Cassidy Burgess End of Summer Report

I wanted to write a play about vampires that reflected them as a literary device society has used to explore taboo topics such as gender and sexuality. I also wanted to explore the progression of vampires throughout history. There is a big difference between Dracula and Edward Cullen, and that difference says a lot about society.

One of the more interesting differences between old vampire literature and new vampire literature is the humanization of the vampires themselves. In early vampire literature, such as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, it is heavily stressed that vampires are un-human and unholy creatures who are barely capable of emotion. However, in modern vampiric tales, vampires are frequently angst-ridden with emotion and torn between feeding on humans or forcing themselves to abstain from human blood.

I successfully wrote the first rough draft of a full-length stage play. Because it is a rough draft, the writing will most likely end up changing, making it hard to share a sample of the play. However, I am excited and able to share my character list and a little bit about each.

* Lucius/Lily
  + The genderfluid main character. They use the pronouns that correspond to the gender of their name. Lucius is kind and morally upright and struggles with his status as a vampire and what he feels is the loss of his humanity.
* Renwick
  + A hedonistic old-fashioned vampire who revels in his status as such. He is somewhat of a jerk, but he is attractive, so he gets away with it. He enjoys all genders of humans equally as long as he can enjoy their blood when he’s done toying with them.
* Hammond
  + Renwick’s human thrall. He is a gloomy fellow, and considering the fact that he pledged eternal servitude to Renwick for immortality, it’s understandable.
* Carrie
  + A sweet and nerdy lesbian who loves theatre. She works as a freelance writer to pay the bills, but her biggest dream is to write the next great vampire novel.

These characters are heavily influenced by my research. For example, one of the things I noticed in my research is that older vampiric literature tends to explore issues of sexuality, while newer vampire stories focus more on gender and gender roles. I incorporated this with Lucius/Lily’s exploration of their gender and with Renwick’s open views on sexuality.

As a theatre major here at Albion, I am incredibly grateful that I got this opportunity to start my playwriting career. I fully intend on revising my play and publishing it, though that process will take a while. I hope that I will be able to share a snippet or two of a scene by the time I get to present my research and costume designs at the Elkin Isaac Research Symposium, but playwriting is a fluid and difficult process, and it’s hard to know where things will be several months from now.

I think one of the biggest things that working on this project taught me was that I could actually do it. I have been writing for eight years now, both personally and for school, but I never really thought that I could work on something as daunting as a full-length play. I am so pleased that I was able to.

I would like to thank Professor Stephanie Henderson for being a wonderful advisor and mentor. I seriously do not know what I would have done without her.

I am so grateful for this amazing opportunity that FURSCA and its donors were able to grant me this summer. I would especially like to thank the Charles J. Strosacker Foundation for supporting my research. This summer has helped me learn new things about myself and playwriting, and the experience I gained will be invaluable later in my career. Thank you!