

*Dowry* does not write the final fate of its queer characters—it leaves their futures open to possibility. Muñoz describes the possibility of “moments of queer relational bliss” to illuminate “a horizon of existence” that opens the queer imagination to modes of living which are not yet known and unabashedly queer (25). It is Constanta’s queer relationships which allow her to imagine a future without Dracula. Before Constanta meets Magdalena she says to Dracula [quote] “I had no idea who I was if you were not at my side” [end quote] (Gibson 63). She only considers killing him once she has met Magdalena and Alexi and experiences these “moments of queer relational bliss” with them. At the end of the novel, Constanta seeks to embrace her queerness, to be free of the normative structures that limit her to botched attempts at fitting herself and her lovers within institutions that were made for cisheterosexual relationships. The final page of the book features Constanta claiming that she will [quote] “live, richly and shamelessly and with my arms wide open to the world” [end quote] (Gibson 235). The future is unwritten, and with the consorts free of Dracula’s cisheteronormative restrictions, it can take new, not-yet-imagined shapes.

Despite historically being a genre rife with anti-queer sentiment and fear, as well as quasi-desire that is framed as shameful, the Gothic is capable of—and indeed currently is—growing to accommodate new viewpoints. The Gothic, as something historically akin to an alternative subculture in academia and publishing, is uniquely capable of not only capturing these cultural fears but embodying them. Small presses like Nyx Publishing [the original publisher of *Dowry*] stand at the forefront of this truly queer new Gothic, refusing the commodification and oversimplification of the Gothic monster that would reduce it to merely an object of terror. Looking outward from the perspective of the monster—or implicitly, the othered, the marginalized—we see the Gothic take a new shape which is not contradictory to its history, but a natural continuation of it.

The reimagining of the Gothic “return to status quo” in *Dowry* represents a shift in the genre, a queer demand for space. Where the defeat of the monster has historically represented the quelling of othered groups and the continuing supremacy of the dominant group—a salve on the anxieties of that dominant group—*Dowry* defeats one “monster”, an agent of the dominant group, and returns peace but not norms. The rest of *Dowry*’s so-called *monsters* are then free to live their non-normative lives, to discover what it means to be queer.

The new queer Gothic’s emergence is reminiscent of the subcultural origins of the classic Gothic. As the classic Gothic now finds itself included in the wider literary canon, its descendants break out of the confines of the mainstream by pushing farther into the margins of sexuality. I would argue that I cannot even fathom what the new queer Gothic will become, that there is one of Muñoz’s utopias out there that I cannot conceive of, that someday my new queer Gothic will be the old queer Gothic and the *new* “new queer Gothic” will imagine futures I can’t

even imagine imagining. The Gothic will continue to expand alongside conceptions of queerness, making it a perfect tool for measuring the distance of our meandering journey towards utopia, a way of looking back and taking note of the anxieties of queers past. And, of course, we will continue to get weirder. We will continue to get *more queer*. We will continue to write our stories in the margins. We will continue to build our subcultures, our niches, our fandoms, our counterpublic book clubs, our ever-expanding queer horizon.

Susan Stryker writes in her book *Transgender History* that [quote] “semipublic subcultural scenes ... can become sites not only for pleasure and social connection in the present but also playful experimental workshops for the transformation of existing realities into desired futures” [end quote] (211). The consumption of genre fictions such as Gothics, science fictions, fantasies, and even romances, demonstrates an interest in—or fear of—a certain kind of future. The queer’s growing interest in the Gothic is demonstrated by an overwhelming trove of academic literature on the queer in Gothic, the surge of contemporary queer Gothics, and the performance of Gothic aesthetics in subcultural queer spaces (such as the recycling of religious imagery in the depiction of the queer body and the caricatures of maidens and monsters being performed as means of separating from the normative expectations of gender either by satire of the norm or by departure from coherent gender expectations entirely). The Gothic imagines the present and future by representing the past, and for queer people, the past can be an especially terrifying place. But by turning the lens, by *looking at* the Gothic instead of *being* looked at by the Gothic, the queer reimagines the future.