

“You are mine, you shall be mine, you and
I are one for ever.”



Dualism and Repression
in Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*

Aditya Kaushal



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Dualism and Repression in Le Fanu's Carmilla

by

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About this Monograph

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“eine verlorene Seele im Dunkelheit, die
nach Licht sucht”
— Aditya Kaushal

“a lost soul in the dark, looking
for the light”
— Aditya Kaushal

Dualism and Repression in Le Fanu's Carmilla

Synopsis

The world of Gothic is a deep sea of hidden gems, from its beginning as a “Goth” tribe in Europe to its induction as part of English literature. This dissertation (which is now a monograph), *Dualism and Repression in Le Fanu’s Carmilla*, explores the lesser-known work of Gothic Fiction. A seminal work of the late nineteenth century, the research work examines the “Dualistic” and “Repressive” traits and *Carmilla’s* role in the evolution of Gothic Vampiric Fiction and the trope of lesbianism. It examines the novella in the broader frameworks of Irish Gothic fiction and its interesting intersection with Victorian social and cultural norms. It also investigates the world of folklore, drawing from the depths of Slavic folklore and historical figures like Countess Bathory, also focusing on the aspect of mythology, and especially which Vampire is the leading protagonist in the case of Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*. As a lesser-known work of Gothic fiction, interestingly, *Carmilla* also sets the ground for Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), making it a precursor and highlighting its influence and cult status.

This research work analyses “Psychological Repression” and “Philosophical Dualism” through the lens of Freud and Jung, and from Cartesian Dualism by René Descartes, embodying attraction as well as its thematic engagement with Victorian rational anxieties about women’s sexuality and gender. By giving a lesbian vampire to the world, Le Fanu utilises the vampire figure as a metaphor for societal taboos and reflects on certain elements that challenge the heteronormative paradigms prevailing in the nineteenth century. Undermining the fact that the nineteenth century was notorious for subverting women’s sexuality, Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* showcases a parallel world in an existing world by challenging the traditional norms of sexuality and gender. Employing different methodologies, including thematic analysis, bibliographic research and interdisciplinary approaches from psychoanalysis to the philosophical mind-body problem, gender and queer

theory, it delves into the deeper aspects of the novella's literary and folkloric underpinnings.

While the research work addresses many questions on a minor level, it answers the major question of *Carmilla*'s repressive and dualistic nature, sexuality and gender, why it is a cult classic and what similarities and differences *Carmilla* and *Dracula* hold to date. It also addresses its legacy in Irish literary history, its contribution to the Gothic tradition, and the portrayal of sexual transgression as a means of subverting the nineteenth-century moral frameworks. This new-age study on *Carmilla* underscores the enduring relevance and potential as a foundation for twentieth-century Gothic researchers and scholars for new explorations in the novella. It aims to bridge gaps in the existing research, filling in the loopholes, and offering a fresh perspective on the novella's cultural and literary significance.

Acknowledgment

The journey of writing this grand narrative has been an amazing part of my life; what started as a dissertation is now a monograph that feels surreal. This research work in itself is an acknowledgement to the world of Gothic Studies and to all those people who helped me during my master's degree to date. I would like to thank, first and foremost, my parents who believed in me when I lost all my hopes when I decided to leave my previous master's degree and let me pursue my master's in English from Linguistics.

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To my mentor, guide, saviour and dear friend, Dr Manish Sharma, who has seen my academic growth since 2018, who has always been there for me whenever I needed him the most, and who introduced and explained Cartesian Dualism to me which became an integral part of my dissertation (words are not enough to explain sir's presence in my life), without his guidance I would have remained a lost student, and have not thought of pursuing a second master's degree which is currently under work in progress.

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Dualism and Repression in Le Fanu's Carmilla

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Dualism and Repression in Le Fanu's Carmilla unearths the gothic depths of one of the earliest and most provocative vampire tales. The monograph examines the novella's (*Carmilla*) intricate interplay between Dualism and Repression, revealing its philosophical underpinnings and psychological complexities. Delving into the intersections of gender, sexuality, and Victorian anxieties, this study unveils how Le Fanu's haunting narrative challenges societal norms and redefines the Gothic tradition. A must-read for scholars and enthusiasts of Gothic literature, queer theory, and nineteenth-century fiction, this book offers a fresh and compelling perspective on the enigmatic, seductive, and sinister figure of Carmilla.

Aditya Kaushal is an interdisciplinary scholar of English Literature and Philosophy. He has completed his B.A. and M.A. in English from Ambedkar University Delhi. His primary areas of research are Gothic Studies, Dark Academia, Psychoanalysis, Three Facets of Existentialism and Occult Studies. Alongside his academic pursuits, he works as an academic editor and research professional, with experience in manuscript evaluation, copyediting, and scholarly publishing across international platforms.