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Leroy Allston Ames Essay Contest Winners

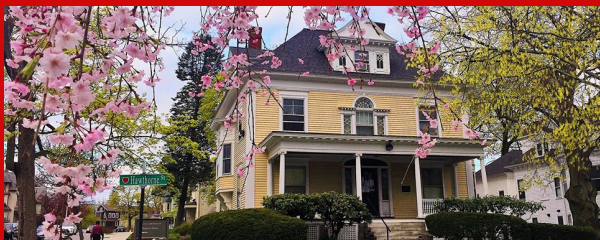
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English Department 2020 Leroy Allston Ames Essay Contest



First Place
Mahi Taban '21

Mahi is a junior from the San Francisco Bay Area. She is double-majoring in English and Political Science.

Sexual Identity, Foreignness, and the Gothic Vampire; The Racialization of Homosexuality in *Carmilla*

In *Carmilla*, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu reveals 19th century British anxieties on race and sexuality, especially in relation to one another. The positionality of Carmilla, Le Fanu's primary antagonist, as a racialized "other" within the narrative, is indicative of British concerns regarding the possible corruption of English women, whose purity, chasteness, and moral aptitude were considered to be threatened by the influence of highly sexualized foreign figures. In *Carmilla*, this is seen through the lens of homosexuality, discourse around which has been historically racialized. Le Fanu employs heavy description of naturalistic imagery, and makes repeated reference to Carmilla's association with mystical, animalistic, and sexual elements in an Orientalized conflation of her alterity and sexual desires. In this way, Carmilla represents 19th century British society's fears of sexual corruption and discrimination of non-Western civilization and social codes.



Second Place
Davina Tomlin '20

Davina is a senior from Oakland, CA. She is double majoring in English and Spanish with a minor in Creative Writing.

Men and Tools in "Ode to a Nightingale"

In "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats walks the line between what is man-made through imagination and what is immortal by nature, and questions the particular gifts of both. He finds that the nightingale has abilities that Keats does not, which he imagines create a blissful connection to the natural world. The poem takes a journey through a fantasy where Keats attempts to use man-made tools; wine and poesy, to achieve some union with what is purely natural. His tools are tempered with nature, but are in essence man-made and created with imagination and "fancy" (73). Here, Keats conflicts with his contemporaries, in that he tries to use the human focused tools he has, rather than join completely with nature. He envies the nightingale, but his solution is not to try to become it, rather, his awareness of mortality prompts him to imagine the human ways he could achieve the same unity with nature.