’s narrative and characterisation of vampires. A queer lens was applied to all close play analyses to critically and effectively engage with any inherent queerness present within the texts and the vampires within the texts. Through this, the video game’s diegetic features were placed within a context of queerness and analyses, and conclusions were drawn based on how those features interacted with queerness.

As close play methodology is contingent on the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the text, the researcher's implicit bias and subjectivity will be present (Carr, 2019). The analysis is situated within the "interpretive framework of the player-analyst" (Carr, 2009, p. 3). While this consequence of analysis has been criticised within video game studies – as detailed in Stang, 2022 – close play analysis is a valuable framework for further understanding the implications and representation of marginalised communities (Stang, 2022; Carr, 2019). Implicit bias is most detrimental to research and analysis when the writing is meant to be objective or in socio-anthropological and ethnographic research (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010; LeCompte, 1987; Hammersley & Gomm, 1997). Close play analysis does not contain any procedures to minimise the analyst's subjectivity. Because of this, the nature of close play methodology gets value from an extensive range of perspectives on a singular topic. Implicit bias is, therefore, not controlled for in this study.

3.3 Video Game Selection

A total of ten games have been chosen for this research. All are games that were developed and are popular within Western society. The games were chosen due to their popularity and acclaim, both in games journalism and on the computer video game distribution service and storefront Steam. All chosen video games had a significant focus on narrative to have ample material to analyse, meaning popular vampire roguelike survival games like *Vampire Survivors* (poncle, 2022) and *V-Rising* (Stunlock Studios, 2022) to be excluded. Instead, all the games chosen fit into the categories of Role-Playing Games or Visual novels. Seven games had a review rating of 'mostly positive' ranging to 'overwhelmingly positive' on the service, with eight receiving a minimum of over 1,500 reviews; the other two received over 100 reviews due to being released recently. The video games selected have their vampires and vampire lore based on gothic and contemporary Western vampire traditions. Nine of the games have vampires as an essential element of their narrative. Six games explicitly reference queerness in their narratives and characterisations or have queerness as a quintessential aspect. These games were all grouped and analysed as explicitly queer games. Four games do not explicitly reference queerness within their narratives or characterisations of their vampires. These games were grouped and analysed as being non-explicitly queer video games.

3.4 Video Game Analysis

The explicitly queer games include *First Bite* (First Bite Games, 2022), *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* (Draw Distance, 2019), *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* (Draw Distance, 2020), *Monster Prom* (Beautiful Glitch, 2018), *Monster Prom: Second Term*

(Beautiful Glitch, 2019), and *Monster Prom 2: Monster Camp* (Beautiful Glitch, 2020). As *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* and *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* are companion games – both are two halves of an interconnected story – their close play analysis was conducted as if they are one game. Similarly, *Monster Prom: Second Term* is DLC, downloadable content for the first game *Monster Prom*, and *Monster Prom 2: Monster Camp*, a sequel that builds on the narrative and gameplay in *Monster Prom*; thus, their analysis was conducted as if they are one game.

The non-explicitly queer games include *Vampyr* (DONTNOD Entertainment, 2018), *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* (Mercury Steam & Climax Studios, 2013.), *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow – Mirror of Fate* (Mercury Steam, 2014a.), and *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2* (Mercury Steam, 2014b.). As *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow*, *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow – Mirror of Fate*, and *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2* are three parts of one overarching narrative, they were treated as if they are one game during close play analysis. It is important to note that although *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow*, *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow – Mirror of Fate*, and *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2* are published by the Japanese video game company Konami, they were developed by the Spanish game developer Mercury Steam.

All ten games were played on the computer using Steam. Once analysed in their respective groupings, the selected games were compared and contrasted against one another using the aforementioned close play analysis to fully understand the symbology of queerness in vampires in video games and the effects of said queerness.

What queerness and queer symbology is in both groupings of video games will be comprised of the explicit queerness and references to queerness within the diegetic features of the games and the queer coded characterisations or aspects of the video game’s diegetic features. For non-explicitly queer vampire games, there will be a focus on the queer coding of characters and how their narrative experience is representative of queerness and queer experiences.

For this research, queerness does not have a concrete definition – much like in real life (Whittington, 2012). For something to be ‘queer’ it must oppose cis-heteronormative standards (Eadie, 2010; Biscop et al., 2019). For something to be deemed ‘queer’ or ‘to be comprised of queerness,’ it must depict, either intentionally or unintentionally, characterisations outside of cis-heteronormative experiences, or allusions to it.

3.5 Summary

The research approach involves close play analysis in a collective case study of ten specifically chosen video games. The close play analysis conducted within the collective case studies will analyse the queerness and representations of queerness in all the video games individually and in

their respective groupings – explicitly queer and non-explicitly queer. Once each video game has been analysed, the games will then be compared and contrasted against each other, along with the groupings. The structure of this research is designed to provide an understanding of how queerness is represented and symbolised in video games through vampires as a continuation of previous representations of queerness in historical and contemporary vampires.

3.6 Author Positionality

I am a 23-year-old Pākehā born and raised in Auckland, New Zealand. I have a Bachelor of Criminology and Religious Studies, with a minor in English literature. I am also queer. I have surrounded myself with queer media since my early teens and have been involved in in-person and online queer communities. I was privileged enough to grow up with parents who accepted my queerness in an area of Auckland where queerness was relatively normalised. I recognise that growing up and living in that environment was a privilege, and because of that, I have not had to endure many of the hardships other queer people have. Because of this, I have and continue to try to understand different political, social, and cultural issues and events that affect the queer community. However, I recognise that I will never be able to fully appreciate the hardships and struggles others have endured as I have not experienced many of them. Vampires have been a great interest of mine since I was a toddler. Because of this – and my queerness – much of the media I consume focuses on explicitly queer or queer-coded vampires. Video games have also been an interest of mine since my early teens. Before I was able to play them, I spent time watching online content creators play and analyse them. This remains a large percentage of the online content that I watch. I also play video games, mostly single-player RPGs and a few MMOs. These two interests and my queer identity, I sought to analyse and understand how they intersect with this research.

4.0 Case Studies

4.1 Explicitly Queer Games

4.1.1 First Bite

First Bite (First Bite Games, 2022) is a dark comedy, vampiric visual novel dating simulator featuring a “murder-himbo obsessed with Eurodance, a narcissist with an online shopping addiction, and a wild card with a penchant for BDSM” (First Bite Games, n.d.). Developed by independent developers First Bite Games, *First Bite* is advertised explicitly as LGBTQ+; the player can romance each character no matter the pronouns chosen, and all the characters expressly mention having sexual relationships with vampires of all genders.

First Bite's narrative is the epitome of contemporary queer young-adult self-insert wish-fulfilment. The player character is a 20-something-year-old self-employed monster erotica and fanfiction writer (queer people make up an overwhelming majority of fanfiction writers and readers, while trans and gender nonconforming people represent over 40 per cent of writers and readers (Rouse & Stanfill, 2023) with the average user age being 25 years-old (Hu, 2016)). The player begins their journey by going on a late-night walk and stumbling upon the house of '6969 Dead End's Drive,' where Valeria, Ilyas, and Laurel either kill or change the player depending on the chosen dialogue options. The player chooses one of the three vampires to endear themselves in order to survive and be transformed into a vampire – the goal of the narrative. The player character is not given a visible appearance; the only reference the player gets to their character's appearance is being offered three unisex clothing descriptions to choose from at the start of the game. This ambiguity, coupled with being able to name the character and choose their pronouns, encourages the player to picture themselves as the protagonist. The player sees the narrative from the protagonist's perspective, and other characters talk directly to the player. The first-person perspective stimulates a sense of heightened immersion (Li et al., 2013; Waggoner, 2009); in this sense, the player is the character. If the correct dialogue is chosen, the player's chosen vampire is interested in the player's character, and therefore the player, enabling the player to experience the fantasy of an inhumanly attractive person of the player's preferred gender expression platonically or sexually lusting after them.

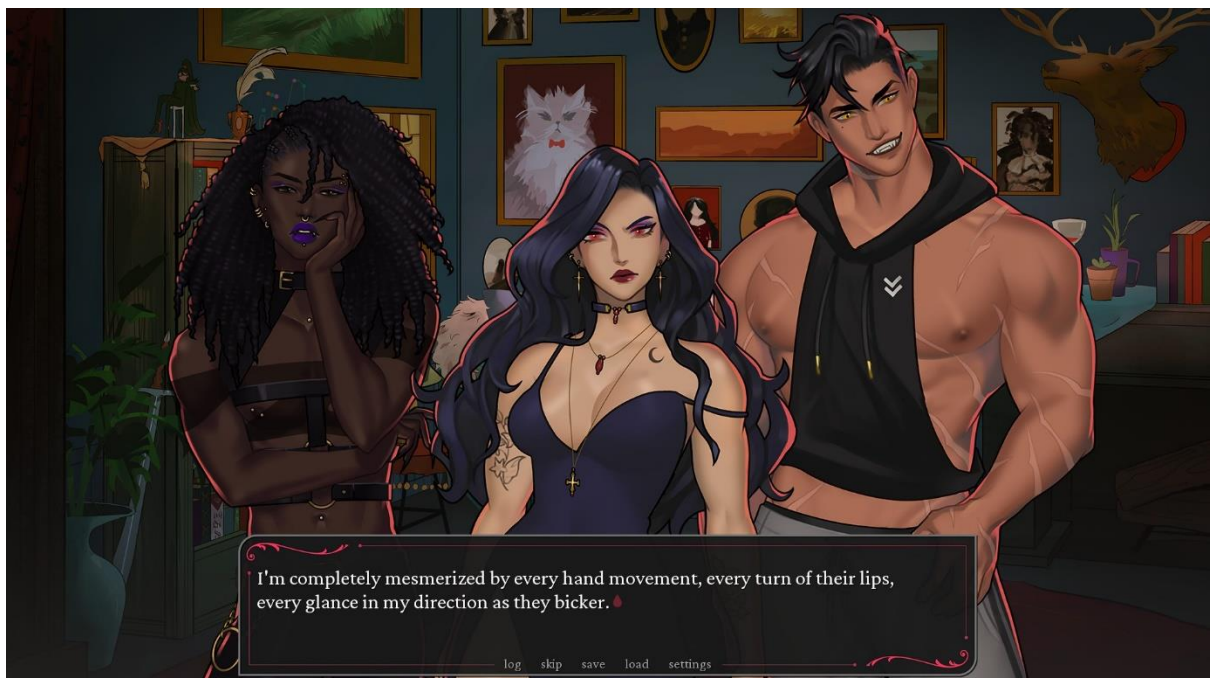
While the game plays the same as typical dating simulator visual novels, prompting the player to choose dialogue, responses, and actions from several choices to further the narrative, *First Bite* does not require players to be romantic with the romanceable characters. If players do not end up at one of the 26 death endings, they must choose a trio member to have a relationship with. This relationship could range from platonic to a monogamous sexual and romantic relationship with their chosen vampire or a polyamorous sexual and romantic relationship with the trio. Despite being advertised as a rated 18+ video game, most sexual content can be skipped by choosing the

platonic route. The only sexual content included in platonic routes is the vampire's references to past sexual experiences and the sexual undertones of the experience of turning into a vampire.

The openness of the vampire's past sexual experiences is paramount to the characterisation of queerness in the game; it reinforces the queer sexuality of the trio through their past sexual partners and the inclusion of kink and BDSM. Kink and BDSM have an entwined relationship with queerness historically and contemporarily (Amin, 2017). Kink and BDSM spaces are largely homonormative and unrestricted by traditional gender scripts (Speciale & Khambatta, 2020); thus, evoking kink and BDSM queerness is too by association. This is only reinforced by appearing in the already-established queer environment of *First Bite*. Kink and BDSM also incite ideas of sexual promiscuity and liberation – stereotypes often attributed to queerness (Sprott & Hadcock, 2017). Sexual promiscuity in kink spaces has been used as a means of gender and sexuality exploration for queer people. This form of self-exploration can actualise and validate a participant's queerness (Muzacz, 2021; Flores, 2018; Sprott et al., 2021). Monsters and kink are also interconnected in fanfiction (Elliott, 2016) and as a sexual fetish (Melton, 2022h.). The vampire is directly related to kink and BDSM through vampire and blood fetishism (Kinkly, 2018). All three vampires have either an explicitly mentioned or an implied kink. The kinky characterisation of the vampires cements the vampires and *First Bite* as an inherently queer game.

Figure 1

Screenshot of Ilyas (left), Valeria (centre), and Laurel (right) from First Bite Game



The three characters – Valeria, Ilyas, and Laurel – group dynamic is romantically and sexually polyamorous, mentioning the three's relationship during each character's route. The trio's gender

expressions span sexualised representations of the hypermasculine to the hyperfeminine. Valeria, using she/they pronouns, is hyperfeminine, displaying sexualised traditional gender markers like long hair, makeup and an exaggerated, yet strong, hourglass figure. Ilyas, using he/him pronouns, is hypermasculine, being noticeably larger in stature than the others and showcasing extremely violent tendencies. Using they/he pronouns, Laurel is a combination of a hyperfeminine aesthetic, like makeup and long hair, on a masculine body. While not explicitly stated as non-binary, Laurel's aesthetic mix of masculine and feminine visual characteristics fit within modern conceptualisations of nonbinary and gender nonconforming identities (Wiid et al., 2023) therefore coding Laurel as such.

Their personalities and characterisation reinforce their visual characterisation. All three are visually hypersexualised and relate nearly every topic discussed to sexual intercourse or sexual innuendos. Valeria embodies the hypersexual vampiric succubus trope, referencing and discussing past sexual encounters like a predator would hunt. Ilyas' main personality trait is a hypermasculine affinity for violence. He collects swords – but not knowing they are cosplay swords, he is constantly breaking them – and when first meeting, the player character keeps asking the others to let him kill them. He is very similar to the violence-obsessed, bloodthirsty Byronic vampires. Laurel is self-obsessed, only wanting to talk about themselves and do things for their own self-interest and self-enjoyment. They are apathetic and uncaring towards others' wants and needs, only indulging Valeria and Ilyas as they entertain Laurel. Similarly to Byronic vampires, Laurel is either incapable of or not bothered by empathy and morality.

Much like vampires in traditional media, the trio's visual characterisation is intended to portray them as inhumanly attractive, with all of them having visual traits specifically sexualised and thought of as the unobtainable standard for mainstream Western attractiveness. In becoming a vampire, they have obtained the ideal physique and appearance of their chosen gender expression, with Laurel having an idealised male physique with idealised feminine cosmetic traits. The trio lacks body fat or any visual characteristics deemed 'ugly' or 'unattractive' by Western beauty standards. Ilyas' scars and Laurel's deep skin tone are the only deviations from this adherence. Ilyas' scars are used within the narrative as visual storytelling of his human life and are the 'attractive' kind of scar. They are similar to his skin tone and are flat, thus the type of scar that can increase male attractiveness (Hedrih, 2023; Zapatero et al., 2022).

Laurel, who is visibly queer and has a deep skin tone, still conforms to sexualised Western beauty standards with their physique and cosmetic appearance. They are still lean and muscular with long hair and are conventionally attractive. Despite being overtly and undeniably queer both in sexuality and aesthetics – something that opposes mainstream norms and societal regulations – they still adhere to mainstream beauty norms. These aspects of their appearance also exemplify the ideal beauty standards within queer communities. The ideal appearance of Black queer men is often based on whiteness (Kumar, 2019). Beauty standards such as these are often entirely

unobtainable, even more so for people of colour – even if their physique matches, they cannot change the colour of their skin, leading to decreased self-esteem and often further social isolation (Thompson & Keith, 2001).

Simultaneously Laurel also defies white European beauty standards. Laurel is unapologetically Black, embracing their deep skin tone and naturally kinky hair texture. The sexualisation of Laurel and their unapologetic blackness place them furthest from a cis-heteronormative framework but also within a white framework. Apart from the player character, who we do not see, Laurel is the only visible person of colour. They are only seen interacting with white people; thus, they are inadvertently exoticized due to their proximity to whiteness and positioned as erotic and unusual. The exoticisation of people of colour often includes them being sexualised and fetishised (Mislán & Ashley, 2018).

This adherence to mainstream Western beauty standards is shown to be an unintentional consequence of transforming into a vampire. Before being a vampire, the player character – and therefore the player – is not considered attractive or ‘hot’ by the vampires; as Laurel explains, the player’s appearance is “legible but not elementary.” After becoming a vampire, the player character and their chosen vampire exclaim that they have gotten ‘hotter’ and more attractive. As the trio are the only figures visible in the video game, it is assumed that the player character’s vampiric appearance is in line with the trio’s appearance as they are the player’s only point of reference for what vampires look like in the world of *First Bite*. This assumption is further supported in *First Bite*’s DLC (downloadable content), *Bad Blood* (First Bite Games, 2023), when a fourth vampire who epitomises upper-class Eurocentric beauty standards is introduced. This adherence to the fundamentally white, heteronormative, classist (Defino, 2020; Edwards et al., 2022; James, 2013) Western beauty norms reinforces the idea and characterisation of the ‘palatable queer.’ Despite being loudly and openly queer, the characters and, therefore, the developers show an internal bias towards complying with and presenting as the idealised mainstream version of one’s gender. This bias, thus, promotes an unhealthy and often unobtainable standard of beauty and the harmful idea of the ‘palatable queer.’

Despite the negative beauty ideals *First Bite* promotes, it is also an element of the game’s wish fulfilment. By having the player turn into a vampire and, as a result, the most ‘attractive’ version of themselves, players can experience others openly lusting after and complimenting them. When queerness and queer aesthetics have often been ignored or insulted in mainstream media (Staples, 2021; Conway, 2004), *First Bite* celebrates it. Forced to exist in fringe subcultures away from mainstream acceptance, ‘looking’ queer, either by being visibly queer or trans or just not fitting into the mainstream definition of attractiveness, being queer has often felt synonymous with being ugly and unattractive (Sicardi, 2019; Howard, 2018). Players can indulge in this form of wish fulfilment by becoming a vampire, and thus someone that fits and is accepted by mainstream

beauty standards. Players can experience being viewed and accepted by a society which often ostracises or commodifies their existence.

The queer wish fulfilment continues in the descriptions of the transformation into a vampire. Depending on the chosen route, the transformation is described in various ways, but similarities and repetitions exist. Once the player character is brought to the edge of death, they are encouraged to drink the blood of their vampire sire, reciprocating sucking. The transformation then happens, and while initially feeling like burning, the player quickly gets overwhelmed by feelings of peacefulness and tranquillity. Being fed on by the player's chosen vampire is described as painful but enjoyable, evoking the concept of kinky queerness. The penetrating fangs hurt, but the sucking that comes after brings pleasure; being fed on is intrinsically sexual. This trope of the act of drinking blood and being drunk being from being pleasurable has been included since the gothic age of vampires (Gelder, 1994c.). While experiencing varying levels of inclusion, the trope was made an essential aspect of vampire texts after its inclusion in Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles* (1976; Doane & Hodges, 1990). Since then, it has been incorporated into much of contemporary vampire media, exemplifying guilt and shame for sexual pleasure (Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska, 2021) and the danger of sexual deviancy (Lundberg, 2015; Shea, 2009). In *First Bite*, the player character indulges in this painful and pleasurable kinky sexual experience, not only giving in to it but actively striving to experience it. Simultaneously is representative of the danger of 'deviant' queer sexuality and ultimate queer acceptance – the player character goes through with the transformation despite the risks and finds that it was not only not dangerous but enjoyable.

In tandem with being a pleasurable experience, vampire bites have also been historically and contemporarily used as an allegory for explicit representation of sexual violation, assault and rape (Keft-Kennedy, 2008; Lehtinen, 2004, Fall, 2018b.). This positions the sexual deviancy of queer people as not only dangerous but violent and abhorrent. It also places vampires and queer people in the role of sexual predators. For cis-women and feminine-presenting queer people, it places them in the masculine role of being "aggressive, demanding, powerful, and sexually uninhibited" (Lehtinen, 2004, p. 2). *First Bite* does not indicate that their transformation and feeding scenes were anything akin to this – due to the explicit giving of consent and the player character's enthusiasm – but the characters still violate the player character. While the player character is undergoing their transformation, in each route, the player wakes up having been physically manipulated by the trio. For instance, Ilyas changes the player character into stereotypical raver clothes with a pacifier, and it is played as a joke within the narrative, with the player character finding it humorous or eagerly accepting it. The trio does nothing except change what the player character is wearing. In Laurel's route, the player character is touched, physically restrained and interacted with in a way that is not consented to expressly. This nonconsensual act positions the vampires as predators, complicit in violating someone who cannot physically consent – providing

a contradiction in the characterisations of the vampires and thus queerness. The vampires only interact with the player character in a way the player consents to – even being killed is consented to as it is a consequence that the player accepts by playing the game – except for this one instance, situating queerness within a space of dissonance and juxtaposition.

Once awakening as a vampire, the player character feels serene, awake, and wholly themselves. It is as if being a vampire was a piece of their life that was missing, and it makes them feel entirely whole as a person. Being fed on and transforming into a vampire is a euphoric sexual experience that completes the player character's identity. The player character rejects their humanity and ties to the human world in exchange for being a vampire. The trio describe humans as below them, completely untethering their vampire selves from their human selves. They are liberated from the stress and mundane slump of their previously described human life and are only now able to live as their true selves. Their rejection of their human lives represents the characters rejecting cis-heteropatriarchal norms and roles, accepting and embracing their queerness. The trio is so comfortable with their vampirism, thus their queerness, that they are entirely apathetic to humans. Humans are merely there to provide substance. The trio and vampires, as a community, are at the top of the power structure and the top of the food chain. Their vampiric apathy towards humans is an inversion of cis-heteropatriarchal power structures; queer people are systematically treated as less than when compared to those who adhere to hegemonic gender roles (Burns, 2020; Jones & Franklin, 2022; Harper & Schneider, 2003; Martinez, 2022) and the trio talk about humans as below them.

Valeria, Ilyas, and Laurel have stereotypical vampiric traits, like the need to drink blood, aversion to sunlight, and immortality. But they do not sleep in coffins and avoid crucifixes, garlic, and holy water. The trio spend their time playing card games, looking after their cat 'Nasty Dennis,' and indulging in their respective vices. Valeria spends most of her time shopping online. Laurel participates in online K-pop fandoms. Ilyas spends his time accidentally buying cosplay swords instead of real ones and listening to the game's parody of 90's Eurodance band Vengaboys, the 'Jeugolads.' The lack of traits typical to Victorian-era vampires, and the inclusion of modern interests and hobbies, humanise the trio. They are more approachable and believable than if they existed only as sex-obsessed, inhumanly attractive vampires. Their characters feel more thoughtful and interesting, while their base vampiric traits provide narrative risk and queer intertextuality. Vampires in the *First Bite* universe can also 'thrall' humans. This trait allows the vampires to influence their chosen victims strongly. They can control what they do, see, and feel. This trait is not new in vampiric lore; media like *The Vampire Diaries* (Williamson et al., 2009-2017), *Vampire Academy* (Waters, 2014; Plec et al., 2022), and *True Blood* (Ball et al., 2008-2014) call this vampiric power 'compulsion' ("Mind Compulsion," 2022; "Heightened compulsion," 2023; "Glamour," 2023). Thralling acts as another form of wish fulfilment for queer players. Queerness and queer people are often controlled or limited in society through cultural and social

pressure, as well as in political contexts. While not able to do it in the game, the idea that in the game's universe, the player character will be able to control others' reactions to them once they are a vampire could provide a sense of control that they otherwise lack in a society that is constantly fighting against them.

4.1.2 Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York

The video games *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* (Draw Distance, 2019) and *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* (Draw Distance, 2020) are both visual novel games based in the established world of *Vampire: The Masquerade* (Rein-Hagen, 1991). While both are explicitly queer, this section will focus on *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York*, using *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* to give context to its sequel. *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* expands on the world and characters introduced in *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* with a new protagonist. Set in modern 2020 New York. The player plays Julia, a cynical and unsuccessful freelance journalist as a human. After she was embraced – turned into a vampire – by a member of the Lasombra clan, Julia spends her first year as a neonate – fledgling vampire – as a powerless errand runner of the New York Camarilla court, which is an organised vampiric sect that enforces the masquerade. Due to Julia's history as an investigative journalist, the Prince instructs her to solve the murder of the Anarch leader, a rival, less organised vampiric sect. Julia accepts as she believes this will give her more power within the Camarilla.

Queerness is built into the world of *Vampire: The Masquerade*. The terminology and foundation of how the world operates are intrinsically queer. Typically rigidly gendered terms, like Prince – the leader of a court – are gender neutral, ignoring mainstream human gender binaries, especially in positions of political power. Whenever terminology specific to the *Vampire: The Masquerade* lore gets added to the in-game dictionary and the gender neutrality of some terms is explicitly stated, further enforcing the game's foundational queerness. Foundational elements of the universe are also queer coded. Fledglings are encouraged to form 'coteries' – this is the main narrative for the companion game *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York*. Coteries function as a found family. The found family trope is a common occurrence in queer media. In a society where 'coming out' as trans or queer comes with the risk of familial rejection or ostracisation for not adhering to heteronormative societal expectations, queer people have often had to intentionally form a family-like structure, or familial-like relationships, outside of their biological or legally recognised family (Yilmaz et al., 2021; Francis, 2021; McConnell et al., 2015). Found families in media provide a sense of solidarity and solace for queer consumers by living vicariously through the characters (O'Riordan & Phillips, 2007; McAlister et al., 2020; Drachman, 2019).

While Julia does not explicitly form a coterie in *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York*, she does look to the Sheriff of New York, Qadir, for guidance and support. As her sire immediately leaves after she embraces Julia, Julia forms a familial-like relationship with Qadir as he mentors her through her first year as a vampire. Julia’s transformation journey echoes many queer people’s experiences of ‘coming out’ – the embrace – and being abandoned by the person who made you. Camarilla Vampires must ask permission from their Prince or Primogen – clan representative of the area – to embrace someone. The sire must then guide their neonate through their first years, teaching them the rules of the masquerade. The person meant to be Julia’s teacher and parent figure abandoned Julia and substituted her; Qadir now takes on the parental-figure role.

Vampiric clans in *Vampire: The Masquerade* are also reminiscent of the found family trope. When one is embraced, they begin to take on common traits of the clan of their sire, now belonging to that clan too. Clan Lasombra embraces Julia, and she, therefore, inherits the clan’s distinctive traits; being unable to be seen in reflections or recordings, unable to use modern technology, and the compulsion to triumph at any cost. Vampires can find community in their clans due to their shared traits. Found families – both in media and real life – are based on sharing collective values, characteristics, and experiences (Thornton, 2022; McAlister et al., 2020). Both *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* and *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* reinforce the importance of community and support in the queer experience. In *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York*, Julia does not have to heed the advice and guidance Qadir gives. Disregarding his advice makes it more challenging to achieve the ‘good ending,’ whereas being receptive and listening to his guidance increases the likelihood of achieving the ‘good ending,’ and following dialogue shows a positive development in the pair’s friendship.

At the start of the game, when Julia is embraced, the embrace is explicitly sexual in feeling, much like other vampire media. Being fed on feels like “pure bliss,” and she experiences “pleasure” she did not know was possible. Julia begins to cry as she feels the relief of the transformation washing away all traces of pain, sorrow, and ego. Towards the end of the embrace, she states that it feels like her sire is “making love to me. She’s giving birth to me. She’s burying me.” The embrace feels more intense than love and ecstasy. It is an entirely sexual, romantic, and spiritual rebirth; Julia being embraced by a feminine figure and what she feels during the transformation cements the concept that vampirism is inherently sexual. After, we are greeted by Julia a year after being embraced. She spends most of this secondary introduction being cynical and self-loathing, both because of the monotony of her day-to-day duties and her need to drink blood. While her self-loathing is always present, it is amplified whenever she drinks blood. Julia detests that she feels this loathing, especially as it worsens when doing one of the things she must do to survive. While acting as a narrative indicator of her morality, it also depicts familiar feelings of self-hate and self-

loathing that exist within many people's queer experiences (Weber, 2011; Duran & Jones, 2020; Anderson, 2021).

References to queerness continue when Julia investigates leads for the Anarch leader's death – Douglas Callihan – and is informed of a rumour by a friendly vampire, D'Angelo. D'Angelo tells her, "There's a rumour someone was threatening to expose him as a homosexual. Havin' to choose between being publicly denounced and endin' it all by his own hand." While it is heavily inferred in both *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* and the context given in *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* that his murder was politically motivated and the rumour of Callihan's homosexuality is merely gossip encouraged by both the Camarilla and Anarch sects. By presenting this rumour as valid reasoning for not investigating further, it is understood that, while queerness is largely accepted in the Camarilla, other vampiric sects and organisations may not be as accepting. The Camarilla, and therefore the protagonist and player, are placed in a community of queerness and acceptance, safe and away from prominent areas of bigotry. Yet, the inferred encouragement of the rumour by the Camarilla is akin to strategic bigotry and self-othering. The Camarilla constantly strives for more power and control by having all vampiric clans under its governing; members are not above using any means to make it happen, even if it is potentially harmful to others. The Camarilla's power structure and pursuit of greater power and control over the vampire world mirrors historical and contemporary heteronormativity. Like heteronormative power structures, the most privileged often dominate in power and reach (Johnson, 2002; van den Berg, 2016). This disproportionate power balance makes the political and social landscape of *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* a complex and nuanced metaphor and environment for queerness, exemplifying the complexity of being queer in contemporary society.

This complexity is continued with the inclusion of the Second Inquisition. The Second Inquisition is a union of various supernatural hunting sects that appear in both games. In America, the Second Inquisition operates under the supervision of the American government. Gangrel clan member, Tamika, tells Julia that the Second Inquisition "only seem to target marginalized and radicalized Kindred. Ones that could theoretically pose a threat to the current order." Queerness threatens heteronormative societies the same way marginalised and radicalised vampires do. The Second Inquisition and who they target is a straightforward representation of how governments and government organisations target minority groups, echoing real-world concerns for how governments and society treat queer people, even more so when accounting for intersectionality (Young, 2022; Casey et al., 2019; Reid, 2021).

Julia is also explicitly queer. As Julia is the playable character, she functions as a conduit for the game and the developer's messages; therefore, the player is placed in the position of a queer woman. While the game does not concretely say her sexuality, it mentions her having sexual relations with men and women. Julia's girlfriend, Dakota, is also central to Julia's character and

both endings of the game. Being her romantic partner since college, Julia is permitted by Qadir to keep seeing Dakota due to her lack of a sire. Dakota appears to support Julia at the beginning of the game, giving her advice and helping her stay in touch with her humanity. Near the end of the narrative, Dakota is revealed to be unhealthily obsessed with Julia. She slowly adopts her aesthetic and admits during the reveal that she is trying to live through Julia. ‘Fusion,’ as it is referred to in academia, lesbian couples are more vulnerable to this breakdown of boundaries and merger of identities than other couples (Pardie & Herb, 1997; Krestan & Bepko, 1980; Ackbar & Senn, 2010).

In the ‘bad ending,’ Julia is used to cover up the murder she was meant to solve, and she flees with Dakota to the West Coast; she is implied to be stuck in this unhealthy relationship but is rewarded by keeping more of her humanity. In the ‘good ending,’ Julia helps cover up the murder, sacrifices Dakota’s life and ascends to Lasombra Primogen, thus sacrificing her morality. While some unfamiliar with the *Vampire: The Masquerade* universe might believe that keeping more of one’s humanity is the good ending (as it is a main mechanic and goal of the table-top role-playing game), in the context of the video game, it represents Julia denying the nature of her existence as a Lasombra vampire. In the ‘good ending,’ Julia embraces the ruthlessness of her clan, using any means to justify her climb for political power while leaving an unhealthy and toxic relationship and the sense of self-loathing that enveloped her at the beginning. When she gains the title of Lasombra Primogen, she describes the feeling of triumph as just as, possibly more, euphoric and elating than being embraced.

Through a queer lens, the ‘good ending’ represents finally accepting one’s nature, queerness, and the joy accompanying embracing it. Killing Dakota, someone she loves, to obtain her personal goals is representative of Julia’s self-actualisation. She is now queer enough vampire enough to leave her unfulfilling and toxic relationship. She does not need the status of being in a relationship to define her relationship with the vampire world and her queerness; her relationship no longer validates her queerness; she does. Whereas the ‘bad ending’ had Julia relying on someone else to support and validate her and her queerness, the ‘good ending’ has her embracing her vampire life and queerness without external validation. Julia’s journey through the narrative is either a journey of pure self-acceptance or an adamant refusal of one’s nature. Julia’s rise to political power is also queer wish fulfilment. Queerness has often been forgotten or discriminated against in politics (Love, 2014); Julia – an explicitly queer character – being placed in one of the most powerful political positions within the governing court allows queer players to experience gaining meaningful political power.

Spirituality plays a big part in the narrative of *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York*. Julia was raised ‘culturally Catholic,’ being raised in the faith but not believing it. Part of her daily duties as an errand runner for the Camarilla court is meeting with Catholic priest Father Leonard and his devoted vampiric follower, Benoit. Julia, Father Leonard and Benoit engage in constant

conversations about faith; Benoit appears to seek to convert Julia, preaching about saving her heart from the devil inside of it, whereas Father Leonard has a genuine fatherly concern over Julia's soul and salvation. Both Benoit and Father Leonard's preaching is evocative of historical and contemporary anti-queer religious proclamations. Towards the end of the narrative, the last time Julia and the player interact with Benoit, he reveals that his obsession with Catholicism is purely aesthetic. He does not believe in the faith but adores the visuals, traditions, and mythos. He likes the "pursuit of virtue," and the luxury Catholicism is drenched in. His character is adorned in Catholic imagery, highlighting the superficial nature of his obsession.

Queerness has often adopted religious aesthetics – especially a Catholic aesthetic – as a form of aesthetic politicization (Conway, 2004; Roden, 2018) and kitschy reclamation of power over an organisation that has harmed many queer people. 'Queering' religious iconography can be a powerful form of visually healing emotional and mental wounds left by religion (Panella, 2020; Farrell, 2021; Pollard, 2021). During this final conversation with Benoit, Julia and the player realise that Benoit was not preaching to Julia to convert her but because he wants her to find meaning in her existence and feel like she a part of something. He is encouraging her to find peace in her existence and, due to her human history with the church, believes that joining the community again might help. While she does not rejoin the Catholic church, in the 'good ending,' Julia finds peace in power. She stops self-isolating and finds meaning and purpose. By not finding this sense of solace in the 'bad ending,' the developers emphasise that the murder mystery narrative is merely a vehicle to explore Julia's self-acceptance – and thus queer self-acceptance.

4.1.3 Monster Prom

Monster Prom (Beautiful Glitch, 2018) and its DLC – *Monster Prom: Second Term* (Beautiful Glitch, 2019) – and sequel – *Monster Prom 2: Monster Camp* (Beautiful Glitch, 2020) – are strategic, competitive, stats-based dating simulators developed by indie studio Beautiful Glitch. The goal of the game is relatively straightforward. The player has three weeks to accumulate stats and love points to successfully ask one of the love interests to attend the end-game event. All of the characters take the form of a monster – ghosts, gorgons, and werewolves, for example. One of the primary love interests, Liam de Lioncourt, and the non-playable side character introduced in *Monster Prom: Second Term*, Dmitri, are both vampires. This case study will focus on their characters, using context and knowledge gained from *Monster Prom 2: Monster Camp* that strengthens their characterisations.

Figure 2

Screenshot of Liam (left) with Scott Howl (right) in Monster Prom Game



Liam is one of the primary romanceable characters and is one of the characters most present in the game's advertising (Those Awesome Guys, 2018). He looks visually very different to previously discussed video game vampires. While he retains the lean, toned physique contemporary vampires typically have, other characters do not describe him as more attractive than average. He has light purple skin, bright yellow eyes, and bat-like ears. While these physical characteristics would typically make players less likely to humanise him, as every character – including player characters – appear very blatantly as monsters, Liam is one of the most 'human-looking' ones.

He dresses and presents himself as the stereotypical 'hipster.' He aims to be what he perceives as cool by subverting mainstream expectations of 'coolness.' Men within the hipster subculture have been described as presenting themselves in opposition to toxic hegemonic masculinity by participating in "alternative masculinity" (Robbins, 2021, p. 217); their alternative presentation only disguises that they are still active participants in harmful masculinity and social roles (Robbins, 2021; Buerkle, 2019). By distancing themselves from stereotypical masculinity and masculine presentations and purposefully, loudly being countercultural consumers, men within the hipster subculture are often considered more feminine and queerer than typical men (Steinhoff, 2021; Maly & Varis, 2016). They hail authenticity and individuality as something aspirational and achieve this by going against mainstream culture; because they want to appear as if their hobbies and interests are not dictated by mainstream culture, they end up being dictated by mainstream culture. Liam is the epitome of a hipster. Every conversation, event, and dialogue

option relating to Liam reinforces this. By wanting to appear countercultural, he becomes a follower of mainstream expectations. He is another version of the palatable queer but for 'alternative' mainstream cultures. He is obsessed with how others view him. Liam spends all lunch trying to take the most aesthetically pleasing Instagram food photo, constantly preoccupied with a need to seem cool to his peers and the people he looks up to. Despite being 'alive' for over 400 years, he has no real sense of self. He has meticulously crafted his image into what he believes to be the most acceptable version based on how others perceive him. Liam hides this blatant insecurity with a blanket of self-righteousness; if he can make others believe and accept his constructed self, maybe he will too.

Throughout the many interactions and events possible with Liam, he is constantly disparaging other characters. Anyone he does not deem smart or worth aspiring to be like is consistently put down or ignored. But he is infatuated with people he can look up to. If the player has the right stats and chooses the 'correct' dialogue options, Liam regards them as someone he can admire. If this happens, Liam will do whatever the player tells him to during events, immediately acting out their advice or instruction. Directly due to his lack of sense of self, once Liam admires someone, he aspires to be like them and have them like him.

It is revealed in routes throughout *Monster Prom* and *Monster Prom 2: Monster Camp* that when Liam was turned into a vampire, he became a powerful villain. Despite working underneath another unnamed villain, due to Liam's power, whatever he said was absolute law. In *Monster Prom: Second Term*, Liam admits that many died or were hurt due to his tyrannical actions during this time. He eventually ended up abandoning those ways and eventually adopting the hipster subculture as a lifestyle where, among obsessing over his manicured, countercultural image, he became hugely concerned with ethics and ethical consumption. He uses his occupation with ethics as a way to deflect and ignore the harm and pain he caused in his past; it is his "way of deflecting the responsibility of introspection and self-critique" ("Liam de Lioncourt," 2023, para. 9). Instead of engaging in healthy self-reflection, he places the blame, not on his deeds, but of the concept of power itself. Once given this knowledge, his character changes from an egocentric, hipster contrarian to a somewhat reformed villain dodging accountability for his actions.

As the player progresses their relationship with Liam, they discover Liam's only genuine interest and hobby, Yaoi – a popular term for the 'boys love' manga genre. Yaoi art typically includes depictions of males aged late teens and older in romantic and sexually explicit situations. Commercial Yaoi is generally marketed towards women and features standalone images or comics of often feminine men (Enriquez & Lippert, 2020; Chang & Tian, 2021; Grady, 2018). Online members of the Yaoi community primarily consist of women who often use Yaoi art with same-sex fanfiction, 'queering' otherwise non-queer characters from media (Dennis, 2010; Zsila et al., 2018). Yaoi as a concept and community is largely made fun of online. It is strange and deviates from the norm; therefore, it is a punchline for many online jokes (McLelland, 2005; Turner, 2015).

Having Liam's one genuine passion be broadly mocked and uncool – and unmistakably queer – emphasises how he rejects or disguises who he is. In – *Monster Prom: Second Term*, in one of the possible routes, stereotypical 'chronically-online fangirl,' Zoe calls Liam's Yaoi art "problematic fanfiction," he insists that it is "high art" and that it is an artistic representation of passion and love. Despite Yaoi being an online punching bag and consistently degraded, Liam feels the need to defend the high position it holds in his mind. Whereas all other parts of his identity are carefully crafted to appear as cool as possible, his love and defence of Yaoi show how he hides behind that façade. Ironically, Liam's genuine interest in Yaoi is one of his only true countercultural interests.

Liam's predisposition and concern for ethics conflict with his love of Yaoi. Liam is often found to be drawing Yaoi of himself and other characters, namely Damien, without consent. His only genuine interest and hobby is a form of gay pornography – something associated with sexual deviancy – and he draws nonconsensual, sexually explicit material of his peers. Despite his drawings being played as a joke, with Liam getting embarrassed and defensive of them, Liam is inadvertently placed in the role of a queer sexual predator in juxtaposition to his concern for ethics.

Figure 3

Dmitri Promotional Image



Note: This image was used as promotional material for *Monster Camp* on the game's Twitter account (monsterprom, 2020).

Along with his one notable, genuine interest, Liam has only one explicit genuine relationship. Dmitri and Liam's relationship fits directly into the found family trope. While Liam initially sired Dmitri because he was attracted to him, Dmitri interpreted Liam's interest in him as purely

familial. As such, their relationship turned into a father-son dynamic, with Dmitri referring to Liam as Father and himself as his son. Their relationship progression echoes the incestuous themes that are in historic and modern vampire texts (Gelder, 1994e.). The dialogue and presentation of their relationship make it clear that the developers did not intend the incestuous themes to be taken seriously, and Dmitri's dismissal of Liam's advancements was intended as a jest towards Liam. Despite fully embracing his vampiric nature, Dmitri still craves Liam's approval and pride, similar to more conventional father-son dynamics. Liam does not explicitly denounce or welcome the responsibility and role Dmitri has pushed him into; he takes on the mentor role in their relationship. Liam also criticises the way Dmitri acts like a stereotypical vampire. This further emphasises how they view their identities; Dmitri embraces it, despite his 'fathers' complaints, and Liam refuses to acknowledge his nature and wants to stay away from anything he deems cliché, uncool, or popular within the mainstream. As a metaphor for queerness, Dmitri represents queer self-acceptance, and Liam represents the opposite.

Liam's entire characterisation is based on his lack of self-awareness and identity. In contrast, Dmitri completely embraces who he is. His appearance starkly contrasts that of Liam's. Dmitri – having the same bat-like ears and a more muscular build – has grey skin, long white hair, and a stereotypical high-collared cape with matching pants and boots. His appearance is much more stereotypical and sexualised than Liam's, giving the impression that he is self-confident and self-assured, mimicking his personality. He does not hide or try to obscure the power and potential for the destruction he possesses, believing himself to be a powerful opponent should anyone try and cross him. He also tries to get the player to “join the Dark Side,” showing complete self-acceptance of his nature. While both characters engage in sexually explicit conversations and situations within the narrative, Dmitri's visual sexualisation follows the trend of sexualised vampires in video games. His overtly sexualised appearance does serve a purpose to emphasise the characterisation of his self-confidence; it is also of note that he is the one of the pair who does not hide from his vampiric nature.

4.1.4 Conclusion

Independent developers make the overwhelming majority of explicitly queer vampire games on the market. They also typically take the form of visual novels – often dating simulator visual novels. Recently, indie developers have started veering away from the visual novel pattern with games like *Lesbian Vampire Simulator* (2021) by ida – a traditional 2D platformer – and *Romancelvania* (2023) by The Deep End Games – a role-playing dating simulator platformer. Indie developers embrace the historical queerness of the vampire. Their narratives and mechanics often have references or draw heavily from traditional vampire mythos to accentuate their

character's queerness. Characters are unabashedly and explicitly queer in their characterisations, especially when they are potential romantic interests.

Vampires in these games directly oppose the “abstinence porn” (Day, 2014, p. 29) vampire narratives in popular mainstream media. Much of mainstream vampire media is sexualised and, therefore, has connotations of queerness. In contrast, forcefully heterosexual vampire media has an intent focus on abstinence that promotes normative Christian morality. The enormously popular *Twilight Saga* (Meyer, 2005; Hardwicke, 2008) is the most prominent and well-researched example of this (Day, 2014; Erman, 2021). The vampires discussed in this research section combat the morally abstinent message by having their vampire characters be sexual. *First Bite*'s vampires are immediately sexual, with all three being hypersexualised in some way and making explicit sexual references. Julia in *Vampire: the Masquerade: Shadows of New York* has a scene where she and her girlfriend have drug-fuelled intercourse. Liam and Dmitri in *Monster Prom* are sexualised and engage in sexual situations.

All three games perpetuate hetero-hegemonic ideals of queerness. The sexualisation of the vampires is often used as an attribute of the vampire's most accepting of their vampiric nature. The *First Bite* vampires and Dmitri from *Monster Prom* are immediately sexualised due to their appearance. Their voices add to this, with all four of them speaking in a sensual manner. These four vampires are the most accepting and embracing of their vampire-ness. Liam becomes more sexualised and more forthright about his love of Yaoi as the player gets to know him, signalling his growing comfort with being himself around the player; in other words, the more comfortable Liam is around someone, the more comfortable he is expressing his vampiric nature. Julia is the only character who opposes this trend. As her narrative progresses, the less sexualised she becomes. Julia begins her vampiric journey being overtly sexualised and ends by losing all reference to her sexuality when she sacrifices Dakota. In exchange for her sexuality and being sexualised, she gains power within the Camarilla. All six vampires have power when they accept their vampiric nature, either political or sexual.

The vampires completely embrace their queerness and sexuality, and the sexualisation of their characters is a vehicle to show this. While it is positive to showcase one fully embracing their sexuality and queerness, this trend of vampires becoming and being sexualised accentuates the stereotype of queerness inherently equating to sexual promiscuity and hedonism (Beirne, 2014). Media where queer people are present commonly represent queerness within this framework. The sexual promiscuity that queer characters often represent and take part in has the connotation of being amoral and results in the objectification and negative view of queer people (Zivony & Saguy, 2018; Annati & Ramsey, 2022; Ferrari & Mancini, 2020). The unadulterated sexualisation of explicitly queer vampires is also a positive representation of queerness.

All three games also perform mainstream beauty standards with the appearances of their vampire characters. Apart from being sexualised, the vampires all adhere to mainstream heterosexual beauty standards. All characters have a stereotypically 'healthy' build and comply with stereotypical visual representations of their gender. Julia and Valeria visually perform mainstream perceptions of alternative femininity despite being undoubtedly queer. Both vampires exhibit visual traits of the alternative gothic subculture in line with historical and modern representations of vampires, with both being conventionally attractive with black hair and gothic clothes and makeup. Valeria epitomises the gothic femme fatale trope and the monstrous feminine. She is forcefully and animalistically sexual, openly dangerous yet seductive (Smith, 2016). Laurel also displays aspects of the gothic femme fatale trope and the monstrous feminine; they are also forcefully sexual while adhering to mainstream hetero-hegemonic ideals of trans beauty. Dmitri's gothic appearance also adheres to gothic mainstream beauty ideals. While these four vampires are 'alternative' in appearance, they are still displayed in a way that fits what the mainstream dictates to be attractive. Liam's aesthetic is the mainstream version of alternative and, while more visually monstrous than the other vampires, still has mainstream beauty markers. Ilyas's appearance performs stereotypical mainstream masculine attractiveness. All three games visually showcase queerness through a lens of mainstream attractiveness. The games functioning as wish-fulfilment in some form reinforce the harmful idea that queerness is only valid if it looks how the mainstream thinks it should; it places these beauty standards as something aspirational, that it is an ideal queer people should strive for.

The vampires in all three games are also isolated from those that are not vampires – or monsters, in *Monster Prom*'s case. The *First Bite* vampires give the player character two outcomes, either be food or become a vampire. They explicitly do not interact with anyone who is not a vampire unless they require blood. The vampires in *Vampire: the Masquerade: Shadows of New York* enforce the law that vampires are not to interact or form relationships with humans unless they have pledged their unwavering and lifelong service to them or need to feed. Julia is allowed to continue her relationship with Dakota due to her sire abandoning her. Even that human-vampire relationship is shown to be harmful to Julia. The vampires also do not typically interact outside their vampiric sects unless necessary for survival or politics. The characters in *Monster Prom* only mention humans when discussing their past human selves or tormenting them. All three games have some form of a 'stick to your own kind' isolationist narrative.

The characters cite safety as one of the reasons why they only interact with those like them, echoing queer experiences. Safety is the main mechanic in *Vampire: the Masquerade: Shadows of New York* and the greater *Vampire: the Masquerade* universe. Vampires must keep up the 'masquerade' by blending in with humans and not getting close to them so humans do not learn about vampires. Having humans know about the existence of vampires puts the vampire world at risk of more people trying to hunt vampires to extinction, like the Second Inquisition. Historical

and modern queer people have often preferred being in the company of other queer people, even creating entirely queer and trans towns and organisations for community and safety (Nash & Gorman-Murray, 2014). The characters have also found comfort and community in their found families. There is an emphasis on the importance of community in all three games.

While showcasing negative stereotypes about queer people, video games also showcase positive aspects of queerness and queer people. Every vampire is entirely unashamed of their explicit queerness; while not all embrace their vampiric nature, they all embrace their sexuality, often finding power in it. All characters – except Liam – completely accept their vampiric nature in tandem with their queerness. Valeria, Laurel, Ilyas, Julia, and Dmitri have found freedom in their self-acceptance. They do what they want without doubt or embarrassment. While seeking approval from Liam, Dmitri does not let that stop him from behaving how he wants or letting it impact his personality. While Liam is not totally accepting of his nature, he finds unabashed joy in the areas of his self that he does openly accept.

4.2 Non-Explicitly Queer Games

4.2.1 *Vampyr*

Vampyr (2018) is an action role-playing game developed by Dontnod Entertainment. Set in 1918 London, the player character is Doctor Johnathan Reid, a returning army doctor and world-renowned doctor and surgeon pioneering research in phlebotomy. The game's narrative begins just as Johnathan awakes in a mass grave, discovering he is now a vampire. While including many action role-playing game elements – like skill trees, gaining and accruing skills via experience points (XP), and fighting enemies – the game's narrative is mainly dependent on talking and interacting with non-playable characters (NPCs) within the four districts of London.

The narrative is predominantly based on Johnathan's struggle with morality. While he now has to drink blood to survive, he still wants to help the communities around him. In the game's opening sequence, Johnathan meets his future love interest, the vampire Lady Elisabeth Ashbury, and Doctor Edgar Swansea, who invites Johnathan to continue practising medicine at Pembroke Hospital to help the current Spanish Flu epidemic. Coincidentally, a blood plague spreading throughout the vampire world is leading to the creation of 'Skals,' a lesser type of vampire ranging from fodder to more advanced enemies. The plot and main quests revolve around solving the vampiric blood plague, uncovering who turned Johnathan and why, and helping the surrounding communities. *Vampyr*'s use of a blood plague is largely reminiscent of HIV/AIDs. The blood plague is started through a transfusion of Elisabeth's blood to a human and continues to be spread through vampires drinking – but not completely draining – the blood of a human. The blood plague is a continuation of vampires being used as a metaphor for the HIV/AIDs epidemic (Abdi & Calafell, 2017; Clements, 2011 e.; Howell, 2021).

The vampires in *Vampyr* are categorised into five different types. 'Ekons' lean heavily into traditional vampire archetypes; religious objects repel them, they die in sunlight, and they must drink blood to survive. While they are not noticeably pale, older Ekons often have milky eyes or blood-red sclera. Ekons, much like traditional Victorian vampires, are often well-educated aristocrats who blend in with high society. Johnathan is an Ekon vampire. Vulkods are often mistaken for werewolves, being feral, beast-like vampires driven by base instincts. Skals are often hated and killed by Ekons because of their distinctly corpse-like appearance, and Ekons believe they are inferior. There are vampires that hunt other vampires called Nemrods. The last type of vampire is Ichors. Ichors are Ekon women whose existence is now led by hatred. Once becoming an Ichor, their body mutates, and large fleshy deformed areas appear. Ichors often do not try to kill their prey, only infect them with the blood plague. While all types of vampires appear as enemies, Ekons – the more humanised vampires – are often much more challenging to beat, showing superior strength and intellect than other vampires. There is also a distinct class hierarchy

within the vampire world, with Ekons often discriminating, enslaving, or eliminating other types of vampires.

The vampires that are more recognisably human are part of 'polite' vampire society. They are portrayed as more sympathetic characters within the narrative, especially as the playable character belongs to this class. They have political influence and power over the lives of humans and other classes of vampires. While othered from human society, they resemble it as closely as possible. Ekons are not like the other, more animalistic vampires, they are respectable vampires. Similarly, many queer people feel the need to present themselves as 'respectably' queer (Vetter, 2023; Joshi, 2012); believing that their acceptance is contingent upon adhering to hegemonic beliefs of acceptable queerness. Respectable queerness is a performance that one does to distance themselves from 'deviant queers' wherein the actor portrays themselves as situated within the cis-heteronormative patriarchy as a way to reduce their own queerness (Joshi, 2012; Soto, 2013). Unlike the other vampires who are led by hatred, bloodlust, and animalistic instincts and whose appearances are so recognisably non-human (queer), Ekons pursue and delight in their proximity to humanness (straightness). As Johnathan is an Ekon, and the point-of-view character, players are placed in a position where this belief and way of being seems rational. Johnathan only ever views the other vampires as their simplistic characterisation, disregarding their human qualities and old human existence. This leads the player to treat them as enemy fodder. They are just another obstacle in completing the game, likewise, conservative 'respectable' queer people view more overtly queer people as a hindrance and blockade to social acceptance and political power (Pugh, 2013; Mejdrić, 2018, Love, 2021).

Johnathan begins the narrative in a state of incongruity; his nature now requires him to kill to stay undead (alive), yet he still feels compelled to help and heal the humans suffering around him. The game's mechanics incentivise forming relationships with those you help and not draining them of blood ('embracing'). When first meeting the NPCs, many dialogue options and conversation routes are locked, only becoming unlocked as you form and level-up relationships with them. Players can increase relationships with NPCs through conversation, learning more about them, and completing character-specific side quests. Interacting with and levelling-up relationships with NPCs unlocks dialogue options that give hints that help with questlines and the main narrative and can unlock different craft-able and high-powered weapons. At the same time, relationships can decrease or completely stagnate if the player ignores them for too long, permanently locking lockable dialogue options.

Forming relationships with NPCs also increases the amount of XP that can be gained when embracing them. (XP is the only way players can unlock more vampiric abilities and increase Johnathan's health and stamina; this ensures that enemies are not overpowered as the narrative and game advances as the player character continues to get stronger as the enemies do.) Advancing relationships with NPCs provides a small amount of XP, but the most XP is gained by

embracing NPCs whose relationships with Johnathan are completely levelled up. This incentive to kill NPCs that players have spent hours building relationships with further emphasises Johnathan's struggle with morality. Spending time building relationships with characters that may or may not be inconsequential to the game's narrative humanises and personifies the characters to the players. It causes the player to become more immersed in the world of *Vampyr* and feel just as conflicted about killing them as Johnathan does.

While embracing fully levelled NPCs may seem appealing to some players who are not as invested in their lives or the world, killing and embracing NPCs has consequences outside of gaining mass amounts of XP. Once a player has fed on a character that is not a Skal or a Guard of Priwen (vampire hunter), getting the 'best' ending is impossible. Killing more than four characters means getting a 'good' ending is impossible, meaning that the only possible endings players can get are the 'sad' ending and the 'worst' ending. Players may also encounter the mourning friends and families of victims they have killed, with the families often in a worse financial situation due to the missing family member. Not only is the player killing a human, but the player is removing the human from human (cis-heteronormative) society through the intrinsic queerness of biting, sucking, and consuming their bodily fluid. Embracing the NPC means that the player is killing them by 'queering' them.

The embraced NPC may also be significant to either the community or narrative. Narratively important NPCs are often not revealed to be so until they are needed via information or a quest. Killing too many NPCs in a given district makes the area less stable, more enemies appear, and more NPCs get sick. Each district has a designated 'pillar' of the community – the one that supports and is the unofficial leader of the community. Killing pillar NPCs sends the district into a hostile level of stability. Hostile districts cannot be made more stable, unlike non-hostile districts. Enemies will also fill the area and begin killing NPCs without regard for their significance, resulting in the player missing out on side quests, information, and potential XP. So, while it may be easier to gain XP and progress by levelling up and embracing NPCs, the negative consequences make the player's choice to do so much more complicated and conflicting, increasing the immersion and sympathy towards the player character.

Despite the negative consequences of embracing NPCs, it is still much harder to play the game in the morally 'good' way. If the player wants the 'best' or 'good' ending, Johnathan must survive on feeding from Skals, vampire hunters, and rats. These blood sources do not give as much XP as NPCs, making it considerably more difficult to gain XP and useful skills and weapons, meaning progressing through the game is slower and more complex than playing in the morally 'bad' or 'evil' way. Embracing NPCs gives the player almost instant gratification as gaining skills, health, and stamina is much faster. Playing the evil way allows players to progress through the narrative faster and be stronger, making enemies and boss battles more effortless and satisfying due to the greater number of skills. Attempting to change the path the narrative is on is also made very

difficult. The game only has one save slot; therefore, if players accidentally kill a significant character or make a wrong choice and find out too late, it is impossible to revert to a save that is not the latest save file. This means all choices made are relatively permanent, further amplifying the player's immersion and sympathy with Johnathan.

The game's four endings are a direct result of every conversation and choice the player makes throughout their playthrough. The best ending results in Johnathan saving Elisabeth from throwing herself into a fire – after finding out that Elisabeth inadvertently was the cause of the blood plague due to the actions of her maker – and the couple leave for America to find a cure for the blood plague. In the good ending, Johnathan still saves Elisabeth, but the two lock themselves in Elisabeth's castle to create a cure in a self-imposed quarantine. Getting one of these two positive endings is the main incentive for playing the game morally righteously, causing minimal or no civilian death and struggling through enemies and boss battles due to the lack of skills. To play *Vampyr* in a morally good way, both the player and Johnathan must struggle. The player struggles through fighting and managing Johnathan's hunger; Johnathan struggles against his vampiric (queer) nature and intrinsic needs. Johnathan must survive on enemy blood during combat – which does not occur as often as his hunger decreases – or on rats which he audibly and visibly finds disgusting and repugnant. Many reviewers have noted that playing *Vampyr* this way is akin to playing the game on “hard mode” (Wilson, 2018, para. 6; Clark, 2018; Webster, 2018)

The other two endings occur if Johnathan kills most or all the available citizens and the districts go hostile. In the sad ending, Johnathan fails to save Elisabeth and lives the rest of his immortal undead life in depressed self-imposed isolation. The worst ending results in Johnathan being entirely apathetic towards Elisabeth's suicide, embodying “the bloodthirsty leech the Guard of Priwen says all vampires are” (Teresa, 2021, para. 14). By acting as his vampiric nature insists, the game rewards the player by making them feel guilty for feeding on their friends and community, but also with the two ‘worst’ endings. The two endings in which Johnathan embraces his new nature as a vampire are considered morally wrong. Whereas in the good endings, Johnathan still exists in a state of juxtaposition, the morally bad endings have Johnathan accepting what his new existence means he must do for his survival and prosperity. Despite fully accepting his nature, in the sad ending, Johnathan does not fully accept the consequences of accepting his queer lifestyle, ending up sad and alone. In the worst ending, Johnathan becomes an unfeeling, bloodthirsty serial killer. In the good endings, while still having to find a way to exist with his incongruent self, Johnathan finds happiness despite his hatred for his vampiric queerness.

Elisabeth is the source of the vampire and human world's suffering in all four endings. Her unintended spreading of the blood plague is presented as her fault despite being a sympathetic character. The only way she can think to fix it is through her death; that is the only way Elisabeth believes she will find redemption for what she has caused. When he turned her, William Marshal, Elisabeth's sire, was infected with the ‘blood of hate.’ The blood of hate caused Elisabeth to be

the only carrier and spreader of the blood plague. Contrasting Elisabeth's characterisation, William is explicitly characterised as someone who used to be an insatiable monster and is now a confused old man. However, he is still in touch enough with his humanity to realise that he must be stopped and locks himself in a castle so that he does not hurt anyone. He also receives a redemption narrative by asking Elisabeth to kill him. Elisabeth is the character that has to sacrifice – losing her father figure, and either herself, her freedom, or the world she knows – to stop the further spread of the blood plague despite not being the reason it exists. The narrative and the characters blame her, despite William giving the blood plague to her. While Johnathan tries to find a cure for the blood plague, it is Elisabeth who must pay for its existence.

4.2.2 Castlevania: Lords of Shadow – Series

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow (2010) and its sequels, *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow – Mirror of Fate* (2013) and *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2* (2014), was developed by Mercury Steam and released by Konami as a contemporary reimagining of the popular and ground-breaking *Castlevania* series. The series' plot follows Gabriel Belmont as he saves the world from the series' main antagonist, Satan. As the series's complex, approximately 41-and-a-half-hour-long narrative is told over all three video games, they will be treated as one video game for ease.

Gabriel Belmont – the game's main protagonist – begins the narrative as a member of the Brotherhood of Light, tasked with ridding the world of the dark force destroying it. The Brotherhood of Light is dedicated to serving God by banishing and defeating all evil they come across. Gabriel is tasked with finding the dark force disconnecting Earth from Heaven and allowing monsters to inhabit the world. He must do this by finding and remaking the God Mask and killing all three Lords of Shadow. Throughout this quest, Gabriel is spurred on by the possibility of resurrecting his late wife and his faith in the Brotherhood of Light and God. He is consumed by the stress that the significance of his quest has on him; this is only accentuated by the horrific things he has seen and was forced to do throughout his journey. After completing the God Mask and realising his whole quest was a ruse – Gabriel would never be able to resurrect his wife, and he was being deceived and controlled by his ally. He lost his faith and hope. Realising he would never see his wife again as he killed her and another close ally, and because he was an unwitting vehicle for the dark forces on Earth, he defeats Satan and descends into darkness. His spirit broken, he aids the child vampire Laura in defeating an ancient demon so that he would not feel more guilt for failing humanity. To do so, he was forced to kill Laura and drink her blood to become the world's most powerful vampire. Deciding to submit to being the “beast” and “cold-blooded murderer” Zobek calls him, Gabriel renames himself Dracula and begins to wage war on the Brotherhood of Light.

Gabriel's journey of being a soldier for the ruling Christian Brotherhood of Light then becoming what he feared most and losing everyone he loves in the process, is reminiscent of queer coming out stories from people raised in religion. Many queer people from conservative religious families are raised to fear or hate queerness. When they come out, many are rejected by their families, thus losing connections with their loved ones (McNamara, 2017; Reczek & Smith, 2021; Thurma, 1991, Gopp-Warner, 2023). Gabriel is raised in a straight Christian world, and on his journey of becoming a queer vampire, he loses his family and friends and despises that his queerness made this happen.

On becoming a vampire, Gabriel lost most of his humanity in exchange for the power needed to defeat the demon, claiming to be now more terrible than it ever was. Once becoming Dracula, the hopelessness and emptiness felt after defeating Satan amplifies. He is now driven by his need for revenge on those he views betrayed him while reshaping the world to fit his cruel, apathetic, and nihilistic views. The guilt he once felt as a human for killing others is completely assuaged as he believes he's sending his victims to a better place. While not entirely contrasting the broody characterisation of Gabriel at the beginning of the narrative, his apathy towards becoming a vampire and his subsequent acceptance of his bloodlust contrasts the still hopeful holy warrior he once was. He reasons away what little guilt and shame his leftover humanity causes him to feel.

Despite being uncaring and unconcerned with humanity, Dracula feels immense love for his family. Upon discovering that the man who attacked him – after Dracula nearly succeeded in decimating the Brotherhood of Light – was his son, Trevor, he tried to heal him with his blood. This resulted in Trevor becoming a vampire and adopting the name Alucard. After Alucard awakens from being healed, Dracula allows him and his grandson to try and kill him. Showing capacity for goodness, Alucard and Dracula team up to stop the arrival of Satan and Zobek, which Alucard knows will occur in the modern day. After waking up in the modern world after hundreds of years of sleep and not feeding, Dracula feeds on an entire family but feels remorse for doing so. While still withdrawn and nihilistic about the world and humanity, Dracula still endeavours to save it from Satan and Zobek's return. Dracula's love for Alucard is emphasised when he willingly protects his child after travelling back in time, even though he knows Alucard will eventually try to kill him. He feels love for his family despite the rejection of his queer self. He wants to maintain a relationship with Alucard knowing Alucard's hate towards him and his queerness.

Dracula slowly begins to soften his resentment towards humanity as the narrative continues. He becomes more selective with whom he feeds on – only feeding on enemies – and willingly works to stop more humans from dying at the hands of Satan and his acolytes. Dracula becomes disillusioned with his life despite fully embracing his role as a bloodthirsty and all-powerful vampire. He agrees to save the world only if he is rewarded with relief in the form of death. His agreement is not because he feels guilt or remorse for the lives he has taken and the harm he has caused but because Alucard hates him. In his quest to stop Satan, Dracula has to fight Inner

Dracula, a representation of his vampiric nature. Inner Dracula is covered in the blood of Dracula's victims, using grotesque tentacles to move and attack. Inner Dracula is a personification of Dracula's inherently evil vampiric nature, a personification of the bloodthirsty queer beast he let himself turn into. Dracula must fight against his belief that Inner Dracula is all that he is and all that he is capable of being before he can forge a relationship with his son, prove that he can become more than a bloodthirsty monster, and be deemed worthy of redemption. He must fight against the belief he was raised with, that queerness is evil, in order to fully accept his true being. The narrative ends with the father and son duo working together to defeat Satan and Alucard's loathing of his father softening; the pair end the game deciding to "wait to see what fate has in stall" for them.

Gabriel is characterised by his loss of faith and building resentment towards the world – blaming the Brotherhood of Light and humanity for his pain. Gabriel's character arc ends with him giving into the nihilism, hate, and bloodlust he feels as Dracula. Dracula is characterised by redemption. While he maintains his arrogance and superiority complex, the contempt he feels has somewhat alleviated. Alucard – the embodiment of Dracula's opposite traits – accepting him and ceasing his attempts to kill Dracula accentuates Dracula's potential for goodness and redemption.

Before Trevor became Alucard, his personality was similar to his father's before his wife died. He had issues restraining his temper and was entirely devoted to the Brotherhood of Light. Alucard was also stubborn, refusing to believe the Lost Soul when it foretold his turn into a vampire and how his father would destroy the Brotherhood of Light. Instead of accepting his fate, he believes he has the power to change it and goes against his family's wishes to do so. His fighting style reflects his personality; it is precise and restrained. After becoming Alucard, his personality completely changes. Becoming a vampire – the thing he hates most in the world – causes him to become disillusioned with his existence. Despite the emptiness and depression, he feels about his new nature, Alucard refuses to give in to his instincts. Unlike his father, Alucard rejects the idea of feeding on humans, instead feeding on monsters and dark creatures to retain a connection to his humanity. His fighting style reflects his personality change. Instead of the precision and control it had before, it is now more animalistic, reminiscent of predators hunting prey. His fighting style reflects how Alucard feels, out of control and like a beast. He wants to remain close to his humanity, embodying the idea of a vampire struggling to remain 'respectable.' Similarly to *Vampyr*'s Ekons, Alucard tries to position himself in close proximity to humanness by rejecting his queer instincts.

During the time jump to the modern era, Alucard has come to accept his existence as a vampire. Instead of feeling anguish about his fate, he shifts his efforts towards saving humanity from Zobeck and Satan. Having to wait hundreds of years to enact his plan to save the world, Alucard developed a patience and control he never had, even as a human. His fighting style becomes refined and controlled again. Alucard utilises the fighting techniques he learnt as a human and his vampiric

powers; he balances the person he used to be with the person he is now. Alucard retains his humanity through his transformation, seeking to be the opposite of Dracula – as is his name. Alucard’s devotion to being good and avoiding becoming like his father is how Dracula was able to be redeemed and believe himself capable of redemption. His journey of accepting his new nature while retaining his goodness and humanity defines Alucard’s character arc.

During Gabriel’s journey to kill all three of the Lords of Shadow, he encounters two significant vampire NPCs. Carmilla is the second Lord of Shadow and the progenitor of the vampire race. Carmilla encompasses the ‘sexually aggressive’ female seductress. Both times she encounters Gabriel, she attempts to seduce him, tempting him to join her for eternity and show him “many pleasures.” The second time she encounters Gabriel, Carmilla forces a kiss on him and upon realising he is still in love with his wife, she tries to kill her out of jealousy. Carmilla also tries to get Gabriel to drink her blood to make him completely loyal to her. She is obsessive over her need to control Gabriel, consistently referring to him as “my Gabriel.” She feels no guilt or remorse for manipulating people to get what she wants. Carmilla expresses indifference towards human life, being as apathetic and bloodthirsty as Dracula was, killing most of the human inhabitants of her castle. Like Dracula, she craves familial love. Carmilla transformed the second vampire, Laura, so that she could have a daughter and refers to her as such. To do this, she took Laura from her parents but shows no remorse.

Laura displays the same ruthlessness and bloodthirsty nature as her ‘mother,’ having murdered hundreds of humans to sate her appetite. While showcasing childlike characteristics – like the enjoyment of children’s toys and games – she is centuries old. Laura uses the knowledge she has gained over her existence to creatively torture and kill victims like Gabriel. Laura enjoys being a vampire but is envious of Gabriel’s love for his wife. Laura states that she has “no humanity” and cannot feel innately human feelings like love, only experiencing rage and the joy of bloodlust. Despite Laura’s belief that she has no humanity and feels nothing towards humanity, Laura sacrifices herself so that Gabriel can turn into Dracula and defeat the ancient demon. Laura’s actions to ensure humanity’s safety despite her nihilistic view of herself show she has the capacity for goodness and redemption, just as Dracula does.

Carmilla and Laura embody the ‘deviant’ queer. They accept all aspects of their vampire life and in turn, reject the human life they once knew. They find strength and joy in the absolute rejection of their past ‘straight’ life. Carmilla even seeks to separate herself from humans further by creating a child through vampiric transformation. Carmilla ‘reproduces’ asexually, not needing a man.

The appearances of the vampires in the *Castlevania: Lords of Shadows* series take a lot of inspiration from traditional vampire media. All vampires have the familiar attributes of prominent fangs, and Laura and Dracula have red irises. Alucard’s irises are yellow due to not feeding on humans, and Carmilla’s eyes are entirely black to signify her as the creator of vampires. As the

significant vampire characters are old enough or powerful enough, they can have a human form as opposed to the other vampire NPCs that have the appearance of large humanoid bat-like creatures or desiccated corpses. Dracula, Carmilla, and Laura have the same skin colour as their human selves. In contrast, Alucard is ghostly pale.

Gabriel's appearance changes four times throughout the narrative. As a human, he has long dark brown hair, tanned skin, and a lean yet muscular physique. Upon turning into Dracula, the only change in appearance is his irises turning red. Once he awakes from his centuries-long slumber, Dracula's hair is white, his skin pale and obviously aged. It changes for a final time when he feeds again, his hair and skin regain their colour, and his clothes morph into a mix of his human clothes and original Dracula clothes. Dracula's appearance follows his character arc, ending with him learning how to balance his humanity (human side) and his vampiric nature. Alucard's appearance is idiosyncratic; his appearance changes the most upon vampiric transformation. Used to showcase Alucard's personality shift after his transformation and his opinion of Dracula, his appearance is the antithesis of his appearance as Trevor. As Trevor, he looks rather similar to his human father; he has long dark hair, tanned skin, and similar facial features but is more noticeably muscular. As Alucard, his hair and skin are white, and his physique and facial features appear more emaciated and softer. His appearance is the visual opposite of his human appearance and Dracula's appearance.

Figure 4

Carmilla Vampiress Form



Note. This in-game screenshot was taken added by user Dovabrine38 and uploaded to the page on Carmilla from Castlevania Wiki (Carmilla (Lords of Shadow), 2022).

Carmilla's appearance aligns with her sexualised personality. She wears a modified nun's habit, with the front plunging, stopping just above the pubic bone. Her breasts are prominently displayed along with her entire midriff. While more overtly hypersexualised as a vampire, in the brief time we see Carmilla's human form, she is wearing a corset with a low neckline, drawing attention to her chest. Carmilla can also change into her 'true form' as she is a powerful vampire and a Lord of Shadow. Her true form is a representation of her personality and true self. Her true form is similar to other vampire NPCs – a large humanoid bat-like creature – but larger and more demonic. She further rejects the need to fit into human (straight) society by visually separating herself from humans by wearing clothes that overtly state that she does not belong and does not want to.

Having all significant vampires appear more human than the others encourages players to relate and sympathise with the characters. Dracula appears as a withered old man, prompting players to understand that between last seeing him and seeing him now, Dracula has changed. He is a more sympathetic character during this part of the narrative. As he begins his journey to save humanity, he reverts to looking healthier, dictating that he is (or will be) worthy of redemption. Having Carmilla be the only vampire player's see change that drastically in appearance – while labelling the change her 'true form' – emphasises her character as manipulative and evil. The only other female vampire, Laura, is childlike in appearance feeding into the 'creepy evil little girl' trope prominent in gothic horror. She is also the product of Carmilla. Carmilla created the vampires to be hate-filled and bloodthirsty creatures like herself; thus, Laura is characterised as such, only receiving some humanity due to her being a child. The male vampires are shown to be redeemable and capable of goodness – along with the child vampire. Carmilla, the sexualised adult women vampire, is not. She is only evil, only manipulative. Even in the one area she shows humanity, her relationship with Laura is a result of her manipulative, cruel, and self-centred actions. Carmilla's inherent queerness is emphasised through her overt hypersexualisation – she takes on the role of sexual dominator and pursuer, a stereotypically masculine role (Hobson, 2016) – this reversing of heteronormative gender roles 'queers' Carmilla's character.

The vampires also have certain abilities. In line with traditional vampires, Carmilla, Laura, Alucard and Dracula have superhuman strength, speed, and immortality. Carmilla and Laura are significantly weakened by holy imagery and weaker than humans when inside a chapel or shrine. This weakness is due to them being more 'carnal' and less pure vampires than Dracula and Alucard. Dracula considers himself and vampires made by him 'pure' vampires as they immediately have access to all of their vampiric abilities and appear in human form. Vampires are also able to transform into a mist of blood. Dracula can use Void and Chaos Magic, the vampiric counterpart to his Light and Shadow Magic. Mechanically, they function the same. Void Magic (Light Magic) is a form of white, 'good' magic used for defensive and healing purposes.

Chaos Magic (Shadow Magic) is a form of black, 'evil' magic used for offensive and attacking purposes. For combat to be at its most balanced, players must balance both good and evil magics. This mechanic emphasises the balance of humanity and vampirism that Dracula must achieve at the end of the narrative.

4.2.3 Conclusion

Both *Vampyr* and the *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* series have the central theme of humanity. Vampires are deemed to have their humanity when they fight against their vampiric nature, like Alucard feeding on beasts and monsters, and Johnathan's 'best' route having him only feed on rats and monsters. Despite this actively making the vampires weaker than others, it is displayed to be the morally good thing to. In *Vampyr*, Johnathan seeks to maintain his humanity despite his newfound vampiric nature going against his morals. In *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow*, characters constantly bring up their humanity or lack thereof. The male vampire characters, Johnathan, Alucard and Dracula, were shown as capable of maintaining their humanity. Both Johnathan and Alucard work to find a balance between surviving with their vampiric needs and their human morals. While losing touch with his humanity due to his feelings of hopelessness, Dracula is able to redeem himself by saving the world and forming a relationship with his son, regaining parts of his humanity.

In Johnathan's two 'bad' routes, the more he gives into his vampiric nature, the less he feels and thus the less humanity he is characterised as having. In his good routes, the less like a vampire he acts, the more human and good he is portrayed. Even the side character, William, a vampire with no regard for human life, is characterised as feeling shame and guilt about the harm he has caused and redeems himself by ending his life, thus redeeming him in the eyes of the characters. By the end of his narrative, Dracula learns to balance acting in a morally good and human way with his vampire-ness despite his apathy towards humanity. Thus, behaving in line with vampiric urges and nature is immoral; characters are characterised as morally correct and good when they behave less like traditional vampires. Alucard was overcome by shame and self-hatred for his intrinsic vampiric being and altered his behaviour to fit within the paradigms of human society. He rejects feeding on a vampire's primary food source and holds his actions to a higher standard than humans, knowing that his mere existence threatens their survival. The male vampires are also depicted as morally good and having humanity. It is typically the primary transformation their characterisation goes through, with the narrative emphasising this transformation as a redemption arc.

Johnathan, Dracula and Alucard still feel the full range of human emotions, the most emphasised being guilt and shame about their nature. Like the contemporary queer vampires of Anne Rice and the less explicitly queer contemporary vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the *Twilight Saga*, Johnathan and Alucard feel that their existence as vampires is intrinsically shameful. Their

guilt is not tied to their actions; instead, it is because of their mere existence as vampires. Queer people often feel shame about their queerness (Morrison, 2015; Bagocius, 2022). The three vampires come to accept their undead lives as vampires, but they do so in an existence shaped by their shame. Dracula and Alucard fight against their need for human blood and live on the outskirts of vampire and human society. In Johnathan's good routes, he lives isolated from vampire and human society, or he leaves his home. Both endings render him unable to interact with the characters he spent much of his time forming relationships with. He must adhere to human (heterosexual) norms despite his vampiric (queer) existence.

In contrast to the male vampire's shame and guilt, the female vampire characters are portrayed as dangerous and immoral. Carmilla is portrayed as a manipulative and evil temptress. She is monstrous in how she acts and thinks. She displays zero sympathy towards humans and no shame about her actions. Carmilla is a monstrously feminine character, displaying traits typical of traditional, gothic female vampiric succubuses. She portrays the fear of the sexually aggressive and predatory female, like her namesake from Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (2021a.). She even 'reproduces' without a man, threatening the heteronormative nuclear family. Laura explicitly says that she has no humanity left. She does get a redemption arc by sacrificing herself so Gabriel can defeat the ancient demon. Even then, Laura is still characterised as uncaring about humanity, only sacrificing herself because she misses Carmilla. Despite Laura being a child, she is equally as dangerous and bloodthirsty as her maker.

Elisabeth is the cause of the blood plague that is destroying the vampire and human world. She is a sympathetic character as she never intended, nor knew, that she was the cause until William told her. It is still deemed to be her responsibility, though Elisabeth retains her humanity. She is not bloodthirsty, and she cares about human life, but she is still representative of the dangerous feminine. Elisabeth is not sexually aggressive or predatory, but she is dangerous due to her being able to spread the blood plague, making her a dangerous love interest for Johnathan. Like queer existence threatens a heteronormative society (Ruile Wang et al., 2019), Elisabeth is a threat to the human world because of her mere existence.

Carmilla and Laura are very simply and blatantly evil, acting in line with traditional representations of vampires. Male vampires end their narratives by being good, retaining or regaining humanity, whereas female vampires are dangerous or the cause of harm. Female vampires are inherently evil. Carmilla, the most blatantly sexualised of the female vampires, is completely irredeemable. The vampire enemy NPCs in both games are also entirely genderless, often appearing disfigured or resembling a humanoid creature. These enemy NPCs leave no room for nuance; they are bad. There is no room to redeem themselves as the main reason for their inclusion is to attack the player character and die.

The vampires within these games are similar to the broody, gothic and Byronic vampires. The male vampires are melancholic about their nature, taking time to philosophise and consider their humanity and nature. They are outsiders in their worlds. William physically isolates himself from the rest of the world. Alucard actively works to behave in the opposite manner to other vampires. Dracula becomes isolated from the human world when he transforms, and when he's a vampire, he willingly isolates himself to draw out Zobek and Satan. Johnathan is an outsider in his community, a vampire living amongst humans who doesn't want to participate in the vampire world. In all of *Vampyr*'s endings, Johnathan remains isolated in some way. In the 'best' ending, he leaves for America, leaving behind the world he knows. In the 'good' ending, he and Elisabeth quarantine themselves away from the outside world. And in the two 'bad' endings, Johnathan ends up alone. The female vampires are dangerous, causing harm and hurt even if they don't mean to; they are inherently evil.

All of the vampires also have the characteristics of traditional Gothic vampires. They can't go into the sun, are harmed or weakened by religious objects, have prominent fangs, and look gothic. The vampires from the *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* series clothing are inspired by more contemporary renditions of modern and Victorian gothic apparel combined. *Vampyr*'s aesthetic is heavily inspired by Victorian London's aesthetic, with the characters' clothes and appearances being inspired by the later stages of the Victorian era. While these games do not explicitly reference the queerness of the origins of vampires, their references to traditional vampires not only evoke that queerness but make the games queer themselves.

5.0 Conclusion

Throughout contemporary iterations of vampires, their queer coding has been maintained. Vampires continue to be symbols of queerness, with their metaphors representing modern queer challenges and experiences. Narratives of vampires in video games invert cis-heteronormative ideals of morality and conformity for one that is quintessentially queer. Throughout the narratives of all the discussed games, the vampires fight against their nature as a vampire and their human past. They are fighting to maintain their past societal role as humans and against their new vampiric needs and desires. They ultimately set aside wants to adhere to human norms and embrace their vampiric nature – a direct parallel to queer self-acceptance narratives often having to reject pressure to conform to heteronormativity to embrace queerness. This parallel is shown through characters discarding their strict adherence to their narrow view of humanity and embracing their vampiric nature. These morality narratives often have the vampires either rejecting humanity and the human world – like in *First Bite*, *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coterie of New York* and *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* – or being rejected by the human world – like in *Vampyr*. They echo real-world queer experiences of rejection from mainstream cis-heteronormative society.

Much like in traditional vampire literature and modern vampire texts, where vampires are explicitly ostracised due to their otherness, vampires in video games continue this trend while introducing the idea that vampires may choose this ostracisation. Queer people isolating themselves from a society they feels does not accept them and often harms them is a common safety measure some queer people take (Riggle, 2017). Real-world found families and queer community towns (Nash & Gorman-Murray, 2014) exemplify this. The explicitly queer video games have more distinct and straightforward representations of this; Julia in *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* explains that the vampires must perform ‘the masquerade’ and stay away from humans for the protection of the vampire species. The trio in *First Bite* chooses to isolate themselves from humans for their safety and their lack of interest in humans beyond their use as sustenance.

The non-explicitly queer games include found families differently. In the *Castlevania: Lords of Shadows* series, Dracula isolates himself from humanity as penance for his past actions and to save them from the harm he might inflict. The Ekon vampires in *Vampyr* isolate themselves from the human world as a safety precaution and because they feel better than them. In two of the four endings in the game, Johnathan ends up in self-imposed isolation either in shame and to save the human world from what he has become or to save the vampire world by creating a cure. The non-explicitly queer games frame the vampire’s isolation as necessary for the safety of humans, being analogous to how cis-heteronormative society and media often demonise queerness (Lenz, 2012; Yurcaba, 2022). The explicitly queer vampire games frame the vampire’s isolation as necessary

for the vampire's safety. This places the explicitly queer video games as viewing isolation from humanity through the lens of queer experiences and the non-explicitly queer video games as viewing their vampire's isolation through the lens of hegemonic heteropatriarchal society.

Vampires have an assumed inhuman beauty in the explicitly and non-explicitly queer video games. This is stated clearly in *First Bite, Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* and *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* and heavily implied in *Monster Prom* by how Liam and Damien are drawn. The trio in *First Bite* visually represents hypersexualised mainstream heteronormative Western beauty standards. In *Vampyr*, the Ekon vampires are visually similar to wealthy and aristocratic humans, and their appearance fits into heteronormative beauty standards in contrast to the often gaunt and below-average-looking human NPCs in the world. In the *Castlevania: Lords of Shadows* series, Alucard appears softer and more angelic than his previous human self, and Carmilla is overtly hypersexualised. The vampires in the non-explicitly queer games adhere more to traditional vampire lore aesthetically, with all of them being pale, having inhuman coloured eyes and some vampires looking animalistic and demonic, depending on their circumstances. All the vampires adhere to conventional beauty standards and, thus, are alluring and attractive; they are a personification of the fear of sexuality that was so common in traditional gothic vampire texts.

The explicitly queer video games sexualise the vampires equally, regardless of gender or gender expression. Most apparently, in *First Bite*, Laurel, Valeria, and Ilyas appear equally as sexual as each other, no matter how feminine or masculine they are. Explicitly queer vampire games ignore gender binaries and roles – instead placing characters on a spectrum of masculinity to femininity. Explicitly queer vampires are able to transgress gender norms and binaries. Within the non-explicit vampire games, there is a dichotomy between how sexualised the masculine and feminine vampires are. The male vampires, while sexualised due to their innate resemblance and adherence to conventional beauty standards, are not as sexualised as the female vampires. Elisabeth in *Vampyr*, who was not explicitly sexualised visually, possesses inherent sexual danger due to their femaleness. The hypersexual female vampire is most apparent in the characterisation of Carmilla in the *Castlevania: Lords of Shadows* series. Carmilla is acutely more sexualised, and therefore evil, than her male counterparts. Her hypersexuality is queer in part because she is a sexual threat to heterosexual societal norms, and she has the power and freedom to step outside the confines of rigid hegemonic heteropatriarchal roles – she threatens heteronormative sexual morality and can reproduce without a partner, an innately queer act.

The non-explicitly queer vampire games conform to rigid cis-heteronormative gender binaries; there are clear masculine and feminine roles. The masculine role is to be the protagonist, the one that overcomes the obstacles of their narratives. The feminine role is to be an obstacle the masculine must defeat, a crazed and sexually dominant object to conquer. With this distinction, *Vampyr* and the *Castlevania: Lords of Shadows* series make female and male vampires two

distinctly different kinds of dangers. Not only does this reinforce vampires as a symbol of sexual immorality and promiscuousness that queerness is often presented as, but also the fear of the sexual feminine and dangers of queer women.

The games promote the assumption that queer beauty must conform to cis-heteronormative beauty norms by default. Coupled with the connotation that queer sexuality is intrinsically dangerous, it implies that queerness is a seductive danger, only amplified by how the characters' transformation into vampires is described. In the explicitly queer video games, the transformation is more transcendent than sex. Julia asks if she is feeling love in the middle of her transformation, and the transformation in *First Bite* during sex with their sire or feels as if they are engaging in an act more intimate and pleasurable than sex. In *Vampyr*, the transformation is painful, leaving Johnathan feeling an overwhelming and powerful bloodlust. The *Castlevania: Lords of Shadows* series characterises the vampiric transformation as something that makes one far more powerful than their human self, yet also able to slip into an intense blood frenzy if one does not have self-control. While not the explicitly sexual experience of the explicitly queer games, the transformation in the non-explicitly queer games is queer-coded; characters experience kinky pain resulting in leaving the strict confines of hegemonic heterosexual society only to end up being a danger to that very society. The transformation is both an embodiment of the seductive danger queerness is believed to have and a vehicle for separating one's past self and their queer self.

All of the vampire games acted as queer wish fulfilment. The explicitly queer vampire games did so more directly – through genre, mechanics, and narrative – in contrast to the non-explicitly queer games. *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* and *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* have similar narratives of gaining power and accepting one's queer vampiric self. *First Bite* and *Monster Prom* allow players to live out queer romantic scenarios, providing a space for queer people to feel agency and power vicariously by playing the game. Players can also explore their sexuality in a safe virtual environment for *First Bite* and *Monster Prom*. While positive, this degree of immersion encourages and almost forces players to participate in the perpetuation of negative queer stereotypes (like sexual danger and promiscuity and unobtainable beauty norms), risking queer players and audiences engaging in stereotype threat. Stereotype threat occurs when “negative stereotypes about one's group undermine one's ability to perform in an area in which the negative stereotype applies” (Nadal et al., 2021, p. 4). If the stereotypes impact one's ability to exist or be accepted within society – like being inherently sexually dangerous or promiscuous – it can lead to people refusing or distancing themselves from queerness (Nadal et al., 2021; Zivony & Saguy, 2018). Queerness only being shown through the lens of conventional attractiveness gives the effect that queerness is only acceptable when shown through that lens. This can lead to queer people who do not fit within the confines of the rigid heteronormative beauty standards to have lower self-esteem and self-worth (Westfall et al., 2020; Martens et al., 2006).

In the *Castlevania: Lords of Shadows* series, Dracula acquires great power and uses it to fulfil his desires, and both he and Alucard use their vampiric powers to save the world. In *Vampyr*'s good endings, Johnathan saves the one he loves from her demise. All three characters struggle to accept their vampiric nature, only to do so in the end. The queer struggle Dracula, Alucard and Johnathan endure about their morality as vampiric (queer) beings is a similar narrative in much of queer media. Queer suffering as a media commodity is a prevalent trait of commercial queerness (Risley, 2023; Lovelock, 2017) as it echoes lived queer experiences (Morrison, 2015; De Ridder & Van Bauwel, 2015; Munt, 2017). Like in other queer media, Dracula, Alucard and Johnathan overcome their suffering, guilt and shame. Despite overcoming it within a framework that centres on how a hegemonic heteropatriarchal society views them, they can exist safely and happily. Their narrative, where suffering is centralised, could provide comfort and wish fulfilment for those who feel as if their queer existences have been defined by shame and suffering. Playing as a character who overcomes those similar struggles could be cathartic compared to games that feel more romantically indulgent (Duncker, 1996; Walters, 2014).

Vampires in video games, whether intentionally or not, showcase queerness and are representative of queer experiences. While, like their literary processors, they inadvertently promote concepts that have possible negative effects on the audience's perceptions of queerness and themselves, they remain an effective means to convey and explore themes of queerness, queer experiences, and queer ways of being. Much like how their gothic origins explored fears and ideas of otherness that existed in the Victorian era, vampires in video games continue to be a vehicle for contemporary explorations of queer otherness; their queer origins provide a unique viewpoint when exploring society through a queer lens. The symbology and lore vampires are based in have altered – and will continue to be altered – as society and time progresses, to better represent societal fears. However, the core tenets continue to be used as metaphorical representations of the vampire's intrinsic otherness.

This study had some rather apparent limitations. Case study approaches to research focus on a depth of analysis rather than breadth. While this study showed consistent queer traits within the games studied, suggesting a broader trend, it is not sufficient enough to establish a consistent trend but offers a basis for a study that would seek to do so. As video games consist of many genres, vampires are included in as many ways. Further research and analysis into how vampires represent queerness in other single-player genres and multiplayer games would be beneficial in understanding how different genres and modes of playing impact queer coding and symbology. How vampires are included within the narrative and mechanics of a game – either as a playable character, non-playable character, enemy, or any other role – affects the queerness would also be an interesting area of study. The methodology chosen for the research relies solely on my interpretation and perspective. Further research and comparative studies on similar topics would reveal more about how queerness is communicated within video games.

References

- Ackbar, S., & Senn, C. Y. (2010). What's the Confusion About Fusion? -Differentiating Positive and Negative Closeness in Lesbian Relationships. *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy*, 36(4), 416-430. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2010.00219.x>
- Adbi, S., & Calafell, B. M. (2017). Queer utopias and a (Feminist) Iranian vampire: a critical analysis of resistive monstrosity in *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 34(4), 358-370. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/15295036.2017.1302092>
- AlBalushi, Z. T. (2019). Challenges of a Case Study. In A. Baron, & K. McNeal (Eds.), *Case Study Methodology in Higher Education* (pp. 323-343). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-9429-1.ch015>
- Amin, K. (2017). Racial Fetishism, Gay Liberation, and the Temporalities of the Erotic. In, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (pp. 76-108). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1220mb1.7>
- Anderson, F. (2021). Please Help Yourself: Queer Preservation and the Uses of the Past. *Third Text*, 35(1), 53-79. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/09528822.2020.1861866>
- Annati, A., & Ramsey, L. R. (2022). Lesbian Perceptions of Stereotypical and Sexualized Media Portrayals. *Sexuality & Culture*, 26, 312-338. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1007/s12119-021-09892-z>
- Artt, S. (2014). Ruthven, Lord. In J. A. Weinstock (Ed.), *The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*. Ashgate Publishing. https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/ashgtmonster/ruthven_lord/0?institutionId=5349
- Bagocius, B. (2022). Homosexual Calm: Pausing to Listen to Queer Shame in *Frankenstein*. *Studies in the Novel*, 54(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sdn.2022.0000>
- Ball, A. (Director, Writer), Harris, C. (Writer), & Offutt, C. (Writer). (2008a., September 7). Strange Love (Season 1, Episode 1) [TV series episode]. In Ball, A., Fienberg, G., Buckner, B., Tucker, R., Woo, A., Oliver, N., Hudis, M., & Robinson, A (Executive Producers), *True Blood*. Your Face Goes Here Entertainment; HBO Entertainment.
- Ball, A. (Writer), Harris, C. (Writer), Buckner, B. (Writer), & Lehmann, M. (Director). (2008b., September 28). Escape from Dragon House (Season 1, Episode 4) [TV series episode]. In Ball, A., Fienberg, G., Buckner, B., Tucker, R., Woo, A., Oliver, N., Hudis, M., & Robinson, A (Executive Producers), *True Blood*. Your Face Goes Here Entertainment; HBO Entertainment.
- Ball, A. (Writer), Harris, C. (Writer), & Woo, A. (Writer), & Minahan, D. (Director). (2008c., October 5). Sparks Fly Out (Season 1, Episode 5) [TV series episode]. In Ball, A., Fienberg, G., Buckner, B., Tucker, R., Woo, A., Oliver, N., Hudis, M., & Robinson, A (Executive Producers), *True Blood*. Your Face Goes Here Entertainment; HBO Entertainment.
- Ball, A. (Writer), Harris, C. (Writer), & Offutt, C. (Writer), & Dahl, J. (Director). (2008d., September 21). Mine (Season 1, Episode 3) [TV series episode]. In Ball, A., Fienberg, G., Buckner, B., Tucker, R., Woo, A., Oliver, N., Hudis, M., & Robinson, A (Executive Producers), *True Blood*. Your Face Goes Here Entertainment; HBO Entertainment.

- Ball, A., Fienberg, G., Buckner, B., Tucker, R., Woo, A., Oliver, N., Hudis, M., & Robinson, A. (Executive Producers). (2008-2014). *True Blood*. Your Face Goes Here Entertainment; HBO Entertainment.
- Beautiful Glitch. (2018). *Monster Prom* [Steam]. Those Awesome Guys.
- Beautiful Glitch. (2019). *Monster Prom: Second Term* [Steam]. Those Awesome Guys.
- Beautiful Glitch. (2020). *Monster Prom 2: Monster Camp* [Steam]. Beautiful Glitch.
- Beirne, R. C. (2014). Embattled Sex: Rise of the Right and Victory of the Queer in Queer as Folk. In J. R. Keller, & L. Stratyner (Eds.), *The New Queer Aesthetic on Television: Essays on Recent Programming* (pp. 43-58). McFarland & Company, Inc, Publishers. https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=1fu2BQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Bethesda Game Studios. (2011). *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* [Steam]. Bethesda Softworks.
- BioWare. (2014). *Dragon Age Inquisition* [Steam]. Electronic Arts.
- Biscop, K., Malliet, S., & Dhoest, A. (2019). Subversive Ludic Performance: An Analysis of Gender and Sexuality Performance in Digital Games. *DiGeSt. Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies*, 6(2), 23-42. <https://doi.org/10.11116/digest.6.2.2>
- Bizzocchi, J., & Tanenbaum, T. J. (2012). Mass Effect 2: A Case Study in the Design of Game Narrative. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 32(5), 393-404. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467612463796>
- Block, R. O. (2018). A Man's Best Friend Is His Monster: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. In, *Echoes of a Queer Messianic: From Frankenstein to Brokeback Mountain* (pp. 1-28). State University of New York Press. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5322491>.
- Bowers, T. (2014, April 10). *Sharing joysticks: how video games are opening up to LGBT themes*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/apr/10/sharing-joysticks-how-video-games-are-opening-up-to-lgbt-themes>
- Bonnet, A. (2017). Introduction. In, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics, and History* (pp. 1-11). Bloomsbury Publishing Inc. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=H5tGEAAAQBAJ&lpq=PR1&ots=mGygQexK0b&dq=western%20culture%20defined&lr&pg=PR7#v=onepage&q=western%20culture%20defined&f=false>
- Books, L. (2020). *Failure is the Name of the Game: Queer Failure in Video Game Novels* [Master's thesis, University of Calgary]. PRISM. <https://prism.ucalgary.ca/items/ea7bb6a6-3dd9-4b0a-ac25-57d171f200dc>
- Boyer, S. (2011). "Thou Shalt Not Crave Thy Neighbor": "True Blood", Abjection, and Otherness. *Studies in Popular Culture*, 33(2), 21-41. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23416382>
- Brewer, P. R. (2003). Values, Political Knowledge, and Public Opinion about Gay Rights: A Framing-Based Account. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 67(2), 173-201. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3521629>
- Bridges, E. (2018). A genealogy of queerbaiting: Legal codes, production codes, 'bury your gays' and 'The 100 mess'. *The Journal of Fandom Studies*, 6(2), 115-132. https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1386/jfs.6.2.115_1

- Buerkle, C. W. (2019). Adam Mansplains Everything: White-Hipster Masculinity as Covert Hegemony. *Southern Communication Journal*, 84(3), 170-182. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/1041794X.2019.1575898>
- Burns, K. (2020, June 23). *Why police often single out trans people for violence: The deaths of Layleen Polanco and Tony McDale highlight how Black trans Americans are treated and criminalized*. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2020/6/23/21295432/police-black-trans-people-violence>
- By Night Studios. (n.d.). *Expanded Beast Trait System*. <https://vamp.bynightstudios.com/vampire/library/expandedbeasttraitsystem>
- Casey, L. S., Reisnew, S. L., Findling, M. G., Blendon, R. J., Benson, J. M., Sayde, J. M., & Miller, C. (2019). Discrimination in the United States: Experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Americans. *Health Services Research*, 2(2), 1454-1466. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1111/1475-6773.13229>
- Carlisle, R. S. (2018). The adaptation of vampire motifs from folklore into literature and film. *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*, 11(3), 337-356. https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1386/jafp.11.3.337_1
- Carmilla (Lords of Shadow). (2022, December 6). In *Castlevania Wiki*. [https://castlevania.fandom.com/wiki/Carmilla_\(Lords_of_Shadow\)?oldid=366686](https://castlevania.fandom.com/wiki/Carmilla_(Lords_of_Shadow)?oldid=366686)
- Carr, D. (2009). Textual Analysis, Digital Games, Zombies. *Proceedings of Digital Games Research Association*, 1-8. <http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/09287.241711.pdf>
- Carr, D. (2019). Methodology, Representation, and Games. *Games and Culture*, 14(7-8), 707-723. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412017728641>
- Catterton, A. (2022, December 27). *How indie developers built the path to queerness in gaming*. TechRadar. <https://www.techradar.com/features/how-indie-developers-built-the-path-to-queerness-in-gaming>
- Chang, J., & Tian, H. (2021). Girl power in boy love: Yaoi, online female counterculture, and digital feminism in China. *Feminist Media Studies*, 21(4), 604-620. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1803942>
- Chaplin, S. (2017). Contagion, Simulation, Capital: From Tru Blood to New Blood. In, *The Postmillennial Vampire: Power, Sacrifice and Simulation in True Blood, Twilight and Other Contemporary Narratives* (pp. 87-102). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=4794234>.
- Chess, S. (2015). The queer case of video games: orgasms, Heteronormativity, and video game narrative. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 33(1), 84-94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2015.1129066>
- Clark, J. (2018, June 4). *Vampyr Review: The City That Never Sleeps*. GameSpot. <https://www.gamespot.com/reviews/vampyr-review-the-city-that-never-sleeps/1900-6416924/>
- Clement, J., Waititi, T., Simms, P., Rudin, S., Basch, G., Bush, E., & Robinson, S. (Executive Producers). (2019-present). *What We Do in the Shadows* [TV series]. Two Canoes Pictures/343 Incorporated/FXP.

- Clements, S. (2011a.). Why Vampires Matter. In, *The Vampire Defanged: How the Embodiment of Evil Became a Romantic Hero* (pp. 1-10). Baker Publishing Group.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=661200>.
- Clements, S. (2011b.). Vampire Saviors. In, *The Vampire Defanged: How the Embodiment of Evil Became a Romantic Hero* (pp. 11-21). Baker Publishing Group.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=661200>.
- Clements, S. (2011c.). Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sin and the Power of the Cross. In, *The Vampire Defanged: How the Embodiment of Evil Became a Romantic Hero* (pp. 80-89). Baker Publishing Group.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=661200>.
- Clements, S. (2011d.). Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles: Eternal Guilt and Transcendent Love. In, *The Vampire Defanged: How the Embodiment of Evil Became a Romantic Hero* (pp. 22-33). Baker Publishing Group.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=661200>
- Clements, S. (2011e.). Sookie Stackhouse: Sex and the Socialized Vampire. In, *The Vampire Defanged: How the Embodiment of Evil Became a Romantic Hero* (pp. 47-58). Baker Publishing Group.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=661200>
- Clements, S. (2011f.). Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Sin and the Power of the Cross. In, *The Vampire Defanged: How the Embodiment of Evil Became a Romantic Hero* (pp. 34-46). Baker Publishing Group.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=661200>
- Clements, S. (2011g.). Stephanie Meyer's Twilight Saga: The Vampire as Teenage Heartthrob. In, *The Vampire Defanged: How the Embodiment of Evil Became a Romantic Hero* (pp. 59-70). Baker Publishing Group.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=661200>
- Creighton, W. J. L. (2022). *Queer-ing Anti-urbanism* [Master's thesis, Victoria University of Wellington]. Open Access Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington.
https://openaccess.wgtn.ac.nz/articles/thesis/Queer-ing_Anti-urbanism/21210878
- Cocks, H. (2016). Conspiracy to corrupt public morals and the 'unlawful' status of homosexuality in Britain after 1967. *Social History*, 41(3), 267-284.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2016.1180899>
- Cohen, K. (2023, March 6). *Why are we so tolerant of churchy bigotry?*. The Washington Post.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/03/06/religious-bigotry-lgbtq-homophobia/>
- Coleridge, S. T. (1816). *Chrsitabel*. Poetry Foundation.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43971/christabel>
- Conway, M. T. (2004). A Becoming Queer Aesthetic. *Discourse*, 26(3), 166-189.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41389711>
- Craft, C. (1984). "Kiss Me with those Red Lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula. *Representations*, 8, 107-133. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.2307/2928560>
- Crystal Dynamics. (n.d.a.). *BLOOD OMEN: LEGACY OF KAIN*.
<https://www.crystald.com/projects/blood-omen-legacy-of-kain/>

- Crystal Dynamics. (n.d.b.). *LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE*.
<https://www.crystald.com/projects/legacy-of-kain-defiance/>
- Day, S. K. (2014). Pure Passion: The Twilight Saga, “Abstinence Porn,” and Adolescent Women’s Fan Fiction. *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*, 39(1), 28-48.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.2014.0014>
- De Ridder, S., & Van Bauwel, S. (2015). The discursive construction of gay teenagers in times of mediatization: youth’s reflections on intimate storytelling, queer shame and realness in popular social media places. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(6), 777-793.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2014.992306>
- The Deep End Games. (2023). *Romancelvania* [Steam]. 2124 Publishing.
- Defino, J. (2020, October 19). *How White Supremacy and Capitalism Influence Beauty Standards*. Teen Vogue. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/standard-issues-white-supremacy-capitalism-influence-beauty>
- Dennis, J. P. (2008). Drawing Desire: Male Youth and Homoerotic Fan Art. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 7(1), 6-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361650903507734>
- Dennis, G., & Dennis, A. S. (2014). Vampires and Witches and Commandos, Oy Vey: Comic Book Appropriations of Lilith. *Shofar*, 32(3), 72-101.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/sho.2014.0031>
- Dhaenens, F. (2013). The Fantastic Queer: Reading Gay Representations in Torchwood and True Blood as Articulations of Queer Resistance. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 30(2), 102-116. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/15295036.2012.755055>
- Dillon, R., & Lundberg, A. (2017). Vampires in Video Games: Mythic Tropes for Innovative Storytelling. *eTropic*, 16(1), 46-67. <https://doi.org/10.25120/etropic.16.1.2017.3578>
- Doane, J., & Hodges, D. (1990). Undoing Feminism: From the Preoedipal to Postfeminism in Anne Rice’s Vampire Chronicles. *American Literary History*, 2(3), 422-442.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/489948>
- Donelan, C. (2014). Vampires Suck! Twihards Rule!!! Myth and Meaning in the Twilight Saga Franchise. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 32(3), 240-250.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2013.811353>
- DONTNOD Entertainment. (2018). *Vampyr* [Steam]. Focus Entertainment.
- Drachman, J. (2019). *Found Family* [Honors Theses, Western Michigan University]. ScholarWorks@WMU. https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/3099/
- Draw Distance. (2019). *Vampire: The Masquerade – Coteries of New York* [Steam]. Draw Distance.
- Draw Distance. (2020). *Vampire: The Masquerade – Shadows of New York* [Steam]. Draw Distance.
- Duncker, P. (1996). Queer Gothic: Angela Carter and the lost narratives of sexual subversion. *Critical Survey*, 8(1), 58-68. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4155969>
- Duran, A., & Jones, S. R. (2020). Complicating Identity Exploration: An Intersectional Grounded Theory Centering Queer Students of Color at Historically White Institutions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 61(3), 281-297.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2020.0028>.

- Dynda, J. (2017). Rusalki: Anthropology of Time, Death, and Sexuality in Slavic Folklore
Rusalky: antropologie času, smrti a sexuality ve slovanském folkloru</br>. *Studia Mythologica Slavica*, 20, 83-109. <https://doi.org/10.3986/sms.v20i0.6662>
- Eadie, J. (2010). Queer. *Paragraph*, 17(3), 244-251. <https://doi.org/10.3366/para.1994.17.3.244>
- Eichmilller, J. M. (2020). "I'm Absolutely Ordinary": *Bella and Her Perception of Gender within Twilight* [Honors Thesis, Portland State University]. PDXScholar. <https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.978>
- Edwards L., Ahmed, L., Martinez, L., Huda, S., Shamasunder, B., McDonald, J. A., Dubrow, R., Morton, B., & Zota, A. R. (2022). Beauty Inside Out: Examining Beauty Product Use Among Diverse Women and Femme-Identifying Individuals in Northern Manhattan and South Bronx Through an Environmental Justice Framework. *Environmental Justice*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1089/env.2022.0053>
- Eklund, T. (2021). Uncanny, abject, mutant monster: From Frankenstein to Genderpunk. *The Australasian Journal of Popular Culture*, 10(1&2), 79-101. https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1386/ajpc_00040_1
- El Hazzouri, M., Main, K. J., & Sinclair, L. (2019). Out of the Closet: When Moral Identity and Protestant Work Ethic Improve Attitudes toward Advertising Featuring Same-Sex Couples. *Journal of Advertising*, 48(2), 181-196. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/00913367.2018.1518736>
- Elliott, J. (2016). Becoming The Monster: Queer Monstrosity and the Reclamation of the Werewolf in Slash Fandom. *Revenant*, 2, 91-110.
- Elliott-Smith, D. (2012). The Homosexual Vampire as a Metaphor For... the Homosexual Vampire?: True Blood, Homonormativity and Assimilation. In B. Cherry (Ed.), *True Blood: Investigating Vampires and Southern Gothic* (pp. 139-154). I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=1208981>
- Encarnación, O. G. (2021). The Politics of Gay Reparations. In, *The Case for Gay Reparations* (pp. 149-164). <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1093/oso/9780197535660.003.0006>
- Enriquez, S., & Lippert, A. (2020). Fandom and Sexuality in the Archives: Collecting Slash Fan Fiction and Yaoi/Boy's Love Manga. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 31(2), 182-201. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9qt0s96c>
- Erickson, G. (2023). Vampires: the undead challenge to religion. In, *Speculative Television and the Doing and Undoing of Religion*. Routledge. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=7052846>
- Erman, I. M. (2021). Sympathetic Vampires and Zombies with Brains: The Modern Monster as a Master of Self-Control. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 54(3), 594-612. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.13024>
- Fall, W. (2018a.). Spike Is Forgiven: The Sympathetic Vampire's Resonance with Rape Culture. *Slayage: The Journal of Whedon Studies*, 16(2), 70-86. https://www.whedonstudies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/26288593/5_fall_-_slayage_16.2.pdf
- Fall, W. (2018b.). Vampires: Reflections in a Dark Mirror. In K. Corstorphine, & L. R. Kremmel (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook to Horror Literature* (pp. 205-217). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5592908>

- Farrell, C. (2021, February 5). *Oscar Wilde & the Met Gala: The Aesthetic Embrace of Catholic Queerness*. Panoramic. https://www.panoramicthemagazine.com/post/iss03_oscar-wilde
- Faucon, L. B. (2019). THE “PERMEABLE I”/EYE: HYBRIB SUBJECTIVES IN TRUE BLOOD. *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 23(2), 65-80. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjfs.28.2.2018-0010>
- Fernández, R., & Parsa, S. (2021). Gay Politics Goes Mainstream: Democrats, Republicans and Same-sex Relationships. *Economica*, 89, 86-109. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecca.12404>
- Ferrari, F., & Mancini, T. (2020). Gender Binary Thêmata in Social Representations of Sexual Minorities: A Ten Year Scoping Review. *Sexuality & Culture*, 24, 2202-2229. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1007/s12119-020-09716-6>
- Fielder, J. D. (2022). The Monsters Among Us: Realism and Constructivism in Vampire: The Masquerade. In, D. K. Picariello (Ed.), *The Politics of Horror* (pp. 73-87). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1007/978-3-030-42015-4_6
- Firestone, A. (2014). “*Is That What You Dream About? Being a Monster?*”: *Bella Swan and the Construction of the Monstrous-Feminine in The Twilight Saga* [Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida]. Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/5217/>
- First Bite Games. (n.d.). *First Bite: Bad Blood*. <https://www.firstbitegames.com/badblood>
- First Bite Games. (2022). *First Bite Games* [Steam]. First Bite Games.
- First Bite Games. (2023). *First Bite – Bad Blood* [Steam]. First Bite Games.
- Fitch, K. (2015). Promoting the Vampire Rights Amendment: Public relations, postfeminism and True Blood. *Public Relations Review*, 41(5), 607-614. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.02.029>
- Flores, W. (2018). Kink as Praxis: Tying Up Sex with Queer and Cultural Rhetorics. *PRE/TEXT: A journal of Rhetorical Theory*, 81-98.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>
- Francis, I. (2021). FICTION AND FILM ANALYSIS: Homonormativity and queer love story in Love, Simon (2018) and Happiest Season (2020). *Women’s Studies Journal*, 35(1), 80-93. <https://search-ebshost-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=anh&AN=154724854&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Gaines, J. H. (2001). Lilith. Seductress, heroine or murderer?. *Bible Review*, 17(5), 12-20.
- Galea, N., Powell, A., & Salignac, F. (2022). The role of homosociality in maintaining men’s powerfulness in construction companies. *Construction Management and Economics*, 41(2), 172-182. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/01446193.2022.2151025>
- Game Grumps. (2017). *Dream Daddy: A Dad Dating Simulator* [Steam]. Game Grumps.
- Gelder, K. (1994a.). VAMPIRES IN GREECE: BRYON AND POLIDORI. In, *Reading the Vampire* (pp. 24-41). Taylor & Francis Group. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=178325>
- Gelder, K. (1994b.). ETHNIC VAMPIRES: TRANSYLVANIA AND BEYOND. In, *Reading the Vampire* (pp. 1-23). Taylor & Francis Group. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=178325>

- Gelder, K. (1994c.). VAMPIRES AND THE UNCANNY: LE FANU'S 'CARMILLA'. In, *Reading the Vampire* (pp. 42-64). Taylor & Francis Group.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=178325>
- Gelder, K. (1994d.). VAMPIRES IN THE (OLD) NEW WORLD: ANNE RICE'S VAMPIRE CHRONICLES. In, *Reading the Vampire* (pp. 108-123). Taylor & Francis Group.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=178325>
- Gelder, K. (1994e.). READING DRACULA. In, *Reading the Vampire* (pp. 86-107). Taylor & Francis Group. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=178325>
- Glamour. (2023, January 13). In *True Blood Wiki*.
<https://trueblood.fandom.com/wiki/Glamour?oldid=145931>
- Goddu, T. A. (1999). Vampire Gothic. *American Literary History*, 11(1), 125-141.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/490080>
- Gopp-Warner, M. (2023, September 15). *I Grew Up In A Homophobic World — Then Everybody In My Life Started Coming Out As Gay*. HuffPost.
https://www.huffpost.com/entry/evangelical-christian-coming-out-queer_n_64ecf515e4b0459c89002369
- Grady, W. (2018). Reflections on Yaoi space and Yaoi time: east and west, yesterday and tomorrow – an introduction. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 9(5), 414-417.
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/21504857.2018.1494021>
- Granger, K. (2021, July 15). 10 great LGBTIQA characters in games. *British Film Institute*.
<https://www.bfi.org.uk/lists/10-great-lgbtiqa-characters-games>
- Greene, T. (2020, December 7). 'Why do queer people want to ruin video games?' and other stupid questions answered. The Next Web. <https://thenextweb.com/news/why-do-queer-people-want-to-ruin-video-games-and-other-stupid-questions-answered>
- Groom, N. (2018a.). Introduction. In, *The Vampire: A New History* (pp. 1-20). Yale University Press. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5535505>
- Groom, N. (2018b.). The Count, Dracula: Smoke and Mirrors – Pen, Paint and Blood. In, *The Vampire: A New History* (pp. 169-192). Yale University Press.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5535505>
- Groom, N. (2018c.). Bleeding Gold: Gothic Capitalism and Undead Consumerism. In, *The Vampire: A New History* (pp. 147-168). Yale University Press.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5535505>
- Groom, N. (2018d.). The Cultures of Death: Gothic Romanticism, Deathly Words. In, *The Vampire: A New History* (pp. 97-117). Yale University Press.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5535505>
- Groom, N. (2018e.). The Count, Dracula: Smoke and Mirrors – Pen, Paint and Blood. In, *The Vampire: A New History* (pp. 169-192). Yale University Press.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5535505>
- Groom, N. (2018f.). Mortal Pathologies: Being Bestial, Living Lies. In, *The Vampire: A New History* (pp. 118-146). Yale University Press.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5535505>
- Groom, N. (2018g.). Conclusion: Crawling and Creeping – Living with Vampires. In, *The Vampire: A New History* (pp. 193-206). Yale University Press.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5535505>

- Haddad, V. L. (2022). Bram Stoker's Dracula and Video Game Narratives: Pandemic Themes in Covid Times. *Interlitteraria*, 27(1), 47-56. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.12697/IL.2022.27.1.5>
- Hagen, J. (2020). Are Queer Games Bringing "Diversity" to the Mainstream Industry?. In B. Ruberg (Ed.), *The Queer Games Avant-Garde: How LGBTQ Game Makers Are Reimagining the Medium of Video Games* (pp. 215-222). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1134cq5.28>
- Haggerty, G. E. (1998). Anne Rice and the Queering of Culture. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 32(1), 5-18. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.2307/1346054>
- Halman, L., & van Ingen, E. (2015). Secularization and Changing Moral Views: European Trends in Church Attendance and Views on Homosexuality, Divorce, Abortion, and Euthanasia. *European Sociological Review*, 31(5), 616-627. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44075400>
- Hammersley, M., & Gomm, R. (1997). Bias in Social Research. *Sociological Research Online*, 2(1), 7-19. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.55>
- Hansaruk, S. M. (2022). Indie Developers and the Queer Content Renaissance in Video Games, 2011-2017. *Major Papers*. <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/major-papers/203/>
- Hardwicke, C. (Director). (2008). *Twilight* [Film]. Temple Hill Entertainment; Maverick Films; Goldcrest Film Finance; Aura Films.
- Harper, G. W., & Schneider, M. (2003). Oppression and discrimination among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and Transgendered people and communities: a challenge for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 31(3-4), 243-52. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1023/A:1023906620085>
- Harris, C. (2001). *Dead Until Dark*. Ace Books.
- Hedrih, V. (2023, March 18). *New research uncovers the effects of facial scars on first impressions of attractiveness, confidence and friendliness*. PsyPost. <https://www.psypost.org/2023/03/new-research-uncovers-the-effects-of-facial-scars-on-first-impressions-of-attractiveness-confidence-and-friendliness>
- Heightened compulsion. (2023, May 23). In *Vampire Academy & Bloodlines Series Wiki*. https://vampireacademy.fandom.com/wiki/Heightened_compulsion?oldid=35005
- Hepatitis D. (2019, September 23). In *True Blood Wiki*. https://trueblood.fandom.com/wiki/Hepatitis_D?oldid=143317
- Hepatitis V. (2017, June 14). In *True Blood Wiki*. https://trueblood.fandom.com/wiki/Hepatitis_V?oldid=141681
- Heritage, F. (2021, March 11). *The 'gay button' in gaming: LGBTQ+ representation in videogames is often hidden – it shouldn't be*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/the-gay-button-in-gaming-lgbtq-representation-in-videogames-is-often-hidden-it-shouldnt-be-156694>
- Heritage, F. (2022). Politics, pronouns and the players: examining how videogame players react to the inclusion of a transgender character in World of Warcraft. *Gender and Language*, 16(1), 26-51. <https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.20250>
- HISTORY. (2020, April 25). *The UnxPlained: REAL VAMPIRES IN NEW ORLEANS (Season 1) | History* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dyr5is3Gihw&ab_channel=HISTORY

- Hobson, A. (2016). Dark Seductress: The Hypersexualization of the Female Vampire. In A. Hobson, & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), *Gender in the Vampire Narrative* (pp. 9-27). SensePublishers Rotterdam. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1007/978-94-6300-714-6>
- Howard, Y. (2018). INTRODUCTION: Ugliness, Underground, Queer Difference. In, *Ugly Differences: Queer Female Sexuality in the Underground* (pp. 1-25). University of Illinois Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctv3s8sr7.4>
- Howell, A. (2021). Vampire nostalgia. *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 35(2), 258-269. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/10304312.2021.1936830>
- Hu, J. (2016, May 16). *The Revolutionary Power of Fanfiction For Queer Youth*. Medium. <https://medium.com/the-establishment/the-importance-of-fanfiction-for-queer-youth-4ec3e85d7519>
- Hulan, H. (2017). Bury Your Gays: History, Usage, and Context. *McNair Scholars Journal*, 21(1), 17-27. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mcnair/vol21/iss1/6>
- Hutton, Z. (2018). Queering The Clown Prince of Crime: A Look at Queer Stereotypes as Signifiers In Dc Comics' The Joker [Master's thesis, Florida International University]. Florida International University Digital Commons. <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/3702/>
- ida. (2021). *Lesbian Vampire Simulator* [itch.io]. ida.
- Interactive Digital Narratives. (n.d.). *Close Playing Project*. <https://courses.digitaldavidson.net/games18/close-playing-project/>
- James, R. (2013). Oppression, Privilege, & Aesthetics: The Use of the Aesthetic in Theories of Race, Gender, and Sexuality, and the Role of Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Philosophical Aesthetics. *Philosophy Compass*, 8(2), 101-116. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12002>
- Johnson, C. (2002). Heteronormative Citizenship and the Politics of Passing. *Sexualities*, 5(3), 317-336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460702005003004>
- Jones, B. (2012). Buffy vs. Bella: Gender, Relationships and the Modern Vampire. In D. Mutch (Ed.), *The Modern Vampire and Human Identity* (pp. 37-54). Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=1109214>
- Jones, S. H., & Harris, A. (2016). Monsters, desire and the creative queer body. *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 30(5), 518-530. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2016.1210748>
- Jones, D., & Franklin, J. (2022, April 10). *Not just Florida. More than a dozen states propose so-called 'Don't Say Gay' bills*. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/10/1091543359/15-states-dont-say-gay-anti-transgender-bills>
- Jones, R., Johnson, M., Taylor, A., Rice, A., & Rice, C. (Executive Producers). (2022 -present). *Interview with the Vampire* [TV series]. Gran Via Productions; Dwight Street Book Club; AMC Studios.
- Jordan, N. (Director). (1994). *Interview with the Vampire* [Film]. The Geffen Film Company.
- Joshi, Y. (2012). Respectable Queerness. *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, 43(2), 415-467. <https://www.corteidh.or.cr/tablas/r28485.pdf>

- Kain. (2022, November 9). In *Legacy of Kain Wiki*.
<https://legacyofkain.fandom.com/wiki/Kain?oldid=198078>
- Kane, K. (2010). A Very Queer Refusal: The Chilling Effect of the Cullen' Heteronormative Embrace. In M. A. Click, J. S. Aubrey, & E. Behm-Morawitz (Eds.), *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media & the Vampire Franchise* (pp. 103-118). Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Keft-Kennedy, V. (2008). Fantasising Masculinity in Buffyverse Slash Fiction: Sexuality, Violence, and the Vampire. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 49-80.
<https://doi.org/10.35360/njes.74>
- Khader, J. (2013). Will the Real Robert Neville Please, Come Out? Vampirism, the Ethics of Queer Monstrosity, and Capitalism in Richard Matheson's I Am Legend?. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(4), 532-557. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/00918369.2013.735934>
- Kirkland, E. (2012). Whiteness, Vampires and Humanity in Contemporary Film and Television. In D. Mutch (Ed.), *The Modern Vampire and Human Identity* (pp. 93-110). Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=1109214>
- Kirtley, B. F. (1956). "Dracula," the Monastic and Slavic Folklore. *Midwest Folklore*, 6(3), 133-139. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4317579>
- Kim, K. (2017). Queer-coded Villains (And Why You Should Care). *Dialogues@RU*, 12, 156-165.
- King, M. (1993). Contemporary Women Writers and the "New Evil": The Vampires of Anne Rice and Suzy McKee Charnas. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 5(3), 75-84.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43308165>
- Kinkly. (2018, April 2). *Vampirism*. <https://www.kinkly.com/definition/12464/vampirism>
- Konami. (1986). *Castlevania* [Nintendo Entertainment System]. Konami.
- Konami. (n.d.a.). *PAST PRODUCTS: VAMPIRE KILLER*.
https://www.konami.com/games/castlevania/eu/en/page/history_1986_msx2#history-detail-top
- Konami. (n.d.b.). *HISTORY*. <https://www.konami.com/games/castlevania/eu/en/history>
- Konami. (n.d.c.). *PAST PRODUCTS: Castlevania Lords of Shadow*.
https://www.konami.com/games/castlevania/eu/en/page/history_2010_los#history-detail-top
- Konami. (n.d.d.). *PAST PRODUCTS: Castlevania Lords of Shadow 2*.
https://www.konami.com/games/castlevania/eu/en/page/history_2014_los2#history-detail-top
- Koscieszka, A. J. (2023). The Moral Service of Trans NPCs: Examining the Roles of Transgender Non-Player Characters in Role-Playing Video Games. *Games and Culture*, 18(2), 189-208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120221088118>
- Kowalski, D. A. (2018). Visions of the Soul: Looking Back on Buffy and Angel. *Slayage: The Journal of Whedon Studies*, 16(2), 130-160.
https://www.whedonstudies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/26288593/8_kowalski_slayage_16.2.pdf

- Krestan, J. A., & Bepko, C. S. (1980). The Problem of Fusion in the Lesbian Relationship. *Family Process*, 19(3), 277-289. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1980.00277.x>
- Kretzschmar, M., & Salter, A. (2020). Party Ghosts and Queer Teen Wolves: Monster Prom and Resisting Heteronormativity in Dating Simulators. *FDG '20: Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games*, 1-8. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1145/3402942.3402975>
- Kumar, N. (2019, August 19). *For Queer Men of Color, Pressure to Have a Perfect Body Is About Race Too*. Them. <https://www.them.us/story/queer-poc-body-image>
- Labre, M. P., & Duke, L. (2004). “Nothing Like a Brisk Walk and a Spot of Demon Slaughter to Make a Girl’s Night”: The Construction of the Female Hero in the Buffy Video Game. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 28(2), 138-156. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859903261795>
- Lamont, E. (2017). “WE CAN WRITE THE SCRIPTS OURSELVES”: Queer Challenges to Heteronormative Courtship Practices. *Gender and Society*, 31(5), 624-646. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1177/0891243217723883>
- Lankoski, P., & Björk, S. (2015). Formal analysis of gameplay. *Game Research Methods*, 23-35. <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/13581>
- Lau, K. J. (2018). The Vampire, the Queer, and the Girl: Reflections on the Politics and Ethics of Immortality’s Gendering. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 44(1), 3-24. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/4-23.10.1086/698274>
- Laycock, J. (2010). Real Vampires as an Identity Group: Analyzing Causes and Effects of an Introspective Survey by the Vampire Community. *Nova Religion: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 14(1), 4-23. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1525/nr.2010.14.1.4>
- Le Fanu, J. S. (2021a.). *Carmilla*. Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/10007/10007-h/10007-h.htm>
- Le Fanu, J. S. (2021b.). Prologue. In, *Carmilla*. Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/10007/10007-h/10007-h.htm>
- Leavenworth, M. L. (2012). “What are you?” Fear, desire, and disgust in the Southern Vampire Mysteries and True Blood. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 11(3), 36-54. <https://doi.org/10.35360/njes.264>
- LeCompte, M. D. (1987). Bias in the Biography: Bias and Subjectivity in Ethnographic Research. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 18 (1), 43-52. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3216340>
- Legacy of Kain. (2023, February 16). In *Giant Bomb*. <https://www.giantbomb.com/legacy-of-kain/3025-445/>
- Lehtinen, K. (2004). Twentieth-Century Vampire Literature: Intimations of Evil and Power. In R. Hamilton., & M. S. Breen (Eds.), *This Thing of Darkness* (pp. 1-9). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401201001_006
- Lenz, R. (2012, August 25). *DEMONIZING HOMOSEXUALITY, AGAIN*. Southern Poverty Law Center. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2012/demonizing-homosexuality-again>

- Li, D. D., Liao, A. K., & Khoo, A. (2013). Player-Avatar Identification in video gaming: Concept and measurement. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(1), 257-263. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.09.002>
- Liam de Lioncourt. (2023, June 25). In *Monster Prom Wiki*. https://monster-prom.fandom.com/wiki/Liam_de_Lioncourt?oldid=9233
- Limpár, I. (2018). Masculinity, Visibility, and the Vampire Literary Tradition in What We Do in the Shadows. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 29(2), 266-288. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26627624>
- Love, H. (2014). Queer. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1(1-2), 172-176. <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2399938>
- Love, H. (2021). Doing Being Deviant. In, *Underdogs: Social Deviance and Queer Theory* (pp. 136-160). University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226761244.003.0005>
- Lovelock, K. (2017). Acceptance, humanity and emotional excess: The politics of queer suffering in Big Brother UK. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20(4), 449-463. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549415603377>
- Lundberg, E. (2015). “Let Me Bite You Again”: Vampiric Agency in Octavia Butler’s Fledgling. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 21(4), 561-584. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/article/595594>
- MacDonald, K. (2022, July 27). *Meet the gaymers: why queer representation is exploding in video games*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/games/2022/jul/27/meet-the-gaymers-why-queer-representation-is-exploding-in-video-games>
- Maddison, S. (2015). Is the Queen Dead? Effeminacy, Homosociality and the Post-Homophobic Queer. *Key Words: A Journal of Cultural Materialism*, 15, 39-56. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26920383>
- Maly, I., & Varis, P. (2016). The 21st-century hipster: On micro-populations in times of superdiversity. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 19(6). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549415597920>
- Marche, S. (2009). *What’s Really Going on With All These Vampires?.* Esquire. <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a6368/vampires-gay-men-1109/>
- Martens, A., Johns, M., Greenberg, J., & Schimel, J. (2006). Running head: STEREOTYPE THREAT AND SELF-AFFIRMATION. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 42, 236-243.
- Martinez, A. (2022, November 22). How political rhetoric factors into violence against the LGBTQ community [Interview]. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/22/1138555795/how-political-rhetoric-factors-into-violence-against-the-lgbtq-community>
- McAlister, J., Parnell, C., & Trinidad, A. A. (2020). #RomanceClass: Genre World, Intimate Public, Found Family. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 36, 403-417. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1007/s12109-020-09733-1>
- McClure, A. (2020). Algorithms, Accidents, and the Queerness of Abstraction. In B. Ruberg (ed.), *The Queer Games Avant-Garde: How LGBTQ Game Makers Are Reimagining the Medium of Video Games* (pp. 73-80). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1134cq5.11>

- McConnell, E. A., Birkett, M. A., & Mustanski, B. (2015). Typologies of Social Support and Associations with Mental Health Outcomes Among LGBT Youth. *LGBT Health*, 2(1), 55-61. <https://doi.org/10.1089/lgbt.2014.0051>
- McFarland, J. (2013). Triangulated desire in Meyer's Twilight: A Queer Dynamic. *Journal of Dracula Studies*, 15(2), 23-46. <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/dracula-studies/vol15/iss1/2>
- McFarland, J. (2016). Resuscitating the Undead Queer in Stephanie Meyer's Twilight Saga. *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, 5(2), 1-22. <https://www.jprstudies.org/2016/07/resuscitating-the-undead-queer-in-stephanie-meyers-twilight-sagaby-jami-mcfarland/>
- McLelland, M. (2014). The World of Yaoi: The Internet, Censorship and the Global 'Boys' Love' Fandom. *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 23(1), 61-77. <https://doi.org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/13200968.2005.10854344>
- McLeod, J. A. (2010a.). Ancient Vampires. In, *Vampires: A Bite-Sized History* (pp. 12-46). Murdoch Books. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=862812>
- McLeod, J. A. (2010b.). The Vampire Plague. In, *Vampires: A Bite-Sized History* (pp. 75-106). Murdoch Books. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=862812>
- McLeod, J. A. (2010c.). Introduction. In, *Vampires: A Bite-Sized History* (pp. 7-11). Murdoch Books. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=862812>
- McLeod, J. A. (2010d.). Dracula Released. In, *Vampires: A Bite-Sized History* (pp. 107-133). Murdoch Books. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=862812>
- McNamara, B. (2017, June 30). *How to Handle One Parent's Rejection After Coming Out as Queer*. Teen Vogue. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/how-to-handle-parent-rejection-after-coming-out>
- Mejdrih, A. P. (2018). *Blurring the Spectrum: Exploring Queer Conservatism* [Master's thesis, Eastern Illinois University]. The Keep. <https://thekeep.eiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4735&context=theses>
- Mejeur, C., & Ho, X. (2022, October 14). QUEER LIVES ARE NOT SIDE QUESTS. *Public Books*. <https://www.publicbooks.org/queer-representation-videogames/>
- Melnic, V. (2018). The Remediation of the Epic in Digital Games: The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. *American, British and Canadian Studies Journal*, 30(1), 153-170. <https://doi.org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.2478/abcsj-2018-0009>
- Melton, J. G., & Hornick, A. (2015a.). Folklore and History. In, *The Vampire in Folklore, History, Literature, Film and Television: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (pp. 39-61). McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=862812>
- Melton, J. G., & Hornick, A. (2015b.). Vampires and Vampirism: General Sources. In, *The Vampire Folklore, History, Literature, Film and Television: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (pp. 23-38). McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=862812>
- Melton, J. G., & Hornick, A. (2015c.). Vampires on Stage and Screen. In, *The Vampire Folklore, History, Literature, Film and Television: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (pp. 135-197). McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=862812>

- Melton, J. G., & Hornick, A. (2015d.). Vampires on Television. In, *The Vampire Folklore, History, Literature, Film and Television: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (pp. 198-291). McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=862812>
- Melton, J. G., & Hornick, A. (2015e.). The Metaphorical Vampire. In, *The Vampire Folklore, History, Literature, Film and Television: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (pp. 304-334). McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=862812>
- Melton, J. G. (2022a.). Origins of the Vampire. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/origins_of_the_vampire/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022b.). The Rural Transylvania to Ruler of the World's Vampires. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/from_rural_transylvania_to_ruler_of_the_world_s_vampires/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022c.). Dracula the Legend. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/dracula_the_legend/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022d.). Vampires through the Centuries. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/vampires_through_the_centuries/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022e.). Political/Economic Vampires. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/political_economic_vampires/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022f.). Christianity and Vampires. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/christianity_and_vampires/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022g.). Central and Eastern Europe. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/central_and_eastern_europe/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022h.). Real Vampires. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/real_vampires/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022i.). Dracula, the Novel. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/dracula_the_novel/0?institutionId=5349

- Melton, J. G. (2022j.). Carmilla. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
<https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/carmilla/0?institutionId=5349>
- Melton, J. G. (2022k.). Coleridge, Samuel Taylor (1773-1834). In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/coleridge_samuel_taylor_1773_1834/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022l.). The Vampire Chronicles by Anne Rice. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/the_vampire_chronicles_by_anne_rice/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022m.). Homosexuality and the Vampire. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/homosexuality_and_the_vampire/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022n.). Buffy the Vampire Slayer Television Series. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/buffy_the_vampire_slayer_television_series/0?institutionId=5349
- Melton, J. G. (2022o.). Games. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
<https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/games/0?institutionId=5349>
- Melton, J. G. (2022p.). Vampire: The Masquerade. In, *The Vampire Almanac: The Complete History*. Visible Ink Press.
https://networkservices.aut.ac.nz/ezproxy.cgi?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/vipvampire/vampire_the_masquerade/0?institutionId=5349
- Mercury Steam, & Climax Studios. (2013.). *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow* [Steam]. Konami Digital Entertainment.
- Mercury Steam. (2014a.). *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow – Mirror of Fate* [Steam]. Konami Digital Entertainment.
- Mercury Steam. (2014b.). *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2* [Steam]. Konami Digital Entertainment.
- Meyer, S. (2005). *Twilight*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Meyer, S. (2020). *Midnight Sun*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Miceli, M. S. (2005). Morality Politics vs. Identity Politics: Framing Processes and Competition among Christian Right and Gay Social Movement Organizations. *Sociological Forum*, 20(4), 589-612. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4540917>
- Mind Compulsion. (2022, November 7). In *The Vampire Diaries Wiki*.
https://vampirediaries.fandom.com/wiki/Mind_Compulsion?oldid=2824603
- Mislán, C., & Ashley, R. R. (2018). Black(er)face and Post-Racialism: Employing Racial Difference and “Progressive” Primitivism Online. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 11(2), 247-264. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcy007>

- monsterprom. (2020, September 24). *MONSTER CAMP – DMITRI The Dark Side has never been so... shirtless...* [Image attached] [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/monsterprom/status/1308826167915491330/photo/1>
- Morrison, M. (2015). "Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid": The "Dignity of Queer Shame". *Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature*, 48(1), 17-32. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mos.2015.0012>
- Muñoz, J. E. (2015). Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms: The Sense of Brownness. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 21(2-3), 209-248. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/article/581600>
- Munt, S. R. (2017). Queer Irish Sodomites: The Shameful Histories of Edmund Burke, William Smith, Theodosius Reed, the Earl of Castlehaven and Diverse Servants – Among Others. In, *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (pp. 31-54). Ashgate Publishing. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=dGdQDwAAQBAJ&lpg=PP1&ots=s-oKh0D3A5&dq=queer%20shame&lr&pg=PR4#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Murnau, F. W. (Director). (1922). *Nosferatu* [Film]. Prana Film.
- Muzacz, A. K. (2021). Expressions of Queer Intimacy: BDSM and Kink as Means of Self-Actualization. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678211022638>
- Nadal, K. L., King, R., Sissoko, G., Floyd, N., & Kines, D. (2021). The legacies of systemic and internalized oppression: Experiences of microaggressions, imposter phenomenon, and stereotype threat on historically marginalized groups. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 63, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2021.100895>
- Nash, C. J., & Gorman-Murray, A. (2014). LGBT Neighbourhoods and 'New Mobilities': Towards Understanding Transformations in Sexual and Gendered Urban Landscapes. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(3), 756-772. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12104>
- Naughty Dog. (2020). *The Last of Us Part II*. Sony Interactive Entertainment.
- Newitz, A. (2008, November 2). *Let's Face It: "True Blood" Hates Gay People*. Gizmodo. <https://gizmodo.com/lets-face-it-true-blood-hates-gay-people-5071755>
- Nihilistic Software. (2000). *Vampire: The Masquerade – Redemption* [Steam]. Activision.
- Oakenfull, G. K., & Greenlee, T. B. (2005). Queer eye for a gay guy: Using market-specific symbols in advertising to attract gay consumers without alienating the mainstream. *Psychology & Marketing*, 22(5), 421-439. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1002/mar.20066>
- Ogilvie, T. (2021). *Skyrim Marriage Options Guide and List of All Romance Candidates – IGN*. IGN. <https://www.ign.com/articles/skyrim-marriage-options-guide-list-of-all-romance-candidates-followers>
- Oinas, F. (1998). East European Vampires. In A. Dundes (Eds.), *The Vampire: A Casebook* (pp. 47-56). The University of Wisconsin Press. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=PpTWQDc0dqEC&lpg=PR5&ots=jyvyK-t5Zs&dq=The%20Vampire%3A%20A%20Casebook%20&lr&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- O’Riordan, K., & Phillips, D. J. (2007). Introduction. In, *Queer Online: Media Technology & Sexuality* (pp. 1-12). Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

- Palfy, C. (2016). Anti-hero Worship: The Emergence of the “Byronic hero” Archetype in the Nineteenth Century. *Indiana Theory Review*, 32(1-2), 161-198. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.2979/inditheorevi.32.2.05>
- Panella, A. C. (2020). Queering Aesthetics: Why Maximalism Matters. *Kaleidoscope*, 19, 1-13. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=159945804&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Pannucci, C. J., & Wilkins, E. G. (2010). Identifying and Avoiding Bias in Research. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, 126(2), 619-625. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PRS.0b013e3181de24bc>
- Pardie, L., & Herb, C. R. (1997). Merger and Fusion in Lesbian Relationships: A Problem of Diagnosing What’s Wrong in Terms of What’s Right. *Women & Therapy*, 20(3), 51-61. https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1300/J015v20n03_04
- Park, M. (2018). *The Aesthetics and Psychology Behind Horror Films* [Undergraduate Honors Theses, Long Island University]. https://digitalcommons.liu.edu/post_honors_theses/31/
- Pelurson, G. (2022). Introduction. In, *Manifestations of Queerness in Video Games* (pp. vii-xxi). Taylor & Francis Group. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=6998322>
- Plec, J., MacIntyre, M., Cummins, E., DeFrehn, E., Montford, S., Murphy, D., & Nayar, D. (Executive Producers). (2022). *Vampire Academy* [TV series]. Angry Films Entertainment; Kintop Pictures; My So-Called Company; Big Whoop Productions Inc.; Universal Television.
- Polidori, J. W. (2012). *The Vampyre; A Tale*. Project Gutenberg. <https://gutenberg.org/files/6087/6087-h/6087-h.htm>
- Pollard, M. (2021, July 2). *Catholic Gilt: The Decadent Kitsch of Religion and the Queer Artists Subverting It*. Elephant. <https://elephant.art/catholic-gilt-the-decadent-kitsch-of-religion-and-the-queer-artists-subverting-it-02072021/>
- poncle. (2022). *Vampire Survivors* [Steam]. poncle.
- Priest, H. (2011). ‘Hell! Was I Becoming a Vampyre Slut?’: Sex, Sexuality and Morality in Young Adult Vampire Fiction. In D. Mutch (Ed.), *The Modern Vampire and Human Identity* (pp. 55-75). Palgrave Macmillan UK. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=1109214>
- Pugh, T. (2013). Florence King’s Queer Conservatism and the Gender Politics of Southern Humor. *The Mississippi Quarterly*, 66(4), 583-610. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26467264>
- Reczek, R., & Smith, E. B. (2021). How LGBTQ Adults Maintain Ties with Rejecting Parents: Theorizing “Conflict Work” as Family Work. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 83(4), 1134-1153. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12765>
- Reid, G. (2021, August 13). Political Homophobia Ramps Up. *Opinio Juris*. <http://opiniojuris.org/2021/08/12/political-homophobia-ramps-up/>
- Rein-Hagen, M. (1991). *Vampire: The Masquerade* [Tabletop Role-Playing Game]. White Wolf Publishing.

- Reymann-Schneider, K. (2018, December 13). *A mixed bag in the portrayal of LGBTQs in video games*. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/en/a-mixed-bag-in-the-portrayal-of-lgbtqs-in-video-games/a-46699812>
- Rice, A. (1976). *Interview with the Vampire*. Knopf.
- Riess, J. (2009). Book of Mormon Stories That Steph Meyer Tells to Me: LDS Themes in the Twilight Saga and “The Host”. *Brigham Young University Studies*, 48(3), 141-147. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43044736>
- Riggle, E. D. B. (2017). Ostracism as a framework for understanding LGBT well-being and risk (*Working Paper, January 7, 2017*). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324827136_Ostracism_as_a_framework_for_understanding_LGBT_well-being_and_risk
- Risley, M. (2023, June 21). *Pride And Prejudice: Queer Suffering In Media*. Trill! Mag. <https://www.trillmag.com/culture/pride-and-prejudice-queer-suffering-in-media/>
- Ritchie, V. [verilybitchie]. (2021, June 12). *A Bisexual History of Dracula* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2nZVArY0U0&t=1015s&ab_channel=verilybitchie
- Rivers, J. W. (2019). Performing Critique: Queer Video Games as Critical Method. *On Culture: the Open Journal for the Study of Culture*, 7, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.22029/oc.2019.1161>
- Robbins, B. (2021). “The Straight Queer”: Hipster Appropriation in the Work of James Franco. In H. Steinhoff (Ed.), *Hipster Culture: Transnational and Intersectional Perspectives* (pp. 215-234). Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=PKRCEAAAQBAJ&lpg=PP1&ots=IBSStdSaZo&dq=Hipster%20Culture%3A%20Transnational%20and%20Intersectional%20Perspectives%20&lr&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Robinson, S., White, A., & Anderson, E. (2019). Privileging the Bromance: A Critical Appraisal of Romantic and Bromantic Relationships. *Men and Masculinities*, 22(5), 850-871. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17730386>
- Roden, F. S. (2018). The Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 5(3), 204-217. <https://doi.org/10.14321/qed.5.3.0204>
- Romano, A. (2016, December 21). *Horror movies reflect cultural fears*. In 2016, Americans feared invasion. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2016/12/21/13737476/horror-movies-2016-invasion>
- Rouse, L., & Stanfill, M. (2023, February 22). *OVER*FLOW: FAN DEMOGRAPHICS ON ARCHIVE OF OUR OWN*. Flow Journal. <https://www.flowjournal.org/2023/02/fan-demographics-on-ao3/>
- Ruberg, B., & Phillips, A. (2018). Not Gay as in Happy: Queer Resistance and Video Games (Introduction). *Game Studies*, 18(3). https://gamestudies.org/1803/articles/phillips_ruberg
- Ruberg, B. (2019). Introduction. In, *Video Games Have Always Been Queer* (pp. 1-30). New York University Press. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5703270>

- Ruberg, B. (2022a.) Hungry Holes and Insatiable Balls: Video Games, Queer Mechanics, and the Limits of Design. *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, 61(3), 107-128. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2022.0026>
- Ruberg, B. (2022b.). After agency: The queer posthumanism of video games that cannot be played. *Convergence: The international Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 28(2), 413-430. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565221094257>
- Salter, A., Blodgett, B., & Sullivan, A. (2018). “Just because it’s gay?”: transgressive design in queer coming of age visual novels. *FDG '18: Proceedings of the 13th International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games*, 1-9. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1145/3235765.3235778>
- Sandel, M. J. (1989). Moral Argument and Liberal Toleration: Abortion and Homosexuality. *California Law Review*, 77(3), 521-538. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.2307/3480558>
- Schaufert, B. (2018). Daddy’s Play: Subversion and Normativity in Dream Daddy’s Queer World. *Game Studies*, 3. https://gamestudies.org/1803/articles/braidon_schaufert
- Schept, S. (2021). Lilith: A Rabbinic Projection of the Demonic Female. *Psychological Perspectives*, 64(2), 189-200. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/00332925.2021.1959206>
- Schlatter, E. (2010, November 4). *18 ANTI-GAY GROUPS AND THEIR PROPAGANDA*. The Southern Poverty Law Center. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2010/18-anti-gay-groups-and-their-propaganda>
- Schotten, C. H. (2018). Nietzsche and Emancipatory Politics: Queer Theory as Anti-Mortality. *Critical Sociology*, 45(2), 213-226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920517752071>
- Sedgwick, E. K. (2015). Introduction. In, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (pp. 1-20). Columbia University Press. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=4012157>
- Shapiro, M. R. M. (2019). The Temptation of Legitimacy: Lilith’s Adoption and Adaption in Contemporary Feminist Spirituality and Their Meanings. *Modern Judaism*, 39(2), 125-143. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1093/mj/kjz003>
- Shaw, A., Lauteria, E. W., Yang, H., Persaud, C. J., & Cole, A. M. (2019). Counting Queerness in Games: Trends in LGBTQ Digital Game Representation. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 1544-1569. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=139171777&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Shea, B. (2009). To Bite or Not to Bite: Twilight, Immortality, and the Meaning of Life. In R. Housel, & J. J. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Twilight and Philosophy: Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality* (pp. 79-93). Wiley-Blackwell. https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=KXOUiGfJ8_oC&lpg=PR11&ots=wu9RYHNXhN&dq=Twilight%20and%20Philosophy%3A%20Vampires%2C%20Vegetarians%2C%20and%20the%20Pursuit%20of%20Immortality&lr&pg=PR11#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Sicardi, A. (2019, March 17). *The Queer Person’s Guide to Feeling Beautiful in an Ugly World*. Out. <https://www.out.com/commentary/2019/3/17/queer-persons-guide-feeling-beautiful-ugly-world#toggle-gdpr>

- Siegel, G. (1996). Balkan Culture as Revealed in Legends of Vampires and Spirits: Folklore of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. *CEA Critic*, 59(1), 51-59. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44378294>
- Silver, A. (2010). Twilight is Not Good for Maidens: Gender, Sexuality, and the Family in Stephanie Meyer's Twilight Series. *Studies in the Novel*, 42(1&2), 121-138. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/392762/pdf>
- Silverio, S. A., Wilkinson, C., & Wilkinson, S. (2021). The Male Gaze or Male Gays? From Romance to Bromance through Performances of Gender and Sexuality by two of *Love Island's* Favourite Characters. *Sexuality & Culture*, 25, 1990-2009. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-021-09860-7>
- Simón, A. (1998). EMOTIONAL STABILITY PERTAINING TO THE GAME VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE. *Psychological Reports*, 83, 732-734. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/doi/pdf/10.2466/pr0.1998.83.2.732>
- Skyrim:Vampire. (2022, May 10). In *The Unofficial Elder Scrolls Pages*. <https://en.uesp.net/w/index.php?title=Skyrim:Vampire&oldid=2614293>
- Skyrim:Vampirism. (2023, April 14). In *The Unofficial Elder Scrolls Pages*. <https://en.uesp.net/w/index.php?title=Skyrim:Vampirism&oldid=2776072>
- Smith, J. L. (2016). *Fashioning the gothic female body : the representation of women in three of Tim Burton's films* [Master's dissertation, University of South Africa]. Core. <https://api.core.ac.uk/oai/oai:uir.unisa.ac.za:10500/22190>
- Sommers, J. M., & Hume, A. L. (2011). The Other Edward: Twilight's Queer Construction of the Vampire as an Idealized Teenage Boyfriend. In G. L. Anatol (Ed.), *Bringing Light to Twilight: Perspectives on the Pop Cultural Phenomenon* (pp. 153-168). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=729859>
- Sotto, S. K. (2012). Queerness. In S. Bost & F. Aparicio (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature* (pp. 75-83). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203097199-9/queerness-sandra-soto>
- Sousa, A. M. (2020). She's Not Your Waifu; She's an Eldritch Abomination: Saya no uta and Queer Antisociality in Japanese Visual Novels. *Mechademia*, 13(1), 72-100. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/772393>
- Speciale, M., & Khambatta, D. (2020). Kinky & Queer: Exploring the Experiences of LGBTQ+ Individuals who Practice BDSM. *Journal of:GBT Issues in COounseling*, 14(4), 341-361. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/15538605.2020.1827476>
- Sprott, R. A., & Hadcock, B. B. (2017). Bisexuality, pansexuality, queer identity, and kink identity. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 33(2), 214-232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2017.1347616>
- Sprott, R. A., Vivid, J., Vilkin, E., Lev, E. M., Orejudos, J., & Schnittman, D. (2021). A queer boundary: How sex and BDSM interact for people who identity as kinky. *Sexualities*, 24(5-6), 708-732. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460720944594>
- Stang, S. (2018). Shrieking, Biting, and Licking: The Monstrous-Feminine in Video Games. *Press Start*, 4(2), 18-34. <http://press-start.gla.ac.uk/index.php/press-start/article/view/85/68>

- Stang, S. (2022). Too close, too intimate, and too vulnerable: close reading methodology and the future of feminist game studies. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 39(3), 230-238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2022.2080851>
- Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska, A. (2021). Pangs of Pleasure, Pangs of Guilt: Girls, Sexuality and Desire. In, *Girls in Contemporary Vampire Fiction* (pp. 123-168). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1007/978-3-030-71744-5_4
- Staples, L. (2021, July 24). *From Leather Daddies To 'Drag Race', Dissecting The Revolutionary History Of The Queer Aesthetic*. Vogue. <https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and-lifestyle/article/history-of-the-queer-aesthetic>
- Steinhoff, H. (2021). Hipster Culture: A Definition. In, *Hipster Culture: Transnational and Intersectional Perspectives* (pp. 1-24). Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=PKRCEAAAQBAJ&lpg=PP1&ots=IBSStdSaZo&dq=Hipster%20Culture%3A%20Transnational%20and%20Intersectional%20Perspectives%20&lr&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Stevenson, J. A. (1988). A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of *Dracula*. *PMLA*, 103(2), 139-149. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.2307/462430>
- Stoker, B. (1897). *Dracula*. Apple Books Classics.
- Stryker, S. (2015). Transing the Queer (In)Human. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 21(2-3), 227-230. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/article/581600>
- Stuart, T. M. (2018). Out of Time: Queer Temporality and Eugenic Monstrosity. *Victorian Studies*, 60(2), 218-227. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.2979/victorianstudies.60.2.07>
- Stunlock Studios. (2022). *V Rising* [Steam]. Stunlock Studios.
- Švelch, J. (2013). Monsters by the numbers: Controlling monstrosity in video games. In M. Levina, & D. M. T. Bui (Eds.), *Monster Culture in the 21st Century* (pp. 193-208). Bloomsbury Academic. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=1190702>
- Svobodová, T. (2022). *The Queer Outcasts: Three Decades of Queer-Coded Characters in Mainstream Animation* [Bachelor's thesis, Masarykova University]. https://is.muni.cz/th/y213w/495619_The_Queer_Outcasts.pdf
- Swanborn, P. G. (2010). What is a case study?. In, *Case Study Research: What, Why and How* (pp. 1-23). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526485168>
- Taylor, L. (2020). What's So Queer About Morality?. *The Journal of Ethics*, 24, 11-29.
- Teressa, C. M. (2021, December 28). *Vampyr: Every Ending And How To Get Them*. TheGamer. <https://www.thegamer.com/vampyr-how-trigger-every-ending/>
- Thompson, M. S., & Keith V. M. (2001). THE BLACKER THE BERRY: Gender, Skin Tone, Self-Esteem, and Self-Efficacy. *Gender & Society*, 15(3), 336-357. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1177/089124301015003002>
- Thornton, R. (2022). "Found Family Versus Blood Family in Station 19 Season 4" Is Blood Thicker Than Water??. *The Undergraduate Research Journal of Christopher Newport University*, 16, 314-327.
- Those Awesome Guys. (2018, February 15). *Monster Prom | Teaser Trailer* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irmJnmGJUPY&ab_channel=ThoseAwesomeGuys

- Thumma, S. (1991). Negotiating a Religious Identity: The Case of the Gay Evangelical. *Religious Movements and Social Movements*, 52(4), 333-347. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3710850>
- Tompkins, J. E., Lynch, T., Van Driel, I. I., & Fritz, N. (2020). Kawaii Killers and Femme Fatales: A Textual Analysis of Female Characters Signifying Benevolent and Hostile Sexism in Video Games. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Music*, 64(2), 236-254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2020.1718960>
- Troika Games. (2004). *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* [Steam]. Activision.
- Turner, S. (2016). *Yaoi online : the queer and affective practices of a Yaoi manga fan community* [Doctoral thesis, Birkbeck University of London]. BIROn – Birkbeck Institutional Research Online. <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/40166/>
- Vampire. (2022, October 25). In *The Vampire Chronicles Wiki*. <https://vampirechronicles.fandom.com/wiki/Vampire?oldid=10013>
- van den Berg, E. (2016). 'The closet': A dangerous heteronormative space. *South African Review of Sociology*, 47(3), 25-43. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/21528586.2016.1182445>
- Vetter, R. (2023, September 10). On Hegemonic Queerness: A Powerful Examination of the Queer Identity. *Autoethnographic Literary Nonfiction*. <https://theautoethnographer.com/on-hegemonic-queerness-a-powerful-examination-of-the-queer-identity/>
- Villemez, J. (2020, September 30). *Press A, Be Gay: LGBTQ Representation in Video Games*. Philadelphia Gay News. <https://epgn.com/2020/09/30/press-a-be-gay-lgbtq-representation-in-video-games/>
- Vincent, R. (2015). Vampires as a Tool to Destabilize Contemporary Notions of Gender and Sexuality. *Ellipsis*, 42. <https://doi.org/10.46428/ejail.42.25>
- Waggoner, Z. (2009). Videogames, Avatars, and Identity: A Brief History. In, *My Avatar, My Self: Identity in Video Role-Playing Games* (pp. 3-20). McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=1593628>
- Waggoner, E. B. (2018). Bury Your Gays and Social Media Fan Response: Television, LGBTQ Representation, and Communitarian Ethics. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65(13), 1877-1891. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/00918369.2017.1391015>
- Walters, B. (2014, July 3). *Out of the past: gay cinema and nostalgia*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/jul/03/out-of-past-gay-cinema-nostalgia-lgbt>
- Walton, R. M. (2011). LILITH'S DAUGHTERS, MIRIAM'S CHORUS: TWO DECADES OF FEMINIST MIDRASH. *Religion & Literature*, 43(2), 115-127. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23347034>
- Wang, R., Yang, Q., Huang, P., Sai., & Gong, Y. (2019). The Association Between Disgust Sensitivity and Negative Attitudes Toward Homosexuality: The Mediating Role of Moral Foundations. *Foundations in Psychology*, 10. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01229>
- Waters, M. (Director). (2014). *Vampire Academy* [Film]. IM Global; Kintop Pictures; Preger Entertainment; Montford & Murphy Productions.
- Weber, S. (2011). What My Women's College Taught Me About Being Enthusiastically Queer. *Counterpoints*, 2011(397), 151-156. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42981065>

- Webster, A. (2018, June 9). *Vampyr is a gothic RPG that makes you feel guilty for killing / Sacrifice strength for stories*. The Verge. <https://www.theverge.com/2018/6/8/17442640/vampyr-review-ps4-xbox-pc>
- Westfall, R. S., Millar, M., & Walsh, M. (2020). Effects of Self-Esteem Threat on Physical Attractiveness Stereotypes. *Social and Personality Psychology*, 123(61), 2551-2561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294119860255>
- Whedon, J., Greenwalt, D., Noxon, M., Kuzui, F. R., & Kuzui, K (Executive Producers). (1997-2003). *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* [TV series]. Mutant Enemy Productions; Sandollar Television; Kuzui Enterprises; 20th Century Fox.
- Whitehead, A. L., & Baker, J. O. (2012). Homosexuality, Religion, and Science: Moral Authority and the Persistence of Negative Attitudes. *Sociological Inquiry*, 82(4), 487-509. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1111/j.1475-682X.2012.00425.x>
- Whitesell, L. (2022). Monstrosity as a Queer Aesthetic. In A. Luko & J. K. Wright (Eds.), *Monstrosity, Identity and Music: Making Uncanny Creatures from Frankenstein to Videogames* (pp. 133-149). Bloomsbury Publishing Inc. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=vq6SEAAAQBAJ&lpg=PR1&ots=BV90Fu7kCO&dq=Making%20Uncanny%20Creatures%20from%20Frankenstein%20to%20Videogames&lr&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Whittaker, A., & Bonanno, V. (2017). Do Daddies Dream of their Electric Niche. *Kill Your Darlings*, 131-137. <https://search-informit-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/doi/10.3316/informit.698319254850282>
- Whittington, K. (2012). QUEER. *Studies in Iconography*, 33, 157-168. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23924280>
- Wiid, R., Müllern, T., & Berndt, A. (2023). The Face of Nonbinary Beauty Communication on Instagram: A Content Analysis. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 44(1), 1-23. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/10641734.2022.2089786>
- Williamson, K., Plec, J., Morgenstein, L., Levy, B., Dries, C., Taylor, M. H., Fiveash, C., & Stoteraux, J. (Executive Producers). (2009-2017). *The Vampire Diaries* [TV series]. Outerbanks Entertainment; Alloy Entertainment; CBS Television Studios; Warner Bros. Television.
- Wilson, N. (2011a.). The Soul of the Vampire: Sparkly Mormons, Female Eves, and Unconverted Wolves. In, *Seduced by Twilight: The Allure and Contradictory Messages of the Popular Saga* (pp. 133-156). McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=679329>
- Wilson, N. (2011b). Got Vampire Privilege? Or, Why You Should Marry an Undead White, Wealthy, Heterosexual Mormon. In, *Seduced by Twilight: The Allure and Contradictory Messages of the Popular Saga* (pp. 157-179). McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=679329>
- Wilson, A. (2018, June 5). *Vampyr review – a beautiful premise wasted in this bland action RPG: Red of dead*. Eurogamer. <https://www.eurogamer.net/vampyr-review>
- World of Darkness. (n.d.a.). *VIDEO GAMES: Experience World of Darkness interactively*. <https://www.worldofdarkness.com/products/video-games>
- World of Darkness. (n.d.b.). *VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE CLANS*. <https://www.worldofdarkness.com/vampire-the-masquerade-clans>

- Wright, L. (2014). Post-Vampire: The Politics of Drinking Humans and Animals in Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Twilight, and True Blood. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 25(2-3), 347-365. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24353033>
- Yilmaz, B., Irmak, A., & Oskay, Ü. (2021). Changes in sexual intentions of LGBT people and their adaptation to social life. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 2022(58), 1248-1257. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1111/ppc.12922>
- Young, N. B. (2022, March 11). *Targeting marginalized communities for political gain is nothing new for Texas conservatives: Texas's anti-trans policy is the latest in a long history of attacks on women's and LGBTQ rights*. The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/03/11/targeting-marginalized-communities-political-gain-is-nothing-new-texas-conservatives/>
- Yurcaba, J. (2022, August 13). *After 'Don't Say Gay' bill passed, anti-LGBTQ 'grooming' rhetoric surges 400% online*. NBC News. <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/-dont-say-gay-bill-passed-lgbtq-online-hate-surged-400-rcna42617>
- Zapatero, Z. D., Workman, C. I., Kalmar, C. L., Humphries, S., Kosyk, M. M., Carlson, A. R., Swanson, J., Chatterjee, A., & Taylor, J. (2022). Facial Scars: Do Position and Orientation Matter. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, 150(6), 1237-1246. <https://doi.org/10.1097/PRS.00000000000009728>
- Zivony, A., & Saguy, T. (2018). Stereotype Deduction About Bisexual Women. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55(4-5), 666-678. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2018.1437116>
- Zsila, Á., Pagliassotti, Urbán, R., Orosz, Király, Demetrovics, Z. (2018). Loving the love of boys: Motives for consuming Yaoi media. *PLoS One*, 14;13(6). <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1371/journal.pone.0198895>