

The Queer Gazes Back

on(sic)

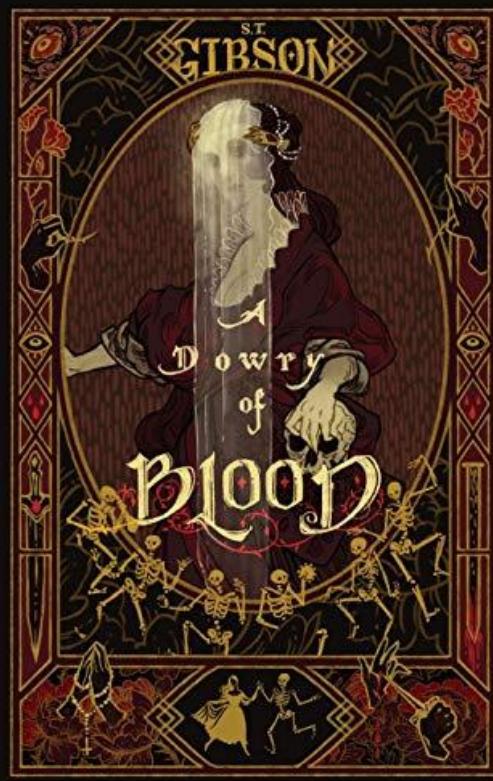
Repurposing the Gothic for Queer Liberation

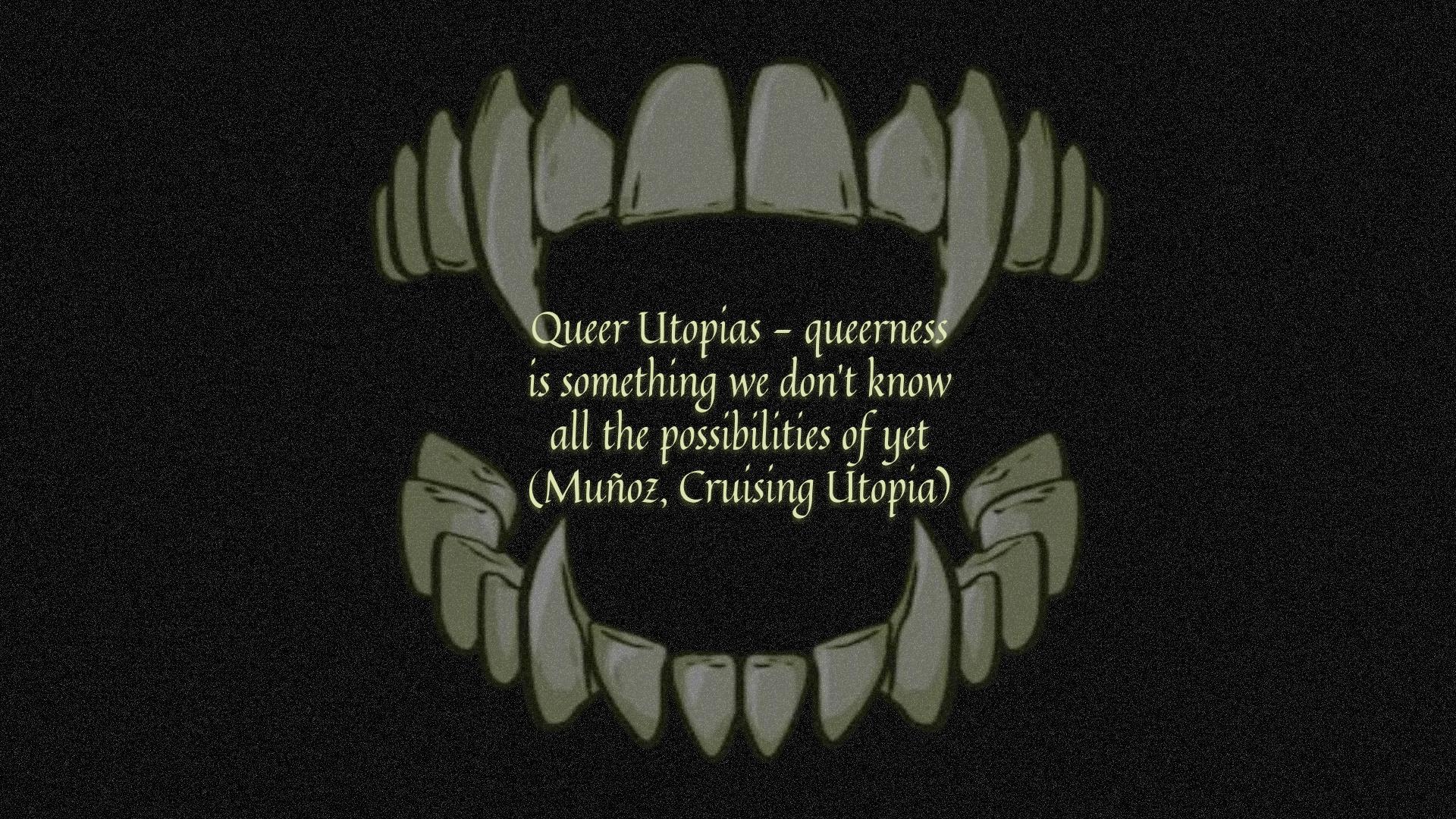
The Big Picture

A Dowry of Blood

“A lyrical and dreamy reimagining of Dracula’s brides, A Dowry of Blood is a story of desire, obsession, and emancipation” (Back Cover).

In my thesis, I put S.T. Gibson’s implicit claim of queer liberation to the test, examining how Dowry plays with Gothic tropes and figures to turn the “gaze” back onto the people who have historically done the gazing.





*Queer Utopias - queerness
is something we don't know
all the possibilities of yet
(Muñoz, Cruising Utopia)*

Gothics are...

1. A representation of cultural fears
2. (Historically) popular literature
3. Sometimes—but not always—based in the supernatural

I use the following Gothic classics in my thesis:

- Frankenstein
- Dracula
- Carmilla

Dude, those are all super gay.
Well, yes, but...

Frankenstein

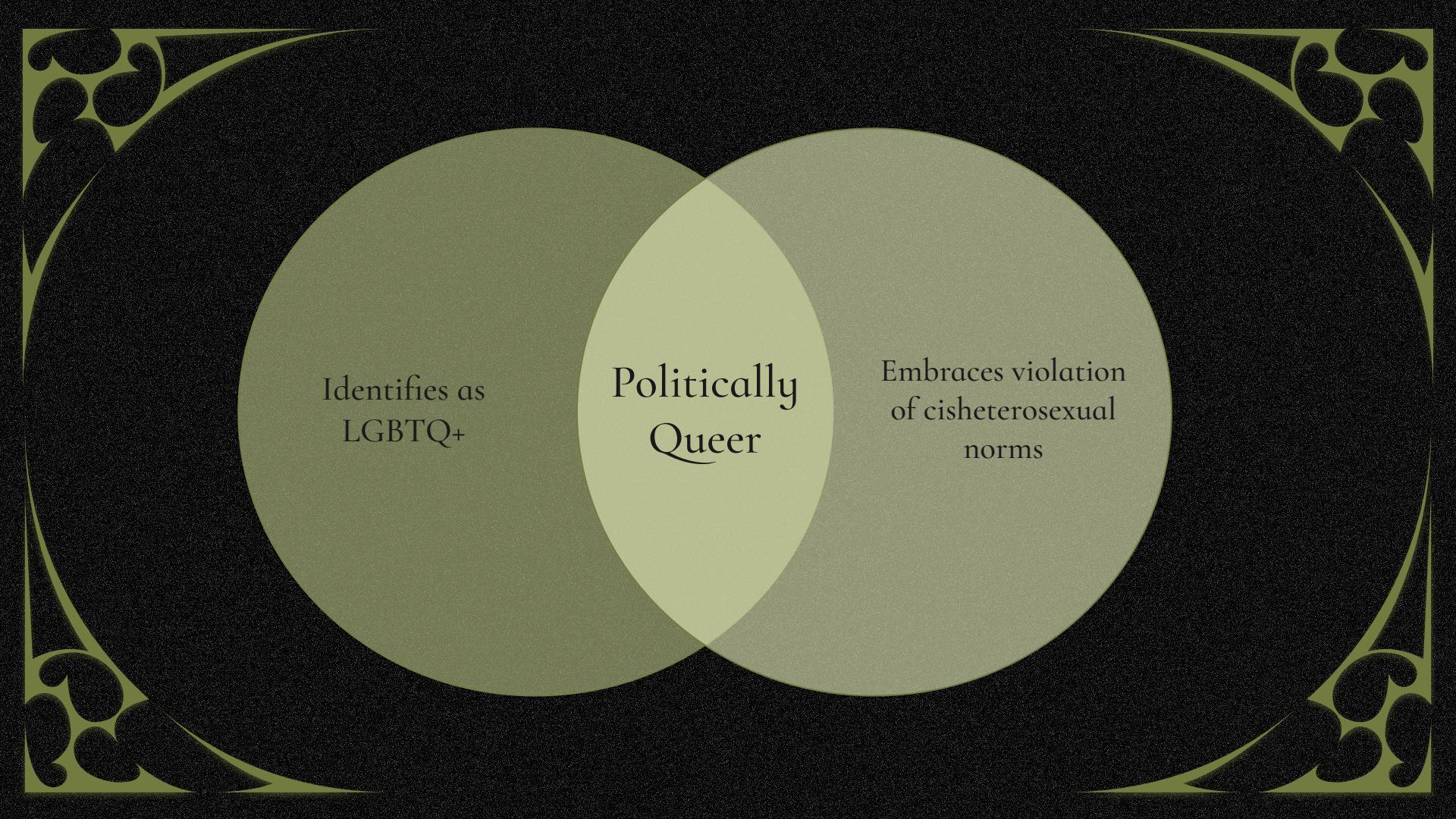
The Creature is never allowed to tell their own story directly to the reader, it is always edited by Frankenstein and/or Walton.

Dracula

Dracula's thirst for Jonathan and his brides' gender inversions are the "problems" to overcome.

Carmilla

Laura and Carmilla are presented as a "case" in the writings of a fictional doctor, implicitly pathologizing lesbianism.

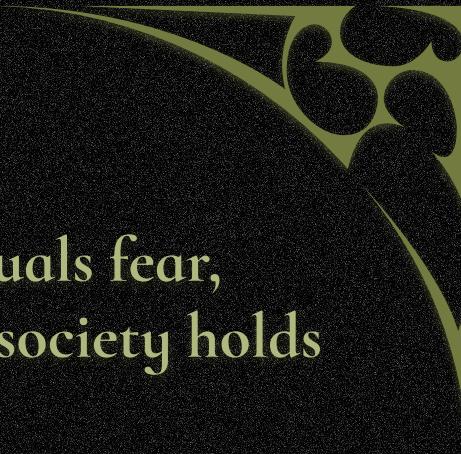


Identifies as
LGBTQ+

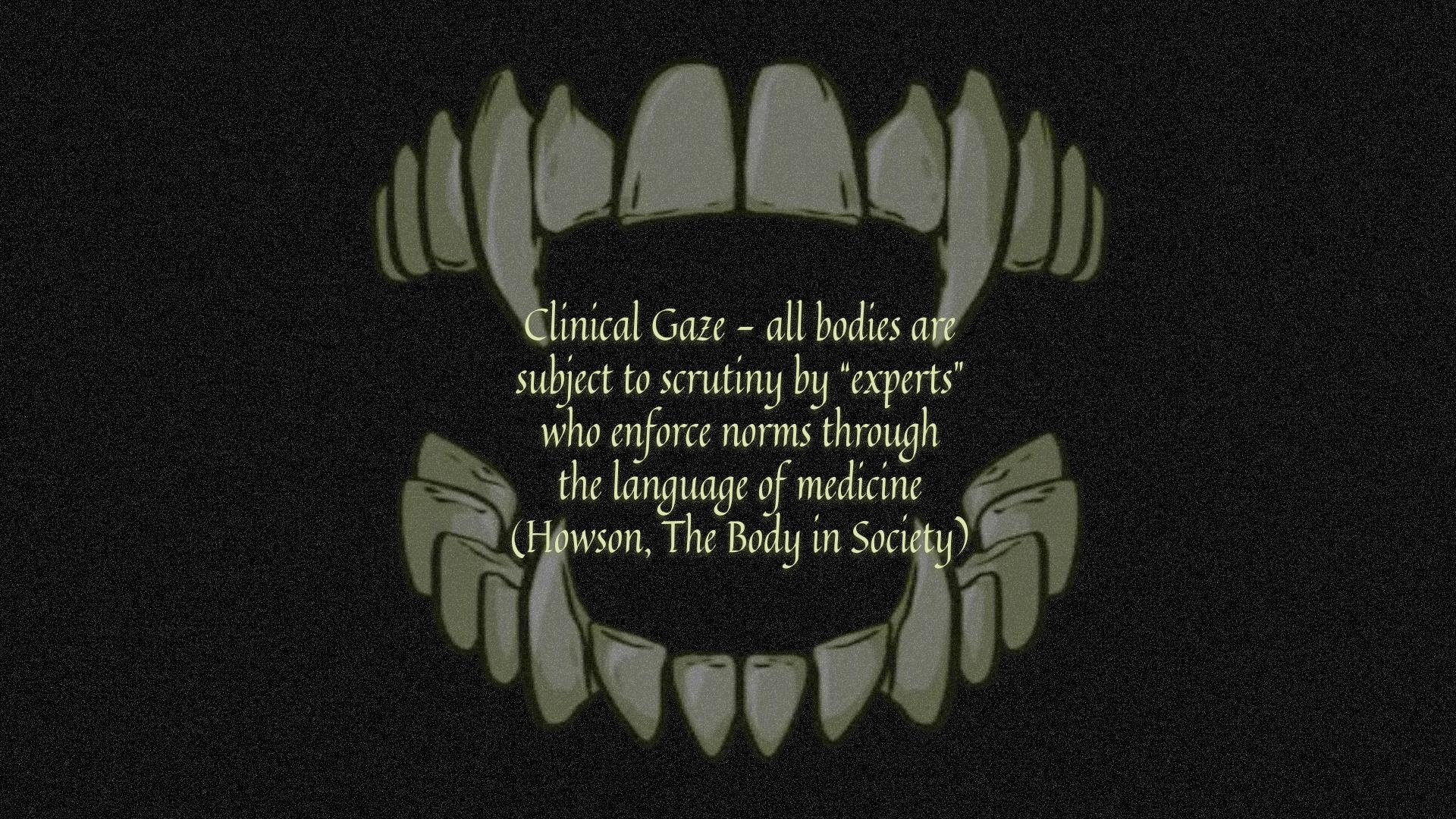
Politically
Queer

Embraces violation
of cisheterosexual
norms

New Queer Gothic



1. Concerned with the things that queer individuals fear, rather than the fear that **cisheteronormative society holds** for queerness
2. Feature explicitly queer characters whose queerness is at least partially expressed in tangible, non-metaphorical ways
3. Push the boundaries of normative sexuality in the time that they are published



*Clinical Gaze - all bodies are
subject to scrutiny by "experts"
who enforce norms through
the language of medicine
(Howson, The Body in Society)*

So How Does Dowry Do Things Different?

Point of View

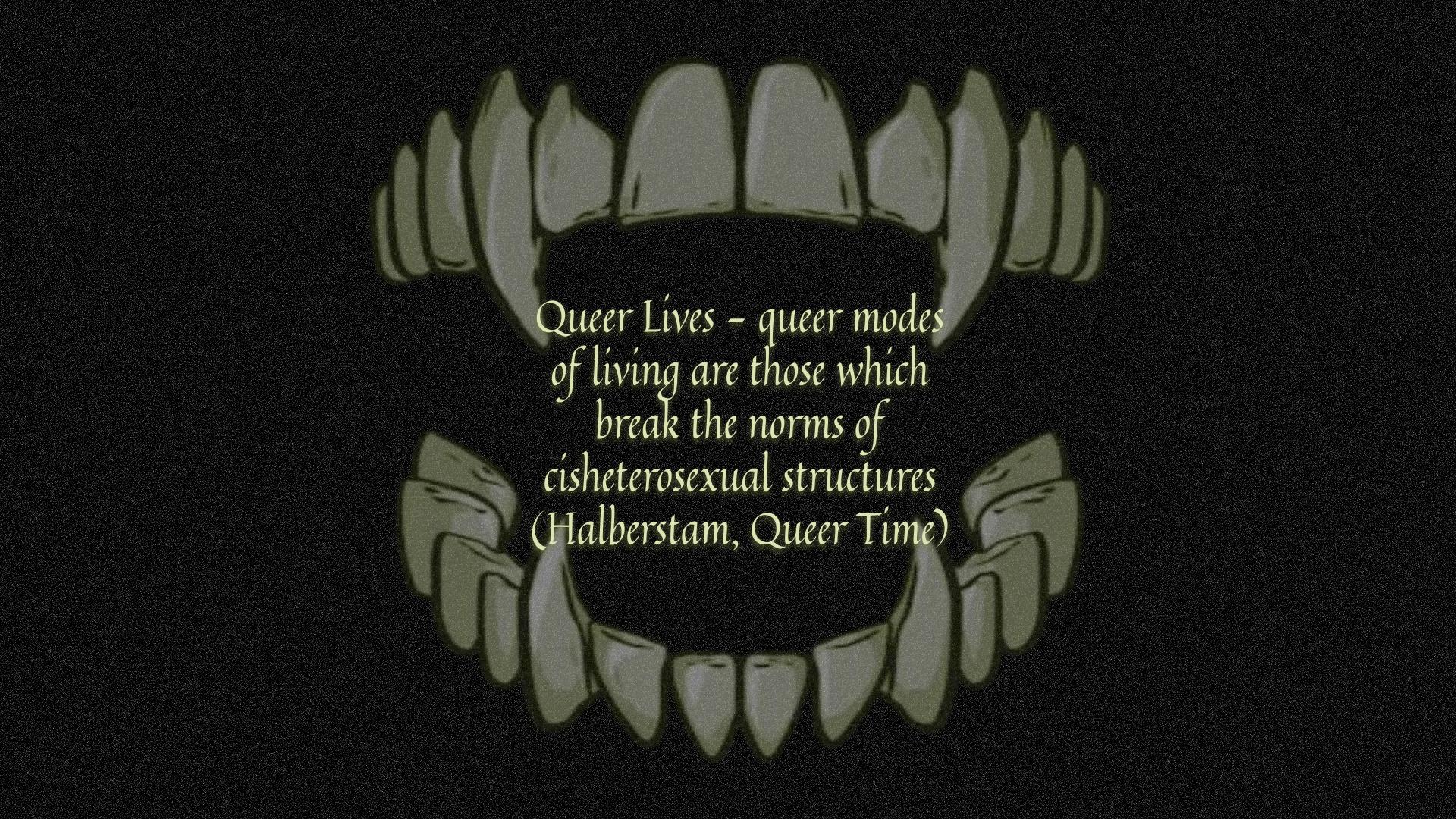
Dowry is entirely from the main (queer) character's point of view.

Antagonist

The antagonist of Dowry is not the person who means to make everyone queer, but the person who seeks to control and conceal the queer expression of others.

Clinical Gaze

Constanta recognizes that Magdalena is a victim of her circumstances and that Dracula's insistence that she needs to see a doctor ignores the real problem.



*Queer Lives - queer modes
of living are those which
break the norms of
cisheterosexual structures
(Halberstam, Queer Time)*

Leaving Room for Utopia

An Abbreviated Conclusion

“You’re a Yapper! What’s the TL:DR?”

A Dowry of Blood shows a queer perspective on fear.

Dowry’s overt queer sexuality, used as a catalyst for the improvement of the main characters’ lives, shows that repression is more of a threat than expression.

Dowry draws attention to the way the language of psychology is used to pathologize and demean women and queers.

Queer stories from queer perspectives bolster the remembrance of queer lives.

Table of Contents

Introduction – The New Queer Gothic: Anxieties of Violence and Queer Discourse	3
Chapter One – Contemporary Queer Hungers: Queer Sex, Kink, and Anxieties of Anti-Queer Violence	13
Chapter Introduction – Blood and Lust: Vampires as Queer Symbols of Sexuality	13
1.1 – Sex as Identity: Building the Body and Spirit	19
1.2 – Assimilationist Sex: Closeting and the Mimicry of Heteronormative Power Dynamics	29
Chapter Conclusion	34
Chapter Two – Medical Gothic: Women, Queers, and the Clinical Gaze on Monsters	35
Chapter Introduction	35
2.1 - Structures of Power Over Bodies	39
2.2 - Gender Dynamics and the Clinical Gaze on Queer Women	42
2.3 - Seizing the Means of (Re)production	48
Chapter Conclusion	55
Chapter Three – Death and Legacy: Queer Resistances to Being Forgotten and Erased	58
Chapter Introduction	58
3.1 Ain’t No Rest For The Undead: The Horror of Stayin’ Alive	61
3.2 Curtain Call: The Creature Demands Rest	65
3.3 The Book-Object	68
Chapter Conclusion	72
Conclusion – Leaving Room for Utopia: <i>Dowry</i> ’s Open Ending as an Unwritten Queer Future	75
Works Cited	78

25,000 words of yapping



Many Thanks

*To the following people, without whom this thesis
would not have come together:*

Professors Lisa Kasmer, Dianne Berg, Justin Shaw, and Elizabeth Blake

Oliver McCormick (Clark University - Sociology '24)

Luc Fell (Bath Spa University - English and Creative Writing '26)