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Vampirism in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* and Angela Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love"

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The vampire, as a terrifying monstrous Other, the Undead, has thrived for thousands of years in myths, legends, and folklore, alluring a great fascination upon different civilizations around the world. In their various forms, these mythical revenants inspire the fear and anxiety rooted in the human psyche, they are the epitome of the disturbing sacred force lurking within the construct of human existence. Transcending life and death, time and space, vampires' enduring appeal is signaled by their impressive reappearances in the nineteenth-century Gothic literature. Drawing inspiration and archetypes from Eastern European folklore, poets and writers explore the fictional power of these overpowering, boundary-crossing creatures with great effort. Since then, the literary vampire became one of the prevailing figures of Gothic fiction that thrilled the readers for centuries. The vampire comes to be an embodiment of many forms of Otherness, its transgressive and ambivalent identity provokes dreadful fears of non-normative behaviors that threaten to disrupt and redefine established values into a modern form.

Typically, vampires are powerful bloodsucking creatures with supernatural abilities; they emerge from the grave at night to prey upon humans through the exchange of bodily fluids. These physical traits mainly originate from Transylvanian medical reports and Slavic folklore. The allure of vampires comes from their ambiguity and excessiveness: they are both attractive and disgusting, their insatiability stirs up both human fear and desire, they represent what is repressed and taboo, and they "resonate in some irresistible way with

unacknowledged social processes."[1] Vampires have been portrayed as highly sexualized exploiters with self-renewing and insatiable appetites, whose relationships with their victims are both predator-prey and erotic. Sometimes, vampires can suffer from their demonic, devouring nature, hence become victims cornered in a shell of immortality - vacuous duplicate only.

The focus of this study is on the role of female vampires. Giving vampires feminine characteristics is not a sudden creation. According to Julia Kristeva, femininity, fertility, and fecundity are all associated with blood, which comes to be a fascinating intersection of meanings, "the propitious place for abjection."[2] From the realms of mythology and folklore, female vampires emerge as seductive demonesses and *femme fatale* that threaten the male domination of the patriarchal society. Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) is one of the finest vampire novels that touch the theme of lesbian vampirism. In nineteenth-century vampire literature, principal literary vampires were male, which follows the Gothic tradition of subordinating women to male villainy as sexualized objects under the male gaze.

Nevertheless, female vampires are often depicted as individual subjects having agency; their transgressive bodies embody both fear and desire, subvert the established gender conventions, and mark out the neglected territory. According to Christopher Frayling, female vampires are based on the trope of *femme fatale*, one of the four archetypal vampires in nineteenth-century fiction[3].

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[1] S. Sceats, "Oral Sex: Vampiric Transgression and the Writing of Angela Carter", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 20, no. 1, University of Tulsa, 2001, p. 107.

[2] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982, p. 96.

[3] Frayling, in his landmark study of the vampire, declares that the four archetypal vampires are "the Satanic Lord (Polidori and derivatives), the Fatal Woman (Tieck, Hoffmann, Gautier, Baudelaire, Swinburne and Le Fanu), the Unseen Force (O'Brien, de Maupassant) and the Folkloric Vampire (Mérimée, Gogol, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Linton and Burton)", he also mentions the 'camp' vampire and the vampire as metaphor of the creative process. In

She is viewed as the embodiment of corruption, degeneration, and deviancy, an agent of perverse and predatory sexual desire who is uncontrollable and destructive. Female vampires' bodies violate taboos, thus triggering a rethinking of female nature and female sexuality. Indeed, Nina Auerbach notes that associating women with frightful creatures "is both a stigma . . . and a celebration of female powers of metamorphosis."[4] Female vampires undoubtedly incite intolerance, fright, and panic in patriarchal societies because of their subversive female power, which put male dominance and male control of female sexuality at risk. Consequently, the bodies of female vampires must be violently mutilated until total annihilation to prevent the possible degeneration and destruction of established social norms and moral cleanliness.

My exploration of the vampirism in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) builds on critics Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik's discussion of the titular character's association with the vampire[5], as well as Alison Light's reading of Rebecca as the novel's focal point of "conflicting desires for and descriptions of the feminine."[6] The novel begins with the nameless narrator's dream of Manderley – the well-known historic estate of the de Winter family, in a hotel room abroad during the couple's exile. Rebecca is the deceased ex-wife of the narrator's retiring husband Maxim de Winter, her beauty and charm are praised by all and contrast sharply with the narrator's mediocrity. As a result, the narrator

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Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula, Faber and Faber, London and Boston, 1991, p. 62.

[4] N. Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1982, p. 65.

[5] In their seminal work, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik focus on the vampirism of Rebecca who is like all vampire figures, has "transgressive, polymorphous sexuality", "a figure of abjection". In "Daphne du Maurier and Gothic Signatures: Rebecca as Vamp(ire)", *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality*, eds. A. Horner and A. Keane, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2000, p. 214.

[6] A. Light, "'Returning to Manderley': Romance Fiction, Female Sexuality and Class", *Feminist Review*, no. 16, 1984, p. 11.

develops a strong sense of inferiority and jealousy. Under the scorn and spite of the housekeeper Mrs. Danvers, who is utterly devoted to Rebecca, and under Maxim's discipline and indifference, the narrator falls prey to unbearable torment until she learns that her husband killed Rebecca out of hatred.

In line with Alison Light's resistance to earlier critical attention on romance as the novel's central theme, this thesis offers an insight into Rebecca's vampirism. I argue in my work that Rebecca manifests many traditional characteristics of female vampires, whose charm, astuteness, and domineering behavior challenge the parochial view of femininity at the time. Like the vampires, Rebecca is ambivalent in essence, she is a beautiful, gregarious woman who induce admiration from the world; at the same time, she is audacious, shrewd, sexually ambiguous and has lesbian tendencies. From her Hebraic name and the numerous depictions of her physical appearance, the reader is reminded of the stereotypical association between vampirism and Jewishness. The nineteenth-century Anti-Semitism, as Judith Halberstam writes, shares with the vampire myth "a kind of Gothic economy in their ability to condense many monstrous traits into one body."[7]

Moreover, Rebecca's Otherness and the effect of her vampirism also encompasses Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject, as the nameless narrator finds in Rebecca's transgression "a forfeited existence"[8] of her own self. Also, in the novel, Daphne du Maurier exemplifies Ellen Moers' notion of the female Gothic – women writers' obsession with the interweaving of grotesque and macabre dreams about "lesbians, lunatics, and Jews."[9]

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[7] J. Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1995, p. 88.

[8] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, cit., p. 96.

[9] E. Moers, *Literary Woman*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1976, p. 108.

Angela Carter's short story "The Lady of the House of Love" serves to deconstruct the stereotypical myths about femininity, female power and identity. It is a prose retelling of fairy tale and a reinterpretation of the vampire myth. The tale is richly allusive; and Carter argues that compared to the lengthy, detailed narratives' "multiplying ambiguities", the space constraints of short stories condense meaning and allow the fusing of sign and sense to a greater degree.[10]

Carter manifests the predicament of a female vampire who is cornered in Gothic clichés and patriarchal control and who can only be released by de-mythologization and embracing reality. Carter is particularly interested in the very nature of vampire desire: ambiguous and ambivalent in essence, vampires are ruthless predators but also victims of their insatiable desire. Carter highlights the vampire's parasitic nature and dependence, making the female vampire a terrifyingly powerful queen with strength beyond that of a human male, but at the same time a poor doll living under strict control of her nature. Carter sees in the female vampire the possibility of combining reality and imagination, she also brings modernity to the Gothic cliché. By colliding with the new rational world, the vampire Queen sees the illusional aspect of her vampirism and femininity imposed on her, and finally, she embraces reality by dying.

Chapter two offers an introduction of the vampire motif, tracing this frightful and devouring creature back to its origin in mythology and legends. The emphasis is on the socio-anthropological and psychological basis of the vampire belief. The vampire comes to light together with human fear; its excesses and intense desires resonate with the dark side of human nature. As Jerrold H. Hogle argues, the role of the vampire is to make people aware and conceal their "most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and

[10] A. Carter, *Burning Your Boats: Collected Stories*, with an introduction by Salman Rushdie, Vintage Books, London, 1996, p. 459.

mental to the widely social and cultural."[11] During the Middle Ages, the vampire belief in Europe had been shaped by various sources, including the attacks from the Christian Church and plagues – some reports of infectious diseases in Eastern Europe have led to a deepening of vampire superstitions. But the vampire belief in Western Europe owes its popularity to the fictional vampire entities adopted in poetry and novels beginning in the eighteenth-century, such as *The Vampire* (1748) and *The Bride of Corinth* (1797). The charismatic modern vampire figure that readers are familiar with comes from Bram Stoker's epistolary novel *Dracula* (1897) – a howling success that contributes the most to the vampire genre. The novel remains canonical and continues to hold influence up to the twenty-first century.

Chapter three focuses on the fictional power of female vampires in Gothic literature. Rebecca's vampirism is analyzed with comparison to Carmilla and the vampire women in *Dracula*. Adopting (lesbian) feminist cultural theories, the thesis argues that the depiction of Rebecca carries on the tradition of the female vampire. In terms of physical appearance, her thinness, pallor, hysteria, and infertility are stereotypes of the female vampire of the time. Allowing deviant women to carry these physical defects, such works convey society's rejection and disapproval of 'improper' femininity that differs from the patriarchal idealization of women. The perverse sexuality and transgressive nature of female vampires are highlighted, as their unnatural bodies and insatiable desire can induce dread and panic in men about the destructive female power that disrupts patriarchal society's ideals.

This chapter also highlights the unique ability of female vampires to establish intimate, erotic relationships with other women, especially with

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[11] J.E. Hogle, "Introduction", *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. J.E. Hogle, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 4.

innocent, virginal girls, in the form of mother-daughter bond and lesbianism. Psychoanalytic theories are used here because psychic vampirism is evident in the mother-daughter-like relationship, and it works as a draining power resulting in fierce self-condemnation on the victim's part. This draining experience with sadomasochistic features plays an integral part in the victims' self-identification. Moreover, by examining the male characters' reaction to this female intimacy that excludes men, the reader discovers the male-dominated society's intense desire to control women's sexuality and deviant behavior.

Chapter four offers an insight into the standard Gothic devices used in connection with vampirism in the novel *Rebecca*. Portraying Rebecca as having Jewish features takes her association with vampires a step further, allowing the social otherness commonly encompassed by vampires to be fully realized, bringing about a horrific effect – the British fear of reverse colonization. Rebecca's enthusiasm for blood is reflected in the novel as the rhododendrons she plants occupy and dominate the entire space of Manderley. The horror and beauty of the rhododendrons are symbolic to the dead mistress and female vampires. Similarly, Carter's vampire Queen carries on her family tradition of planting luxuriant roses, and in the end, she herself turns into a dark thorny rose. Moreover, representing freedom and power, the imagery of the sea is significant in displaying Rebecca's autonomy and self-determination, which is an essential distinction between Rebecca and Carter's vampire Queen.

Inspired by the author's treasured home Menabily, Manderley is presented as the major locus of the narrative. Its depiction follows Gothic tradition: it is a haunted, bleak manor house that separates the present from the past and guards values of the past.[12] The fact that Rebecca's ghostly presence has been haunting Manderley before her corpse is discovered, makes Manderley a symbolic coffin

[12] F. Botting, *Gothic*, London, 1996, p. 2.

for vampires to rise from the dead. From a feminist perspective, as a house that has held two wives in, Manderley is also a symbol of the confinement of female desires. In this case, the English mansion is not much different from the vampire Queen's ancestral castle that watches and controls her behavior. The Gothic manor house is critical to both female protagonists' survival and struggle as it epitomizes "the feudal past, the oppressive patriarchal system, the arbitrary power, and violence always threatening to disrupt civilized values." [13] In addition, Mrs. Danvers's ghastly look and her job as a housekeeper make her the most vampire-like creature in the novel who guards the gates of life and death. Her care and preservation of her mistress' belongings and her desire to sacrifice the narrator reveal her insane longing for her mistress' resurrection. There are also comparisons with the killings of female vampires and Rebecca by the male protagonists. The masculine incapacity to tolerate lesbianism and sterility is at the root of the brutal killings.

Chapter five explores the dark aspects of vampirism in "The Lady of the House of Love". Carter makes use of the rich suggestiveness of vampires, emphasizing vampires' ambiguity and ambivalence, who are both atrocious predators and innocent victims of desire. Through the Countess Nosferatu, the reader discovers a habitually hidden and repressed part of the (human) psyche. Carter reinforces the claustrophobic sense of Gothic fiction by portraying a female vampire who is entombed in a castle of eternity and has lost her sense of reality. This sense of captivity also comes from Carter's reflections on the passive waiting of *Sleeping Beauty* – the main source of the tale. The Countess's parasitic nature makes her intensely dependent; though love comes to her rescue, her destructive nature cannot coexist with love. The female vampire is doomed

[13] M. Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds: Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, Ombre Carte, Verona, 2017, p. 12.

to a monotonous life of eternity, reluctantly repeating the acts of killing and cannibalism that repulse her, not knowing how to break this vicious cycle.

Carter also invites the reader to observe the falsity and meaninglessness of fairy tales and vampires when divorced from reality. In fact, Joseph Campbell suggests that it is impossible to take fairy tales seriously because they are the imaginative utopia, the "never-never land of childhood"[14] where the reader is sheltered from the cruel, harsh realities. Carter sets out to deconstruct such mythological figures and the fantastic, unreal incidents, going inwardly to the characters' minds to revive the forgotten power of autonomy and freedom.

Like other writers who touch upon the vampire subject, Carter uses the theme of female vampirism to convey her view of femininity. Indeed, Carter is a feminist writer. In *Notes from the Front Line*, she asserts that she is a feminist in all aspects of her life, and the women's movement has been "of immense importance"[15] to her. Unlike Rebecca, who uses her transgressions to oppose the patriarchal order and advocate for women's empowerment, Carter's vampire Queen is captured in the empty mechanical life of gradual decay. Driven by her vampire nature to seduce and devour, she is unable to grasp real aspects of her feminine nature. By portraying an aggressive female predator who possesses strength over humans, Carter explains that in an unequal system, women's emancipation cannot be achieved through deviant behavior alone.

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[14] J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2004, p. 26.

[15] A. Carter, "Notes from the Front Line" 1983, in A. Carter, *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings*, eds. J. Uglow, Penguin, London, 1998, p. 38.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCING THE VAMPIRE MOTIF

Vampires have entertained readers for ages, from the most famous Transylvanian count Dracula to the charming Cullen family in the *Twilight Series*, the vampire is undoubtedly one of the most intriguing motifs in the Gothic literature of the western world. Together with the imagination of movie directors and screenwriters, it has entered fully in pop culture as to influence the popular imagination across the globe. The success of vampire novels, movies, and TV series has led to a roughly similar association when people hear the word 'vampire': a pale, grim-faced nobleman living in a magnificent but eerie castle deep in the woods of Eastern Europe; he wears a black cloak and sleeps in a cold coffin, his fangs always coveting the throats of innocent women; he is a living dead who can live for centuries and stay forever young, only holy relics like the Crucifix and wooden stakes can kill him.

Nevertheless, vampire legends are more complex and diverse, as Nina Auerbach argues, they "are easy to stereotype, but it is their variety that makes them survivors."[16] Since the dawn of humanity, human societies had beliefs about frightening bloodsucking creatures, centuries before Bram Stoker's *Dracula* acquired its popularity within the genre. Myths, folklore, and superstitions related to vampires are widespread, the presence of these evil undead fiends has been rumored and circulated in almost every culture around the world and spans millennia of human history. In general, the vampire is

[16] N. Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, p. 1.

inseparable from human self-identification. According to Joseph Campbell, the enigmatic energy of the mystical creature that inspires, discloses, and acts in legends may also be found in humanity. Similar to how the mythical world affects humans, human's imaginative and creative power greatly influence the external world.[17]

Although vampires come in very different forms, which is one of the primary reasons for their longevity in popular culture, there are always specific requirements for a mythological figure to be included in the vampire category. To name a few, they look as pale as a corpse, usually with frightful blood-red eyes and a pair of fangs; they emerge from their coffins at night to hunt. Most significantly, driven by their intense desire, vampires bite and suck blood. The superpower they possess is often the ability to fly or transfigure (commonly into a bat), as well as an enormous strength. To prevent being attacked by vampires, people can use garlic, sunlight, crosses (and other sacred symbols). Vampires are not indestructible; they can be killed by decapitation, stabbing the heart with stakes, burning, and preferably combining these methods to ensure their total destruction – people fear that the vampires will return as they essentially exist on the border between the living and the dead.

The transgression of vampires transforms them from simple mythical monsters to a metaphor for humanity. Their identities are ambivalent and they exist at the edge of the natural and the supernatural, life and death, human and unhuman. Moreover, vampires, by their very nature, confound limitations by being dead, alive, and undead at the same time.[18] Their ability to blur and destroy boundaries is the prime source of their fascination for generations of

[17] J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, cit., p. xxxv.

[18] N. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, Yale University Press, London, 2018, p. 91.

horror writers, as the disruption of limitations is the main preoccupation of the Gothic genre.

Vampires and the undead, demons, ghosts, etc., all embody the universal human fear of the mysterious realm of death. But in the dark empire full of evil creatures, vampires are a special kind, "neither ghost nor demon […] for he is a thing which belongs to no world at all."[19] Vampires are not invisible and untouchable like ghosts, nor are they strictly demons, capable of infusing themselves or others' bodies with evil energy. Nonetheless, they are all driven by a vile desire to harm. Vampires are monsters that creep out of the grave at night and feed on the blood of humans, sucking it to keep themselves from decaying. Indeed, Nick Groom notes that "the vampire has been an eternal (indeed, undying) threat to humankind."[20]

2.1 – THE CREATION OF VAMPIRES: SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

To understand the evolution and symbolism of the vampire in literature, and ultimately how *Rebecca* incarnates vampirism, it is important to look at what the myth tells us, as "myths are dramatic or narrative embodiments of a people's perception of the deepest truths"[21] – myth's primary purpose is for it to tell us something about ourselves. Vampires have haunted civilized society since the dawn of human history, most cultures have dealt with vampiric entities. While vampire forms and traits may vary, they are all symbolic representations of death

[19] M, Summers, *Vampires and Vampirism*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 2005, p. 18.

[20] N. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, cit., p. 13.

[21] H.C. Holman, W. Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature*, Macmillan, New York, 1992, p. 306.

and fear. Often coming back from the dead with hatred and revenge, vampires seek to take away the most precious part of a human being – life. They are predators, and while ancient people hunt in the wild, vampires appear to be lurking in the dark, ready to pounce – a trait that critics believe "takes advantage of mankind's natural fear of the night."[22]

These creatures have their origins in various myths and stories, some of which are quite similar while others are strikingly unlike. Lilith, known as *Strygia* (screech owl) in the Talmud, was one of the oldest vampires; her narrative is based on Babylonian and Assyrian folklore. Lamia, a blood-drinking female monster, was depicted in Greek mythology; *Empousa*, a pale and fanged creature and *Strix*, a bat-shaped monster, feared garlic. They all live on human blood. The most horrible blood-sucking creature in Philippine folklore, *Aswang*, is an attractive woman with light skin and long hair, she marries into human society and slowly drain her husbands' blood and attack children. It is said that they enjoy sucking human blood, and they are only active at night. Moreover, in Irish folklore, there are vampire-like revenants called *Dearg-Dul*, they are thought of as beautiful yet evil fairies that allure and suck human blood, and during daylight they return to the underground.

The various descriptions of evil, bloodsucking creatures in world's folklore reveal that vampires are symbols created by the human imagination to explain the unknown phenomena of nature. The image of vampires is ever-changing because the human understanding of the self deepens through time. In general, vampires embody the universal human fear and anxiety of death. Death is inescapable, yet it can never be fully comprehended or explained; even now, death is widely seen as a great horror than a natural process. The vampire myth

[22] T. Bane, *Encyclopedia of Vampire Mythology*, McFarland & Company, Inc., London, 1969, p. 9.

is rooted in the primitive human reflection on the perplexing division between body and soul. Joseph Campbell argues that humans can access "our highest aspirations, our most uncanny knowings, our mystical understandings, and our spontaneous inspirations and unleashings of creative ideas"[23] when in touch with their souls. British Anthropologist E.B. Tylor, in an insightful section, argues that amid their development, ancient thinking men were deeply bothered by two sets of biological problems – death and dreams. Humans around the world all inferred at roughly the same time that, separable from the body, there are a life and a soul (or phantom): the soul is the body's "image or second self", and the life enables the body to "feel, think, and act"[24].

In line with Tylor, Friedrich Engels suggests that the concept of immortality arises from the observation of the soul. Primitive men, he argues, although ignorant of the structure of the body, began to consider the existence of the soul by reflecting on the inexplicable phenomena of dreams, they perceived as if a soul lives inside the body that provides the person with thinking and feeling.[25]

Moreover, while the body gradually decays and eventually dies, the soul/mind grows enriched by acquiring experience and knowledge. Hence, from the mysterious phenomena of dreams and unconsciousness during which the soul leaves one's body, the ancient people wondered if there was a continuance of the soul, life, and personality that live on after death in a veiled form. Thus, the idea of immortality and stories about what happens after death developed.

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[23] J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* cit., p. xxxi-xxxii.

[24] E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Research into the Development of Mythology Philosophy Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, vol. 1, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 2016, p. 351.

[25] F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 2003, p. 14.

This reasoning about dreams, death, the soul, and immortality is inextricably linked to the construction and evolution of the vampire motif. In sum, vampires are not merely emblems of the human fear of death, they are also related to the inherent human curiosity and desire in the quest for knowledge. In this light, the longevity of the legends of the Undead is hard to subdue. Furthermore, it is thanks to their vast potential of immortality, power, and mystery that vampires have been able to evolve from terrifying revenge monsters to freedom fighters with a rebellious spirit.

Along with fantasizing about greater happiness in the afterlife, ancient pagan people believed that the ideal death is oblivion and rest, claiming that death is "a sweet guerdon of repose, a blessed oblivion after the toil and struggle of life."[26] This idea brings to mind the vampires' most horrible condition – they live forever, without rest, but endless hunting. Vampires are thus the product of contradictions, prolonging their own lives by taking other lives, much like a curse.

When the concept of the soul developed into beliefs about ghosts, ancients believed that ghosts of the dead had more power than the souls of the living, and this belief led to the emergence of certain burial rituals. In the Ancient Greek epic poem *Iliad*, Patroclus's ghost appears before Achilles and asks for a proper burial to lead his soul into the afterlife. In many parts of the world, special burial rites for the dead, such as wakes, weeping, and giving alms to the poor, are designed to appease people's anxiety and fear for the incomprehensible death. However, if the burial rites were not done correctly, people feared that the dead would return to the world for revenge. It is undeniably true that the vampire legends may be traced back to people's fear of death, but people also fear returning of the dead. Hence, the vampire figure often embodies this kind of fear

[26] M. Summers, *Vampires and Vampirism*, cit., p. 23.

of retribution.

Nick Groom suggests that vampires are identifiable entities that can be traced back to a specific period and place. Hence, they possess peculiar and recognizable manifestations and attributes – particularly in relation to "blood, science, society and culture."[27] Indeed, vampires' most characteristic trait is their horrid and insatiable desire for blood. Blood, which sustains life and spirit, has been revered and feared throughout the ages. The Israelites and the Aborigines of Australia believed that "the life of the flesh is in the blood"[28] and that blood can nourish the souls of the deceased, animating the corpse with vitalizing qualities. Moreover, the dead would return to the world to seek revenge on those who did not provide him with this kind of nourishment.

The central characteristic of vampires confirms this belief: blood can provide vampires with more vigor and power. Thus, vampires always appear in high spirits; they have a remarkable fascination with blood and a massive appetite for it. Indeed, as Montague Summers writes, "by blood it sustains and nourish its own vitality, it prolongs its existence of life in death and death in life, blood it seeks and blood it must have."[29]

However, vampires also stand for bad blood and its negative aspects like corruption and virulency. As Nick Groom argues, by blurring the boundaries between life and death, human and monsters, even between "psychological stability and physical metamorphosis" [30], vampires are an epitome of contradictions (of blood).

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[27] N. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, cit., p. 13.

[28] M. Summers, *Vampires and Vampirism*, cit., p. 33.

[29] M. Summers, *The Vampire in Europe*, cit., p. 17.

[30] N. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, cit., p. 66.

2.2 – VAMPIRES IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Vampire legends and superstitions had been rumored for centuries, but they became well-known until the fourteenth-century when the Black Death hit heavily on West Europe and took away tens of millions of lives. The plague lasted for nearly a century and contributed to the spreading of vampire superstitions. Apart from supplying specific characteristics of the vampire's physique, the plague also provided one of the most significant traits of vampires: infection. People became frantic and desperate in the face of this fatal infectious disease that they had never heard of, as Nick Groom writes:

> Such extreme anxiety in the face of the rapid, devastating and inexplicable spread of disease – and the frantic attempts to contain it – forms the background to subsequent outbreaks of vampirism.[31]

Ages before sanitation and antibiotics, plague and epidemics stroke without warning, wreaking havoc and causing death and misery. Hopeless villagers, who lacked a modern understanding of blood circulation, infectious diseases, death, and other biological symptoms, came up with and were more prone to supernatural explanations for the mysterious fatal disease. Also, they came to believe that sufferers who turned into vampires would prey first upon their family members. These vampire panics, the horrible stories, and superstitions about this horrible bloodsucking creature were the response to outbreaks of unknown deadly diseases. As a matter of fact, like many myths, the vampire myth can be read from a medical perspective: numerous traits and superstitions associated with vampires originated with real-life diseases.

A blood disorder named porphyria, for example, can cause attacks that are

[31] Ibid, p. 71.

abrupt and excruciatingly painful, and give its sufferers some vampiric signs such as sensitivity to sunlight and fangs. Today, Porphyria is an uncommon disease, but it had been prevalent in medieval rural villages that had less regular interaction with the outside world. It was mostly from Transylvania that vampire legends began to spread to the West, there were indeed records of Porphyria in some rural communities in this region. Furthermore, a major rabies epidemic was also recorded there in the eighteenth-century, and many vampire descriptions seem to point to rabies symptoms; its violent manifestations like hemorrhages make the patients seem scary and inhuman.

Another disease that gave its victims a horrific way to die and was responsible for the plague, was tuberculosis. Also known as 'consumption', it had caused a tremendous fear among people in New England in the nineteenth-century and it took away the lives of many Northeast people (especially Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Vermont). To nineteenth-century Americans, vampires were disease victims, and the most vampiric symptom is the progress of gradually weakening body. Archaeologists suggest that consumptives seemed like being sucked of life as they wasted away, their skin became cadaverous and they died slowly.[32] Moreover, it was believed that dead victims of tuberculosis could reach the victims and suck the life out of them without leaving their graves. In an attempt to stop the infection, the bodies of those who had died of consumption were exhumed to find out if they were sucking blood to keep their bodies fresh and contain liquid blood in their heart.

In this miserable period, religious (mainly Christian) beliefs reached a peak, with many believing that the spread of the disease was God's punishment for humankind. In the Middle Ages, Christianity played an essential role in the

[32] Connecticut State Archaeologist Nicholas Bellantoni speaks about vampire folklore beliefs in historic Connecticut at the Danbury Historical Society in Danbury, Conn. on Saturday, Oct. 26, 2013.

formation of the vampire belief. Many scholars even consider the vampire as a reflection of Christianity, "Christ's evil twin"[33], as the vampire and Jesus both promise eternal life, albeit in different ways. Also, Nick Groom suggest that blood "lays at the heart of the Christian mass and the symbolism of the Church."[34]

Christians believed that there is life after death. In the end, the body is nothing more than a container for the soul, which may continue its existence in another realm. The most considerable similarity between the Christian religion and vampirism is that blood bears great significance to both. Blood is not only the essence of the life force, it also holds supernatural power. Jesus's words such as "he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life"[35] proclaim that blood has redeeming power. In other words, the blood of life is the Holy Spirit, and the drinking of blood can provide the Christians spiritual sustenance to give them eternal life. Much like the vampire sucking blood to sustain their immortality, Christians live eternally as God's servants by accepting Christ and drinking Jesus's 'blood'. Blood offers immortality for both.

Moreover, Christian Church condemned the vampire as a form of the devil to prove the righteousness of Christian doctrine: "The bloodthirsty hate the blameless, and they seek the life of the upright."[36] The evil spirits were described as wicked, immoral, and brutal; they are ruthless ghosts or lusty

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[33] P.F. Stack, "Eat My Flesh, Drink My Blood: Are Vampires Jesus' Evil Twins?", *The Christian Century* 15 Nov. 2010, https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2010-11/eat-my-flesh-drink-my-blood-are-vampires-jesus-evil-twins

[34] N. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, cit., p. 26.

[35] M.D. Coogan, M.Z. Brettler, C.A. Newsom, and P. Perkins, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version: with the Apocrypha: An Ecumenical Study Bible*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 1893.

[36] Ibid., p. 930.

demonic vampires. Medieval religious texts demanded followers refrain from lust and practice abstinence because people might produce evil energy when letting out their desires. The only way of staying away from being tempted by demons and eventually ascending to heaven after death is to remain devoted to God and follow the guidance of the Church. The devil, who uses a living body for evil purposes, was seen as a divine punishment. In sum, the horrific vampire folklore offered the medieval Church an opportunity to gather followers as the poor sufferers sought support and guidance from the Christian belief when feeling threatened by demons: "O that you would kill the wicked, O God, and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—those who speak of you maliciously, and lift themselves up against you for evil!"[37]

By endowing the vampire with evil attributes and promoting their frightening aspects, Christian Church gave credence to these mythological figures. Meanwhile, to mitigate the fear (for the vampire) that the Church cultivated, one must resort to the Church because it offers a way to escape – through following the Christian beliefs and practices.

Additionally, Christians believed that having a Christian burial was crucial. It had become a religious and ceremonial act when Christ stated that he would come to resurrect the dead on Judgment Day. Those who disobeyed were considered sinners, and their souls would wander the earth, making it easy for them to become devils/vampires. The solution lies in proper Christian burial, as it was necessary to prevent Christians from becoming vampires. However, the Church refused to baptize apostates and those un-baptized, and it did not protect suicide victims or those who had received ex-communications. Thus, in literature, the reader frequently encounters vampires exhibiting these qualities.

[37] Ibid., p. 886.

2.3 – THE VAMPIRE CRAZE IN THE 19TH-CENTURY LITERATURE

Beginning in the late eighteenth-century, European poets and writers started to adopt and transform vampire legends, creating a rich system of meaning, initiating a craze in vampire literature. The vampire has a Slavic origin, and numerous vampire reports in the area surrounding Transylvania demonstrated many characteristics associated with modern vampires. However, their bodies were more grotesque and horrific than the literary vampire, and in the reports, these legendary vampires are so bestial that they "lap […] chaw, grunt and groan"[38] like a carnivore. Local burial rites were also altered as a result, with the deceased being nailed to coffins to prevent them from reincarnating as vampires and harming the living.

The word *Vampire* has a Slavonic origin, the concept of the bloodsucking vampire was exported from Balkan countries, Greece, Russia, etc., to other European countries. Since vampires were tangible entities, they were separate from ghosts and demons during a certain historic period – the Enlightenment. As Nick Groom writes, vampire history is founded in the empirical methodologies of the eighteenth-century growing investigative sciences, and the vampire is created when "Enlightenment rationality encountered East European folklore."[39]

Reports of vampirism in the early eighteenth-century were widely documented in places such as the Hungarian Empire. People reported discovering fresh, undecayed corpses in coffins filled with the blood of the living, as well as proofs of vampire killings. Articles and books about vampirism were published and translated, and in London, news of vampires from Hungary was reported as horror stories. British society was experiencing complex conflicts at

[38] M. Summers, *The Vampire in Europe*, cit., p. 196.

[39] N. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, cit., p. 54.

the time, which led to the vampire being quickly politicized. Figurative readings of the vampire were popular: corrupt officials, foreign trading enterprises, and government tax revenue were all vampires who suck the nation dry.

In the eighteenth-century there were intense debates and investigations about vampires. For example, in his ground-breaking *Dissertations sur les apparitions des anges, des démons et des esprits, et sur les revenants et vampires de Hongrie, de Bohême, de Moravie et de Silésie* (1746), monk Antoine Augustin Calmet provides a rich and detailed collection of apparitions of ghosts, revenants, devils, and angles, as well as cases of magic, witchcraft, and vampires.

In the Enlightenment, the mysterious knowledge that vampires represent appeared to be disruptive in science as it "ultimately questions the ability of humans to know anything at all."[40] By undermining the epistemic basis of the Enlightenment rationalism and empirical scientific knowledge, vampires cast a shadow over the Enlightenment. Their abnormal bodies and supernatural powers are not at all anthropocentric, as Nick Groom writes,

> So it is that vampires, by occupying radically uncertain positions in medical science, in questions of evidence, in the rationalist turn in both Protestant and Catholic theology, and in philosophical accounts of the human, draw uncomfortable and disturbing attention to the fissures and shortcomings in contemporary ways of thinking; in so doing, they inspired generations of writers.[41]

[40] E. Thacker, "Black Illumination", *Tentacles Longer Than Night: Horror of Philosophy*, vol. 3, Zero Books, Washington, 2015, p. 128.

[41] N. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, cit., p. 120.

When vampire stories appeared in England, they were quickly captured and transformed by Romantic poets who were "experimenting with the vampire myth as a metaphor for the psychology of human interactions."[42] Indeed, these bloodsucking creatures provoked great fascination in writers as the vampire mirrored a shift in popular psychology at the time.

The sort of predecessors of vampire literature appeared in poems from the eighteenth-century, like Goethe's beautiful ballad *The Bride of Corinth* (1797), Gottifried August Bürger's narrative poem *Lenore* (1773), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's long narrative ballad *Cristabel* (published in 1816), Lord Byron's poem *The Giaour* (1813), John Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1819) and *Lamia* (1820). In these poems, vampires are not merely terrible bloodsucking animals, but 'tamed' and are capable of empathy. Vampires' perilous romances soon captivated a large number of readers.

Heinrich August Ossenfelder's short poem *Der Vampir* (1748) is widely regarded as "the first that touched upon the theme of the vampire in literature."[43] In the poem, the vampire is a scorned but aggressive lover taking steps to entice a blameless lady into the darkness where he believes is far better than the pious teachings of her mother. This vampire is incompatible with Christian principles. This short poem offers readers a sense of the beauty vampires possess following a struggle, despite their wounds and scaliness. Indeed, then the vampire mythology made its way into the literary world, its original system of meaning was shattered; the evil and vicious vampire transforms into a warrior with a strong sense of independence and rebellion.

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[42] J.B. Twitchell, *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1981, p. 103.

[43] W. Dudley, *Vampires and Vampirism: Legends from Around the World*, Lethe Press, Maple Shade, 2001, p. 50.

Similarly, the story of *The Bride of Corinth* is about a vampire rising from the grave to reunite with the one she loves, and the focus is also on the conflict between paganism and Christianity. However, Goethe offers little description of vampirism like biting or blood-sucking, and only the last part of the poem is consistent with the legendary method of eliminating vampires – burning. This act of balance made the poem popular because it conforms to the conventional morality of the society at the time.

Written in 1819, William Polidori's chilling and disturbing story, *The Vampyre*, is generally regarded as the first English vampire fiction and has become important fodder for later writers. It has had a long-lasting impact on the vampire genre and has been reprinted and translated numerous times. As one of the canonical texts of the genre, *The Vampyre*, according to Wright Dudley, has taken the vampire myth "both to heights of artistic psychomachia and to depths of sadistic vulgarity", rendering the vampire "the most compelling and complex figure to be produced by the gothic imagination."[44] In *The Vampyre*, the modern vampire is said to have been invented, whose figure and traits have gone on to dominate the genre right up to the current day. The author was mistakenly identified as Lord Byron for more than half a century, but Byron's physician Polidori is the actual author. Moreover, Byron is considered the inspiration for the vampire character Lord Ruthven, and just like in Byron's fragment that inspired Polidori, the 'death' of the vampire must be kept secret.

Christopher Frayling argues that *The Vampyre* is the first narrative that mixed diverse aspects of the vampire figure into a unified literary form, and Polidori's blend of "realism and weird events"[45] also remains important. This

[44] Ibid.

[45] C. Frayling, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula,* Faber & Faber, London, 1992, p. 108.

short work offers many of the recognizable tropes to modern viewers, it brings the vampire myth into a contemporary setting. Also, as James B. Twitchell argues, it introduces the sexual initiation of the heroine, the vampire's roots in East Europe and its medical-scientific basis, as well as "the midnight vigils, the mob scene, the hunt and the chase."[46]

The Vampyre is innovative in many ways. Polidori was the first to transform the vampire's status from a lowly filthy creature to an aristocrat who is widely popular among high society. This high-class status embodies the danger of destabilizing society from within. Polidori also complicates the relationship between the vampire and humans: Audrey's friendship with Ruthven was first mixed with some attraction and dependence, but later Ruthven was the cause of Audrey's tragic misfortune (although there is no depiction of direct conflict between the two). The traditionally isolated wanderer now has a fixed and intimate connection with a human (servant or assistance), which opens more possibilities to enrich the actions of the vampire. To add another layer of complexity to the vampire, Ruthven manages to escape the vampire-killing, which aligns with his enigmatic nature. Moreover, as Michela Vanon Alliata argues, *The Vampyre* has a psychological dimension since Polidori uses vampirism as a metaphor to express his uncertainty about his own identity and his "fatal association and an ultimately vampiric bond" with Lord Byron that entails "anxieties with issues of projection, power, and control."[47]

Two other influential works on the vampire in the nineteenth-century were *Varney the Vampire* (1847) and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). *Carmilla* is a story of lesbian entanglement, "a story of the sterile love of homosexuality

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[46] J.B. Twitchell, *The Living Dead*, cit., p. 124.

[47] M. Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds: Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, cit., p. 17.

expressed through the analogy of vampirism."[48] Notably, *Carmilla* contains many parallels to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's long narrative ballad *Christabel* (1816): Both works focus on the relationships between women where female sexuality and purity are intertwined. Continuing in the vampire tradition, the female vampires' corruption, intelligence, and beauty in both productions appeal to the upper class, including men. The setting of the stories is both isolated castles surrounded by woods in the traditional Gothic style, but Le Fanu moves the scene to England.

Published in 1897, Irish writer Bram Stoker's *Dracula* remains the most successful and canonical vampire narrative in the history of literature. The novel is one of the most classic Gothic novels and remains globally acclaimed for its position in the critical spotlight and the many film adaptations. *Dracula* uses the epistolary form to tell the story of Count Dracula, a powerful vampire from Transylvania who comes to England and preys on women, eventually being destroyed by human forces. The novel's success is also due to the inclusion of historical elements: Dracula's prototype is Vlad III, one of the most important rulers in Wallachia during the fifteenth-century.

Dracula reinterprets the vampire myth and conveys the author's nuanced understanding of Victorian ideology through British society's reaction to vampires. Through the metaphor of vampirism, Stoker displays the fear of reverse colonization and the awakening of women in British society. During the Victorian era, Britain was undergoing a tremendous economic, political, and social transformation. Through industrialization and expansion of cities and towns, and through the development of its international influence, it had become the most powerful empire in the world. Still, at the same time, a sense of fear for decadence and decline of the Empire was all-pervading. This period in England

[48] Ibid., p. 129.

also focused on promoting a family-centered morality, with the ideal state of women as ‘angels in the house’ – pure, submissive, and fertile. However, discussions of women’s breaking of the status quo also began during this period, and women’s demands for roles in the public sphere were at odds with the idealized notion of the angelic woman.

Furthermore, the New Women became the central topic of various debates, they were regarded as freaks who deviated from the traditional view of femininity. Discussions of female sexuality, marriage, and political rights greatly influenced Stoker through his feminist mother. By contrasting submissive women and aggressive female vampires, the author creates the possibility of subverting patriarchy. In the novel, female vampires are precisely the grotesque, frighteningly aggressive women, far removed from society’s ideal of women; their disobedience and their reversal of gender roles posed a great threat to male-dominated Victorian society. However, these female vampires do not grasp a similar autonomy to male vampires like Dracula.

CHAPTER 3

GENDERED VAMPIRES: A RISE TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Although vampires are often depicted as male, female vampires usually appear more 'transgressive' as they cross even more boundaries and carry signs of pervasive cultural anxieties and fears. By possessing subversive female power, they reassert the values of patriarchal societies. In addition to questioning accepted norms and values, female vampires' transgressive and transformative bodies serve to identify, reconfigure, or transform boundaries. At the same time, their identity is never stable but constantly changes, and in nineteenth-century literature, they start to take on the domestic aspect. Compared to the male vampire, the female vampire's character is more inseparable from history. Her character has been shaped by the same forces that have shaped women's identities in general. [49]

Female vampires have a long and rich history since the dawn of creation; they were mythological goddesses, serpents, and seductresses, often connected with Eros and evil. Lamia and Lilith are two of the first instances of female vampires in Greek and Judaic mythology. Their stories have long acted as cautionary tales for males about the dangers of being seduced by a *femme fatale* – a woman who is both attractive and dangerous. The terror and fear they bring through their subversive female sexual power, threaten traditional gender

[49] C. Senf, "Daughters of Lilith: Women Vampires in Popular Literature", in *The Blood Is the Life: Vampires in Literature*. Popular Press 1, Bowling Green, O.H, 1999, p. 213.

conventions and the control of male-dominated society over female nature and sexuality. Indeed, as Michela Vanon Alliata writes:

> The metaphor of vampirism underlying the trope of the *femme fatale*, as the expression and distortion of an original sexual energy, and its implicit fantasies of empowerment, unrepressed and monstrous sexuality, illustrate man's fear of female power, a power suggested by the fact that the Undead is a sort of *Übermensch*, with an immortal and incorruptible body.[50]

The story of Lilith, the female demonic and controversial figure of Jewish folklore, places the vampire's emergence in the garden of Eden at the same time as God's creation of humans. It is often cited as one of the most important in finding out the origin of the vampire myths. Her name is derived from the Hebrew word meaning "night creatures", "night monster", "night hag", or "screech owl". In the earliest reference, the anonymous Hebrew text of the Middle Ages *Alphabet of Ben Sirach*, Lilith is portrayed as strong-willed and independent. She resists Adam's insistence of mounting her from the top during their consummation of marriage by claiming to be his equal in God's creation. She escapes and refuses to come back and agrees with harsh punishments. As a result of her renunciation of all duties of wifehood and womanhood, her body takes on the form of a succubus – a terrible winged demon that feeds on the life essence of others to sustain her own – and so the world's first vampire is born. Also, she comes to be the archetype of female sexual predators and responsible for infant death.

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[50] M. Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds: Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, cit., p. 148.

The chief characteristics of the beautiful human-headed, snake-bodied child-eating monster Lamia, in addition to her bloodthirsty nature, are her "uncleanliness, gluttony, and ignorance."[51] She was a victim of Hera who killed her and her children out of jealousy and punished her by depriving her of sleep. The bitter and insane Lamia grew disfigured and transformed into a horrific creature that avenged herself by killing and sucking the blood of all the children she could find.

The first literary work that introduced the female vampire as the protagonist was *The Bride of Corinth* (1797) by J.W. Goethe, though in this poem, he concentrates on the conflict between faiths. Forced to give up her lover because of her conversion to Christianity, the girl dies in chaste life and come back from the grave as a vampire when her lover, an Athenian boy, visits the family. The girl is vampiric because she appears white and pale, she refuses to eat bread but drinks blood-red wine. It is worth noting that, although the passionate depiction of the couple contrasts with the cold abstinence of the girl's mother, the girl's sexuality is not entirely active and aggressive (as in the later female vampires), it comes from love and loyalty than from pure bloodthirsty desire.

The first female vampire with a sexual interest in women appears in *Christabel* (1816) – Samuel Taylor Coleridge's longest and most controversial poem. The poet also introduces the psychic vampirism, which is regarded as conventional as the omnipresent image of blood. In the poem, the innocent heroine Christabel believes the story of the female vampire Geraldine's abduction and takes her home to spend the night. When Geraldine undresses, Christabel sees terrible and indescribable marks on her body. The male characters in the poem are also charmed by Geraldine and believe her stories,

[51] J.C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion: A Study in Survivals*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1910, p. 175.

and the female vampire also possesses supernatural powers. Moreover, Coleridge fuses psychic feeding with lesbian eroticism. For example, in the bedchamber scene, when Geraldine undresses, Christabel cannot resist glancing at her body; this voyeuristic move combines innocent curiosity as well as erotic desire.

Geraldine's latent lesbian sexuality reminds the reader of one the most influential vampire novel – Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). Indeed, many critics find "[*Carmilla*] contains so many strange parallels to *Christabel*."[52] Both novels feature a pair of female companions, one of whom is a beautiful and virginal noble girl Laura, well-protected by men, and the other is a scheming and attractive female vampire Carmilla. In *Christabel* and *Carmilla*, female vampires do not appear as terrifying monsters or ruthless villains, but rather as confident, compassionate women. As a result of their vampire friend's influence, both Laura and Christabel suffer nightmares. Moreover, both texts exhibit lesbian-like erotic depictions.

Literature began to portray female vampires in a different light as time progressed, these powerful creatures started to integrate into society and family life, their transgressive bodies evolved into social and domestic entities. In vampire narratives, female vampires, with the help of their intelligence, tend to successfully establish and maintain social relationships. They even navigate various social situations with ease and enjoy being the center of attention and the envy of the town. This feature also has to do with female vampires' natural attractiveness – these fiends exhibit a physical beauty that is often dangerously alluring. For vampires, this wonderful disguise facilitates the seduction of potential victims. The culmination of this glamorous and grand 'masquerade ball'

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[52] A.H. Nethercot, "Coleridge's 'Christabel' And Le Fanu's 'Carmilla'", *Modern Philology*, Aug. 1949, vol. 47, No. 1, p. 32.

occurs when people discover their true colors. Once people realize they are the deviant social Other and capable of spreading disease, these vampires start to be rejected and repulsed, which reflects Victorian society's obsession with cleanliness and rejection of impurity.

In the Victorian era, due to the patriarchal society's contradictory notions about female nature, women were viewed as morally pure yet defined by their sexuality. In literature, female characters frequently become disoriented by the restricting and contradictory roles imposed on them and attempt to cross borders in search of their true selves. In vampire literature, female vampires often act as a mirror or double to the virginal female protagonists, and they serve to break the limitations of the stereotypical perception of the feminine, creating contradictions and paradoxes with their transgressive bodies and bring chaos to the patriarchal order.

In the nineteenth-century, female vampires were frightful and shocking to the Victorian society because of their unstable, transgressive identities. While the women faced a wide range of social restrictions at the time, female vampires do not conform to ideological notions of the female body and cultural role. They cross the line between life and death, masculine and feminine, reality and imagination, etc. Their supernatural power and violent behaviors contain the subversive power to frighten the patriarchal order. In addition to disrupting established social rules, female vampires provoke the feeling of abjection. However, before recognizing the repulsion, people find themselves first attracted to female vampires, as they often look and act like other women and function in society at their full potential.

Female vampires in Gothic literature are often exaggerated versions of deviant women, the *femme fatale* seen as horrific abject to the patriarchal society. These creatures serve as the mirror or double of the ideal woman of the Victorian

era, the evil versus the good, the ‘fatal woman’ versus the ‘angel of the house’. Female vampires’ excesses enable the identification and reconstitution of the restrictions of women in society; their transgression induces fears of social disintegration. They were considered abnormal and unnatural because of their disregard for the rules of society and their incorporation of fantastical characters and events.

Indeed, both the vampiric women and the angelic feminine are exaggerated archetypes; together they reflect the complexity of female nature, which resists confinement and definition. Whether it was the pre-nineteenth-century belief that women were inferior to men, or seen as angels in the Victorian era, these seemingly opposite stereotypes were essentially created to support the patriarchal society to keep women confined to prescribed roles instead of releasing women from the structure. Those who did not perform their roles were labeled as abnormal, unnatural and unfeminine, the threatening Other to the mainstream society. In addition, female vampires pose a significant problem because of a common characteristic that helps them function more efficiently in society – their demeanor resembling what is considered ‘normal’ behavior for women, before their vampiric identity is revealed.

Within this patriarchal ideology and the contradictions undermining the structure, Gothic fiction finds room for creativity. The female vampire discloses the prevailing cultural anxiety and fear of patriarchal society concerning the deviant women, who refuse to perform prescribed roles or to be defined by relationships with men. They are uncontrollable, uncheckable, and are only driven by their own desires. Moreover, “in the movements of vampiric desire and energy”, the female vampire tramples on established notions of “meanings, identities and proper family boundaries.”[53] As such, for Gothic writers, the

[53] N. Groom, *Gothic*, cit., p. 98.

vampire becomes a powerful tool for reasserting societal values, restoring or defining limits and boundaries. For instance, the most famous female vampires, Carmilla and Lucy Westenra, one of the vampire women in Stoker's *Dracula*, embody the cultural fear about perverse sexuality and disease. By crossing the line between the proper and the improper behaviors, female vampires testify to the limitations of society's perception of female nature.

3.1 – THE VAMPIRE DISEASE AND THE POLLUTED WOMANHOOD

In *Rebecca*, the portrayal of the titular character's physical state before her death is very typical of vampirism. Her thinness and pallor are mentioned by almost every character. Before shooting her, Maxim describes her looking "ill, queer", "very pale, very thin" (312). Favell, Mrs. Danvers, and Colonel Julyan all complain that she is "so slim" (190) and "too thin". The doctor's report also confirms that Rebecca is "rather too thin" and "rather pale" (413). She also seems to have been suffering from hair loss as she used to have "mass of dark hair" but "wore it short the last few years" (190).

The twentieth-century made remarkable advances in medical science, and the doctor in Rebecca can relate her thin and pale figure to cancer. However, the doctor also explains that thinness was also a fashion for women, and Rebecca's deformed uterus, which results in infertility, is unrelated to cancer. These bits of medical information fit perfectly with the tradition of vampire narratives. In *Dracula* and *Carmilla*, the last few scenes always revolve around examining the disease of female vampires by male experts or doctors. Similarly, the sterility, excessive thinness, and pallor of vampire women in these narratives are also displayed in *Rebecca*.

As a twentieth-century writer, Daphne du Maurier upgrades the tradition according to the progress of the times by mentioning cancer, uterine malformations, and uses X-rays to assist medical reports. The author's association of fashion with excessive thinness, and the allusion to sterility, are in keeping with the nineteenth-century's pattern of equating the New Women to vampires.

Diseases have always been one of the most prominent stereotypes of vampires and are related to their monstrosity – they are living beings with dead bodies. Also, vampires are perceived as contagious because of their potential to transmit diseases. Vampirism, indeed, is itself a disease. This belief is also based upon a folk belief of disease – some diseases caused blood loss and some violent behaviors were regarded as having vampiric cause. This preoccupation with imperfect bodies and impurity peaked during the nineteenth-century, and this anxiety manifested itself in the portrayal of vampires in Gothic literature.

Female vampires' disease was more disturbing to Victorian society than their male counterparts. Their abnormal, excessive sexuality and infertility greatly threaten the male dominance and the future of British reproduction. For the Victorians, the symptoms of the vampire disease – violence and defiance of authority – were also a great threat to social morality. Thus, people relate female vampires to hysteria. As Tamar Heller argues:

> not only, for doctors [,] is the hysterical woman like a vampire but, in tales like Le Fanu's, the vampire can be read as a figure for the hysterical woman. Moreover, as all this male nervousness about voracious women suggests, both the female hysteric and the female

vampire embody a relation to desire that the nineteenth-century culture finds highly problematic.[54]

Indeed, in vampire narratives, both vampires and infected humans are known to have lost their fertility due to infection. Also, it seems that the potential victims are always young fertile English girls on the brink of marriage – a means to control female sexuality and reproduction. The aim of marriage is to maintain the purity of the British race, and the vampire infection of fertile women extensively violates this fundamental Victorian ideology. Marriage in the Victorian era, as Marilyn Brock writes, aimed at creating a "cultural paradigm of female mythological dualities" – the obedient 'angels of the house' and the rebellious, balky villainesses.[55] Strict restrictions on female sexuality led to a dichotomy between the 'angels of the house' and the vampire women.

In *Rebecca*, Maxim struggles to maintain the narrator's innocence and purity, thriving to create an idealized, angelic housewife who obeys the Victorian domestic rules for women. However, the narrator is gradually drained of her energy by Rebecca – the devil in Maxim's mouth – and eventually loses her innocence because of Rebecca's strategy. Notably, the narrator has also been infertile throughout the novel. This paradigm is consistent with the experience of Laura – the innocent well-protected young girl in *Carmilla* – who is permanently corrupted by the vampire's lesbian sexual power, which has left her infertile. In addition, the continuing effect on Laura after Carmilla's death also

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[54] T. Heller, "The Vampire in the House: Hysteria, Female Sexuality, and Female Knowledge in Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' (1872)", *The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction*, eds. B.L. Harman and S. Meyer, Garland Pub, New York, 1996, p. 78.

[55] M. Brock, "The Vamp and the Good English Mother: Female Roles in Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and Stoker's *Dracula*", *From Wollstonecraft to Stoker: Essays on Gothic and Victorian Sensation Fiction*, eds. M. Brock, McFarland & Co, Jefferson, N.C, p. 121.

proves the impotence of the male characters, who, like Maxim, are incapable of protecting the domestic 'angels' in the face of the powerful physical and mental penetration of the female vampire.

What exacerbates the fear of sterility caused to female vampires is them being the racial Other. In this case, Rebecca and Carmilla also share many similarities. Their names both have foreign origins, and they are both dark, with thick dark hair suggesting aggressive female sexuality. Just like Carmilla's perplexing reaction to the traditional English funeral, Rebecca overrides the most prestigious, historic family in England. She trades on her adherence to the family rules of English society, and she attends masquerade balls in the dresses of a de Winter female ancestor while mercilessly mocking the family and its heir. Though dead, Rebecca manages to tarnish the de Winters' reputation and has the ancestral estate burned.

Like Carmilla, who tries to hide her physical reaction to the Christian funeral, Rebecca's flawless fulfillment of her duty as mistress of the English manor is one of the more frightening aspects of this concern about the contamination of the English race by foreign blood – the infiltration of the racial Other into English culture by disguising themselves and accepting assimilation. It is also clear in *Dracula* where the vampire learns the English language and culture in order to infect the British. Similarly, Dracula chooses categorical 'angels' to infect first: Mina is engaged, and Lucy has just received three marriage proposals. The impotence of English men is also shown in the segment where Dracula attacks Mina next to her sleeping husband and forces her to suck blood from his breast, and in the scene where the blood of British men is incapable of healing Lucy. Indeed, both *Carmilla* and *Dracula*, as Marilyn Brock argues, display an

abortive attempt to recover and reassert male dominance in Britain "over threats of aggressive sexual deracination by those colonized."[56]

Many critics point out that the literary female vampire's behavioral oddities and some violent outbursts suggest that vampirism mimics hysteria, and hysteria in turn, leads to some of the characteristics of vampires, such as "intense, even potentially insatiable, sexual desire"[57]. Hysteria was a medical belief widely known during the nineteenth-century, recognized along with the development of the science of the nervous system and psychiatry. The term has a Greek origin, *μητέρα*, meaning uterus, which "reflects the ancient notion that it was a specifically female disorder resulting from disturbances in uterine functions."[58] It is an uncontrollable emotional excess that affects both the body and mind, and it was previously thought that it only targeted women. Furthermore, hysteria has demonic and supernatural connotations. It was in the tradition of hysteria to locate a wide variety of inexplicable physical symptoms which were often ascribed to the supernatural, bewitchment, possession by devils or female body disorders.[59]

As for the feminine thinness of Rebecca, what the doctor in the novel has labeled as a prevailing 'fashion', also has to do with hysteria, or, more precisely, in relation to the most obvious symptoms it exhibits – anorexia. In *Scenes of the Apple Food and the Female Body in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Women's Writing*, Tamar Heller and Patricia Moran note that Victorian medical discourse was hypercritical about women's thinness and treatments of both anorexia and "her discursive and etiological sister" hysteria, "stressed the need

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[56] Ibid., p. 129.

[57] T. Heller, *The Vampire in the House*, cit., p. 79.

[58] M. Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds: Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, cit., p. 172.

[59] A.T. Scull, *Hysteria: The Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, p. 15.

to fatten up 'nervous women'."[60] Critics also illustrate the relationship between the pursuit of thinness and fashion in the twentieth-century. People had gradually shifted their focus from inner morality to the norms of the body, which resulted in a drastic change in the way the female body was presented. The control of appetite and thinness weas seen as palpable epitomes of self-control and self-discipline. As opposed to being fat – a symbol of family, women went on diets or wore corsets because this new trend of slender women symbolized "'youth' and projected a 'disquieting and alert glamour'."[61]

The relationships between female slenderness and fat, anorexia and appetite, embody the opposition between the 'angel of the house' and the *femme fatale* because anorexia represents the pursuit of fashion and the expression of women's self-assertion. Critics like Paula Marantz Cohen connect anorexia with the growth of the notion of nuclear family in the nineteenth-century. By promoting an idealized image of feminine nature and emphasizing the moral responsibility of women to society, women were confined in the domestic sphere. The essential domestic function of perfect wifehood and motherhood was to support the family by providing nourishment (milk and food).

Nevertheless, in the late nineteenth-century, women from the middle class popularized dieting to differentiate themselves from lower-class stout female servants. However, the trend was met with significant criticism because society believed that dieting might affect fertility. Many Victorian physicians called for women to refrain from wearing such garments, claiming that corsets affected the female reproductive system and "impeded the proper exercise of their domestic

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[60] T. Heller, P. Moran, "Introduction Scenes of the Apple: Appetite, Desire, Writing", *Scenes of the Apple: Food and the Female Body in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Woman's Writing*, eds. T. Heller and P. Moran, State University of New York Press, New York, 2003, p. 23.

[61] Ibid., p. 11.

function."[62] In this period, a treatment in which anemic girls were given animal blood emerged. This image of anorexic, pale, skinny girls drinking blood was, according to critics, embodied in the female vampires of the late Victorian period.

Thus, women's sexuality and power were brought into the debate about female appetite and body shape. The nonappetitive women were rebelling against the domestic restrictions by refusing to eat – it was a political gesture. Critics note that women's thinness and disease should be seen as resisting domesticity, rather than an "acquiescence to its restrictions on female power."[63] Indeed, the dichotomic expectations of women were contradictory; society required nineteenth-century women to have two bodies: a virginal one and a sensuous one. A good appetite symbolized good motherhood but might also suggest lust. Beneath anorexia and female slenderness waited the hunger for power outside the domestic sphere, which was caused by the refusal of prescribed female role and function to procreate.

In this period, the concept of the New Woman has also developed thanks to the perplexing notions on the female body. Indeed, jokes about the nonappetitive women can also be find in *Dracula*. The prejudice against the New Woman was similar to the perception of female vampires, who Victorians considered prone to anorexia because they espoused intelligence but rejected their feminine body and its function of procreation. The parodic portrayal of the New Woman, as Marilyn Brock argues, was brainy and quick-witted, albeit a little bookish, and "riding a bicycle rather than sidesaddle"[64] rather than mothers and wives who regard childbearing as their primary task in life. She was presented as so intelligent that her mind seemed separated from her body and especially from

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[62] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[63] Ibid., p. 25.

[64] M. Brock, "The Vamp and the Good English Mother: Female Roles in Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and Stoker's *Dracula*", cit., p. 127.

her reproductive functions. As a result, the public generated the idea of linking the new woman and anorexia nervosa because she does not eat food, but knowledge.

The relationship between female sexuality and female maladies such as anorexia nervosa, can be found in many vampire narratives. For example, critics often consider Carmilla hysterical and anorexic because under the surface of her meekness lurks a woman with devouring sexual desire, which incites great fear of society.[65] Because of the New Woman's underlying hunger for more than food, society believed that they were more susceptible to unclean external nutritional influences, such as the vampire disease. On the other hand, Dracula, Carmilla, and Rebecca all chose potentially good British mothers. In these stories, the failure of male protection and power demonstrates that England's vulnerability to mighty invasions of the social and racial Other was caused by a hackneyed obsession with cleanliness and conflicting notions on womanhood, not by the New Woman.

Attempting to attribute women's unnatural bodies and abnormal behavior as symptoms of diseases – whether hysteria, bacterial infection, or cancer – the purpose of vampire narratives is to show how the perception of women shifts when the disease is diagnosed. Whether in *Dracula*, *Carmilla*, or *Rebecca*, the notion of moral and physical cleanliness is shown to be an obsession of English society. The penetration of female vampires into the minds and bodies of virginal English girls is perceived as a threat; they need to be eliminated so that the social and domestic sphere can be 'sanitized'. In *Purity and Pollution*, Alison Bashford explains the reasons for the Victorian emphasis on family morality and the strict requirements for women to observe the restrictions on morality. The sanitary reform started with the treatment and control of diseases, but physical and mental

[65] T. Heller, *Dead Secrets*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992, p. 79.

diseases are inseparable because the ultimate purpose of sanitization is the orderly functioning of society that demands high moral cleanliness. By 'moralizing' women and emphasizing their responsibility in the domestic sphere for children's upbringing and moral education, society acquires a group of 'morally pure' middle-class men and women, thus guaranteeing social stability and orderly functioning.[66]

3.2 – FEMALE VAMPIRES' MOTHER-DAUGHTER BOND

The association of disease with morality is because vampire women, unlike ordinary patients, have a capacity for contagion beyond that of ordinary infectious diseases. By establishing intimate relationships with women, female vampires permanently affect those women's intellect, which is a form of the transference of vampire disease. For example, Rebecca has successfully built a passionate relationship with Mrs. Danvers and makes her entirely identify with her values. Also, Rebecca gradually gains control of the simple and ignorant narrator's mind and succeeds in transforming her into a mature woman. This form of spiritual contagion directed at women is consistent with Carmilla's effect on Laura, as Laura is still deeply influenced by Carmilla even after her death.

Indeed, female vampires' exceptional attractiveness and guiding force and their ability to replace fertility through vampire disease transmission, endow them with the maternal role. Their image is closely associated with "the archetype of the all-powerful mother"[67] because of their cardinal traits: the

[66] A. Bashford, *Purity and Pollution: Gender, Embodiment and Victorian Medicine*, Macmillan, London, 1998, pp. 1-2.

[67] M. Vanon Alliata, *Haunted Minds: Studies in the Gothic and Fantastic Imagination*, cit., p. 147.

strong desire to devour and nourish. In vampire literature, male vampires also choose virginal young girls to infect and then nurture like a mother, and Dracula forces Mina to suck the blood from his breasts is a clear example. According to Sheena Yates, the transformation of vampires is a "perverted parallel of the breastfeeding relationship"[68] because both entail the nourishing of bodily fluid – blood and milk. Vampires seek virginal young girls as targets of infection to enable this breastfeeding relationship because these girls are at the threshold of sexual and reproductive development.

Both Laura and the nameless narrator in *Rebecca* have undergone being drained by vampirism – their bodies and mind are gradually filled with female vampires' influence. This painful experience is characteristic of a mother-child relationship. Indeed, as Sheena Yates argues, feelings of loss and separation can be found in both the object relationships, with the vampire or mother, and the vampire fantasy is related to the human need and desire for intimacy.[69] Rebecca's influence is so powerful that the narrator gradually forgets herself and feels like she is nothing, which is exactly the effect of the vampire blood-sucking: the vampire's life comes from the lives of the victims, not from within themselves. Before becoming an independent subject, subconsciously, the child becomes an object of the mother's desire, and to gain autonomy, eventually, the child needs to detach or kill the mother.

By the same token, as the narrator undergoes the powerful effect of psychic vampirism, a sadomasochistic perversion in which she becomes more and more obsessed with Rebecca, she begins to grow dependent on her, a dependence linked to her hatred of her own vulnerability and inability to leave. The narrator becomes increasingly desperate to kill Rebecca, yet her dependence grows

[68] S. Yates, "Psychic vampirism in contemporary psychoanalysis: Issues of pathological identification and sadomasochistic perversion", *Horror Studies* 6, no. 1, April 2015, p. 7.
[69] Ibid., p. 6.

stronger and stronger. According to Freud, the process of identification requires a child to take on the characteristics of the same-sex parent and imitate the parent's behaviors. However, this process is accompanied by self-criticism and self-reproaches. In the novel, the narrator is helplessly drawn to Rebecca and tries to imitate her, even if it means degrading herself in the process.

This process of identification with the help of psychic vampirism is clear in *Rebecca* even from the beginning of the narrator's recollection – during her stay in Monte Carlo. After reading Rebecca's signature and hearing about Rebecca's charm, the narrator has suddenly developed a strong interest in Rebecca. Her fascination for Rebecca's confidence and her sudden desire to grow mature begin the moment she sees Rebecca's handwriting on the book of poems. Her observation of Rebecca's signature is incredibly delicate, with an emphasis on her handwriting "stood out black and strong, the tall and sloping R dwarfing the other letters" (36). Even though her husband has stated his wish twice – not to wear black satin, the narrator still falls inexorably into admiration for Rebecca; note that her imagination of Rebecca is full of erotic connotations:

> She had beauty that endured, and a smile that was not forgotten. Somewhere her voice still lingered, and the memory of her words. There were places she had visited, and things that she had touched. Perhaps in cupboards there were clothes that she had worn, with the scent about them still. In my bedroom, under my pillow, I had a book that she had taken in her hands, and I could see her turning to that first white page, smiling as she wrote, and shaking the bent nib. Max from Rebecca. […] she had written it with so great a confidence on the flyleaf of that book. That bold, slanting hand, stabbing the white paper, the symbol of herself, so certain, so assured. (47-48)

Rather than feeling jealous of Rebecca calling Mr. de Winter by his nickname – proof of their former intimacy – the narrator is more captivated by Rebecca's confidence and power underlying her handwriting. Thus, in her fantasy, the narrator unconsciously over-amplifies her admiration for Rebecca and starts to self-criticize herself as "quiet and dull, who did not matter" (48). The narrator's fantasy proves Rebecca's power of psychic vampirism, as she has unconsciously experienced being drained of life force because of Rebecca's mysterious attractiveness. Moreover, this passive attraction also carries the pleasure of masochism – bitter self-depreciation.

What follows is further evidence of this, as the narrator acknowledges her sense of inferiority and self-hatred as a result of Rebecca's overwhelming impact. The narrator realizes that she needs to 'kill' Rebecca's influence because she becomes unbearable of the desire to read Rebecca's signature. She begins by referring to her desire as a "demon", her act of cutting the page as "criminal", and eventually, she set fire to the fragments. Interestingly, the letter R is the last to burn out and shows power during the burning process: it "twisted", "curled outwards", "crumpled" and grow "larger than ever" (64). The sensation of destroying Rebecca's handwriting is most notable, as the narrator gains confidence from it, she feels "much better" and gains "freshness, the same gay confidence." (64)

Rebecca goes on to exert influence as the narrator enters the morning room – a perfectly preserved room of Rebecca, presented in a design that reflects both her exquisite taste and her excellent working skills – "so businesslike and purposeful" (94). The narrator has quickly recognized Rebecca's handwriting and begins fantasizing about Rebecca's confidence at the writing desk. Note that at this point the narrator has not forgotten to belittle herself – she thinks Rebecca's documents are "reproach to me for my idleness" (97). The narrator

unconsciously mimics Rebecca and tries to write a letter, only to find her own handwriting is “cramped and unformed” and “without individuality, without style, uneducated” (98), like a pupil. In this scene, Rebecca acts as a role model or the mother who assists the narrator in growing up (and teaches her to write). However, this upbringing is harsh, as the narrator constantly faces self-depreciation caused by Rebecca’s powerful influence.

In the novel, the narrator has indulged in many more fantasies of Rebecca, and she has become subject to the imagination of the graceful Rebecca writing invitations and entertaining guests. Each time, the narrator needs to remind herself of Rebecca’s death to temporarily withdraw from the fantasies. Still, her mental state deteriorates to the point of delusional disorder: she shocks Maxim and herself by briefly identifying with Rebecca and experiencing Rebecca’s old days. Also, the narrator finds her “dull self did not exist” (225).

Before the masquerade ball, the narrator identifies herself with Rebecca again, but this time she cannot help but being overwhelmed by the change in herself. She puts on the dress Rebecca wore, and after the styling, she looks exactly like Rebecca: her “curls stood away from the head in a little cloud” (237). She is so pleased with “this self that was not me at all” (238), and feels “so excited”, “so happy and so proud” (238).

Finally, at the end of the novel, when the narrator learns all the secrets – a sign of maturity, she turns into Rebecca in her nightmare. In this strange dream she writes letters and invitations with “a thick black pen”, her handwriting becomes Rebecca’s – “long, slanting, with curious pointed strokes” (426). When looking at herself in the mirror, she sees Rebecca – “very pale, very lovely, framed in a cloud of dark hair” (426). Interestingly, after the narrator has clearly identified herself with Rebecca in the mirror, Rebecca seems to ‘revive’ and shows the narrator her manipulation over Maxim:

> He held her hair in his hands, and as he brushed it he wound it slowly into a thick rope. It twisted like a snake, and he took hold of it with both hands and smiled at Rebecca and put it round his neck. (426)

Vampires prefer simple-minded female victims since they lack the strength to resist the influence of vampires because of the all-encompassing protection of patriarchal society. The victim's lack of knowledge about the world makes it easier for vampires to prey. In fact, in *Carmilla*, Laura is seduced by Carmilla's confidence and charm on their first meeting, precisely at the time she becomes frustrated with male incompetence. Carmilla earns Laura's trust by sharing stories from their childhood, and as their relationship develops, Laura becomes increasingly eager for knowledge. In *Rebecca*, the nameless narrator desires Rebecca's confidence so much that she attempts a clumsy imitation, and this desire also comes from her lack of guidance and her thirst for knowledge.

Indeed, the nameless narrator is essentially the same as Laura, Christabel, and other vampire victims, as their lives both lack the upbringing and teachings of their mothers; and they all rely on their fathers (or husbands) for guidance. The narrator is a meek wife dominated by her husband. Even though she is aware that their disparity in class and age may lead to difficulties in the future, she silently accepts her unequal marriage. She gives up control of her life to her husband, not even bothering to consider the consequences of her actions. In Manderley, she strives to be the 'angel of the house', wanting to keep everyone unthreatened. On the other hand, Rebecca always takes the lead in her relationships, guaranteeing that no one can control her or has higher authority. Also, she is only driven by her own desire. She forces Maxim to accept unfair conditions to guarantee her autonomy, yet she often defies the rules to gain more. She even ensures that she will bring a crisis to Manderley long after her death.

The narrator tries to be the ideal of the innocent, accommodating housewife in a male-dominated household and society. However, much like Laura's father is unable to protect his daughter from being attacked by vampires, nor can the narrator's husband protect her from overwhelming emotions like jealousy. Both simple girls lack the influence of a mother, they long to be guided and nurtured, and the female vampire fills just the right hole in their hearts. As Nina Auerbach argues, the intimacy that female vampires offer "threatened the sanctioned distance of class relationships and the hallowed authority of husbands and fathers."[70]

3.3 – FEMALE VAMPIRES' LESBIAN INFLUENCE

The association between abnormal sexual desire and vampire infection has long been established in literature. The vampire is depicted as having strong sexual desire, a dramatized version of society's dread and anxiety about gender and sexuality. Indeed, one of the most frightening traits of female vampires is their non-normative sexual desire. Vampires transcend the boundaries of gender and sexuality, bringing both attraction and repulsion; they reject a binarized definition of sexuality by being both alluring and disgusting.

The unconventional nature of vampires' sexuality also comes from their being agender, as they do not possess gendered sexual organs. Their association with sex originates from biting, through which the vampire takes away one's life and gives birth and nurtures this newly born vampire. It is an act of transgressing the boundary between life and death, and it also replaces human feeding and reproduction. Moreover, biting and bloodsucking allow penetration and

[70] N. Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, cit., p. 6.

exchange of bodily fluids – a metaphor for sex acts – to occur. In vampire literature, those being attacked exhibit fear and excitement, as they are both prey and sexual partner of the vampire.

Le Fanu's *Carmilla* provides the characteristic of homoerotic ability to female vampires, adding a layer to the threatening effect of vampires on society. This trait has become one of the most classic traits of female vampires, and Daphne du Maurier has also adopted it in the characterization of Rebecca, which gives this character a deeper connection to vampirism. Both novels display the cultural fears that range from lesbianism to female autonomy; through the representation of vampiric women, the novels rebel against the stereotypical social construction of the feminine.

From the nineteenth-century, British society developed an obsession with purity and cleanliness. The English patriarchal society regarded deviant sexuality as unnatural and needed to be controlled as it might lead to infertility and threatens marriage – a fundamental way to control and regulate female sexuality and procreation. Thus, out of the Victorian society's obsession for bodily and moral cleanliness, women with abnormal sexual needed be eliminated. Furthermore, female vampires' intimate relationships often exclude men, which were seen as an attempt to replace male dominance. Hence, in vampire literature, the heroines are often depicted as naive young girls who need to be protected by men, while female vampires appear as evil villains who attempt to corrupt the future English mothers' body and mind, by spreading vampire disease through their abnormal sexuality.

Both Dracula and Carmilla use aggressive sexuality and racial identity to threaten the British patriarchy. The attempted assault on Jonathan by the Weird Sisters in Dracula's castle suggests that female vampires have the potential to subvert male initiative in sex acts. While Dracula, who asks the vampire sisters

to leave Jonathan to him, demonstrates the possible homosexual penetration of human males. Unlike Dracula's ability to infect both sexes, Carmilla's vampiric contagion only targets women, especially those inexperienced young girls who lack the mother influence in their lives and are sheltered only by male characters, who fail to offer intimate and consistent companionship.

Both the virginal heroines of *Carmilla* and *Rebecca* fit this category: Laura has just lost her only female friend, and the nameless narrator in *Rebecca*, has lost both parents. While Carmilla and Rebecca are very astute in using their female identity to avoid suspicion of males, and to successfully attack the young women through psychic vampirism. Carmilla hides her true nature by taking advantage of the mental weakness and fragility of women of the period. Similarly, one of Rebecca's characteristics is thinness, which hides her robust physique and makes her always look non-threatening and frail – "quite a slip of a thing" (190). Rebecca's astuteness is also shown in her excellence in playing the manor's mistress, as Gran confirms, she has "breeding, brains, and beauty", "the three things that matter in a wife" (304). Also, when Maxim finds about Giles and Rebecca's affair, she still pretends by "looking like an angel" (310).

It seems that these intelligent and monstrous women are so aware of society's binary perception of gender that they deliberately mimic specific behaviors to disguise themselves to produce a pleasing effect of gender. By stylizing their bodily gestures and actions, female vampires "constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self."[71]

Furthermore, both Carmilla and Rebecca show cracks in her performance of normalcy. Carmilla has been suspected by Laura for the way she trembles when seeing the funeral. When Rebecca drops the disguise to face Maxim and Ben,

[71] J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, 2006, London, p. 199.

she completely reverses her disguised angelic appearance and becomes scary. In fact, in *Carmilla*, Le Fanu writes that the female vampire displays great tenacity in preying on her victims and can "exercise inexhaustible patience and stratagem."[72] The female vampire's aim is to satisfy her passions and desires and completely drain the life force from her victims. Female vampires deliver the perfect performativity of gender roles with their patience and astuteness. They quickly gain the crowd's trust and establish good social relations to prey on their victims.

In the Victorian era, lesbianism, although beginning to be discussed and acknowledged, was considered rare, and the desire to be a lesbian was equated to the desire to be a man. Thus, both Carmilla and Rebecca are described as 'boyish' even if they carry little masculine traits. The only characteristic that connects them to men is their intense sexuality. In the minds of those who subscribe to the binary gender system, there is a natural deterministic relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality. Women were expected to conform to society's expectations if they were born with female biological traits.

Moreover, a woman must be heterosexual and submissive because she is the object of men's sexual desire; women are the receptive sex partner rather than the "insertive" one (male). For this reason, female vampires try to lower suspicions by showing tenderness and obedience – a signal of sexual desire object rather than an autonomous subject. But in the female friendships that vampire women form, they play the "masculine" role – the "insertive". Indeed, both Laura and the narrator in *Rebecca* perceive that the powerful vampire-like characters make them feel passive and dominated.

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[72] S.J. Le Fanu, *Carmilla* 1872, ed. K. Costello-Sullivan, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2013, p. 81.

In *Rebecca*, there are clear arousals of same-sex sexual desire in portraying the relationship between the three main female characters: Rebecca de Winter, Mrs. Danvers and the second Mrs. de Winter. Also, since they belong to different classes and are all married women, they are "(potentially at least) transgressors of matrimony, of sexuality, and of class."[73] Homosexuality has historically had class-crossing connotations, often associated with people of lower class. In *Rebecca*, the narrator has ongoing difficulties with class crossing; encountering and touching Mrs. Danvers always incites in her a mixture of social and sexual insecurity, "a sensation of discomfort and of shame" (74). For instance, when Mrs. Danvers grabs her arm, the narrator feels like "a dumb thing" and she "shudder[s]" (189). Also, the narrator has degrading fears and wonders whether Mrs. Danvers thinks she is "ill-bred" (75) or "like a between-maid" (75). By evoking the narrator's lesbian fantasies, Mrs. Danvers breaks the current class of the two so that she can easily deride and touch her. Similarly, Rebecca makes class differences disappear by having Mrs. Danvers comb her hair instead of Maxim. When their relationship becomes more intimate, various boundaries are broken, and identities become confusingly fluid and unfixed.

Furthermore, the narrator's obsession with Rebecca is abrupt, violent, and bears the marks of fetishism. When she sees Rebecca's handwriting on the book of poems, she is so overwhelmed with emotion and thoughts that she is compelled to burn the page to break free from her imagination. When she first enters Manderley she imagines herself "sitting in Rebecca's chair", "leaning against Rebecca's cushion" (87), and when she looks at Rebecca's workstation and bedroom, she has gone through the same trembling. Moreover, Maxim's attempt to keep the narrator's purity and innocence leaves Rebecca the

[73] N. Hallett, "Did Mrs. Danvers Warm Rebecca's Pearls? Significant Exchanges and the Extension of Lesbian Space and Time in Literature", *Feminist Review*, no. 74, Sage Publications, Ltd., 2003, p. 43.

opportunity to let the narrator secretly tasting the forbidden knowledge of feminine body and passion. Indeed, when the narrator touches Rebecca's handkerchief, the reader sees treated to a tantalizing scene of lesbian lust and fetishism intertwined:

> There was a pink mark upon the handkerchief. The mark of lipstick. She had rubbed her lips with the handkerchief, and then rolled it in a ball, and left it in the pocket. I wiped my fingers with the handkerchief, and as I did so I noticed that a dull scent clung about it still. A scent I recognized, a scent I knew. I shut my eyes and tried to remember. It was something elusive, something faint and fragrant that I could not name. I had breathed it before, touched it surely, that very afternoon. (133)

The apex of their queer sexuality occurs when the narrator enters the west wing of Manderley and considers herself an intruder who has "strolled into my hostess's bedroom by mistake" (186). She also feels ugly and inferior when looking at herself in Rebecca's mirror: she finds her face "white and thin" and her hair "hanging lank and straight" (187). It seems that the narrator is very aware of the existence of boundaries and is quite content to feel secure under her husband's restraint in Manderley. Moreover, since the bedroom symbolizes the female inner space and has been the primary place in lesbian literature where same-sex sexual contacts occur, for the narrator, stepping into the west wing is a transgression with sexual connotations. Mrs. Danvers, the guardian of the entrance to both the enclosed Manderley and the west wing, serves as the seducer who breaks the boundaries and Maxim's patriarchal parameters.

The narrator and Rebecca's relationship is erotically established when the narrator steps into the late mistress's bedroom and starts to touch her bedclothes, a scene full of lesbian connotations. When the narrator enters, she feels her legs

"trembling, weak as straw" (187); she must sit by the table to prevent rapid heartbeat, but she quickly picks up Rebecca's old brushes from the table – an important object of eroticism for the narrator. Then she starts her exploration of Rebecca's inner space, activating the unsettling effect of the objects. She touches the dressing gown, the slippers, and the quilt, knowing that they have not been "touched or laundered since it was last worn" (188). It is worth noting that the narrator slowly "traced with my fingers" the nightdress case, put the nightdress against her face to feel the heat, and finds "a dim mustiness about it still where the scent had been" (187).

The sexualization of feminine spaces can be activated not only through bodily contacts, but also by the transference of items. As Nicky Hallett argues, "things can be affected by touch, become themselves subjectified […] activates realignments, unsettles the seemingly still."[74] Even after leaving the space, things become carriers of meaning, as in *Rebecca*, the narrator's comb continues to carry meaning even after she has packed it away from Manderley.

The touching of objects activates the lesbian dimension, and the objects stand for the boundaries of eroticism. The refusal of transferring objects, in contrary, also serves to the sexualization of space. Maxim dismisses his wife's desire to be a mature woman, and he strongly objects to her wearing "black satin, with a string of pearls" (40) – dressing objects commonly worn by mature women. His refusal of such garments arises from his hatred for Rebecca's deviancy as pearls commonly symbolize value and fallen women.

Moreover, Maxim's resistance and fear of the narrator's potential lesbian sexuality are reflected in his repeated requests for her to dress up as *Alice of the Wonderland* for the ball. With an emphasis on objects that stand for purity and control, he tries to persuade the narrator to wear a "ribbon round your hair and

[74] Ibid., p. 37-38.

be Alice-in-Wonderland" (219). Also, he compares a father's discipline to forbid his daughter not to read certain books to a husband's control over his wife, saying "a husband is not so very different from a father after all" (226). His insistence reveals his fear for women's "forbidden knowledge" and the intensity of his desire to keep her chaste and pure. Interestingly, the reader knows from Beatrice that Maxim's ideal type of woman is "smarter, more sophisticated", a "social butterfly" (120). Indeed, men's uncontrollable attraction to smart, sophisticated women like Rebecca, intensifies men's disgust and rejection of objects that symbolize mature women. By avoiding and tabooing black satin and pearls, the homoerotic significance of these objects is accentuated.

In contrast to the concentration on lesbian eroticism in *Carmilla*, the plot of *Rebecca* is dominated by heterosexuality, where lesbianism is repressed, and the female bodies appear to be impermeable. The intention of reducing lesbian influence is particularly evident in the novel, where Rebecca remains dead throughout, although her personal belongings can be activated by touching to acquire lesbian significance. Because of her cold death, the intensity of heat and passion she (and her objects) can transfer has been minimized – her contagion is controlled. Also, the breaking of class difference is unsettling but appears to be just temporal, as Rebecca's relationship with Mrs. Danvers and Mrs. Danvers' relationship with the narrator are fixed. Moreover, the lesbian influence is not temporally and spatially enlarged, as Rebecca's objects are finally burned to ashes, the altered signification they carry remains not transferred.

From the beginning of the novel, the already matured narrator calls Manderley in her dream as a "sepulcher" where her "fear and suffering lay buried" and "there would be no resurrection" (4). She seems to suggest that the lesbian desire aroused in Manderley is dead and over. However, there is still a glimmer of possibility: the whereabouts of Mrs. Danvers is unknown, and she appears in

the narrator's dream about Manderley, suggesting that the narrator's lesbian fantasy is not conclusive. Her intention to repress herself is clear, however.

This point has to do with the author's "personal antipathy to her own lesbian inclinations"[75] as Daphne du Maurier had a long history of confusion about gender. Calling herself 'boy-in-the-box' when she was young, she even gave herself a boy's name – Eric Avon, and dressed as a boy. Moreover, Margret Forster writes that Daphne du Maurier "wished often that she was a boy... because she and her sisters were well aware of how passionately their father had longed for a son."[76]

This anxiety about gender is especially frequent among female writers since the literary world of West Europe is "overwhelmingly male—or, more accurately, patriarchal."[77] Historically, women were regarded as the second gender below male writers. Many assumed that female writers can only write about wives and mothers, and that their works were hardly taken seriously. For this reason, *Rebecca*, before its success, was underestimated: critics first saw the novel as a Gothic Romance, with which Daphne du Maurier herself was quite unhappy with, because she "saw it as 'rather grim', even 'unpleasant', a study in jealousy with nothing of the 'exquisite love-story'."[78]

As Sandra M. Gilbert observes, "almost every woman writer must have experienced the kinds of gender-conflicts."[79] In the midst of contradictions, women writers struggle fiercely in their minds and pens, trying to break away

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[75] Ibid., p. 41.

[76] M. Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*, Arrow Books, London, 2007, p. 12.

[77] S. M. Gilbert, S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1979, p. 89.

[78] M. Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*, cit., p. 137.

[79] S. M. Gilbert, S. Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, cit., p. 107.

from the gender stereotypes established by male writers and reconstruct a gender-balanced world where women characters are liberated from restrictions. Compared to their male counterparts, women writers suffer significantly from the 'anxiety of authorship' as they fear that their writing career will destroy them since they will never be taken seriously. Moreover, they "must first struggle against the effects of a socialization" and "redefine the terms of her socialization."[80]

Daphne du Maurier refers to herself as a hybrid: a wife, mother, and celebrated writer, and she needs to balance these roles. There are "tremendous contradictions in her character."[81] Growing up, she expected to be a boy, and in writing, she found a window of release to write many novels in male voices. Moreover, in *Rebecca*, *My Cousin Rachel*, and *The Jamaica Inn*, all the protagonists see in the mirror a part of themselves that is different, reflecting the author's difficulty in controlling the boundaries of her own self, and the anxiety that comes with this unstable identity is a source of Gothic unease. In *Rebecca*, du Maurier perpetuates the rules of the patriarchal society, making the vampire to die and the 'angel of the house' survive.

3.4 – THE KILLING OF FEMALE VAMPIRES

Rebecca embodies the dread of feminine evil represented by lust and forbidden lesbian desire. Like Carmilla, an antagonist to heteronormativity, Rebecca takes on the male role in her lesbian dominance over her victims. In the eyes of the male characters, she is the seductive vampire sisters in *Dracula*, who try to reverse the prescribed gender roles. Her uterus cancer and perverse

[80] Ibid., pp. 90-91.

[81] M. Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*, cit., p. 12.

sexuality are a threat to British reproduction, and her transgressive body is an embodiment of women's cultural anxiety and resistance to male control under a patriarchal order. As a female and a racial Other, her successful contamination of British men and women indicates the failure of the British patriarchy. Thus, just as Carmilla and Lucy need to be staked by English men to prevent their attempts to shake up the patriarchal system and reclaim men's authority, Rebecca was no exception – males must kill her to restore order.

In the novel, Rebecca's death is "an appalling tragedy" (36), she has endured cancer, shooting, and flooding, to the point of mutilation. Her first corpse has "battered her to bits", making "her beautiful face unrecognizable" (191); her second corpse is dissolved, with "no flesh on it" (295). The complete destruction of her body is consistent with the killing tradition of female vampires in vampire literature, which is more violent and complete than the killing of their male counterparts. Though compared to the male vampires like Dracula, vampire women have fewer victims, and their supernatural powers are not as potent, these women suffer from more extreme violence when getting killed, which contrasts sharply with Dracula's 'easy death'[82]. In *Carmilla*, the male group kills her with a combination of methods: she is stabbed through the heart with a sharp stake, beheaded, burned to ashes, and thrown into the river.[83] The complete elimination of their corpses proves that female vampires are a more significant threat to humans and leave a more decisive influence than male vampires.

Upon learning that Rebecca tries to use her power to pollute the de Winter family lineage, Maxim immediately shoots her and destroys her body in an act that is his emphatic reaction to the deviant woman. This reaction is consistent with the males who kill Carmilla, but one thing that distinguishes Maxim from

[82] M. Brock, "the Vamp and the Good English Mother", cit., p. 130.

[83] J.S. Le Fanu, *Carmilla* 1872, eds. Kathleen Costello-Sullivan, cit., p. 110.

them is that he does not express "a sense of patriarchal guilt over the creation of these female characters."[84] Instead, he acknowledges Rebecca's success and continues to fear her potential influence, and his fear lasts until the end of the novel. As the exoneration of murder charges has not eased his anxiety, he refuses to attend Colonel Julyan's dinner and becomes extremely anxious when he hears of Mrs. Danvers's abrupt departure. Though he admits to the narrator that he does not regret killing Rebecca, he worries that Rebecca has irrevocably influenced the narrator. He is frightened by the narrator's drastic change in just one day: she now looks older and mature, and that "funny, young, lost look" (335-6) that he treasured is gone forever.

Maxim's concerns prove to be all accurate, and his frustration at the complete transformation of the narrator is not speculative, for he has seen Rebecca's parasitic impact on the narrator and is disappointed in his inability to continue to eliminate this influence. In fact, he is guilty of the incompetence of not providing good protection to ignorant, virginal girl – the nameless narrator. He fears female vampires' contagiousness. Women who are deviant must be destroyed to prevent their disease from spreading.

Interestingly, Maxim kills Rebecca out of her threatening the de Winter family's future with children. Rebecca leads Maxim to fantasize that their future son will grow up and inherits Manderley, and she finally gets killed because she 'promises' to be "the perfect mother, Max, like I've been the perfect wife" (313). In this scene, Maxim resembles the men that kill Lucy in *Dracula*, who watch the already transformed Lucy hunting children in a cruel way: she growls over the child and "with a careless motion", "there was a cold-bloodedness in the act."[85] The last act of Lucy that prompted them to kill was the cruelty towards

[84] M. Brock, "the Vamp and the Good English Mother", cit., p. 130.

[85] B. Stoker, *Dracula*, cit., p. 227.

children. It seems that women's rejection of maternity is the ultimate cause that makes men deeply aware of the horror of feminine evil.

Contrary to Carmilla, who Le Fanu suggests "is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons. […] it seems to yearn for something like sympathy and consent."[86] Rebecca seems less sympathetic and unconcerned about anyone's consent. She resembles the vampire sisters in *Dracula*, who share one of Rebecca's most prominent traits – ruthless laughter. Indeed, Rebecca's triumphant laughter is one of her most endearing features throughout the novel. At the time of Maxim's discovery of her true nature, she quickly seizes his weakness and forces him to accept her unfair bargain, laughing, she calls the bargain "a leg-pull", "a God-damn triumph" (304). In Mrs. Danvers's proud description of her hostess, she claims that having sex with many men makes Rebecca "rock with laughter" (382). In threatening Maxim with an illegitimate child, Rebecca keeps laughing like "she would never stop" (313). Interestingly, in depicting her death, the author focuses on her smile as well:

> She turned round and faced me, smiling, one hand in her pocket, the other holding her cigarette. When I killed her she was smiling still. I fired at her heart. The bullet passed right through. She did not fall at once. She stood there, looking at me, that slow smile on her face, her eyes wide open... (313)

This reminds the reader of what Mina declared in *Dracula*: the vampire sisters laugh constantly because women should not show sadness to men. Sadly, the reader will never know whether it is happiness or sadness behind Rebecca's laughter because her voice is taken away as she remains dead throughout the

[86] J.S. Le Fanu, *Carmilla* 1872, cit., p. 110.

novel.

There are many similarities between Rebecca and Lucy, and male reactions to these women's transformation from charming to evil are strikingly similar. Lucy is as popular and beautiful as Rebecca; she has received three marriage proposals – "symbolic of her power in the domestic realm"[87]. When she is considered to have died a normal death, people pity her and praise her for her increasing beauty and try to stop Van Helsing's destruction of Lucy's corpse as they are aroused to sympathy by her beautiful body. However, when they see Lucy hunting children in her vampire form, the change in their opinion of her is instantaneous, "The sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness. […] the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight."[88] In *Rebecca*, Maxim has also experienced an extreme shift in his impression of Rebecca. He first believes that he is the "luckiest man in the world" and Rebecca is "so lovely, so accomplished, so amusing'" (304). But right after he discovers Rebecca's true color, he uses the dirtiest words to describe her: "vicious, damnable, rotten through and through", "incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency" (304).

Moreover, both writers attribute the male characters' first terror of monstrous women to the eyes. While everyone praises Maxim's choice of Rebecca as his wife, he has doubts because he senses that there is "something about her eyes" (304). Similarly, Lucy makes the male characters shudder with her eyes being "unclean and full of hell-fire" (227).

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[87] M. Brock, "The Vamp and the Good English Mother", cit., p. 127.

[88] B. Stoker, *Dracula*, Dover, New York, 2000, pp. 175-227.

CHAPTER 4

REBECCA AS A VAMPIRE

Published in 1938, *Rebecca* is a classic piece in Gothic literature, a masterpiece of the brilliant British author Daphne du Maurier. The novel was a sensational phenomenon in the British and American literary world, a great commercial success, and it has produced very famous film adaptations. The author, du Maurier, was deeply influenced by the Gothic novels of the nineteenth-century and the Brontë sisters' literary works. *Rebecca* is an enthralling tale of Gothic mystery that is also laced with tenderness and lingering love themes, making the story twist and turn as the characters are portrayed with a mild fatalistic sadness enveloped in a mysterious aura. For many years, the book has been one of the best-selling romantic masterpieces, and it made the author extremely popular and entered "the literary stratosphere."[89] The novel presents a nostalgic remembrance of the old days, but also a gloomy and desperate terror, paired with persistent tension throughout the novel.

Born in London in 1907, Daphne du Maurier started her creative career as a writer at the age of 15. She published 17 full-length books throughout her lifetime, two of which, *Jamaica Inn* and *Rebecca*, were adapted into movies and received wide acclaim. Her grandfather George du Maurier was a cartoonist and writer, her father a famous actor and theater manager, her mother a niece of author and journalist William Comyns Beaumont. Daphne was the middle sister of three, and it appears as though all three sisters inherited their family's artistic

[89] S. Beauman, *The Breaking Point: Short Stories by Daphne Du Maurier*, Hachette Digital, London, 2010, p. i.

ability and received an advanced education while growing up. Given that her elder sister Angela was also a writer, and her younger sister Jeanne du Maurier became a painter, their education at a young age influenced their literary and art career significantly.

The du Maurier family spent many years in Cornwall, and many of Daphne's works are set there. As a young lady, it was there that she spent her holidays and met her future husband, Sir Frederick Browning. Her ties to the region are so deep that some of her writings are labeled Cornish novels. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik argue that as Daphne's attachment and sense of identification with Cornwall deepened, this mode became considerably more prevalent and "allowing her to give creative shape to transgressive desires."[90] Daphne and her husband resided at Menabilly with their three children; it is a magnificent home that was very significant to Daphne and a place she adored. In Menabilly, she obtained the space and tranquility she had always desired via writing and could escape the London social events. However, because of her husband's military profession, Daphne must follow him on short visits overseas, and this rushing about brought her little pleasure and delight but only increased her missing and adoration for Menabilly, as Margaret Forster points out, "she realized at once that she would be trapped in the kind of situation she dreaded."[91]

When Daphne du Maurier began writing *Rebecca*, her father, who had a profound influence on her, had just died a few years earlier. She was in Egypt with her husband and pregnant, and the novel was inspired by her husband's first fiancée and her beloved Menabilly. As Margaret Forster writes, the nameless narrator's inner world existed long before the plot was invented, and Daphne's

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[90] A. Horner, S. Zlosnik, *Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination*, Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1998, p. 64.

[91] M. Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*, cit., p. 128.

own fantasies and daydreams about Menabilly and its surrounding landscape are reflected in the novel's "hallucinatory quality from the first"[92].

Rebecca is a novel that has nothing to do with romantic love, and du Maurier regarded it as "'rather grim', even 'unpleasant', a study in jealousy with nothing of the 'exquisite love-story' her publisher claimed it to be."[93] Nevertheless, critics have always categorized the novel as romance because it is the story of a heroine who overcomes jealousy to gain the loyal love of her husband. As Margaret Forster says, critics labeled the novel as 'unashamed' and paid no attention to the "battle between the sexes in *Rebecca*, or saw it as a psychological study in jealousy, as Daphne had hoped."[94] While the love theme is important, the novel's extensive Gothic elements break the bottleneck of the romantic novel in the traditional sense. What is evident is the similarity of *Rebecca* to *Bluebeard* (1697) and *Jane Eyre* (1847). Daphne has been outspoken about her love of the Brontë sisters' works and has written biographies of them. *Rebecca* can be seen as a new version of *Jane Eyre*, with enhanced mystery and Gothic style, and a subtle addition of fairy tale elements, which allows the novel to escape the monolithic subject matter of romance.

The novel begins with a classic sentence "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again" (1). The reader immediately sees a flashback in which the protagonist describes her first encounter with her husband Maxim de Winter, the reserved and aloof owner of the West Country estate Manderley. The narrator is an employee of a vain and extravagant American noblewoman Mrs. Van Hopper who is fond of gossip and often embarrasses her. Maxim frequently asks the narrator out for drives, and she falls madly in love with him. She accepts his cold marriage proposal and takes over as mistress of the renowned estate Manderley,

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92 Ibid., p. 138.
93 Ibid., p. 142.
94 Ibid., p. 145.

a position she has long coveted. However, in the estate, she is under the surveillance of the skull-looking housekeeper Mrs. Danvers, and slowly she becomes haunted by the shadow of Maxim's attractive ex-wife Rebecca.

Maxim de Winter is bent on asking his wife to remain innocent and ignorant, but at the welcome ball, he rages at the sight of her wearing the gown worn by Rebecca. The narrator grows gradually paranoid under the pressure of Mrs. Danvers and jealousy towards Rebecca. Eventually, the rescue team finds the body of Rebecca in her sailboat, which is proved to be deliberately sunk. This discovery leads to the overturning of what everyone had thought was suicide. Maxim admittes to the murder of Rebecca to the narrator and has detailed her debauchery and wickedness, including the reason he killed her: she was pregnant with someone else's child. The narrator feels relief and tries to help her husband get away with murder, while the housekeeper is shocked by the truth of Rebecca's death because she is extremely loyal and admiring to her, and with the aid of Rebecca's cousin and lover Jack Favell, she set fire to the estate.

The similarity between *Rebecca* and *Bluebeard* is evident right from the beginning. Maxim and Bluebeard are both owners of distant Gothic mansions; they are moody aristocrats holding some awful, unspeakable secrets. The heroines are young, ignorant, ordinary girls; they hastily marry the wealthy older man, dreaming of a luxurious life. Both men strive to limit the curiosity of their wives, which represents a typical male-dominated patriarchal order. However, the two tales end differently: in Rebecca, the heroine does not kill but helps her husband escape the murder charge. She is defending the patriarchy, while it is the ex-wife who is finally eliminated, represents the resistance to the patriarchy.

In terms of character relationships and plot, *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre* have a lot in common. Both novels begin with flashbacks, and both narrators belong to a socially lower class. They are unattractive women who fall in love with a cold

and gloomy older man of high society. Both girls are troubled by their husbands' ex-wives. Both stories conclude with a devastating fire that destroys the estates. There are so many similarities that Angela Carter even described *Rebecca* as "shamelessly reduplicated the plot of Charlotte Brontë's novel."[95]

Both novels feature spooky Gothic houses teeming with dark secrets, with a disturbing sense of patriarchal oppression that pervades. There is no indication of Manderley's location in the novel, and Manderley is introduced through a dream, which significantly colors it with a dreamlike quality. Moreover, access to the manor requires passing through secluded wild plants and extremely long driveways – an almost enclosed space that makes one feel shut out. Instead of a maternal and warm space that offers protection, the Gothic home is a labyrinth and prison that harbors untold secrets, a metaphor for the oppression of women.

Rather than portraying a medieval castle, Daphne du Maurier updates a mysterious Gothic manor house in an unknown location. The de Winter family has owned the estate for ages, making this a society dominated by men with a rich past. The villain in the novel is not the male owner of this mansion but the strictly entrenched patriarchal system. Whether they are trying to conform or desperately resisting the demands imposed by this system, the characters in the novel seem exhausted and dislocated in their struggle.

Although *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre* share similarities that are hard to ignore, both novels revolve around the desire for love and autonomy at a more complex level. Rebecca is not the narrating voice and is in sharp contrast to Jane Eyre. Dead from the beginning, Rebecca's story relies entirely on the descriptions of other characters and the narrator's imagination. Critics often equate Rebecca with Bertha Mason – the madwoman in the attic – in *Jane Eyre*, both of whom are the hero's ex-wives and stand as an obstacle between their marriage. More

[95] A. Carter, *Expletives Deleted*, Vintage, London, 1993, p. 163.

importantly, both, one insane and the other dead, have lost the ability to defend and explain themselves, the perceptions of others shape their identities. Moreover, their presence and image terrify the narrators to the extreme. In *Jane Eyre* many of the descriptions of Bertha fit the typical image of a vampire, she "bite" and "suck the blood", "drain my heart"[96], in a passage, Jane relates Bertha Mason's appearance directly as a vampire:

> a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight; but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell. [...] Fearful and ghastly to me—oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discolored face—it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments. [...] This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow fur rowed; the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me? [...] Of the foul German specter—the Vampire.[97]

As a typical nineteenth-century stereotype of Jews, cannibals, and lunatics combined, Jane was not alone in her perception of Bertha as a vampire. Typical of the era, this is a depiction of the unfamiliar, queer and deviant Other. The author's depiction of Bertha, as Heidi Kaufman states, "blends three different forms of Jewish discourse—the Jew as devil, as wanderer, and as vampire[98]".

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[96] Brontë, *Jane Eyre: An Authoritative Text, Context, Criticism,* ed. R.J. Dunn, 3rd edition, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., London, 2001, p. 181.

[97] Ibid., p. 242.

[98] H. Kaufman, *English Origins, Jewish Discourse, and the Nineteenth-Century British Novel: Reflections on A Nested Nation*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, P.A, 2009, p. 121.

4.1 – REBECCA: THE JEWISH VAMPIRE

In Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik's reading of *Rebecca*, they suggest that the titular character's monstrosity is "further inflected by the text's association of her with 'Jewishness'."[99] She has a Hebrew name with the meaning "to tie firmly" and "captivating beauty", which at the end of the novel echoes in the narrator's nightmare, where Rebecca's hair turns into "a thick rope. It twisted like a snake" (426). In the novel, the dim-witted Ben introduces Rebecca as someone who "gave you the feeling of a snake" (174) because knowing Ben is stupid, Rebecca takes off her disguise to intimidate him. Also, Ben, Colonel Julyan, and Doctor Baker all suggest that Rebecca is "tall and dark" (174) – a sign of exoticism.

There are many descriptions of Rebecca's thick black hair. For example, the bishop's wife describes Rebecca as having "cloud of dark hair against the very white skin" (139). Mrs. Danvers says that Rebeeca's "mass of dark hair, standing out from her face like a halo" (190). Maxim describes her "black hair blowing in the wind" (305) when she sits on the hill above Monte Carlo and threatens him. Most importantly, in the narrator's imagination, Rebecca's beauty and lush black hair are the focus of her unique beauty:

> The long slim legs, the small and narrow feet. Her shoulders, broader than mine, the capable clever hands. Hands that could steer a boat, could hold a horse. […] I knew her face too, small and oval, the clear white skin, the cloud of dark hair. (224)

[99] A. Horner, S. Zlosnik, *Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination*, cit., p. 112.

It is worth noting that at the end of the story, the narrator becomes Rebecca in a nightmare in the car on the way back to Manderley. When she looks at herself in the mirror, the author combines the meaning of Rebecca's name with her snake-like black hair.

Indeed, Rebecca's appearance is similar to Bertha's: strong, tall, dark-haired, sexually arousing exotic woman. As a matter of fact, as Margaret Forster argues, the prototype of the eponymous character is Daphne du Maurier's husband's ex-fiancé Jan Ricardo, "a dark-haired, rather exotic young woman, beautiful but highly strung."[100] Also, Daphne had explicitly written in a letter saying that she wrote Rebecca about her "feelings of jealousy re him [Tommy] and Jan Ricardo."[101] Like Rebecca, Jan Ricardo also died young during the war.

Rebecca's exoticism distinguishes her from the other characters in the novel. She is the Other in English society, yet she can rely on her beauty and charm to earn everyone's affection, which causes the narrator to feel inferior and paranoid. Rebecca's promiscuity and wildness are also a characteristic traditionally associated with exotic women. As Marilyn Brock writes, the fear of reverse colonization is delivered through the portrayal of evil characters with racial features "deracinating victims through sexually aggressive acts."[102] In the novel, when describing the ordinary English narrator, Beatrice emphasizes her being different from Rebecca. Mrs. Danvers's narratives also highlight Rebecca's unique beauty and her sexual desire as she attracts men when she is only twelve, and men in Manderley are all crazy for her.

Rebecca exhibiting vampiric and Jewish qualities is not unusual. In fact, the representation of evil characters as vampires with Jewish characteristics has a

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[100] M. Forster, *Daphne du Maurier*, cit., p.100.

[101] Ibid., p. 220.

[102] M. Brock, "the Vamp and the Good English Mother", cit., p.120.

long history. Sahara Blau argues that the inspiration for creating the vampire myth can be seen from the portrayal of vampires as the "stereotypical Jewish parasite and contaminator of blood"[103]. The vampire is the ultimate Other who encompasses human's greatest fears and the dark side of humanity.

Although there is the story of one of the first female vampires Lilith in Jewish folklore, vampire presence in Jewish texts is "extremely rare"[104]. Jewish laws and *Talmud* explicitly forbid Jews from consuming blood. Vampires were used in the Middle Ages to describe the Jews as evil, vicious, and greedy because of their potential to damage and weaken the whole of Christendom. The two monsters against God, Gog and Magog, were given Jewish features as early as the biblical tradition. In the Middle Ages, they were depicted as unclean 'Red Jews' who bites bleeding human limbs. Their image represents "the unpleasant, frightening and invasive nature that a predominantly Christian Europe was then attributing to the Jewish community."[105] Since the blood of Jesus has a healing effect, their act of sucking blood also represents the theft of salvation, an attack on the whole of Christianity.[106] Judaism, as Julia Kristeva argues, was presented as a sin, a terrifying otherness that was absorbed into the Christian world; and since "abjection. accompanies all religious structuring"[107], the Christian Church was no exception.

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[103] S. Blau, "Kosher Vampires: Jews, Vampires, and Prejudice", *With Both Feet on the Clouds: Fantasy in Israeli Literature,* ed. D. Gurevitch, E. Gomel, and R. Graff, Academic Studies Press, Boston, 2013, p. 206.

[104] S. Epstein, S.L. Robinson, "the Soul, Evil Spirits, and the Undead: Vampires, Death, and Burial in Jewish Folklore and Law", *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, vol. 1, no.2, Penn State University Press, PA, 2012, pp. 232.

[105] F. Matteoni, "The Jew, the Blood and the Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe", *Folklore*, vol. 119, no. 2, Folklore Enterprises, Ltd., Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 2008, p. 183.

[106] Ibid., p. 4.

[107] J. Kristeva, Powers of Horror, cit., p. 17.

Jews are also associated with usurers because of their successful careers in money lending, which results in them being particularly linked with 'economic bloodsucking'. Indeed, the traditional image of Jews is closely tied to usurers, bloodsuckers, and this image embodies vampirism.[108] Also, Ken Gelder suggests that both the vampire and the Jew are seen as the "'source' of the internationalization of capital"[109], and the restriction, alienation, expulsion, and elimination of them can return control of capital flows to the state. Thus, to regain and rehabilitate the national identity, it is important that Dracula remains always a vampire (stereotyped and demonized).

The novel *Rebecca* also contains many descriptions of the titular character's astuteness and sociability. Stereotypical Jewish characteristics can be seen in Rebecca's manner and behavior: she is exotic, cunning, and a master of disguise – she has a gift of being attractive to everyone (and dogs). Maxim's accusation reveals Rebecca's shrewdness, in which she evaluates the demands of each other and cleverly exploits Maxim's weakness—his love for Manderley—to acquire additional benefits to her own advantage. Though indignant, Maxim must admit that Rebecca's intelligence and competence are above his:

> "Damnably clever. No one would guess meeting her that she was not the kindest, most generous, most gifted person in the world. She knew exactly what to say to different people, how to match her mood to theirs. Had she met you, she would have walked off into the garden with you, arm-in-arm, calling to Jasper, chatting about flowers, music, painting, whatever she knew to be your particular hobby; and you

[108] H.L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1996, p. 160.

[109] K, Gelder, *Reading the Vampire*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, New York, 2001, p. 16.

would have been taken in, like the rest. You would have sat at her feet and worshipped her." (304)

Maxim may have developed "a seed of doubt" (304), but Rebecca gets a head start by offering a quid pro quo: she will look after Manderley and decorate it flamboyantly, rendering it sumptuous and "the most famous show-place in all the country" (305). Rebecca is so adept at playing the part of a wife that everyone believes the pair is the "the luckiest, happiest, handsomest couple in all England" (305). In exchange, she will be free from her husband's discipline, allowing her to freely enjoy her sexuality, sail, and venture out of town. Because she knows her husband's greatest weakness—fear of bad reputation and a deep attachment to Manderley—she has crafted an offer that he cannot refuse.

Rebecca's greatest strength is her audacity in defying rules when she is dissatisfied with the conditions of the agreement. After successfully completing her end of the contract, she discovers a means to maintain a firm grasp on her own initiative. Note that the furious Maxim uses an interesting metaphor – drinking – to describe Rebecca's gradual breakthrough of their agreement.

Rebecca is not ashamed of violating the terms of her deal and shows no restraint after being discovered. Maxim asks her to abide by the bargain, but she rages at him, curses him with "every filthy word in her particular vocabulary" (308). Moreover, Rebecca retaliates against him by seducing his friends, in order to win back her dominance over him. Indeed, Maxim admits that he dreads "the gossip, the publicity" (310) if their secret is revealed to all. This series of smooth operations of Rebecca in her transaction with Maxim fits perfectly with the stereotypes of Jews. As Thomas C. Wilson argues, there are two categories of Jewish stereotypes: "pushy, covetous, clannish, ill-mannered, ruthless, dishonest, mercenary, grasping, overbearing, sloppy, loud, money-loving, and uncouth"

and "financially successful, ambitious, hardworking, intelligent, loyal to family and other Jews, industrious, energetic, and able to get ahead."[110]

It was pervasive to portray Jews as a group with negative characteristics detrimental to society from the Middle Ages. For example, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale* (1387) tells the story of a Jewish community that abducted a Christian child for singing the hymn. Also, in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1600), Shylock, the unbearable moneylender whom everyone despises, is a Jew. In *Oliver Twist* (1838), there is Fagin, the greedy and notorious Jewish thief who abuses and exploits the boys he kidnapped. Indeed, Diane Hoeveler categorizes Jew's association with demonic creatures: Jews were seen as "the embodiment of the anti-Christ, as a sorcerer, as a poisoner, as a defiler of the sacrament of communion, as a usurer, and as a practitioner of the ritual murder of Christians."[111]

Many critics suggest that Stoker's portrayal of vampires in *Dracula* is also linked to the growing Jewish immigrant community of the period, who were considered a threat to England and were often compared to plague-spreading rats (as also depicted in Dracula).[112] Many gold coins from other countries are found in Dracula's residence, and he desires to hide his foreign traits by learning English. This corresponds to the identity crisis Jewish immigrants had in England at the time; they have been under considerable pressure to forget their Jewish ethnicity and conform to the English majority's principles.

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[110] T.C. Wilson, "Compliments Will Get You Nowhere: Benign Stereotypes, Prejudice and Anti-Semitism." *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 3, Midwest Sociological Society, Wiley, 1996, p. 465.

[111] D. L. Hoeveler, "Charlotte Dacre's Zofloya: The Gothic Demonization of the Jew", *English Faculty Research and Publications*, 2005, p. 258.

[112] H. Bresheeth, "The Development of the Vampire Genre: Representation of the Social Other", *Cinema and Memory: Dangerous Liaisons*, ed. H. Bresheeth, H. Zand and Zimmerman, Zalman Shazar Centre, Jerusalem, 2004, p. 153.

Vampires' transformation from mythical monsters to become more human-like might be explained by the rise of anti-Semitism intensified with the integration of Jews into European societies. This movement led to a great readiness for Jews to hide their actual appearances to avoid becoming deviants social Other. Similarly, literary vampires lose many of their distinguishing characteristics. Ken Gelder mentions that Charles Boner in *Transylvania* (1865) – one of *Dracula*'s source-text, depicts the region as a wonderful whirlpool of many races. However, the vampire provides the negative aspect of diversity: it confuses the national identity and threatens the British imperialist ideology, which "depends upon a stable identification between nation and self"[113]. This fear can be seen as colonization by Jews in reverse.

The British feared the Other's invasion and absorption of their national identity and self-identity, and Dracula's mixed multiracial identity reinforces this fear. The representation of Jews as nomadic further widened their characteristic as "uncontrollable" and "uncheckable". Vampires do not suffer from race anxiety, their identity is more stable, and their love for living in a dispersed manner renders them capable of moving capitals. Hence, as Ken Gelder argues, the vampire incites national fear because it "returns colonization to the colonizers; he is shown to be more of an imperialist than the British."[114]

Rebecca suffers from a similar identity crisis; her true nature needs to be disguised, knowing that society would reject her as the social Other. Her disguise proved to be so effective that she is perfect in the eyes of locals, including the bishop's wife, Beatrice, and Gran. Only when she faces someone who poses no threat to her does she have no qualms revealing her true self. For example, she scared the dim-witted gardener Ben to death, who describes her as a 'snake' who

[113] K, Gelder, *Reading the Vampire*, cit., p. 12.

[114] Ibid., p. 14.

threatens to put him "to the asylum" (174). Furthermore, Maxim's charges against Rebecca fully display her astuteness and pretenses: while he accuses Rebecca of being "vicious, damnable, rotten through and through" (304), he admits the brilliance of her tactics in fooling people.

Maxim also accuses Rebecca of being abnormal. Indeed, vampire malevolence is inextricably linked to deviant behaviors. Vampires present their Otherness as a menace to human communities. Human dread and anxiety about them stem from a concern of being invaded by undesirable values and behaviors. However, the influence of vampires is difficult to suppress since they represent a darker side of humanity and society itself. There are always vampires lurking inside of our psyche, and whether they are real or not is unimportant, as Matthew Beresford argues, "if we only looked into ourselves – and into our society – we should find the demon already there."[115]

Rebecca is extremely hungry for power and triumph as a woman with the dual characteristics of a vampire and a Jew. Still, she is equally adept at 'usurping' power and colonizing in reverse. Rebecca exploits her beauty to gain power and her intelligence to dominate men; she is promiscuous, homosexual, sterile, and suicidal. She embodies the patriarchal fear of women violating domestic codes, and her pretend role as a good wife represents the fear of reverse colonization. As Nina Auerbach argues, "vampires go where power is"[116], Rebecca marries into the de Winter family, which embodies wealth and fame, and she finally gains control of both the historic estate and its owner. Everywhere she can exert her influence, she works relentlessly to get the most satisfactory outcomes, earning the admiration and adoration of everyone around her. Maxim

[115] M. Beresford, *From Demons to Dracula: The Creation of the Modern Vampire Myth*, Reaktion Books Ltd., London, 2008, p. 11.

[116] N. Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, cit., p.10.

once asserts that, on social occasions, Rebecca can make everyone "sat at her feet and worshipped her" (304) because she knows too well how to court popularity.

Rebecca's potential power in reverse colonization is seen in her remodeling of Manderley. She transforms the old traditional English mansion that has "a wilderness; lovely, yes, wild and lonely with a beauty of its own" (307) into a fabulous modern space that is uniquely hers:

> "Her blasted taste made Manderley the thing it is today. The gardens, the shrubs, even the azaleas in the Happy Valley; […] Half the stuff you see here in the rooms was never here originally. The drawing room as it is today, the morning room—that's all Rebecca. Those chairs that Frith points out so proudly to the visitors on the public day, and that panel of tapestry—Rebecca again. Oh, some of the things were here admittedly, stored away in back rooms—my father knew nothing about furniture or pictures—but the majority was bought by Rebecca. The beauty of Manderley that you see today, the Manderley that people talk about and photograph and paint, it's all due to her, to Rebecca." (307)

Moreover, Rebecca delights in showcasing her design by throwing extravagant parties and inviting everyone she knows. Frank once says that the Manderley balls are "quite a big show" (143) and are filled with guests even from London. The balls and garden parties are described in a flowery language such as "quite enchanting", "wonderful", "all so in keeping". Guests also praise Rebecca's "attractive original idea" of organizing fancy balls which are all "so beautifully done" (139). Indeed, Rebecca succeeds fulfills her 'promise' by taking good care of Manderley.

Rebecca's ambition for power does not end there; months after successfully operating the estate in accordance with their agreement, she begins bringing her London acquaintances to Manderley. When Maxim warns her about her violation of their deal, claiming his ownership of Manderley, Rebecca only "smiled, she did not say anything" (309), which seems to be her unspoken declaration that she wishes to usurp Manderley. Indeed, she then pesters and seduces Frank and Giles, which is particularly frightening to Maxim as he dreads that she will eventually ruin his reputation and his beloved Manderley. Hence, she gradually gains control of Manderley, transforming it into a place for her pleasure and a sanctuary dedicated to her.

Rebecca's power peaks at the time of her death, and, already knowing her disease is incurable, she plans to use her death to destroy Manderley and Maxim. She threatens him with an illegitimate heir to get him to kill her so that he will be charged with murder. Her intelligence and cunning, coupled with her beauty, ensure that she has the last laugh. Her struggle for power combined with her Jewish and vampiric qualities are on full display throughout the novel.

4.2 – RHODODENDRONS, THE SEA, AND MANDERLEY: THE VAMPIRE SYMBOLS

4.2.1 – THE RHODODENRONS

Many critics regard the rhododendrons as one of Rebecca's semiotic substitutes, which stand for admiration and danger. It is the most notable trope Daphne du Maurier uses in the novel, as the rhododendrons that "threaten to overwhelm the drive" [117] are the epitome of Rebecca. In the novel, the

[117] N. Brazzelli, "Manderley in *Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier: a Haunted House", *Acme,*

rhododendrons are not like the ordinary ones – "a homely, domestic thing, strictly conventional, mauve or pink in color, standing one beside the other in a neat round bed" (72); they are so luxuriant and lush in growth that they form a bloodred wall that bewilders and startles the narrator of their discovery:

> They startled me with their crimson faces, massed one upon the other in incredible profusion, showing no leaf, no twig, nothing but the slaughterous red, luscious and fantastic, unlike any rhododendron plant I had seen before. […] these were monsters, rearing to the sky, massed like a battalion, too beautiful I thought, too powerful; they were not plants at all. (72)

The rhododendrons are so important that they appear more than thirty times throughout the novel, at pivotal moments as the story unfolds. Usually, rhododendrons induce sentiments of delight, but the narrator finds these blooms terrifying due to their extreme lushness. "Slaughterous", "luscious" and "fantastic" (72); these rhododendrons represent excessive beauty.

The reaction to the flowers is also interesting: the narrator is frightened while Maxim is unconcerned – he even smiles and inquires whether the narrator likes this kind of flower. The sensation of these flowers becomes the narrator's first secret with Rebecca. Moreover, Madeleine K. Davies argues that the long road symbolizes Rebecca's birth canal, the sea represents the amniotic fluid, and the red rhododendrons symbolize her menstrual blood. Thus, the road to Manderley is a symbolic indication that the narrator is returning to Rebecca's womb – a reverse birth.[118]

University of Milan. 73. 2, 2020, p. 145. Web.

[118] M.K. Davies, "Rebecca's Womb: Irony and Gynaecology in 'Rebecca'", *The Female Body in Medicine and Literature*, eds. A. Mangham and G. Depledge, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2011, p. 184.

The blood-red color of these rhododendrons reminds the reader of vampires' desire for blood. Indeed, vampires are always linked to blood-red things, indicating their blood-sucking nature. For example, in *the Bride of Corinth* (1797), "with a parching thirst, she quickly sprang / For a dark and purple tinctured wine"[119]. Rebecca's fascination with these blooms is mirrored in her floral arrangements throughout the home, most notably in her morning room. The author (or narrator) describes the rhododendrons that fill the room in great detail:

> There they were, bloodred and luscious, as I had seen them the evening before, great bushes of them, massed beneath the open window, encroaching onto the sweep of the drive itself […] And I noticed then that the rhododendrons, not content with forming their theater on the little lawn outside the window, had been permitted to the room itself. Their great warm faces looked down upon me from the mantelpiece, they floated in a bowl upon the table by the sofa, they stood, lean and graceful, on the writing desk beside the golden candlesticks. The room was filled with them, even the walls took color from them, becoming rich and glowing in the morning sun. They were the only flowers in the room, and I wondered if there was some purpose in it, whether the room had been arranged originally with this one end in view, for nowhere else in the house did the rhododendrons obtrude. There were flowers in the dining room, flowers in the library, but orderly and trim, rather in the background, not like this, not in profusion. (93)

Not only does the rhododendrons represent Rebecca's or the vampire's passion for blood-red flowers, but also Rebecca herself and her course of life. Rebecca's beauty and charm are at their peak – she is recognized as the most

[119] J. W. von Goethe, "the Bride of Corinth", Public Library UK, accessed December 8, 2021. http://public-library.uk/ebooks/16/82.pdf

beautiful woman. Her stunning exuberance and confidence give her a character for flair and flamboyance. She fills Manderley with countless guests and decorates the mansion with tremendous flair so that everyone is left with satisfaction and admiration for her. Also, Rebecca embodies the frightening aspect of these overgrown crimson blossoms. To Maxim, her perfection is a pretense because she is an emotionless, immoral, vicious woman who is even more sure of her wickedness than her beauty. Seeing Maxim suffer makes her thrilled.

The discovery of Rebecca's body occurs concurrently with the rhododendrons' withering. Watching the flowers fade, the narrator produces the feeling that even extreme beauty is transient: "a brief beauty. Not lasting very long" (150). Coincidentally, it is at this point that the narrator hears the story of Rebecca's drowning. The withering of the rhododendrons represents the end of Rebecca's control over the narrator as she sighs with deep feeling: "they would not bloom again for another year" (268).

In fact, although the rhododendrons are withering, their influence will still be there – much like Rebecca's. Seeing the flowers' withering, the narrator suddenly has an ominous feeling "as though a blight had fallen upon Manderley" (268). Soon disaster strikes and the story ends with Manderley being burned down. Notably, the author concludes the tale with a significant focus on the blood-red flame light, which reminds the reader that the blood-red rhododendrons are burning.

4.2.2 – THE SEA

The sea frequently appears throughout the novel, and it is also critical to Rebecca as the sea symbolizes her ambition and self-determination. The sea represents the most significant distinction between Rebecca and Carter's vampire Queen: Rebecca aggressively rebels against an unequal system, and through sailing, she gains her self-worth.

In the gloomy Gothic mansion Rebecca inhabits, she gains what Fred Botting argues, an "adventurous freedom"[120] that characters may encounter in the fantastic and exciting events in Gothic fictions, apart from frightening violence. Her chamber in Manderley, the west wing looks "down to the sea" (83); every day she can see, hear, and even smell the sea's shifting forms. Unlike the narrator, who admires the sea's beauty but shudders at its terror, Rebecca enjoys the sea in all its manifestations.

Moreover, the author contrasts Rebecca's courageous spirit with the narrator's conflicted sentiments about the sea. Critics suggest that the narrator's anxiety towards the sea matches babies' fear of leaving the womb (of Rebecca). Indeed, the narrator expresses satisfaction multiple times throughout the novel that she does not spend the night in the west wing due to her fear of the black tumbling sea:

> A mist salt-laden, borne upwards from the sea. A hurrying cloud hid the sun for a moment as I watched, and the sea changed color instantly, becoming black, and the white crests with them very pitiless suddenly, and cruel, not the gay sparkling sea I had looked on first. [...] Somehow I was glad my rooms were in the east wing. I preferred the rose garden, after all, to the sound of the sea. (101)

[120] F. Botting, *Gothic*, cit., p. 4.

When the narrator becomes fearful of the sea for the second time, the "mournful harping" sound of the huge waves lapping at the shore makes her impossible to fall asleep and it "plays a jagged tune upon the nerves" (134). She expresses her gratitude for the view of the rose garden from her window. In contrast to the sea, which represents Rebecca's confidence and pursuit of freedom, the rose garden's stillness indicates the narrator's cowardice and sense of insecurity.

The turbulence of the sea symbolizes Rebecca's aggressive and subversive power, and her ever-changing personality is reflected in the sea's unpredictability. The reader might deduce that Rebecca chooses the west wing due to her love of the sea; and that she organizes her morning room, where she spends most of her time, to have a view of the sea. The sea that gives the narrator a nervous breakdown, has a different effect on Rebecca – "she was not nervous of anything" (145). She often sails alone in the middle of the night and then returns to sleep at the beach cottage.

Undoubtedly, the sea is the epitome of freedom, strength, and mystery; it surges and calms, concealing uncountable secrets while wielding immense force that can devour everything. Hence, Rebecca's passion for sailing demonstrates her remarkable bravery. Despite knowing the sea may be beyond her ability to navigate, she still tries to tame this wildest thing in the world and is eventually swallowed by it. As Colonel Julyan has guessed, "She must have sailed alone over that spot scores of times. And then the moment came, she took a chance—and the chance killed her" (334). However, to be swallowed by the mighty sea is nevertheless a death that fills her with pride. Favell says, "That's the sort of death Rebecca would choose, she'd go out like she lived, fighting" (365). And significantly, Mrs. Danvers says, "it wasn't a man, it wasn't a woman. The sea got her. The sea was too strong for her. The sea got her in the end" (273).

Rebecca has greater strength and courage than other children even as a child, "she had the strength of a little lion" and "no one got the better of her". She "drove a four-in-hand" (273) and ruthlessly subdues a disobedient horse by "slashing at him, drawing blood, digging the spurs into his side" (273), making the horse tremble and bleed.

This profound connection between women and the sea reminds us of Edna in *The Awakening* (1899). For Edna, the sea also symbolizes freedom, strength and escape. What is worth noting is that only after awakening can women have the strength to face the vast ocean bravely. The sea is not just a metaphor of freedom, but also of her awakening to her own self-awareness, of rebirth: she learns to swim, and in the water, she discovers the vastness of the cosmos and the insignificance of human beings. Together with the purifying effect of water, she is reborn. In addition, both Edna and Rebecca, like the fishermen who fearlessly battled the sea, eventually died in the sea – a place of the widest freedom filled with brave souls.

In the episode of Rebecca's death, the author devotes an extensive description to the turbulent sea. Interestingly, it is conveyed through Maxim – the one who kills Rebecca, and who is not experienced at sea, to have a taste of the violent sea that Rebecca had been fighting throughout her life:

> The little jib fluttered. I could not sheet it in. A puff of wind came and the sheet tore out of my hands, went twisting round the mast. The sail thundered and shook. It cracked like a whip above my head. I could not remember what one had to do. I could not remember. I tried to reach that sheet and it blew above me in the air. Another blast of wind came straight ahead. We began to drift sideways, closer to the ridge. It was dark, so damned dark I couldn't see anything on the black, slippery deck. (314)

The sea has also long been symbolic of solitude and independence. The Christian world often views life as a sea voyage seeking the salvation of the soul. In the old English poem *The Wanderer*, a warrior loses his director and wanders on the waves of the icy sea. Suffering and anguish at sea is a certain way to gain wisdom and truth in order to reach heaven and have eternal peace. The sea voyage and the land life are two symbolic metaphors: those who enjoy pleasures on land will eventually die, but those who endure hardships on the sea (like the mariner) will gain true eternal life.

Learning about her cancer, Rebecca resolves to terminate her life while she is still young rather than "getting old, of illness, of dying in her bed" (386). Rebecca gains immortality by being buried in the sea, much like a vampire – she lives on in the shadow of the narrator's dread and jealousy, in Maxim's secret, and in the memory of Mrs. Danvers, who adores her at her most beautiful and boldest. By destroying Maxim and Manderley, Rebecca ensures that her power is not overstepped.

The sea is also a symbol of the Gothic castle: enormous, lonely, and full of potential crises. It is like a watery graveyard, where countless people have been buried over the centuries, fighting and struggling to their death. In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), the dark, ominous sea epitomizes the Gothic style. In the novel, depressed people who have lost their way in real life come to the sea to seek salvation. Indeed, the sea has a healing effect, especially for the restlessness, anxiety, and confusion brought about by industrialization and consumerism. When one contemplates the ocean's enormous length, the magnificent fusion of water and sky, and the roaring storm underneath the swaying boat, there is no reason to feal troubled and dissatisfied. Day by day, the undulating waves of the sea wash people's hearts, making them realize the meaning of living while combating the water.

In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel argues that by observing the infinite and unlimited sea, man feels "his own infinite in that Infinite" and is encouraged and empowered to go further than he ever has before – "to stretch beyond the limited."[121] Indeed, the sea is calling and attracting people with its potential to hold infinite secrets. In *Rebecca*, the titular character becomes a 'social butterfly' in pursuit of worldly power, but her true passion lies in the sea, where rests her truly independent and free spirit.

The sea symbolizes personal struggle, bravery, and adventurous spirit. It is not motionless and unchanging like the land that exposes itself and waiting to be explored. The sea sets up all kinds of unexpected obstacles for the navigators and requires people to give full play to their own strength and intelligence to conquer. Only the bravest, those who put life and death at risk, can taste the true freedom and eternity that the sea brings.

4.2.3 – MANDERLEY

Manderley is Rebecca's carrier, her coffin in which she resurrects; her presence lingers and is sensed throughout the estate, particularly in the west wing, which Maxim purposefully abandons, and Mrs. Danvers meticulously preserves. Indeed, in this Gothic manor, "the dead and the living coexist"[122] and Rebecca's influence is clearly felt by the reader and all the characters in the novel.

Manderley is modeled after Menabilly in Cornwall. Just as the author lavished love on Menabilly throughout her life, she likewise transformed Manderley into the heart of *Rebecca*. Its importance is demonstrated at the opening of the novel, which has become a classic quote: "Last night I dreamed I

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[121] F. Hegel, and J Sibree, *The Philosophy of History*, Dover Publications, New York, 1956, p. 108.

[122] N. Brazzelli, "Manderley in *Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier: a Haunted House", cit., p. 152.

went to Manderley again" (1). It is a venerable, enchanted, and bleak manor house belonging to an old family since the Conquest; it is the supreme treasure and glory to the de Winter family. Manderley is also a dream; it can only be recovered through the narrator's memories, as it has been destroyed. Manderley carries most of the novel's Gothic features since a haunted medieval manor is the quintessential element in Gothic literature.

The depiction of Manderley echoes the medieval Gothic edifices that embody "a feudal past associated with barbarity, superstition and fear"[123]. In *Rebecca,* Manderley is frequently referred as "a sepulcher" (4), the long driveway as "church roof"; its owner Maxim is described as "medieval", that "stare down at us in our new world from a long-distant past" (15).

As a relic of the past, the Gothic manor preserves the old value system, with its might and splendor, scrutinizes those who attempt to enter. In other words, it is a prison that resists penetration and assimilation from the outside by firmly imprisoning the people inside. The interior of the manor appears harmonious and magnificent, but is threatened by hidden crisis, represented by its labyrinth-like passages and locked dungeons. Indeed, at the first sight of Manderley, the narrator describes it as "a thing of grace and beauty, exquisite and faultless" (73). Also, the many grand and gorgeous balls held here add to its deceptive appearance. Moreover, the owner Maxim further tries to guard the fabulousness and magic nature of the manor by asking the narrator to dress like *Alice in Wonderland*.

Indeed, Manderley is like an isolated magic island. The author completely avoids events of the real world, making it impossible for the reader to define it in terms of time. Also, Manderley is not specifically represented in terms of geographical location: it is right by the sea and looks "like fairyland", "it looks

[123] F. Botting, *Gothic*, cit., p. 2.

perfectly enchanting" (16). When the narrator leaves Manderley to London, she tries to calm her unsettling feelings by assuring that the estate will be protected by magic – "It would lie always in a hollow like an enchanted thing, guarded by the woods, safe, secure" (401)

The author underlines Manderley's separation from the ordinary world by exhaustively detailing its unusually long entryway, which begins with two tall iron gates that alienate Manderley from what the reader often thinks of as a contemporary manor house. The narrator immediately finds the drive strange as it is not a "broad and spacious thing of gravel, flanked with neat turf at either side, kept smooth with rake and brush", but is "twisted and turned as a serpent" (71). Also, the author hints Manderley's Gothic aspect, by referring the trees' intermingled branches as "the roof of a church" (71) as the dense tree branches block the sunlight, wind, and outside sound that even the car's engine throbs sound "quieter than before" (72). The narrow stream in the woods, which is supposed to be tranquil and clear, is twisted and turned like a snake, heading to the deeper, darker world of the woods. Everything in the driveway was pressing on the narrator's nerves, but it is also long and winding enough for her to comprehend one fact: "the lodge gates were a memory, and the high road something belonging to another time, another world" (72).

Manderley is Rebecca's sepulcher. Before her body is discovered, she has been lying in the submarine wreck by the beach of Manderley. In Manderley, she rises from the dead, and her powerful presence affects the new hostess almost to the point of mental breakdown. Behind this effect, Mrs. Danvers's tireless efforts serve as the most prominent driving force: she perfectly preserved Rebecca's personal items, and through language and surveillance, she tries to get the narrator to sacrifice in exchange for Rebecca's rebirth.

Indeed, Mrs. Danvers asserts that though dead, Rebecca is "still mistress

here", she is "real", not "the shadow and the ghost" (275). Mrs. Danvers subverts what the narrator has believed that Rebecca's shadow keeps obstructing the couple's happiness. Instead, she tells the narrator that Rebecca should rise from the dead in Manderley, which has been kept well and ready for her coming, and the second Mrs. de Winter must make place for Rebecca. Mrs. Danvers tries hard to erase the identity and confidence of the narrator and eventually persuades her to die to ensure Rebecca's resurrection.

The morning after Mrs. Danvers succeeds in tricking and humiliating the narrator, to her disgrace and guilt, the narrator is in black despair, 'dead in the water'. She has "no illusions left now" (260) and stops pretending. She finally faces up to the failure of her marriage and admits that they are a bad fit from the start because she is "not of his world". She realizes that Rebecca's bold and attractive appeal is what Maxim needs, not her self-deprecating humility, "like a child or a dog" (260). She admits that Mrs. Van Hopper was right – Maxim married her not out of love, but to find a wife who can take care of the household. In this highly negative state of mind, she begins to acknowledge Rebecca's existence by giving up Manderley to Rebecca, she admits:

> She was in the house still, as Mrs. Danvers had said; she was in that room in the west wing, she was in the library, in the morning room, in the gallery above the hall. Even in the little flower room, where her mackintosh still hung. And in the garden, and in the woods, and down in the stone cottage on the beach. Her footsteps sounded in the corridors, her scent lingered on the stairs. The servants obeyed her orders still, the food we ate was the food she liked. Her favorite flowers filled the rooms. Her clothes were in the wardrobes in her room, her brushes were on the table, her shoes beneath the chair, her nightdress on her bed. Rebecca was still mistress of Manderley. Rebecca was still Mrs. de Winter. (261)

After acknowledging that she has been vanquished by Rebecca with the assistance of her devoted housekeeper, the narrator's ego has withdrawn to the very edge, almost to the point of being the "ghost and shadow" that enables Mrs. Danvers' plans for Rebecca's return to take effect. Rebecca's presence is ubiquitous; she returns to reassert her dominance over Manderley. Furthermore, encouraging the disillusioned narrator to commit suicide appears to be Mrs. Danvers' final maneuver in order to facilitate Rebecca's resurrection. Indeed, without the blast, the narrator would have leaped from the building immediately, as she is preparing to accept death and forget everything – especially Rebecca, "I was beginning to forget Rebecca. Soon I would not have to think about Rebecca anymore..." (277).

The final explosion is not a spoiler for Mrs. Danvers's scheme, but a reminder that she has been mistaken all along – Rebecca is not "lying dead and cold and forgotten in the church crypt" (272) as she believes. Rebecca has come back to life and has been in Manderley all along, what Mrs. Danvers suspects may be true, that Rebecca has really appeared, she is just too smart to do hide-and-seek with everyone in Manderley.

By leaving her own body exposed, Rebecca provides the narrator a wonderful opportunity to take control of Maxim, who must give up exerting dominance over the narrator because he is in great crisis. Rebecca has never left Manderley; she has never laid in a church crypt waiting to rise from the dead, for she is resurrected. Rebecca's lingering shadow deeply infects everyone in the manor, especially the narrator. For this reason, Manderley, Rebecca's sepulcher, is in the end set ablaze. Because eradicating a vampire by means of sickness, shooting, or drowning is not enough, she must be sentenced to the most effective and traditional form of execution – burning.

However, burning Manderley will not destroy Rebecca since the narrator's

body has been seized by Rebecca upon the revelation of the secret; in her nightmare, the narrator and Rebecca become one. Indeed, Maxim is very frustrated with the narrator's maturity, "It's gone forever, that funny, young, lost look that I loved. It won't come back again. I killed that too, when I told you about Rebecca... It's gone, in twenty-four hours. You are so much older..." (336)

The narrator's first sexual encounter with her husband, her sudden disappearance of jealousy and hatred for Rebecca, and her rapid grasp of the control of Manderley demonstrate how Rebecca instantly matures the narrator by succeeding in her plan to make Maxim guilty. It is the first time Maxim has tried to create a connection with the narrator: he pulls her close to his shoulder and kisses her passionately – something the narrator has craved for so long. The roles of husband and wife are reversed as now Maxim relies on the narrator for support and assistance, he holds the narrator's hands tightly "like a child who would gain confidence" (302). When the narrator learns that her husband is in danger of being imprisoned or hanged, she sets out to assist him in escaping. Surprisingly, the narrator stays calm and reassures her husband. In sum, Maxim is vanquished, and the wife rises to become the family's pillar of protection. From that point on, the narrator appears to be possessed by the powerful Rebecca, who is in control of the household.

Like the vampire, whose identity is a condition that spreads rather than a singular monstrous being, Rebecca is unconcerned with the body in which her spirit is housed. Her body appears twice, both maimed and unrecognizably disfigured, demonstrating how fluid and unfixed human identity is.

Rebecca infects the narrator with vampire disease, transforming her into a mature woman who takes control of her life and has no secrets with her husband. preventing her from moving on easily and forcing her to constantly reflect and mature into a strong woman. Indeed, the novel opens with a sequence of

flashbacks in which the mature narrator admits that a crisis lurks beneath the couple's seemingly peaceful happiness:

> The things we have tried to forget and put behind us would stir again, and that sense of fear, of furtive unrest, struggling at length to blind unreasoning panic—now mercifully stilled, thank God—might in some manner unforeseen become a living companion, as it had been before. (5)

To set the tone, the narrative opens by fusing the past and the present. The narrator appears to be both recalling the past and experiencing the present. The de Winter couple is haunted by the shadow of the past, and the fact that Manderley is still alive makes it impossible for them to feel at ease, as they both attempt to ignore the powerful memory of it. The detailed description of Manderley, although appearing in a dream, is still clear to the narrator and makes her "heart thumping in my breast, the strange prick of tears behind my eyes" (2). Notably, in contrast to the clear identity of Manderley, whose every blade of grass has a distinct shape, the narrator's identity is never certain.

The novel's incipit is very disturbing as the married couple seems to be rootless, hiding out in an overseas hotel room as if they are in exile. The narrator's dream is horrible since she sees Manderley in all its grotesqueness, devoured by monstrous wild vegetation. Their supposedly pleasant and prosperous lifestyle in the hotel is deceptive. Indeed, the narrator lies to herself many times, in her dream of Manderley, she "walked enchanted, and nothing held me back" (3); but when she wakes up, she claims that "Manderley was no more" (4).

Despite what the couples claim on the surface, they are constantly reminded of Manderley by the tiniest details of their current life abroad. Also, the narrator

is aware that her husband, like herself, often think of Manderley, "rather more often than he would have me know" (5). Apparently, the narrator does not wish to forget Manderley, as evidenced by her attempts to conceal the memories – Manderley is her "secret indulgence" (7). She remembers every single thing because they are "memories of Manderley that will not be denied" (7). As a result, she has developed a strange hobby of becoming a "a mine of information on the English countryside", in order to face the cruel reality and "sweeten this exile" (8). It seems that the narrator has no interest living the present or the future, she enjoys so much recalling Manderley – just having a cup of tea makes her fly through the memories of the past. She keeps repeating that "it is over now, finished and done with. I ride no more tormented, and both of us are free" (9), but she seeks to be transported back to Manderley in her imagination.

From the narrator's description of Manderley in the opening of the novel, she appears to indicate that Manderley is the focus of this suspense thriller because it holds the scars and secrets from her past. Indeed, recognized as a hierarchical structure, Manderley is the real villain of the novel because it symbolize "the haunting presence of an old-fashioned, strict patriarchal system"[124] The narrator's mixed feelings of repulsion and attraction about Rebecca are mirrored in her recollections of Manderley since it is the location where Rebecca's shadow resides. Manderley indeed is a vessel that carries Rebecca's spirit, a vampire's coffin where she comes back to life. With the help of Mrs. Danvers, Rebecca has successfully transmitted the vampire disease to the narrator.

[124] N. Brazzelli, "Manderley in *Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier: a Haunted House", *Acme,* University of Milan. 73. 2, 2020, p. 146. Web.

4.3 – MRS. DANVERS AND THE VAMPIRE

In the novel, Rebecca never really appears; the narrator's persistent terror is partly due to the ambiguous character Mrs. Danvers, the housekeeper of Manderley, and Rebecca's nanny. Mrs. Danvers is physically hideous and constantly intimidates and humiliates the narrator to prevent her from taking over Rebecca's position as the mistress Manderley. She is a lurking presence and a bridge between life and death, an agent of the deceased Rebecca in the realm of the living.

Mrs. Danvers is the character who most closely resembles a vampire. The narrator is immediately startled by her vampire-like appearance in their first encounter. The author uses language that evokes images of dead corpse in the portrayal of Mrs. Danvers: her hand is "limp and heavy, deathly cold, and it lay in mine like a lifeless thing", her voice is "cold and lifeless", her face is like "dead skull", her eyes are "hollow", and she never takes her gaze away from the narrator, which rapidly instills in her a "feeling of unrest" and arouses her "old nervousness" (75). Only when speaking about Rebecca, Mrs. Danvers becomes alive "with unexpected animation, with life and meaning" (81).

Mrs. Danvers remains at the border between life and death, she preserves Rebecca's clothing and personal possessions in waiting for Rebecca's resurrection, and she attempts to drag the narrator to her death in order for Rebecca to remain Manderley's sole mistress. After Rebecca's death, Mrs. Danvers is Rebecca's agent in the living world and a guardian of Rebecca's traces of living. The frontier between life and death is constantly blurred and confounded by these vampire-like companions. Their identities are indefinable, and their presence fits Nick Groom's definition of vampires whose nature is to confound limitations rather than defined by the liminality of life and death: "not

both dead and alive; they are also undead. And so they disturb the primacy of animated life and humanity by replacing the fundamental distinction of life and death with a third state of being (or rather, unbeing).”[125]

Mrs. Danvers blurs the line between life and death by preserving Rebecca’s clothing and personal belongings untouched, while Rebecca’s body is discovered naked each time she is found. The body appear twice in the course of the novel, each appearance of the body is extremely disturbing to Mrs. Danvers and Maxim. The bodies are both naked and decomposing: the first time it is found, the body is broken into pieces by rocks and waves, her face is unrecognizable, and “both arms gone’” (191); the second time the body is found with “no flesh on it” (294), recognizable only the head and limbs.

What is worth noting is that there are two bodies of Rebecca, both are identified by Maxim as the same person, and neither is suspected by anyone since the bodies soon decay to be almost identical. This indicates that human bodies are similar and concrete, but the construction of human identity is fluid and unfixed. Rebecca is never bound to a certain image; she is always on the border and not defined by the liminality, even in her death. Indeed, Rebecca’s fluidity and her ability to transform and to shift between identities remind the reader of the vampire, who is essentially “a condition that proliferates. Through circulation, oozing and passing, vampirism spreads and flows: it is a multiplicity, an array, a contagion.”[126].

Rebecca’s transgressive nature is most evident in the violation of sexual categories, in this case, it is also Mrs. Danvers who cooperates with her. In the novel that lacks motherhood, Mrs. Danvers is the only woman who has played the mother role as she has taken care of Rebecca as a child. Her extreme

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[125] N. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, cit., p. 91.

[126] Ibid.

admiration for Rebecca, in turn, reinforces the incestuous relationship between the two. She is the first to welcome the virginal narrator to Rebecca's "womb", and as a housekeeper, she carries keys to Rebecca's secrets, a hidden transgressive world that defies patriarchal values.

CHAPTER 5

THE VAMPIRE IN "THE LADY OF THE HOUSE OF LOVE"

5.1 – INTRODUCTION

Angela Olive Carter (1940-1992) was one of the most brilliant and influential British novelists, journalists, and short story writers of the twentieth century. With dazzling imagination and through means of horror, her works stands out from the rest of the era for playing with magical realism, Gothic horror, drama, science fiction and fairy tales. Carter depicted society with horrific and luxuriant Gothic techniques to convey her postmodernist ideas, especially her critique of gender politics and her Freudian-influenced exploration of the self. She was a fan of Gothic because "Its style will tend to be ornate, unnatural – and thus operate against the perennial human desire to believe the word as fact. Its only humor is black humor. It retains a singular moral function – that of provoking unease."[127]

Among her large body of works, the short story collection *The Bloody Chamber* remains the most influential. First appeared in 1979, this collection is a Gothic and erotic reworking of traditional fairy tales, Carter made it clear that these short stories are not "versions" or "adult fairy tales", but fabulous "new stories" of horror. As Jacqueline Pearson writes, "for Carter allusion helps to provide a language for ambiguity, one way of achieving this is to tell and retell

[127] A. Carter, *Burning Your Boats: Collected Stories*, cit., p. 459.

certain central narratives."[128] By using the form and imagery of fairy tales, Carter offers readers startling feminist interpretation of the mythical roles, exposing in particular "the latent content [that] is violently sexual"[129].

Carter expresses her fascination for traditional tales: "It turned out to be easier to deal with the shifting structures of reality and sexuality by using sets of shifting structures derived from orally transmitted traditional tales."[130] Indeed, Carter was dedicated to deconstructing the myth of gender as she saw "womanhood was synonymous with suffering" and myths as "extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree."[131] Carter discovers that the purest power of the soul could be unleashed through new interpretations of mythological figures. As Joseph Campbell argues, the psyche can be elevated through fairy tales or stories about "the soul being stolen, mismanaged, disguised, disrupted, pre-empted or trodden upon."[132]

Our source text of this chapter is Carter's reworking of Perrault's *La Belle au Bois Dormant* (Sleeping beauty). First published in *The Iowa Review* in 1975, "The Lady of the House of Love" is a short story included in her famous collection *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979); it was her side project while she was working on one of her best-known work *The Sadeian Woman* (1978). Also, Carter's translation of Perrault's 1697 collection of fairy tales *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* (1977) provided the basis for Carter to create her own appropriations of classic fairy tales.

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[128] J. Pearson, "Foreword", *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. R. Munford, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2006, p. viii.

[129] E. Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter: A Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017, p. 268.

[130] A. Carter, "Notes from the Front Line", cit., p. 39.

[131] E. Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter: A Biography*, cit., p. 228.

[132] J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, cit., p. xlvi.

"The Lady of the House of Love" is most directly based on the author's radio play *Vampirella*[133]. Edmund Gordon illustrates the difference between the *Vampirella* and its prose version:

> *Vampirella* is a voluptuous, slyly comic piece of work, full of knowing gothic details and camp flourishes. […] "The lady of the house of love" is a gothic tale about a reluctant vampire; the radio play, *Vampirella*, is about vampirism as a metaphor,' Angela commented in 1985. 'The one is neither better nor worse than the other. only, each is quite different.'[134]

The young British soldier in both plots is based on her friend Christopher Frayling who was doing research about vampires[135]. By the time Carter was inventing this short story, there had already been numerous movies where Dracula was a prominent subject, the rich suggestiveness of vampires made them very prevalent in popular culture. Vampirism suggest unbridled, unsatisfied sexuality, plague, and fear of the social Other; they are the dark side of human nature that cannot be repressed. At their core, vampires are paradoxical and ambiguous, as they need to be parasitic but voraciously infectious with disease,

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[133] Broadcasted on BBC Radio 3 on 20th July 1976, *Vampirella* was Angela Carter's first radio play, the date of its composition is unknown, but according to Carter, it certainly predates the prose version "The Lady of the House of Love".

[134] E. Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter: A Biography*, cit., p. 256.

[135] Edmund Gordon mentions that Christopher Frayling was one of Carter's most important friends at Bath and they were both fascinated by vampires. Frayling's upcoming exploration of Romania sparked Carter's thoughts and "The character of hero in her 1975 radio play *Vampirella* – a somewhat naïve, over-educated, gung-ho young englishman, who sets out on a bicycle tour of the Carpathians, all unprepared for the darkness he'll encounter – is based on Frayling. She presented him with the typescript as a gift." E. Gordon, *The Invention of Angela Carter: A Biography*, cit., pp. 231-2.

and they are non-genital in their reproduction and penetration. Carter takes use of the vampire's rich suggestiveness and pleads for the union of fantasy and reality since such imaginary creature is also part of human nature. As Rebecca Munford says, "The literary scavenging to which Carter herself alludes is recapitulated as parasitic and predatory; the figure of the vampire, one of her most favored motifs, becomes a metaphor for her textual practice."[136]

It is no secret that vampires manifest the contradictions and ambiguities of the Gothic genre: their existence on the brink of death raises questions about death and immortality, while their insatiable sexual appetites and indeterminate sexual orientation arouse fresh concerns about gender. To Carter, vampire stories lend itself to a wide range of interpretations because of the vampire's versatility, as Sarah Sceats writes, "Carter's writing carves out an oblique territory, using vampiric tropes to examine gendered behavior and heterosexual power relation."[137]

The plot revolves on an orphaned vampire queen who reluctantly fulfills the role of a vampire alone in her decaying castle in the Carpathians. Under the care of the old mute and watchful eyes of her painted ancestors, she spends her days listening to the caged lark sing and counting tarot cards, hoping for the tiniest chance to let her escape this monotonous state of life. Hunting animals and boys disgusts her, but driven by hunger she has no choice, her true desire is to become human. One summer, a handsome young British officer sets off on a journey to Romania, the home of vampires, on a bicycle. As a result of his heroism, he is not afraid of the gloomy ruinous castle and pities the fragile girl in the antique

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[136] R. Munford, "Angela Carter and the Politics of Intertextuality", *Re-visiting Angela Carter: Texts, Contexts, Intertexts*, ed. R. Munford, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2006, p. 2.

[137] S. Sceats, "Oral Sex: Vampiric Transgression and the Writing of Angela Carter", cit., p. 108.

wedding dress. In her macabre bedroom the girl gets her finger stabbed by the sunglasses she broke, and when the young man kisses her wound, she is awakened – or more accurately, she dies.

In literature, the vampire's parasitic and predatory nature, and its overweening exploitation are often obscured. Carter's vampires revolve around these negative connotations. As Sarah Sceats writes, "vampiric trappings in Carter's 'realist' writing are generally attached to behavior that is coldhearted, deliberate, and manipulative, drawing on the overpowering, insidious, and contaminating aspects of the vampire."[138] In "The Lady of the House of Love", Carter focuses on the dangers of dependency brought about by the parasitic and predatory nature of vampirism. Unable to become the human of her dreams – because it is her food – the vampire Countess places herself in the position of a victim bound by nature, as she is unhappily surrounded by the loneliness that her predatory nature demands. In this story, Carter explores the plight of the vampire cornered by the Gothic genre and undertakes a reinterpretation of the vampire legend. The author discovers the gradual flattening-out of the vampire story and fairy tales. According to Joseph Campbell, focusing or favoring only one or two themes and restricting or prohibiting all others, the "panoramic spirit and breadth of its teaching stories" gradually narrows which "in culture, this is a life-threatening symptom."[139]

Just as Carter uses the lark in the short prose to allude to the situation of the Countess Nosferatu, this short story embodies the fierce conflict of free will under the control of fate. The lark, supposedly a symbol of self-determination and freedom, is trapped in a cage and ponders daily whether it can sing a new song. Carter gives life to *Sleeping Beauty*'s slumber, revealing that all life under

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[138] Ibid., p. 111.

[139] J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, cit., p. xli.

control is essentially a monotonous repetitive shell of a trapped being.

5.2 – FROM VILLAIN TO VICTIM: THE TRAPPED VAMPIRE QUEEN

Vampire literature has heavily discussed the views of the patriarchal society about proper and improper sexuality. Traditionally, female vampires have been depicted in literature as beautiful seductive women with intense sexual desire that attempt to contaminate innocent young people and the stability of society and culture. They have been mostly characterized as transgressive sexual beings whose image contains the opposition to the limitations and irrationalities of the patriarchal perceptions of femininity. The meaning of female vampires has been expanded in contemporary Gothic literature, as they can also embody the stereotype of transgressive women, allowing us to explore in depth the assumptions about women who are undermined by a patriarchal society.

Carter uses a frightful self-loathing female vampire to reflect the hollowness and pain of women under confinement in an attempt to dispel society's prejudice against the *femme fatale*. The constrained view of women held by patriarchy is like the painted eyes on the wall, guaranteeing that women remain under the control of the male-dominated system. The Countess's power is void, even though already a queen, because her power is imposed and forced upon her by fate to obey and execute. Her power has nothing to do with her personal free will, just as the Countess identifies in the text, "she herself is a haunted house" (130). the corrupt Gothic castle, the lark, and the tarot cards all embody the theme of being imprisoned; they are all rotten inside, beneath a fine exterior. Moreover, the beauty of the Countess, which is emphasized several times in the text, is a way to conceal her emptiness within, reflecting the meaninglessness of the male dominated society that often associates femininity with beauty, which does not

represent the real woman:

> She is so beautiful she is unnatural; her beauty is an abnormality, a deformity, for none of her features exhibit any of those touching imperfections that reconcile us to the imperfection of the human condition. Her beauty is a symptom of her disorder, of her soullessness. (119)

The Countess is trapped in a shell of beauty, and the more perfectly beautiful she looks, the more it makes a mockery of her inner soulless self, because what can move humanity is "imperfection", and perfection is just a "disorder" (119). In addition to her beauty, her bridal wedding gown also plays the same role, the "hoop-skirted dress draped here and there with lace" is only a beautiful cover to wrap her "fragility of the skeleton of a moth, so thin, so frail" (126). Carter displays the real significance of the dress, "a fabulous lending, a self-articulated garment in which she lived like a ghost in a machine" (126). The wedding dress is further linked to the concept of marriage, reflecting the confining effect and control of marriage on women. The fact that her mother bequeathed it to her illustrates that the marriage system is in fact a means of passing on suffering, and that marital bliss is an illusion because it does not leave women the right to disobey.

Situated in the Carpathian Mountains, the magnificent but gloomy Gothic castle is like the lark's cage, no matter how exquisite its appearance, its interior is haunted and empty, and its sense of history is condensed with time and the past. From the beginning of the story, the reader knows that this is a place that has been "abandoned" (117), forgotten and left to rot in the past. Living alone in a decaying castle, the Countess Nosferatu is left to live a monotony of meaninglessness in an eternity of time and space, where the castle is powerless

to provide spiritual protection for the girl, it constrains her self-identification, turning her into a doll. The gloomy atmosphere and the claustrophobic space of the castle convey to the reader the numbness of the heroine in a prison under the control of male authority, just as Julia Kristeva points out:

> an encompassment that is stifling (the container compressing the ego) and, at the same time, draining (the want of another, qua object, produces nullity in the place of the subject). The ego then plunges into a pursuit of identifications that could repair narcissism—identifications that the subject will experience as in-significant, "empty," "null," "devitalized," "puppet-like." An empty castle, haunted by unappealing ghosts—"powerless" outside, "impossible" inside.[140]

In "The Lady of the House of Love", femininity is discussed through the characterization of the female vampire Countess Nosferatu. She represents the dark side of vampirism, bloodsucking and men-eating to her are only compulsory rituals imposed on her, her true desire is to become human. In contrast to the common powerful independent vampire figures, the Countess seems a lonely, helpless victim permanently playing the role of transgressive woman, under the control of her "demented and atrocious" (117) vampire ancestors.

The Countess has the same naivety and innocence as her archetype the *Sleeping Beauty*, but she also possesses the insatiable desire of a vampire and of a *femme fatale*. This inner fragmentation has turned her life into a "game of patience" (119). The waiting process is not as sweet as sleeping, but rather monotonous and causes self-alienation and self-hatred. Satisfying the appetite is

[140] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, cit., p. 49.

necessary, but it is done against her will. For example, the Countess wishes to keep rabbits as pets but needs rabbits for nutrition, so she kills and eats rabbits but "with a small cry of both pain and disgust" (121).

She knows what she wants to be but does not know how. She is always inquiring and waiting for new possibilities to present themselves to her via the Tarot cards. Indeed, she is the *Sleeping Beauty* who waits endlessly for a new possibility that can completely change her life, but the waiting is too long and passive that she "cannot escape" (118) and the result is "her soullessness" (119).

Carter utilizes traditional symbols of femininity like the bridal gown and roses, to express the dark aspects of the feminine beauty. Throughout the short story the Countess appears wearing the same garment – "the only dress she has, her mother's wedding dress" (121). This dress is gorgeous but out of fashion, just like the magnificent but decaying castle. As the British soldier thinks when he observes her in this dress, "a self-articulated garment in which she lived like a ghost in a machine" (126). She cannot fit into this dress, so her body seems hanging suspended, but she everyday puts it on like a daily ritual she has to perform. Through the bridal gown, the author brings the element of marriage into the short story, discussing harmful aspect of the ritual of a mother passing a wedding dress to her daughter, which aims at confining the daughter inside a rotting system of marriage. The roses in the gloomy garden are also planted by her mother, and they have a more pronounced confinement effect because they "have grown up into a huge, spiked wall that incarcerates her in the castle of her inheritance" (120).

The roses in the story represent the vampire Countess's beauty, corruption, and imprisonment. Traditionally, the rose represents female purity and female genitalia, which in the same way, though, serves to objectify women. Additionally, the blood-red color of the rose represents killing and death, and the

excessive redness is often associated with vampires. The female vampire in the short story is no exception to this rule. Growing large, lush roses seems to be a family tradition for the Nosferatu family as the Countess's mother planted "too many roses" (124) in the garden. In the decaying castle and desolate village, the large number of luxuriant roses seems to be the only thing with great vitality and energy, because the beauty of the roses rests on the bones of their vampire mistress' prey, as the housekeeper fertilize the roses with men's bones, which gives the roses the "rich color, their swooning odor" (132).

The most traditional association of roses with women lies in the external and sensual beauty of both. In the short story, the Countess's beauty is described as excessive, a perfection that is unnatural and abnormal. Similarly, her roses are also beautiful of this kind. The first time the British soldier sees this rose garden, he immediately has a violent reaction:

> A great, intoxicated surge of the heavy scent of red roses blew into his face as soon as they left the village, inducing a sensuous vertigo; a blast of rich, faintly corrupt sweetness strong enough almost, to fell him. Too many roses. Too many roses bloomed on enormous thickets that lined the path, thickets bristling with thorns, and the flowers themselves were almost too luxuriant, their huge congregations of plush petals somehow obscene in their excess, their whorled, tightly budded cores outrageous in their implications. (124)

When the young man first sees the Countess, he has also associated her red lips with "the obese roses in her garden" (129). Moreover, when the vampire Queen vanishes, she leaves him "as a souvenir the dark, fanged rose" (135), which symbolizes mourning and death. The "fanged rose" represents the danger of beautiful women as it evokes the image of the "vagina dentata" which embodies the fear for male castration. The thorns also symbolize the

imprisonment for women, like the "huge, spiked" (120) rose wall that incarcerates her and makes her hovers "behind the hedge of spiked flowers, Nosferatu's sanguinary rosebud" (130).

The Countess is cornered in the "timeless Gothic eternity of the vampires" (122), her predicament is also the result of the Gothic cliché. As an old traditional Gothic character, she needs a new narrative technique from the author to help her escape from this stale literary genre. And Carter offers her a whole new plot, a possibility she could never have imagined – a rational virgin who represents time and change.

5.3 – IMMORTALITY: A GIFT OR A CURSE?

The Countess's vampirism and immortality is an exaggerated metaphor for the meaningless waiting of the *Sleeping Beauty*. Just as her questions have never been answered, the Countess is a vampire trapped in her seemingly desirable 'gift' of vampirism – immortality. Driven by her uncontrollable murderous predatism and the monitor of her ancestors, her eternal life brings only repetitions and can only create a dead-end cycle which eventually makes her soulless, "she is herself a cave full of echoes, she is a system of repetitions, she is a closed circuit" (118). She endlessly questions the meaning of her life, but "The Tarot always shows the same configuration" (120).

This concentration on the dark side of vampire immortality displays the absence of free will under the prescient control of one's own destiny. In an unfree society, the power wielded by a woman only allows her to move from one negative stereotype to another, from the submissive *Sleeping Beauty* to the ferocious vampire. The Countess is a powerful vampire "queen of night, queen of terror" (120) who runs the world of darkness, "the hereditary commandant of

the army of shadows" (120). She is also a blood-thirsty predator, powerful enough to subvert the gender roles as she preys on male victims. Her condition seems a significant improvement to women, but she is still unsatisfied because she is reluctant to this role. In *The Sadeian Woman: A Cultural History*, Carter argues that women who have little or no political power are the true victims of male-dominant power because "sexual relations in the context of an unfree society as the expression of pure tyranny, usually by men upon women."[141]

Carter attempts to dismantle the false power that has been given to women, the dark side of artificial femininity. Having power against her will would only serve to make her unhappy and ultimately consume her soul. The immortality and agelessness of vampires is not as enviable as it may seem. The wheel of destiny brings only the curse of repetition and entrapment, the cruel reality of the Countess's desirable power of commanding the dark world, is her soullessness. "The Countess herself is indifferent to her own weird authority" (120), and she "notices nothing" (118) of the decaying castle and the furniture she is immersed within. Her life in the old Gothic castle is an illusory emptiness as she is only a puppet who perpetuates her ancestral indoctrinations. She is a creature trapped in the "timeless Gothic eternity of the vampires" (122).

She is not the only one who is immortal; all objects associated with her also carry this sense of eternity that time cannot extinguish. Carter's use of classic Gothic and vampire motifs conveys "the spatial and temporal separation of the past and its values from those of the present."[142] The extensive use of Gothic elements as embodiment of the Countess's predicament, is shown throughout the short story. The castle stands in the "abandoned village" that "all shun", like "a

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[141] A. Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History*, Penguin Books, New York, 1979, p. 24.

[142] N. Groom, *The Vampire: A New History*, cit., p. 2.

dilapidated eagle's nest atop the crag" (124). The beautiful vampire Queen wears an "antique bridal gown" and lives in a "dark, high house" (117) with paintings of her ancestors monitoring her behaviors. The dominant colors of the rooms are vampires' favorite red and black – the "red plush cloth", "red figured wallpaper", "burgundy velvet" and "black satin". The castle is also characterized by death, the Countess's bedroom is full of "funerary urns and bowls", the Countess sleeps on a catafalque surrounded by long candles, in "an open coffin" (119). The gloomy garden "bears a strong resemblance to a burial ground" (120), here she buries the fragments of skin and bone of her preys, which serve as fertilizer to the wall of "roses her dead mother planted". She is taken care of by "an old mute" (120).

Carter also emphases the fact that the Gothic castle is decaying and ruinous, the castle door is of "time eroded oak" (124) and the cabinet is "of wormy oak". The interior is "devastated" (128) and full of "cobwebs, worm-eaten beams, crumbling plaster" (126). And "the rain that drives in through the neglected roof" (118) makes "Depredations of rot and fungus everywhere" (118). The British officer is also surprised by the carpet "part rotted away, partly encroached upon by all kinds of virulent-looking fungi" (127). All of these are in stark contrast to the Countess's aspirations, her indifference to the rotting of the place is indicative of her need of change and progress. Even though the Tarot card never shows her new prospect, she patiently continues to wait for the miraculous turnaround of her dull life, she wants a new possibility that can transform her cold winter into "a country of perpetual summer" where her "perennial sadness" disappears"(118). She has only two hobbies when she is waiting for hunger to strike, which is the only time she has to herself: listening to lark sings and distributing the Tarot cards. These monotonous hobbies, combined with her existential meditations, point to her true desire – to escape and be free.

The Countess's ancestors' ferocious eyes in the paintings further enhance the oppressive gloomy atmosphere of the castle, and they represent the real agency of the Countess's actions. They are monitoring her and through this poor maiden they "projects a baleful posthumous existence" (117), making her a soulless doll who "does not possess herself". Her body is marked by emptiness like a "haunted house" because her ancestors often "come and peer out of the windows of her eyes" (130). The painted eyes' haunting effects are so strong that they immediately catch the British young officer's attention. He first notices a strange but "memorable beastliness" (126) in the eyes, when he comes back to contemplate these portraits, he finds "these livid faces all seemed contorted with a febrile madness and the blubber lips, the huge, demented eyes" (128).

The old Gothic castle and her ancestors' monitoring eyes construct the confinement that has eventually rendered the vampire Queen a soulless victim who repeatedly performs her vampire role, a "ventriloquist's doll" (129) who has no ability or method to break through the bondage and gain self-identification. The element of the inevitable Tarot adds a deterministic pattern to her predicament and her desperation, suggesting the impossibility of women gaining free will in a male-dominated society.

The Countess's pet lark is a miniature of herself, who suffers from the same inescapable imprisonment. It is a lifeless caged bird that "more often remains a sullen mound of drab feathers" (118), it sings only occasionally, just like the Countess only looks active when hunting for food. She is clearly aware of the similarities between the lark and her ghastly condition, as she often reflects on the bird's situation by contemplating "Can a bird sing only the song it knows or can it learn a new song?" (117). Later, when the Countess invites the British young man to her bedroom, she parallels this question with "could love free me from the shadows?" (130). She knows she is caged like the lark, who is unable

to break free but can only repeat the same song and waits for a change from the outside.

5.4 – THE AWAKENING

As suggested by the *Sleeping Beauty* and the Tarot that "first time, dealt herself a hand of love and death" (123), the girl in a bridal gown who endlessly waits seems to finally going to be saved by a man who represents love. The British officer is the one who ends the ritualistic obligations of the Countess's meaningless life and awakens her from it. When the handsome young soldier appears, Carter seems to follow the traditional fairy tale pattern. This transformation of the plot echoes *Sleeping Beauty* and people's prejudice about the life-infusing power that love plays for women. But the difference is the reversal of the heroine's role from prey to predator, where she is the one with the power and answers, while the man is the ignorant object to be seduced.

Carter provides the reader a solution in order to end the Countess's miserable repetitions in the vicious circle: "rooted in change and time, is about to collide with the timeless Gothic eternity of the vampires" – a young virginal British officer, "blond, blue-eyed, heavy-muscled" who takes a trip round the Carpathians with a bicycle – "the most rational mode of transport in the world" (122). His character is imbued with many characteristics that are the opposite of vampirism; he is a symbol of the sun, reason, and change. He brings the progressiveness and historicity that she cannot possess, the cogs of time suddenly start turning from stagnation when the vampire Queen collides with him. He is lured, but only by pure curiosity, he maintains his exuberance, curiosity, and courage all the time:

> And though he feels unease, he cannot feel terror; so he is like the boy in the fairy tale, who does not know how to shudder, and not spooks, ghouls, beasties, the Devil himself and all his retinue could do the trick. This lack of imagination gives his heroism to the hero.
> He will learn to shudder in the trenches. But this girl cannot make him shudder. (131)

The identity of a soldier sets him apart from other men, he will be a man who can quickly travel through time and space, abandoning emotional thinking in favor of purely rational action for a purpose. Soldiers create terror and bear pain because they live in cruel reality, not intimidated by supernatural and fantasy. Indeed, in the short story, the young man "saw the humour of it" and "laughing" (122) when he decides to ride to the realm of superstition and horror on bicycle.

What makes this young man unique is that he is on the point of being sent to the front lines. He has to be prepared for bloody, cruel war, but for the time being, he retains the naivety and purity of a young virgin: "virginity, most and least ambiguous of states: ignorance, yet at the same time, power in potentia, and, furthermore, unknowingness, which is not the same as ignorance" (122). This still childlike naivety certainly has some expression, he feels a "faint unease" when discovering the village uninhabited and full of dirty secrets, but a single light of the setting sun can lift his spirits. When he follows the old woman to the manor and cannot restrain from recalling of the ghost stories he heard in his childhood, he "almost have regretted accepting the crone's unspoken invitation" (124), but his faith as a soldier brings him back to his senses quickly, he "brusquely reminded himself he was no child, now, to be frightened of his own fancies" (124).

The British young soldier refuses to be drained, which helps him to withstand the pull of masochism essential to psychic vampirism. Comparing to other vampire victims who are unconsciously drained out of their life force, this virginal young soldier goes as far as to sympathize with the female vampire, which eventually led to his reversal of his role of her prey. Indeed, every encounter he has with the Countess is tinged with an inexplicable sympathy. Seeing for the first time "how beautiful and how very young" (127) the Countess looks, he immediately thinks of an almost heartwarming picture between a dead mother and her child who "putting on the clothes of a dead mother in order to bring her, however briefly, to life again" (127). Looking at the Countess's "extraordinarily fleshy mouth, a mouth with wide, full, prominent lips of a vibrant purplish-crimson, a morbid mouth", he quickly dismisses the idea of "a whore's mouth" (127) that everyone would first associate with it and thinks of how young and unhealthy she is. He helped her pick up the tarot cards and tries to cheer her up by covering "the grisly picture of a capering skeleton" with a "happier one – of two young lovers, smiling at one another" (128). Most importantly, the first time the Countess "deeply moved his heart" occurs when he hears the girl's "unembodied" voice, causing him to comprehend her empty condition of life in which she is being controlled, like "a ventriloquist's doll" (129).

When he meets the Countess, the power of his rationality begins to reveal itself. His own sense of enlightenment transforms him into "the sun she is forbidden to look at" (129), hurting the Countess's eyes to the point of necessitating the use of sunglasses. The climax of the story comes when the Countess, unable to restrain her appetite and sexual desire, tries to seduce the young man but is stopped by the sunglasses. Her sunglasses, which she has accidentally smashed to pieces, frightens her. This is an unexpected accident in

her repetitive monotonous life, and she is at a loss. With the sunglasses on, she cannot undress because she cannot perform that old mechanism – the imposed monstrosity and femininity; when the sunglasses are off, she is overwhelmed because she begins to see her true self. She senses that "this unexpected, mundane noise of breaking glass breaks the wicked spell in the room, entirely" (133).

The Countess has never been taught to do things differently than she usually does, but now she must deal with this new understanding. It is now that she returns to her childlike innocence as "she gapes blindly down at the splinters and ineffectively smears the tears across her face with her fist. What is she to do now?" (133). When her fingers are pricked under panic, she sees her blood for the first time, which represents the first time she sees her true self. The hero comes up and kisses her, now she fully understands the way she can become human – by dying. At this point, reality carries the light of reason to break the Gothic fantasy, and her dark, empty life under her ancestors' control collapses instantly when the girl realizes that her life is just a fantasy of nothingness:

> All the silver tears fall from the wall with a flimsy tinkle. Her painted ancestors turn away their eyes and grind their fangs. [...] He was awakened by larksong. The shutters, the curtains, even the long-sealed windows of the horrid bedroom were all opened up and light and air streamed in; now you could see how tawdry it all was, how thin and cheap the satin, the catafalque not ebony at all but black-painted paper stretched on struts of wood, as in the theatre. The wind had blown droves of petals from the roses outside into the room and this crimson residue swirled fragrantly about the floor. The candles had burnt out and she must have set her pet lark free because it perched on the edge of the silly coffin to sing him its ecstatic morning song. (134)

The Countess fulfills her will to become human through death. The menstrual blood she left on her bed is proof of her real feminine body, not a fictional one. The author has her leave humans with a touch of irrationality – a rose that "regained all their former bloom and elasticity, their corrupt, brilliant, baleful splendor" (135), which represents the blurred line between reality and fantasy. Her presence should not be easily erased, and a rational lack of sensibility is not possible.

A vampire who desires to destroy (eat) men and craves their love is not destined to exist. The Countess's dependence on her vampire nature, and her submission to the familial control that represents a patriarchal society, is difficult to end by simply transferring her dependence to a man.

Carter challenges the view that women's emotional reliance is natural, and by portraying women as a mix of rebellious and terrifying vampires, Carter seeks to undermine the patriarchal control of women. The Countess, who is profoundly parasitic but also extremely individualistic, is incapable of confronting her ambiguity and transgressive identity. Carter provides women with a means of self-identification by posing such a predicament. According to Joseph Campbell, a soul can be set free through stories, because through stories it can be heard, understood, and "given an enlarged broadcast range, granted leadership in the quest for experience that carries such worth for the higher self."[143]

[143] J. Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, cit., p. xlviii.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

From ancient mythology, vampires represented the terrifying social Other, serving as a warning to men and women. Inherent in this symbolic function of the vampire is the need for a patriarchal society to stabilize male-dominated values and order. The medieval Christian Church has used the horror of the vampire belief to help itself to consolidate. Vampires' threatening and disgusting image is deeply rooted in the popular imagination, yet people also recognize that vampires might mirror the dark aspects or latent desire of human nature – the vampire is a component of the self, or even the ideal notion of human subjectivity.

The vampire's capacity to endure as an effective vehicle for transmitting ideas over centuries is due to vampirism being derived from human contemplation of the soul and spirit, and vampires directly reflect the fear of death and the unknown. Also, rumors and superstitions about vampires spread rapidly during outbreaks of plagues.

Vampires live concurrently in different parts of the world because the human quest for experience and knowledge has always been accompanied with fear and imagination of the unknown. The numerous characteristics of vampires are likewise based on this fundamental premise. They are always monstrous-looking creatures who take away the most valuable resources from the human body and society, including blood, health, life, sterility, and even morality.

The vampire's symbolism is always evolving as civilization advances, yet fundamentally, these features represent a tremendous deal of anxiety about the period. For example, in a consumerist society, vampires were used as a metaphor

for exploitation and usurpation, meaning that they would steal people's wealth. In the Victorian society, which promoted moral cleanliness, vampires were always portrayed as seductive and having voracious sexual desire, because the spread of vampire diseases would destroy marriage and fertility, threatening the very foundations of British male-dominated society.

The vampire has developed into one of Gothic literature's most iconic stock figures, owing to its ambiguous status on the edge of various limits and its quest for excess. Just as blood represents both vitality and injury (or death), vampires are both alluring and repulsive creatures that remain vibrant through the changes of history, captivating generations of writers and readers. In literature, vampires are becoming more humanoid and sympathetic, and often exhibit a great capacity for adaptation and learning in order to better mix with indigenous cultures. Such assimilation can lead to resistance from male-dominated societies seeking stability in power, and British people fear the possible consequences of reverse colonization. However, through exposure to these domesticated vampires, people discover the more positive social aspects of these evil creatures: they serve as a mirror, double, or parody of humanity and provoke new thinking about self-identification, social order, gender, race, etc.

The study of female vampires in different Gothic texts reveals how female vampires convey through their transgressive bodies and deviant behaviors their dissatisfaction with the restrictions of patriarchal society on women. For the Countess Nosferatu, women's subjugation by a patriarchal society looms over their heads just as long as the oppressive and gloomy atmosphere of the Gothic manor house. Vampire women who struggle in the enclosed prison that confines them, grow luxuriant blood-red flowers, and try to sing a different song. It is a symbol of their desire to break free, to step outside the confines of domestic sphere and gain political power in the public sphere.

Rebecca embodies the vampire's fluidity of identity, which works to blur boundaries and remains ambiguous. Through vampires' transgressiveness one can not only break boundaries but can even redefine limits. Rebecca is 'not normal' because conventional norms do not constrain her, she enables herself to be the one who establishes the rules and therefore makes women like her a part of the feminine. Rebecca possesses both masculine and feminine characteristics. Her lesbian tendency breaks gender conventions under the strict rules of heterosexual society. She exhibits all the deviant behaviors associated with *fatal woman*. She has always struggled for greater power and freedom and has always fought against the socially regulated idea of womanhood.

From the narrator's fascination and fear of Rebecca and the suppression and denial of Rebecca's influence, one sees the femininity Rebecca represents as an avoidable part of every woman's self. Rebecca's death is likewise reminiscent of the female vampire's: she is brutally killed because of the need for a male-dominated society to reaffirm the social and economic power of a heterosexual order. Throughout the entire story, Rebecca is deprived of her voice, and even her ex-husband dehumanizes her by calling her abnormal. Even so, Rebecca retains the power to affect the couple irreversibly and profoundly.

Angela Carter incorporates vampire metaphors into her rewritings of fairy tales, using the rich suggestiveness of vampires to delve into the repressed and hidden psyche, examine heterosexual power relations and focus on the expression of female power, identity and feminine nature. In "The Lady of the House of Love", the Countess Nosferatu fully demonstrates the overpowering, seductive, and ravenous characteristics of female vampires. Her predatory conduct is detailed, and she keeps using the language of lust – French – to seduce.

However, Carter put the focus on vampires' parasitical dependence. As Sara Sceats argues, "The complicated interrelationships of dependence and power

make vampirism an obvious metaphor for political oppression" [144], the relationship between the Countess and the man who comes to kiss her awake is not as simple as in *The Sleeping Beauty*. While her power and the rational virgin's purity and boldness defy traditional gender norms, his refusal to submit to her seduction simultaneously reverses the predator-prey relation. The Countess is tormented by her predicament, but when she sees a twist of fate approaching, she is unable to grasp; she knows only to destroy.

The vampire is not just a symbol for power, predation and abuse, but also a mouthpiece of desire, which makes the vampire an easy victim of passion, a "ventriloquist's doll" (129) cornered in monotonous solitude. The Countess subjectivity has been damaged, and the only thing that can free the vampire is self-awakening, but "Can a bird sing only the song it knows or can it learn a new song?" (117). The Countess feeds on men but wants love from men, and she tries to transfer her dependence on vampire nature to this man. This is impossible to exist, so she does not exist when she chooses love. She finally acquires the human identity she craves, but she rejects the dependence on patriarchy and the romantic solution.

[144] S. Sceats, "Oral Sex: Vampiric Transgression and the Writing of Angela Carter", cit., p. 110.

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