

The Artist's Statement

Bailey Lawlor is an Illustrator and Writer from the Appalachian region of East Tennessee. Their pronouns are They/Them and they have an obsessive desire to see more Queer and Neurodivergent characters in storytelling that don't center around these aspects of their identity.

Their project, the first 21 pages to a Soft Horror Webcomic with complimenting Character Sheets and Merchandising, is titled "*VIVERE.*" Translated from Latin it means simply "*To Live,*" a sentiment that plays into Lawlor's work and general outlook.

To Live implies a simple command or purpose, one thing above all else that a person or persons must do; and that is just-to be. To exist in whatever way best suits the individual, much like the act of escapism through storytelling allows a mind to wander in whatever direction it most pleases, temporarily uninhibited by outsider expectations.

This concept extends to the presence of Queer and Neurodivergent folks in storytelling media. Rather than making any grand or overt gestures, allowing them to just be/to exist within the narrative as any other person would be allowed to, uninhibited by the expectations of others.

Bailey Lawlor

Thesis Proposal

Fiction has always served to elicit some form of emotional release, a swelling of new feelings or a sense of understanding with someone else. Stories that allow their readers to experience something so far different from their own lives and even undeniably close to home and familiar are influential and bear power. In moments of grief or overwhelming anger a person can find themselves somewhere else even if only for a moment. This is the aspect of storytelling that I plan to embrace, the emotional connection one makes with a series of characters and narrative outcomes that draws them ever deeper into a world they believe they can genuinely escape to. With this, I will write the script for a first book installment encompassing a larger world and series of characters. Readers will be introduced to a small cast consisting of a secret agent, a mysterious leader of a frozen laboratory and the four scientists working there, gathered into a Mystery/Horror webcomic that forces each character to use all of their wits and relationships to one another in order to escape a dubious creature trapping them in the middle of a frozen tundra. The first 10 to 20 pages will be fully illustrated in addition to character sheets in order for readers to feel a deeper connection to each contributing character within the story. This comic will be accompanied by a small merchandising campaign that will assist in introducing the comic to new readers. It will be accessible to audiences young adult and up, opening the door for younger and older readers to become enthralled within a new world rich with conversation surrounding topics of identity, mental health and casual queer representation.

Growing older has always presented numerous questions and challenges, a struggle to identify yourself, find your niche or mannerisms amongst a large and loud crowd. It's unfailingly complicated. This stress is exacerbated in those who may fall into any category of 'other,' creating a sense of alienation or abnormality. I myself struggled with aspects of otherness, not quite fitting into what I assumed was the standard mold that so easily fit my peers. I wouldn't be diagnosed with ADHD or Depression until I was already well on my way into adult life and I wouldn't yet understand my

relationship with my gender until I'd started my college career. These late blooms hindered my ability to find the community I most related to as points of neurodivergency and queer themes had yet to fully enter a public discussion that was terribly kind or understanding. But as I got older and these communities found room to fit into popular media it became a matter of catching up. Books, Cartoons and other fictional media rapidly became an outlet for discussion for these different communities that prior hadn't had as big of a voice. Shows such as *Avatar the Last Airbender*, *Adventure Time*, and *Steven Universe* aired one after the other, each gradually closing the gap between what could and couldn't be talked about or deemed 'appropriate' for younger audiences, all contained within fabricated realms. These fictional places open avenues of escapism that best suit difficult topics and sentiments for readers, places that are like Earth but separate from our own world and way of knowing. Additionally, the media that pushed to close the gap between heterocentric and queer representative characters fueled the desire for more, edging away from how non-queer writers thought an LGBTQ+ character should act and allowing them to tell their own stories on their own terms. In the hands of narrators past and present, Neurodivergent themes and LGBTQ+ characters have often been handled as symbols or devices for something else. Specific to Horror, the topic of mental health and wellbeing becomes a tool used to disturb or disrupt an audience's comfort. As a result this molds an unsavory perception of those who aren't neurotypical, painting them as dangerous or disturbed and causing negative reactions when brought up in conversation. On the other side, LGBTQ+ characters frequently are used as representations of 'evil' or 'unsavory lifestyles' that lead to gruesome consequences in their narratives. However, in fictional media that allows these characters and themes to be written by those that align with them, not only can a more open and positive conversation begin, but characters with diverse and interesting facets can emerge and thrive. In the words of English Professor, Carina Pasquesi, "What happens when the figure around which discourse is constructed resists being articulated by the law? What happens when the figure authorizes its own discourse and acts without aspiring to liberal subjectivity and its dominant institutions?" (125)

My process for crafting stories has always started with its characters. This project began with the two main characters, Clark and Sherman, when I was in the seventh grade and had just started

drawing in what I considered to be a 'serious sketchbook.' The two have gone through changes and revisions every year since then, before finally landing where they are now, meeting one another for the very first time in an impossible dilemma, trapped in the middle of a frozen tundra. Clark is a Vampire, a member of a secret organization, called "*The Immunity*," with the primary goal of protecting all non-human entities from a covert group of Hunters. Clark is sent on a mission to find and eliminate a Hunter encampment in the deep North only to discover someone or something has beat him to his work; the camp and its occupants have been thoroughly devastated. Quite suddenly aware that whatever may have been responsible for this is still lurking nearby, Clark makes a mad dash to find safety, prompting the chase of his life. At just the right time he spots a lone building amongst the trees and snow, busting his way in and shutting the doors right before it would have been too late. However, trouble isn't finished yet with the vampire, as he finds himself inexplicably at the mercy of four panicked scientists bearing weapons made of their own lab equipment, in addition to their mysterious leader. Clark is faced with a stressful decision-how much he should reveal as to why he is out there. But lying seems difficult in the presence of their lead scientist, Sherman, standing out amongst the rest as they hold themselves with far more age and experience than their appearance would initially suggest. Luckily, Sherman is willing to work with Clark, keeping his secrets from the others in return for the full truth. An unlikely team, Clark and Sherman work in sync to figure out what is attacking them, why it's attacking them and if they can escape before it's too late. This narrative centers around the pair and their plight, their relationship to the other scientists trapped and to one another. It isn't interrupted with any need to pause and address the facets of their identities outside relevance to the story. Neither are their mental states used as devices in its Horror themes. The eerie tone and atmosphere for the story is carried by the setting and the Monster that lurks in the background, unseen but nevertheless present.

In bringing this story to life, I rely on both written and visual tools. This combination allows the story to be more accessible and easier to read, taking the form of a digital Webcomic. Having the comic first live on the screen welcomes a wider audience the luxury of quick and convenient access. Although, as I am also extremely fond of print books, the pages will be illustrated keeping in mind the

colors may eventually be printed. The pages will be sized at roughly 6 x 9 inches, equivalent to most printed media yet still applicable to online uploads. The visuals will be fully illustrated on a digital format, lending their ease to online publication as well as considerably speeding up the timeline for the completion of each page. This will also benefit the project down the line, after thesis, creating a quick and manageable turnout of pages for consistent online updates. The only physical aspect of the project for the time being will be presented as merchandise. Stickers, Prints and Shirts with graphic illustrated elements from the story will be available for purchase both in person at specific events as well as online. This small campaign will assist in spreading awareness for the Webcomic as well as go towards further funding for its continuation.

Influences for this project come primarily from Contemporary Comic Illustrators and Writers, creating stories that carry similar themes and manners of representing non-typical characters. Comics such as Rowan MacColl's *Kingfisher*; a long running webcomic surrounding a small cast in a cult mystery. Her characters and story's surrounding themes are queer without being overtly stated or lingered upon, allowing them to exist and focus instead on the more important plot points and dilemmas plaguing them. Additionally, many of her characters are neurodivergent, unspoken but present without having themselves used as negative representations of their symptoms. Another Artist and Author going by the moniker, Marsoid, has created two separate comics featuring queer and neurodivergent characters. In the cases of both stories, the characters' identities are not specified or lingered on unless it becomes relevant to the narrative. In these cases, the subject is able to be fleshed out with respect and dignity as Mars himself is queer. When it comes down to writing a Horror narrative, a genre that has largely treated marginalized communities unkindly, influence ultimately comes from the genre's core theme of otherness and the uncanny. These sentiments align with marginalized experiences who may feel outcast from a majority crowd and who feel a sense of alienation for who they are. It twists Horror into something that can both harm and benefit them, allowing depictions of beasts and people that they can empathize with. Horror fiction such as *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley sees a creature made by science, reborn within a new body and treated as an abomination as a result, empathizing with the experience many Trans folk go through in their

relationship with their own bodies. This is also relevant in the film *Ginger Snaps* directed by John Fawcett, the story focusing on the transition of one young girl into a werewolf, bitten right as she begins to transition into puberty. The story and imagery follow her as her relationship with her body changes, experiencing aspects of dysphoria as her transformation progresses before coming to embrace a new form, that of her werewolf body instead of her original human one.

Story and Narrative have from the beginning been prominent in my work's development, both as an illustrator and as a writer. Character designs and developments have played an integral role in my artistic progress and made for a prominent feature to celebrate in my portfolio, however unfortunately it lacks more professional layouts that might be expected. I have only started my journey as a Comic Artist and Writer within the past year and a half and as a result my portfolio lacks an abundance of examples for layouts, pencils, inks and colored comic pages. With the additions made by this comic in character and world development, as well as stages in page illustration, I'll have a more rounded portfolio that I can take to studios and art directors in order to begin accessing work in comics and writing. It will also provide me with the content needed to share with an online audience so I'll be able to effectively establish myself and my work, create intrigue for future projects as well as current projects I wish to continue. But perhaps most importantly this project will stand out as my first fully realized comic creation with a planned continuation and surrounding body of work to advertise it with. With this in mind I will be set on a path toward completing a full-length visual novel, which has been a long-term goal of mine for years.

That being said, this project is grounded in my history and progress as an Illustrator and Storyteller in kind. It has carried themes of my own life into its pages and established characters that I have longed to share for a considerable time. In a way, Sherman and Clark have grown as I have, entering new stages of development and understanding coming into the present where now concrete strides have been made to incorporate them into their new world and narrative. Their story and their characters have been affected by new influences and knowledge gained by experience. Where they have previously existed as words and visuals separately, introducing them into a comic format will allow both halves to complete them, fully realized. This comic will be the beginning of a new path, leading to

more defined aspirations and projects that will push me to continue developing as an artist as well as a character in my own right.

Vivere - Creative Brief

A Story by Bailey Lawlor

Project Vision

Vivere is a short Graphic Novel and first installment to a larger and longer narrative part of an escapist, alternative world, set to be published digitally with the desire to print later on. Our story begins with Clark, a covert operative for an underground society intent on improving the general state of the world and relations between both humans and nonhuman entities. Clark is sent to handle a dangerous group in the deep North only to discover he is in for far more than he bargained for- something supernatural, large and angry. He is helped by an unexpected encounter with a group of five scientists, trapped by the same mysterious menace that brought Clark to their base. The leader of this group, Sherman, seems to be far more level-headed in the face of this supernatural enemy to be a mere civilian. By working together, Clark and Sherman can only hope they will be enough in order to get them all out in time.

Comparative Media

This Project was born from a love for storytelling and a desire to see more media with queer and neurodivergent representation that wasn't overtly obvious or blatant in its depictions. Horror media has played a significant role in both harming and helping marginalized groups in its depictions of 'the other' or 'the monstrous,' and so it continues to call for an abundance of material that can act as an empathetic tool and means of escapism. Similar works include the stories of Marsoid; their completed comic, *Long Exposure*, as well as their recent release, *Ride or Die*. They write with themes of Mystery, the Supernatural and Romance while featuring queer characters whos' stories are not centered or based on their queerness. Rowan MacColl also works along these lines with her most recently completed comic, Book 1 of *KingFisher: A Fox Hunt*; a story with queer and neurodivergent characters set within a narrative on the Occult, the supernatural and the Criminal. Other example works include *CosmoKnights* by Hannah Templer, one comic that started online before finding its first installment in print format. And like other Stories, such as the Podcast *The Adventure Zone*, certain aspects of characters' identities will remain vague and unspecified in order to better guarantee more people are able to personally empathize with them, as well as to ensure that as the writer I am not speaking over anyone in telling their own stories.

Media inspirations for this story, outside the world of comics, also include both classic and contemporary Horror films. For example, John Carpenter's *The Thing* influenced Vivere's setting and tones of isolation within a frozen tundra while also dealing with a larger cast. Jon Turteltaub's *The Meg* helped to influence the lighter tones of the narrative as well as how to handle a diverse cast of characters in a high stakes Horror setting. It also acts to incorporate a background romance without pulling away from the major narrative.

Audience

Vivere is intended for slightly older audiences, teens and upward in age. At this point there is a loving abundance of Young Adult and Children's media available that features queer and neurodivergent characters closer to that age group that are going through coming-of-age or similar narratives. These are stories that most anyone can relate to but because they are targeted for their age groups they are often harder for an older audience to enjoy. It is tiring and disheartening not to see someone closer to your own age living and thriving in stories with positive or escapist themes for marginalized groups. While of course these kinds of narratives are not unheard of, there certainly isn't an abundance. It is significantly harder to find them for an older audience that desire that kind of casual queer and neurodivergent representation. Vivere will add to this steadily growing pool of media, offering an additional escapist outlet. It will also be an added point of escape for Horror genre fans who want more narratives in which queer and other marginalized communities do not become the source or targeted victim of said Horror.

Market Application

Vivere will first be published online, allowing it to be read and shared by a vast audience on the web and more easily accessible for those who can't very well make it out to a bookstore or who's local store may not carry an abundance of new material. I am currently looking at either hosting it on Webtoons, Tapas or potentially it's own dedicated website. When the chance to print becomes available, I would like to consider studios such as Oni Press, Dark Horse, Boom or Image Comics. I am also considering taking an alternative route from traditional publishing and attempting to self-publish the work via a kind of kickstarter campaign. In addition to the success I want the work to have on the market and for audiences, this Comic will act as an important example in my portfolio, showing potential clients that I can work on nearly every level of comics productions as well as meet the appropriate deadlines.

Methods + Materials

The comic and complimenting materials will be created entirely through digital means. This will help the process and timeline work smoothly, making it possible to meet deadlines without putting unnecessary strain on any step in the production process. Color will mostly consist of flat colors with light and shading elements. Additionally, textured brushes will help lend a rougher tone to the drawings, notably to the background scenes of which mostly consist of frozen tundra sets as well as some roughed up lab interiors. Ultimately I want the illustrations to echo the energy the audience is intended to feel from each scene, quiet and soft to loud and frantic in tone.

V I V E R E

Vivere is a soft Horror comic series intended for Web release and future print. The project includes the main Cover, the first 21 pages taken from Script to Full Color and finally Letters. The main body of work is accompanied by 6 Character Sheets of the main Cast of the story, including brief but intimate information on each person involved. Also included is a Merchandising set of 3 different pieces, including Stickers, Postcard Prints and Keychains.

The Project exists primarily in a digital format however character sheets and pages have also been printed to allude to future publishing and print endeavors.

Vivere serves as the artist's first attempt to take a comic from script all the way to full color and detailing, giving them a body of work to use in their portfolio as well as in promotion for the continuation of this project and future endeavors.

The Narrative itself is based around the artist's desire to see more works on the market that provide diverse plots and genres that casually include queer and neurodivergent characters, their service to plot and development not based upon these aspects of their identity. The thought behind this project is to simply allow these characters to exist; to live. Hence the title for this project, Latin '*To Live*': VIVERE.

Oral Defense

Hi, and welcome to my Thesis Defense. My name is Bailey Lawlor and I use they/them pronouns.

I was born and raised in East Tennessee in the Appalachian region, where I was able to cultivate a love for the outdoors, the tradition of storytelling as well as my own sense of self and person.

Over the years as I've learned more about who I am, my history and my present, I realized that this process of discovery may have been a far easier one if I'd had more examples of people like me in media I could access. If I'd had stories and characters that could be read as Queer, Neurodivergent, etc. without it being seen as a source of shame or an incredibly niche persona.

This understanding of what could have been, as well as the recent publication of works by other authors and artists like myself, has inevitably led me to take the very first steps toward my own project.

VIVERE is a soft Horror Webcomic about an Agent working for an underground Society as he discovers a Laboratory isolated in the far North, and a Menace prowling the wilds just beyond. That Agent in question and our first Protagonist, Clark Cadell, must work with the Lead Scientist of the Lab facility and our second Protagonist, Sherman Neoma, to uncover the mystery of the Monster, figure out an escape strategy and deliver themselves and the remainder of the scientists to safety.

This is of course all easier said than done. As the Agent and small group of Scientists begin collaborating for their survival, they quickly learn there is far more to their plight than some beast out in the woods spontaneously ticked off at them. There's something not quite right going on in this frozen landscape and it turns out their group is on a fairly short timeline to figure out what that something is; as Clark

finds out- the Research Facility they're taking shelter in- has had its power knocked out and the backup generator has already been running for a few days now.

It's a race to uncover a solution and an exit from this nightmare before they all inevitably freeze to death, assuming the Monster doesn't find a way to get to them first.

On top of this, and throughout this life-or-death scenario, Clark gradually clues in on the fact that Sherman, the aforementioned head of this base, seems to know more than they're letting on. After all, they figure out within the first few moments of meeting Clark, that he himself is not all that he appears to be.

It's a narrative written with both Queer and Neurodivergent characters in mind, individuals that readers can find some aspect of- that they're able to relate to, to see themselves in.

This project consists of the first 21 pages, fully illustrated. -A set of six character sheets that give brief, intimate descriptions of the characters involved.

And finally a series of physical merchandise items that ground the project and assists in my intent to broaden the scope of this story's reach. Included in this series is a printed postcard, stickers and a keychain.

VIVERE is initially intended for Web format, the idea being to make the comic as accessible as possible. So both final pages as well as character sheets and likewise supporting content will be displayed and shared via online comic and social media platforms. The sole physical aspect of the work will be the merchandising series, also sold via online platforms like Etsy or Shopify. Additionally, if the project finds future success, it will eventually be printed either through traditional or self publishing avenues.

However, as much as this body of work will serve me along a career path, VIVERE was created with the intent of sharing a point of view with a wider audience. Even with progress made in recent years, it is rare to find characters or narratives written with Queer or Neurodivergent readers in mind; even more so to find an author of said work that aligns with those themes. Consequently this can lead to stilted or generalized stereotypes written into the stories we consume. Characters become caricatures that stand out amongst a majority Heteronormative and Neurotypical cast.

But stories that don't need to point out these differences, that require no special care or treatment for these characters, are the kinds I've loved discovering and want to see an abundance of available on the market. Narratives that aren't necessarily *about being "different"* or Memoirs by people who are either/or. Just an amalgamation of different genres from Westerns to Science Fiction/Fantasy or Horror where the existence of a Queer or Neurodivergent character is simply that; another character, perhaps even a majority of the cast, and treated no differently than any other might be in general media.

When talking about both Queer and Neurodivergent representation in media, I like to consider this quote by [Wendy Peason](#) on the subject of queerness in Science Fiction. Here she says, *"The heteronormative assumption behind much science fiction, both cinematic and literary, are very neatly exposed by the circular reasoning with which the producers of Star Trek refute demands for visibly non-straight characters: homophobia, they say, does not exist in the future as it is shown on Star Trek; gay characters therefore cannot be shown, since to introduce the issue of homosexuality is to turn it back into a problem: in order for Star Trek to depict a non-homophobic view of the future, it must depict a universe with no homosexuals in it."*

This is of course a very tongue-in-cheek sense of reasoning on part of Star Trek producers, -that Peason points out,- who for all intents and purposes just didn't want to include Queer characters in their show. However there is a strange bit of

backwards reasoning to it that raises an important question. “How do you portray queer or neurodivergency in media without having to say anything?” The obvious answer might be to include a pride flag in a piece of wardrobe or accessory. To display on a shirt some humor-intended quip linked to a character’s depression. But this can’t be true for every single character, it certainly isn’t for every real queer or neurodivergent person. At the end of it, there is no one-way to depict a person based on these aspects of themselves, no fail-safe umbrella costume that can communicate what you want.

I argue that the solution is simply to allow the characters to speak for themselves, for actions and dialogue to dictate how an audience interprets a character. In order for queer and neurodivergent characters to exist in narratives, treated as any other might be, they need only to be.

I also chose to write a Horror story for this project specifically for its complicated ties to both Queer and Neurodivergent spaces. The genre has a long history of using themes of suffering, punishment and monstrosity to alienate niche groups of people. It’s not uncommon in Horror to find a queer coded or explicitly queer character being used as a moral dilemma or a tool to point out the ‘wrong,’ the ‘unnatural’ or the ‘monstrous’ amongst a cast. It’s a character type that swims along the same lines of the stereotypical caricatures of the ‘whore’ or the ‘glutinous.’

Additionally, in the case of Neurodivergency, these characters or their symptoms are commonly used as Horror devices or subjects of Monstrosity themselves. Either they themselves are the antagonists to a neurotypical cast or their symptoms are painted as a source of corruption or evil.

However, as much as Horror has been used as a tool of harm, it has just as much stake within these spaces as a means of healing, identity and fun. With themes of both queerness and neurodivergency abundant in Horror media, in many cases it’s easy to find ways to spin a more positive outlook on these portrayal- becoming sources of representation rather than hurtful caricatures. With a grain of salt,

audiences are able to project themselves upon the plights and woes of these Monstrous figures or characters.

When looking at queerness and neurodivergency as it relates itself to Horror, I consider how or why identifying with “Monstrosity” can be so validating, uplifting rather than demeaning within a genre meant to disturb or upset.

I come back to another writing on the subject by [Carina Pasquesi](#), in her article “Of Monsters, Creatures and Other Queer Becomings”, where she elaborates:

...“Perhaps we have a tradition of describing ourselves as fierce creatures, something more powerful than just human, as a way to be brave, to give ourselves a necessary fiction of power in the face of a kind of negativity that is certainly not enabling. Maybe this is a way to front like we’re not scared because shifting the focus from danger to pleasure and queer world-making is a real challenge.”

The simple labeling of being “the other,” of the different and the vermin-esque, aligns as a part of the history of queer culture and the experience of being neurodivergent. Being viewed as the Monstrous creatures existing in opposition to the status quo. This makes sense then how it can be so easy, natural even, to find identifying factors in Horror media and cultivating empathy for its Monstrous subjects, regardless of what might have been the intentions of its producers.

However, by putting my work within the Horror Genre, I don’t want to restrict queerness and neurodivergency to the experience of being viewed as Monstrous. I set out to use VIVERE to merge these ideas of casual representation and the identifiers within Monster-specific Horror media. Afterall, there is always much more to a Monster than what you first see on the surface.

Following this, by writing for Horror, VIVERE walks along this line of historically queer and neurodivergent themes in literature, film and art.

So the audience this project is immediately intended for is both queer and neurodivergent persons who have been looking for more out of storytelling, who desire to feel included in the narrative rather than having to cherry pick from a collection of heteronormative media.

This story is for people like me; specifically several-years-younger me who back then didn't even know how much they wanted more media and genres with casual representation for queer and neurodivergent folks. VIVERE shoots for YA and older readers. I want this work to be as approachable for older audiences as it might be for younger teens. In recent years there have been handfuls of new shows and books with queer rep in mind, benefiting younger viewers who are now able to see themselves in the media they love as they grow and develop. However this same love has not been as apparent in media for older kids and adults. It's not as often that a person 17 years and older is able to easily see themselves portrayed in these kinds of stories. And 17 was about the age I finally began taking my sense of self and identity seriously.

VIVERE is intended to join the market and make more media for this gap, providing more storytelling and genre options for this faction of people.

This project certainly saw major edits made from when I first began working on my proposal in August of 2021 to now. Actually, VIVERE was originally just a 20ish page short story I wrote towards the beginning of 2020 and into quarantine for a Creative Writing class at my first College. On the left you can see the first illustration I ever made for this story, now next to the same scene a part of the comic today. So from that first stage of development the characters, scenes and details of the plot were significantly different. Even the tone shifted when I prepared to edit and reformat the Prose for Script.

Because when I first wrote Vivere, before it even had a title, I was in an entirely different state of mind. I'd found out my College was shutting down because a handful of school heads no longer wanted to run it without making enough profit.

There had been emotionally charged protests and sit-ins that followed. For all intents and purposes I was losing a family.

The City was then rocked by three separate tornados in a single night.

Without any power we were all forced to head home and we never got the chance to return; as the weeks that followed lead us into an international health crisis. I ended up spending a majority of my time on the story in quarantine, emotionally numbed and desperate for an outlet.

In a way it becomes more gratifying to see this project come to fruition. This all started at Watkins College. I carried it with me for 2 years and over 2500 miles. Now it's here, on the West Coast and fully realized.

So now, when I began the process of refreshing the story and rewriting it, I had to both convert the prose format into a graphic novel script, and make major revisions to the content and flow of the Narrative. Events were added or removed, characters changed and had to be redesigned. I had to visualize the details of the story's environment to better understand the characters' and their dilemma and ultimately consider what I was communicating not only by the dialogue but by actions and circumstances.

The timeline also played a role in the editing process, primarily with the complimenting materials. The Character Sheets initially had more involved illustration elements beyond that of the figures themselves, including illustrated items and related objects that could be associated with each character. But as weeks progressed I had to compromise by cutting these excess elements in order to ensure the Comic Pages themselves would be completed.

The Merchandising campaign also had to be reformatted. When I proposed the project back in December I had planned to produce stickers, pins and tshirts. Shirts

and Pins ended up getting cut due to the fact that I didn't have the designs themselves locked down in time to ensure they could be produced and shipped for the final presentation. I found out the process of actually deciding on what designs and motifs would best suit the project was more time consuming than I had first guessed. But by giving myself the time to deliberate I was able to feel more confident in my final picks while still producing the necessary three item series.

When pursuing this project, I had to take on the role of Author, Editor, Producer, Illustrator, etc-allowing me to dictate all aspects of VIVERE and the vision I had when initially developing the story. When traditionally producing a Novel or Comic, a larger team and handful of specialized roles would be involved in its completion. On my own I had to adjust myself to playing and working in each of these parts, sticking to a schedule and timeline in order to assure not only that everything got done on time but that it was also the best quality I was able to produce.

Working with my Mentor I was also able to consider the changes and their importance or influence on the final product. What was the impact of my storytelling within color, what bits of dialogue or scenes did or didn't work and ultimately what reaction would I get from an audience? I was able to consider the way people would respond to the characters, which at the end of the day, was one of the most important aspects of this project to me; how exactly people might or might not identify defining points of these people and their narrative. With that information I was able to make important edits and decisions all the way through.

Since this was my first attempt at taking an idea from Script to Full Color, there were learning curves I had to drift into. I had to learn to be okay with the fact that my script wasn't perfect and that I could make changes to it as I was working through my stages of Layouts, Pencils and even all the way to Color. Throughout this process I was getting new ideas and suggestions to better the story and what I wanted it to do for an audience. At the end of it, I knew what I wanted it to be, and I had to be open to help and advice from others to get it exactly where I wanted it to go.

Past this point -after this is all said and done- I know I want to continue developing the pages for VIVERE. I will take its script pages to completion. With the work I've put into it this past handful of months I know I have a solid foundation to keep going and to cultivate more interest online to fund the remainder of the project. Merchandising items and promotion will assist in advertising. These initial character pages will begin to stew interest and make way for me to create more specific sketches and character exploration pages to further draw readers in. And with these first 21 pages I'll be able to have a kind of 'soft-opening' to give an audience a sense of the story, what the remainder will look like and what exactly the story itself is about.

As much as it is about Horror and a sense of casual representation-it is once more sharing a point of view.

I've always believed the biggest point of stories and storytelling is the sense of escapism they provide, an exit point from present day realities and troubles into something both entirely new and incredibly familiar, much like visiting friends, a cherished spot in nature, or a moment of closing one's eyes and allowing oneself to wander.

Indulging in stories is an important aspect of everyday life for me, regardless of what form they take. And at the heart of it, that's what VIVERE is about, its namesake.

VIVERE is simply Latin "To Live," which insinuates a conscious sense of being, existing-in anyway a person chooses to. It's to the point, it leaves no room for question but rather is a flat statement that encompasses anything and everything. VIVERE is to live, to continue, to survive -to exist. It asks for nothing else.

So I ask for nothing else. When writing I imagine I have found a body, a consciousness, that has been placed in a new context. I ask only that it lives, that

the characters of the story act and think with that concept in mind, whatever it might translate to for these different persons. It could mean fighting a grueling battle as much as it could be laying on a rock and photosynthesizing. That frame of thought influences how I wrote Vivere.

I find Clark, Sherman and the remainder of this small cast in this situation and environment, and I ask what they might do. What would each unique personality say or how would they react to this -or that -or another odd happening. In its own way, working on this project was a means of escapism in itself as I was able to put my own consciousness into a new context and submerge into that moment. It's emotionally cathartic as much as it is intensive work.

It's a sensation that brings me back to it again and again -like one might return to a favorite book or show. So I'm certainly not finished with Vivere. This has been only the first step, the first installment, into something much longer and satisfying.

So I thank you all for coming today and listening to my story, for seeing my work. I'm so incredibly grateful.

I also wanted to quickly thank my Mentor on this project, Caitlin, for helping me through every step of the process. None of this would have been possible without you and the advice and insight you gave me in the script, characters and art. Thank you so much for taking this on with me.

And with that, I can now answer any questions you might have.

Annotated Bibliography

Pasquesi, Carina. "Of Monsters, Creatures and Other Queer Becomings." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 46/47, no. 2/1 (2013): 119–25.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43264545>.

- ★ This article revolved around the discussion of language in the queer community and the weight behind it. How the use of terms such as 'creature' or 'fierce' are terms used both to empower in the face of uncertainty and threat as well as to 'self-other' oneself from the day-to-day of heterocentric culture; an embrace of the concept of being an outsider. This source helped develop my language when articulating the relationship between Queer/Neurodivergency and the genre of Horror.

Jolene Zigarovich. "The Trans Legacy of Frankenstein." *Science Fiction Studies* 45, no. 2 (2018): 260–72. <https://doi.org/10.5621/sciefictstud.45.2.0260>.

- ★ This Article went into detail on the impact of the story of Frankenstein's Monster and how it carries themes of the Trans and Queer experience. This article helped me to more directly make the connection between Horror and Queer/Neurodivergency, providing more concrete examples and sources.

Carroll, Noël. "The Nature of Horror." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46, no. 1 (1987): 51–59. <https://doi.org/10.2307/431308>.

- ★ This article was Noël Carroll's observation and study of The Nature of Horror as a genre. However she specifies the conversation to a section

she dubs “art horror,” of which is particular to Monster Media. After distinguishing general Monster Media from Art-Horror Monsters, Carroll spends the remainder of the article discussing what makes a monster, why and how. This article greatly assisted in my research and bettered my understanding of Monster Horror media and the language to use with it.

Wendy Pearson. “Alien Cryptographies: The View from Queer.” *Science Fiction Studies* 26, no. 1 (1999): 1–22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240748>.

★ This Article was Pearson’s way of illustrating the relationship of the Science Fiction Genre to Queer Fiction and Queer studies, going all the way back to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. It draws connections to specific pieces of literature and film media that expose underlying fears or questions following Gay and Lesbian identity discussions. The article connects Science Fiction and Horror as intrinsically being a part of the same line of storytelling, or rather as Science Fiction acting as a branch from Horror. The Article helped me link and better elaborate on themes within my Thesis by linking Horror and SciFi as well as Queerness and identity.

Fawcett, John, dir. *Ginger Snaps*. 2000; Toronto, Canada: Motion International, 2021. Amazon Prime Video.

★ *Ginger Snaps* is a film that follows the story of two sisters when a horrific werewolf infection takes hold of the oldest; Ginger. This film acted as an early example of Trans and Queer experience and themes standing out in Horror Media, how they translate and more specifically how it makes it easier for an audience to project/relate to the Monstrous subjects.

Turteltaub, Jon, dir. *The Meg*. 2018; Sanya, China: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2022. DVD.

- ★ This film tells the story of a group of scientists accidentally releasing an ancient Meg into the upper ocean. They set out to survive as well as ensure that the Meg doesn't harm anyone else. It was an early influencer when developing the story of *Vivere* as well as how a diverse cast of characters can work together without getting lost in the narrative or losing focus. It was also a great example of a fun piece of Horror that ended with a happy ending.

Scott, Ridley, dir. *Alien*. 1979; Water Oakley, Berkshire: 20th Century Fox, 2021. DVD.

- ★ The iconic film by Ridley Scott that follows the crew of the *Nostromo* as they contend with an alien invader aboard their ship. Similar to the *Meg*, this film helped me understand the impact of a confined setting, a set cast of characters that can each stand on their own, as well as the looming threat of a stalking creature.

Carpenter, John, dir. *The Thing*. 1982; Juneau, Alaska: Universal Pictures, 2021. DVD.

- ★ An iconic film by John Carpenter that tells the story of an isolated group of researchers and technicians stranded in a snow storm with a monster lurking among them. The tension of the film coupled with the confined and isolating setting assisted me in designing the setting and circumstances of *Vivere*.

McElroy, Clint, Griffin McElroy, Justin McElroy, Travis McElroy, Carey Pietsch, and Tessa Stone. Essay. In *The Adventure Zone*. New York: First Second, 2020.

- ★ A Graphic Novel series based on the Podcast of the same name, following a *Dungeons and Dragons* campaign played by three brothers and their dad. This work greatly influenced how I wanted to illustrate

and talk about a diverse set of characters in a way that leaves ample room for them to be left open for interpretation by the reader.

Nib, The. *Be Gay, Do Comics*. Idea Design Works, 2020.

- ★ A collection of Comics about the Queer experience, queer characters and other queer becomings. Talking on subjects of working as a queer creator in the comics/storytelling industry, it made me consider my own place in that setting.

Hall, Natalie. Natalie Hall. Accessed October 14, 2021.

<http://www.nataliehallart.com/>.

- ★ An Illustrator and Tattoo artist working out of Los Angeles, California. They are a creator that has inspired my work for several years now, her portfolio including both Monstrous subjects as well as more innocuous or innocent subjects, however maintaining an unsettling or eerie illustration style.

Rowan MacColl Illustrations. Rowan MacColl. Accessed November 5, 2021.

<http://www.rowanmaccoll.com/>.

- ★ An Illustrator and Writer whose work has influenced my own for several years now. I have been an avid reader of her series *KingFisher* as well as a few other less developed Narratives that she has so far shared. She has been a prime example of including queer and neurodivergent characters in stories of varying genres without making their identities the driving force of the plot or otherwise obvert.

Alias, Marsoid. "FAQ." MARSOID. Accessed November 28, 2021.

<https://www.marsoid.net/faq.html>.

★ An Illustrator and Writer whose work has influenced me for several years now. I have enjoyed their long running queer/supernatural/romance comic series *Long Exposure* as well as their more recent project *Ride or Die*. Their ability to include queer character in multiple setting/genres casually has deeply inspired my own work. In addition to their combination of Horror/SciFi/Mystery/Supernatural with Romance elements.