

Chapter 2

Psychological Repression and Philosophical Dualism in Carmilla: A Thematic Analysis

Le Fanu's *Carmilla* has greatly impacted the Gothic literary world. A tale from the Victorian era emphasising the struggles of women, especially related to their identity, created a long-lasting impact. *Carmilla*'s and Laura's narratives showcase the different sides of the Gothic, intervening in what it is like to be the one when there is no one to rely on, and when someone is with you, it is a tale of Gothic romance. Le Fanu's vampire (*Carmilla*) is not a prototypical example of a vampire; it is a play on the Victorian moral woman, dismantling the notion of an archetypal woman that has been portrayed by Patmore in "The Angel of the House." As a lesbian vampire, *Carmilla*'s nature talks about the repressive self and her dualistic being in Styria, often the subject of being under the male gaze; her presence in the life of young women marks the start and the end of a romantic relationship, which creates the environment of eeriness and the upliftment of the ongoing curse of the trio. The good vs evil, which always has been the main moralistic point in several cultures, also marks an induction in *Carmilla*, but forces the reader to look at the main aspect which makes *Carmilla*, *Carmilla*. Through the lens of Freud and Gustave, the idea is to answer the question of why both *Carmilla* and Laura are repressed, and another question is to look at the dualistic trait through the lens of the Mind-Body problem by René Descartes, also known as Cartesian Dualism.

2.1 LE FANU'S 1872 LESBIAN VAMPIRE *CARMILLA*: A BRIEF

The character of *Carmilla* is a prototypical example of a lesbian vampire, who expresses her romantic desires toward the protagonist (Laura). The novella

also leaves the never-acknowledged fact of homosexuality as a negative trait; it works as more of a starting point in gothic fiction to put forward the idea of having a seductive lesbian young lover as a vampire. “She held me close in her pretty arms for a moment and whispered in my ear, Good night, darling, it is very hard to part with you, but good night; tomorrow, but not early, I shall see you again” (42). This newly flourishing love between two young women becomes the origin of lesbian vampirism, “she murmured with a sigh, as she drew her arm closer about my waist, and let her pretty head sink upon my shoulder. “How romantic you are, Carmilla,” I said” (65). One can only think of the reasoning that Laura never shows her masculine side, while Carmilla’s masculine side is completely repressing her all the time until she starts to feel the danger. However, one can think that Le Fanu leaves it morally ambiguous. The narrative is frequently anthologised and has been adapted several times for film and other media. Like, as *The Blood-Spattered Bride*, a 1972 Spanish horror film written and directed by Vicente Aranda, 2019, a British romantic horror film named *Carmilla*, written and directed by Emily Harris, etc. The novella has spin-offs, like *Carmilla and Laura* by S. D. Simper, J. S. Le Fanu and David Brian’s novel *Carmilla: The Wolves of Styria*, etc.

The novella is set in the Victorian timeline and shows the typical elements of the Victorian woman’s ideal. It depicts the “angel in the house,” a phrase from a narrative poem by Coventry Patmore in 1854. It shows a cultural ideal whereby women represent the spiritual and moral centre of the family and are suited by nature to marry, have children, and maintain a nurturing home. We can see this typical ideal woman type in the novella because Laura has never left her “Schloss” or castle, her life has gone through a lot when she lost her mother in her infancy, ‘My mother, a Styrian lady, died in my infancy, but I had a good-natured governess, who had been with me from, I might almost say, my infancy. I could not remember the time when her fat, benignant face was not a familiar picture in my memory” (11). In Chapter 1, “An Early Fright,” we find that Laura awaits the day when she can

finally meet a female friend to cure her loneliness and fill the dark void left by her mother's death.

Le Fanu dismantles the Victorian idea that women were merely men's useful possessions who relied on them and required their constant supervision in the novella. In contrast to the supposed Victorian males, the male characters in the story—such as General Spielsdorf and Laura's father—are shown to be helpless and unproductive. The unnamed father and Carmilla's mother agreed on putting Carmilla behind at Laura's schloss, showing women's superiority, but Spielsdorf is powerless over Bertha's faith. In both of these scenes, women are shown to be on par with, if not better than, men. Consider the relationships between Carmilla's vampiric predecessors and their prey to see how much more dangerous this empowerment of women is to men. In contrast to the male vampires, Carmilla is emotionally and sexually involved with her prey. She can also overcome more restrictions by controlling death. In the end, it is suggested that the river where her ashes were scattered is what maintains her immortality.

Le Fanu's novella has some instances that are related to the popular legend of Countess Bathory. Some scholars have argued that the legend was one of the reasons that inspired Le Fanu to use it in his novella. Countess Bathory was a Hungarian noblewoman and also an alleged serial killer from the family of Bathory, who owned land in the Kingdom of Hungary (now Slovakia). Legends describe her tendencies as vampiric, the reason behind this was that she bathed in the blood of young virgin girls (aged 6–15) to retain her youth, also several charges against her have been described as a witch-hunt by historians, "Mass slaughters of peasants, the cyclical devastations of the Black Death, the unending battles, made my world an unsteady island on a sea of blood. There was literally and metaphorically no place for me to step without stepping in blood.... Given this red liquid medium in which I spent my life, it would have been surprising if I didn't bathe in blood" (Throne 11). Throne uses these particular quotes to explain to the world why Countess

Bathory had a strange addiction to virgin blood and the urge for only female virgin blood.

As *Carmilla* is considered a lesbian vampire or a ‘revenant,’ she also has some similarities to a Slavic vampire. In Slavic mythology, the Wąpierz were said to sneak into houses at night and drink the blood of people. In certain Slavic mythologies, a wążpierz usually resembles the look of a young girl. According to Adelaide Bennett,

“The Upierczy were creatures who become vampires after a suicide, a violent death, or practicing witchcraft during their lifetime. Their breath was so hot that it dried the dew on the grass and could even cause droughts. They could be destroyed by drowning them in freshwater (a river or a lake, but not the ocean). Driving a nail through their bodies sometimes work as well, but you needed to be careful to drive the nail in with a single blow. If you hit the nail more than once, the body would revive and rise up to suck your blood.” (18)

In the spinoff version of *Carmilla: The Wolves of Styria* by David Brain, Brain portrays *Carmilla*, who can transform herself into a wolf. Bennett describes this as a classic Russian werewolf vampire *Wurdulac*, “a tragic creature condemned to feast only on the people it loved in life. As a result, entire families could be transformed into Wurdulacs; once a Wurdulac has eaten through his entire family, he must form new relationships, because only the blood of someone he loves can nourish him. In some stories, the Wurdulac starves to death rather than make new friends. By destroying himself, he ends the chain of death” (Bennett 21). With a close reading of the novella, we can find instances that one of Le Fanu’s inspirations was to use Slavic/Russian vampires in his work and make the antagonist a Slavic vampire who resembles a young lady, “You have heard, no doubt, of the appalling superstition that prevails in Upper and Lower Styria, in Moravia, Silesia, in Turkish Serbia, in Poland, even in Russia; the superstition, so we must call it, of the Vampire” (147). The quote in itself is a depiction of why Le Fanu wanted a particular Vampire for his story. Further arguments can describe that

he wanted someone who not only takes charge but also feeds upon what Le Fanu tried to do. In one way or another, he wanted someone who could dismantle the notion of Victorian womanhood set by the heterosexual society.

2.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL REPRESSION AND PHILOSOPHICAL DUALISM

In the preliminary stages of research, one thing that always occurred to my mind was why Le Fanu decided to change the normative structure of Vampiric Fiction Writing. Since there was no structure, most of the Gothic novels were experimental, and the form/style or the structure of the Gothic novel was at a nascent stage. *Carmilla*, as an early work of vampiric fiction, has some strange characteristics. It does something to the reader's mind, which makes *Carmilla* more engaging and interesting. Throughout the novella, several things come up, most importantly, the nature of the antagonist (Carmilla). Sometimes it feels like she is not in the right mindset while talking to others; she looks confused and out of the world. Something which struck my mind while reading the novella was that both Laura and Carmilla are *repressed*; the reason behind it is that sometimes both of them behave in uncertain ways; Laura questions why that dream even occurred to her, and does not tell others about it. On the other hand, Carmilla's nature is extremely *dualistic*, and dualism is also coming up through her anagrams. According to Veeder, the duality of Carmilla's character is suggested by her human attributes, the lack of predatory demeanour, and her shared experience with Laura. The concept of dualism is presented through the juxtaposition of vampire and human, as well as lesbian and heterosexual (197). Evidently, in this novella, Carmilla is also repressed alongside Laura. Without any doubt, it feels like Le Fanu's intention was to make his readers engage in the novella for the thrill that vampiric fiction gives to one person. And he decided to give the trait of repression to the character of Carmilla. On the other hand, Carmilla also shows the duality trait, which is psychological indeed but philosophical as well.

The fact that Le Fanu made repression one of Carmilla's traits signifies the loving bond between Carmilla and Laura. Throughout the novella, several instances show repressed moments. Now, how precisely does repression work in *Carmilla*? As mentioned before, one of the reasons that could have made Le Fanu add repression as one of the character traits in *Carmilla* would be to make it more engaging for the readers. Laura is also a repressed character in the novella, who belongs to a world of loneliness and isolation, as she has no friends and her father does not pay any considerable amount of attention to her. Recalling her past, because of a terrible incident in her life when she was in her infancy, she lost her mother, and loneliness and isolation from the world started to take place in her life. After another incident, when she meets Carmilla, her loneliness and the isolated world start to disappear because now there is someone in her life who, first of all, is the same age as her (almost) and fills the world of loneliness with joy. We cannot forget that Carmilla starts to showcase motherly nature towards Laura. From here onwards, a new relationship begins; however, things also start to dwindle.

Freud's theory of repression suggests, "repression is a defence mechanism that ensures that what is unacceptable to the conscious mind, and would if recalled arouse anxiety, is prevented from entering into it. Akin to denial, which tends to refer to current events, it was invoked to account for a patient's failure to recall, in the course of free association, events of significance in the past. Painful memories, being kept out of consciousness by repression, achieve 'psychic autonomy' and become fixed" (Gregory 681). In the case of Laura, Carmilla visited the young Laura in her dreams when she was not more than six years old. She describes the first meeting as,

"I was not frightened, for I was one of those happy children who are studiously kept in ignorance of ghost stories, of fairy tales, and of all such lore as makes us cover up our heads when the door cracks suddenly, or the flicker of an expiring candle makes the shadow of a bedpost dance upon the wall, nearer to our faces. I was vexed and insulted at finding myself, as I conceived, neglected, and I began to whimper, preparatory to a hearty

bout of roaring; when to my surprise, I saw a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of the bed. It was that of a young lady who was kneeling, with her hands under the coverlet. I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling; I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again. I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly. The lady started back, with her eyes fixed on me, and then slipped down upon the floor, and, as I thought, hid herself under the bed.” (13-14)

This particular meeting between Laura and Carmilla shapes the entire narrative of repression. Because this particular event creates the whole motif of conscious to the unconscious mind, Laura says: “The first occurrence in my existence, which produced a terrible impression upon my mind, which, in fact, never has been effaced, was one of the very earliest incidents of my life which I can recollect” (12). It also describes that a traumatic experience for a fairly young child, which becomes a memory, starts to haunt them; they tend to fight it back because they do not know how to deal with it, they tend to repress the memory in their mind and try to move on. The victims try to self-censor the traumatic experiences and emotions related to them, and that memory tries to disturb them; they try to consciously forget that experience and do not want to recall it, which implies that something is trying to prevent them from becoming conscious and compels them to remain unconscious. With this in place, it seems that Laura is a victim of emotional damage, which leads to her repression.

In *Camilla*, repression works in two stages. First, Laura’s dream (fundamental repression) gives her trauma, which becomes the reality in the second stage (after-pressure). According to Freud, “there was “reason to believe that there is a fundamental repression, a first phase of repression, which consists in the psychical (ideational) representation of the instinct being refused access into the conscious,” as well as a second stage of repression,

repression proper (an “after-pressure”), which affects mental derivatives of the repressed representative” (Freud). Throughout the novella, the trait of repression is working through both Laura’s and Carmilla’s conscious and unconscious minds. The nature of repression, as already mentioned, is linked to what happened in the past, especially “dreams” which arouse the symptoms of anxiety and trauma, and one does not want to acknowledge them because of an irrational fear of others. In terms of Victorian morality, repression was believed to be connected with the motif of developed sexual feelings in young women. Some scholars believe that it has to do with the trope of lesbianism, which was something unsettling in Victorian morality, and Le Fanu deals with the trope of lesbian vampires and thus brings *Carmilla* into the picture, which deals with this entire trope of a lesbian couple.

Carmilla is a stereotypical character of the Victorian period. After knowing that her carriage bashed into a tree, and when she opens up her eyes, the first thing she says is, “Where is mamma?” (31). This preliminary dependence of Carmilla on her mother and not knowing the reality somehow makes things go a bit lopsided. As a vampire, she does not need to be dependent on someone, but if she does not play her cards correctly, there is a slight chance that she will not be able to gain the trust of Laura’s family. Veeder makes a fascinating observation in his article. He says, “What better way for a seducer to get into the good graces of a young woman obsessed with mother? Carmilla seems equally duplicitous when she mirrors other emotions of Laura’s, protesting to fear before the fearful young woman and to long-lasting dreams like hers” (212). I would like to call this “mirror of repression” because her ego is both the source and the result of the repression of the fundamental vulnerability of the body (which is interconnected to her past life).

Carmilla’s nature and activities seem immensely intentional, as a vampire who is sucking the life out of her prey intentionally seems highly fitting to her. Le Fanu never asserts that Carmilla’s vampiric nature is intentional to her purpose. If we trace the acts, the first act of trauma that

Laura holds happens in Chapter 1, “An Early Fright,” when she has the dream of Carmilla. Later in the novella, there is no mention of her traumatic experience of the same until we come down to Chapter 6, “A Strange Agony.” Freud describes this active nature of repression as an intentional activity, he says, “Since repression is a motivated activity, instigated by the ego in response to “trauma,” the question is then whether repression is a simple act of avoiding painful stimuli that can be described as voluntary or “intentional”...repression explicitly refers to repression in intentional terms with respect to it being “a question of things which the patient wished to forget, and therefore intentionally repressed from his conscious thought and inhibited and suppressed”” (Boag 7). Now that Laura is under Carmilla’s control (unconsciously), she again experiences the same dream, which makes repression intentional in Laura.

“Thus fortified I might take my rest in peace. But dreams come through stone walls, light up dark rooms, or darken light ones, and their persons make their exits and their entrances as they please, and laugh at locksmiths. I had a dream that night that was the beginning of a very strange agony. I cannot call it a nightmare, for I was quite conscious of being asleep.

But I was equally conscious of being in my room, and lying in bed, precisely as I actually was. I saw, or fancied I saw, the room and its furniture just as I had seen it last, except that it was very dark.... But I soon saw that it was a sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat.... I could not cry out, although as you may suppose, I was terrified. Its pace was growing faster, and the room rapidly darker and darker, and at length so dark that I could no longer see anything of it but its eyes. I felt it spring lightly on the bed. The two broad eyes approached my face, and suddenly I felt a stinging pain as if two large needles darted, an inch or two apart, deep into my breast. I woke with a scream. The room was lighted by the candle that burnt there all through the night, and I saw a female figure standing at the foot of the bed, a little at the right side. It was in a dark loose dress, and its hair was down and covered its shoulders.... As I stared

at it, the figure appeared to have changed its place, and was now nearer the door; then, close to it, the door opened, and it passed out.” (74-75)

This implies that till now, Laura has been trying to question certain things within her, without telling others about the intentional repression, as she is unaware of such a thing. The entire time, she was simply avoiding the painful stimuli which is making her the victim of Carmilla. Carmilla’s intention is quite traceable; her victims are around the same age as her and mostly look for a companion in their lives, and Carmilla serves as that companion in their lives. This is something common in Carmilla’s victims’ nature, as they are part of the typical Victorian woman ideal hood where men were considered superior to women. *Carmilla* is breaking that stereotypical idea of womanhood by breaking the norms of heteronormativity, and that’s why our vampire ‘CARMILLA’ is taking advantage of the fact that no one will ever question the main root cause of the death of young women. With this, Laura says, “My first thought was that Carmilla had been playing me a trick and that I had forgotten to secure my door. I hastened to it, and found it locked as usual on the inside. I was afraid to open it—I was horrified. I sprang into my bed and covered my head up in the bedclothes, and lay there more dead than alive till morning” (75).

While Laura shows the symptoms of being repressed throughout the novella, one thing that should be taken into consideration is, ‘Is Carmilla also repressed?’ In Laura’s case, we know she has a repressed memory that keeps on traumatising her, but what makes Carmilla repressed is something that should be answered. Carmilla, like Laura, confesses that she also had a similar experience that Laura has; she says, “She confessed that she had experienced a similar shock on seeing me, and precisely the same faint antipathy that had mingled with my admiration of her. We now laughed together over our momentary horrors” (42). Now, what is this experience that she is carrying with her, and is that the reason why she is also repressed and going through

trauma? Just like Laura, Carmilla also has a very prolonged description of meeting Laura, she says,

“I must tell you my vision about you; it is so very strange that you and I should have had, each of the other so vivid a dream, that each should have seen, I you and you me, looking as we do now, when of course we both were mere children. I was a child, about six years old, and I awoke from a confused and troubled dream, and found myself in a room, unlike my nursery, wainscoted clumsily in some dark wood, and with cupboards and bedsteads, and chairs, and benches placed about it. The beds were, I thought, all empty, and the room itself without anyone but myself in it; and I, after looking about me for some time, and admiring especially an iron candlestick with two branches, which I should certainly know again, crept under one of the beds to reach the window; but as I got from under the bed, I heard someone crying; and looking up, while I was still upon my knees, I saw you—most assuredly you—as I see you now; a beautiful young lady, with golden hair and large blue eyes, and lips—your lips—you as you are here.

“Your looks won me; I climbed on the bed and put my arms about you, and I think we both fell asleep. I was aroused by a scream; you were sitting up screaming. I was frightened, and slipped down upon the ground, and, it seemed to me, lost consciousness for a moment; and when I came to myself, I was again in my nursery at home. Your face I have never forgotten since. I could not be misled by mere resemblance. You are the lady whom I saw then.” (39-40)

Though it does not say that Carmilla is also repressed, however, it does imply that Carmilla also has a clear memory of the vision she had of meeting Laura. On the other hand, it can be taken up as a starting point in figuring out if, in any way, she is repressed. As already mentioned above, Le Fanu dismantles the Victorian idea that women were merely men’s useful possessions. In one way, the possibility that Carmilla also seems repressed is that she is under constant observation of men and getting examined by a male doctor after the

carrier incident. However, there is no certainty if that made her a repressed being; the question remained at its vantage point.

Carmilla's repression is different from Laura's; in her case, the recurrence of funeral hymns makes her repressed. Laura says, 'All her energies seemed strained to suppress a fit, with which she was then breathlessly tugging; and at length, a low convulsive cry of suffering broke from her, and gradually the hysteria subsided. "There! That comes of strangling people with hymns!" she said at last. "Hold me, hold me still. It is passing away"' (52). This is connected to her past life when the people of Karnstein buried her after the funeral. That moment of her burial became the traumatic memory of her life, which is now a repressed memory, and she is trying to forget about it consciously, and somehow, the entire trait of repression in Carmilla makes her a one-way victim of Victorian society.

Carmilla showcases the dualist (dualism) trait within herself. According to Mesa Pérez, "the vampire like a supernatural entity in the novella is observed as a dual being, as mentioned below by Baron Vordernburg through the information collected by Mircalla's former lover: He has left a curious paper to prove that the vampire, on its expulsion from its dual existence, is projected into a far more horrible life. Due to its 'amphibious existence,' duality is essential to the vampire, as is mentioned in the following lines: The amphibious existence of the vampire is sustained by daily renewed slumber in the grave. In this sense, it seems to me that it is for this very reason that Carmilla can maintain those dual opposites both in her physique and actions as it is part of her nature" (25). In these lines, Mesa Pérez tries to explain Carmilla's nature, which is linked to her previous life and how her nature is extremely dualistic. Vampiric duality in every Vampiric shows their nature towards their victims. In Carmilla's case, her dualism is not merely related to her previous lives, but it's far more interesting how she behaves when she is around Laura and others. Laura gives a very detailed description of what Carmilla looks like,

“She was above the middle height of women. I shall begin by describing her. She was slender, and wonderfully graceful. Except that her movements were languid—very languid—indeed, there was nothing in her appearance to indicate an invalid. Her complexion was rich and brilliant; her features were small and beautifully formed; her eyes large, dark, and lustrous; her hair was quite wonderful, I never saw hair so magnificently thick and long when it was down about her shoulders; I have often placed my hands under it, and laughed with wonder at its weight. It was exquisitely fine and soft, and in color a rich very dark brown, with something of gold. I loved to let it down, tumbling with its own weight, as, in her room, she lay back in her chair talking in her sweet low voice, I used to fold and braid it, and spread it out and play with it. Heavens! If I had but known all!” (43-44)

Laura’s description of Carmilla made me think that Le Faun intentionally decided to make Carmilla too extravagant with dualistic traits, so she could easily prey upon young women, and they would not suspect anything. Carmilla’s dualism is more related to her personality; it seems like her dualism is related to what Carl Gustav Jung says about dualism in human nature. According to Jung, “Duality is the fact of human nature: Every good quality has its bad side, and nothing that is good can come into the world without directly producing a corresponding evil. This is a painful fact” (229-230). One illustration of this dualism is that we cannot reach completeness unless we integrate our dark side. Because Carmilla tends to change her dualistic personality from passive and calm to aggressive and irritated, it seems fitting to her feminine and masculine duality as a Lesbian Vampire.

Carmilla’s dualistic nature is highly unfitting for Victorian times. When women were perceived as belonging to the domestic sphere, at least by the middle class, this image obliged them to create a clean house for their children and spouses, required them to make meals, and forced mothers to nurture their children. Hence, Coventry Patmore in 1854 wrote a poem titled “The Angel in the House.” Where he asserted that an ideal woman should

look like an ‘angel’ and that her duties are to tend to her husband and properly raise her child. This entire notion of the ideal woman is what Le Fanu is dismantling in the novella. *Carmilla* is not portraying that stereotypical ideal woman; she is different, so she is a vampire who preys on young women. Something which is completely off about her is the fact that she never tells who she is, what her family background is, or where she is from. The only thing a reader knows in the initial stages of reading the novella is this: “What she did tell me amounted, in my unconscionable estimation—to nothing. It was all summed up in three very vague disclosures: First, her name was *Carmilla*. Second, her family was very ancient and noble. Third, her home lay in the direction of the west” (45).

As mentioned above, ideal Victorian women were highly dependent on their husbands because they were the ones who were raising the children and looking after their families, not the ones who were supporting the families financially. More or less, men were considered the centre of the families and were in power. If we look at the traits or personalities of men and women, men tend to be more dominant and emotionally stable; on the other hand, women tend to be more sensitive, warm, and apprehensive. Well, *Carmilla* has all of these in her, and that is the reason her character tends to fall into the dualistic category of personality and does not fall into the ideal Victorian woman archetype. Laura says,

“In some respects her habits were odd. Perhaps not so singular in the opinion of a town lady like you, as they appeared to us rustic people. She used to come down very late, generally not till one o’clock, she would then take a cup of chocolate, but eat nothing; we then went out for a walk, which was a mere saunter, and she seemed, almost immediately, exhausted, and either returned to the schloss or sat on one of the benches that were placed, here and there, among the trees. This was a bodily languor in which her mind did not sympathize. She was always an animated talker, and very intelligent.” (49)

Carmilla's duality comes from her human and vampiric attributes. Besides these, her duality portrays her independent nature, which signifies that she does not need a male persona in her life. Her masculine side comes forward when she is with Laura, and her feeling showcases her sexual desire for Laura as her lover. Her masculine side reflects her dominant nature, which portrays a hierarchy between Carmilla and Laura. Laura says, "She used to place her pretty arms about my neck, draw me to her, and laying her cheek to mine, murmur with her lips near my ear, Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness; if your dear heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours" (46). The lines demark that someone has to take the first charge in a relationship, and Carmilla, who is a lesbian and a Vampire, takes that charge to build up that hierarchy by pulling her masculine side. For Victorian women, calmness and softness were considered ladylike; however, Carmilla is far from that nature. Her feminine side has always felt a bit irritated and unusual. "Well, her funeral is over, I hope, and her hymn sung; and our ears shan't be tortured with that discord and jargon. It has made me nervous. Sit down here, beside me; sit close; hold my hand; press it hard-hard-harder" (52). Saying 'well, her funeral is over' is unusual for a Victorian woman. This atypical behaviour lacks some kind of ladylike manners, but it also signifies something. In vampiric tradition, a funeral meant the burial of a deceased body underground, which prevents the deceased from coming back into a new form. There is no way that we can say that Carmilla is calm and soft; her aggression is fatal to others. She says, "How dares that mountebank insult us so? Where is your father? I shall demand redress from him. My father would have had the wretch tied up to the pump, and flogged with a cart whip, and burnt to the bones with the cattle brand!" (56).

Besides dualism as a characteristic trait, Le Fanu uses dualism as a mind-body problem. In the storyline, he adds something which is attention-worthy, for so long the reader is inclined to think that Carmilla is one character; however, he introduces the anagrams of Carmilla: Carmilla,

Mircalla (Countess Karnstein) and Millarca. The trio forms a special bond; while the names are different, they are connected. Carmilla, as mentioned, belongs to the revenant subcategory of Vampires who prey upon their loved ones and, if not killed properly, can come back to life with the purpose of revenge. Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, is also Millarca and Carmilla; she is the one who started the whole notion of cult, where she preys upon the young women and sucks the life out of them.

“He said that the patient was suffering from the visits of a vampire! The punctures which she described as having occurred near the throat, were, he insisted, the insertion of those two long, thin, and sharp teeth which, it is well known, are peculiar to vampires; and there could be no doubt, he added, as to the well-defined presence of the small livid mark which all concurred in describing as that induced by the demon’s lips, and every symptom described by the sufferer was in exact conformity with those recorded in every case of a similar visitation.” (138)

Not different at all, the same symptoms that Laura feels before meeting Carmilla and during Carmilla’s stays at their schloss. But how is dualism presented here through the mind-body problem? According to Descartes, “mind and body interact and ideas represent material things without resembling them” (Audi 286). For Descartes, mind and body are two distinct and separable objects. Mind-body dualism in the Philosophy of Mind refers to either the idea that mental events are not physical or that the mind and body are separate and different from one another. In the case of the trio anagram, after the death and burial of Mircalla, Countess Karnstein remained alive and without proper death; the possibility of coming back is far too high in Vampiric culture, it is like the reincarnation of a vampire; however, the more plausible term would be “Vampiric multiplication.” It is mentioned in the novella that when the General, Laura’s father and some other people went to check the grave of Countess Mircalla, her body parts were intact and she was breathing in her coffin, Laura says,

“The next day the formal proceedings took place in the Chapel of Karnstein. The grave of the Countess Mircalla was opened; and the General and my father recognized each his perfidious and beautiful guest, in the face now disclosed to view. The features, though a hundred and fifty years had passed since her funeral, were tinted with the warmth of life. Her eyes were open; no cadaverous smell exhaled from the coffin. The two medical men, one officially present, the other on the part of the promoter of the inquiry, attested the marvelous fact that there was a faint but appreciable respiration, and a corresponding action of the heart. The limbs were perfectly flexible, the flesh elastic; and the leaden coffin floated with blood, in which to a depth of seven inches, the body lay immersed.” (147-148 [see Fig. 7 in the appendix])

This proves the Descartes mind-body problem, which is also known as Cartesian Dualism, that mind and body are separable from each other, and mental events are not physical. In the trio of *Carmilla*, *Millarca* and *Mircalla*, the body is the same, but the mind is different. It is because to achieve the goal of the body, therefore, different prey and different stories for each anagram. However, that urge to prey upon young women remains the same. *Mircalla*'s mind is the one who is leading to all the events that happen with the women of Styria, but no one knows who is behind them because the bodies are changing frequently with the anagrams.

Another type of dualism, which Le Fanu did not assert completely but can be seen, is by keeping ‘the angel’ safe and killing ‘the evil.’ In the traditional classic manner, Le Fanu ends the novella by killing the Vampire (*Carmilla*, *Millarca* or *Mircalla*); it asserts that whatever happens through the beginning of the story, one has to go back to the original structure of a moral/value-based plot. By killing the ‘evil’ in the end, Le Fanu shows that it is impossible to have a narrative where ‘evil’ is winning and ‘good’ is losing the battle. He comes back to the same discourse that the ‘angel in the house’ must remain safe and intact. On the other hand, Le Fanu gives greater significance to the ideal Victorian woman even in a novella purportedly

dealing with a lesbian vampire relationship. In the context of the novella, ‘evil’ represents ‘homosexuality’ and ‘good’ represents ‘heterosexuality’ respectively.

2.3 ECHOES FROM THE ABYSS: A FINAL REFLECTION

Le Fanu’s tale of a lesbian vampire, *Carmilla*, epitomises the abilities of Gothic to interrogate repressive Victorian societal norms and dualistic tension with the cultic trio as well as with society. The novella explores repression as a psychological mechanism shaping the identity of Laura and Carmilla, contrasting Victorian ideals with insurgent desires. Carmilla’s dualistic nature exemplifies the interplay between humans and the supernatural while portraying vampirism as the main metaphor for marginalised identities. Yet, the conclusion takes on the traditional morality, symbolised by Carmilla. This unsettling paradox reinforces the Gothic’s enduring power: it captivates by interrogating norms, yet often retreats to asserting them, leaving readers haunted, terrified and reflective.

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