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## The Forbidden Aspect of Erotic Desire Embodied in the Figure of the Vampire in “Carmilla” and “Olalla”

Camila Armijo Quiroz<sup>1</sup>

During the Victorian period, there was a dichotomy for women. On the one hand, there was the image of an “Angel of the House”, who was basically the submissive wife within a strongly patriarchal system. On the other hand, women could also be portrayed as monsters/prostitute because they refused to fulfill the role of a perfect wife and preferred to have an uncontrollable sex desire. This research will focus on the analysis of women as “monsters” by using the nineteenth-century vampire stories “Olalla” by Robert Louis Stevenson and “Carmilla” by J. Sheridan Le Fanu. These two works will provide an exploration into the forbidden or transgressive aspects of erotic desire embodied in the figure of the vampire, precisely, female vampire. Throughout this study, there are several transgressive elements depicted in the characters of Olalla and Carmilla. Firstly, those monsters are sexually empowered characters, Olalla and Carmilla possess a sex desire that should not be acceptable for a woman. Secondly, the short stories clearly establish a ‘role reversal’ in the relationships with their human partners, that is to say, the female vampires take the active role since their fangs are the elements of penetration (like a phallus) whereas their lovers take the passive role. And thirdly, the sexual orientation is considered transgressive, particularly, in Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” that presents a homosexual relationship with a female friend, Laura.

KEYWORDS: MONSTER, FEMALE VAMPIRE, OLALLA, CARMILLA, EROTIC DESIRE

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<sup>1</sup> My name is Camila Armijo Quiroz and I am from Santiago. I have just gotten a BA in English Literature and Linguistics at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. I am the youngest of four siblings and the only one who took the path of humanities. Personally, I’m interested in the analysis of women and sexuality throughout the centuries from the male perspective. Apart from that, I enjoy videogames, classical/medieval and vampire/horror literature, comic books, music, arts, drinking tea and escaping from Santiago whenever I can.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the world of literature branched out into the supernatural realm, and dealt with dark, fearful, dangerous and yet attractive beings like the vampire. The figure of the vampire was rooted in folklore around the world and had been portrayed up as a merciless killer who was grotesque and hideous, in other words, as a monster. In spite of the fact that the mythological vampire can be traced back in time, it is important to see that the nineteenth-century becomes obsessed with vampires in literature, who are now human-shaped beings. English writers were the first ones who explored that vampiric world. John Polidori, an English doctor, created a short story called “The Vampyre” in 1819. The story introduces Lord Ruthven, as an elegant, mysterious figure who is a master of seduction. Lord Ruthven’s outstanding appearance is inspired by Lord Byron, a British poet who was acquainted with John Polidori and from whom the concept of Byronic hero<sup>2</sup> was adopted. This new obsession in literature swept England and then Europe into the vampire world. In fact, Polidori’s Romantic vampiric tale is not the only one in literature. The Victorian era saw the rise of iconic vampires such as Bram Stoker’s iconic and legendary *Dracula*, that inherits the same elegance and power of seduction as Polidori’s “The Vampyre”. Even though Lord Ruthven and *Dracula* are male vampires, their remarkable characteristics were transmitted to female blood drinkers as well. This paper will explore the forbidden aspects that are portrayed in the figure of the female vampire during nineteenth-century literature. The erotic transgressive aspects are associated with vampires that provide another perspective of sexuality of Victorian society. This will be seen in the short story “Olalla” by Robert Louis Stevenson and “Carmilla”, a novella written by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1874), an Irish writer whose family originally came from France, is considered the father of the Victorian ghost story, due to his fascination with horror and brutality. The folk superstitions in Ireland had greatly influenced his early life. In 1833, Le Fanu entered Trinity College in Dublin to study Law. At this time, he became a member of the staff of the Dublin University Magazine which offered him the opportunity to publish his first story, “The Ghost and the Bonesetter” (1838). Le Fanu married Susanna Bennett in 1844, the same year he published his first novel, *The Cock and Anchor*. Unfortunately, his wife died in 1858 and then, his

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1. Regarding the “Byronic Hero”, professor Speed Farris identifies this character as a “romantized antihero who possesses a wicked character and does not possess the heroic virtues” (1). Usually, he is “isolated by society and lives as a wanderer or in exile” (3). Among the main aspects in this romantic figure, the Byronic hero is described as a “young attractive male with bad reputation, he defies authority and conventional morality and becomes paradoxically ennobled by his rejection of virtue” (3). Atira Stein adds that this hero “can be bad-tempered, arrogant, overbearing, cold, ruthless and emotionless” (3).

mother two years later. Affected by depression and insomnia due to his loss, Le Fanu began to immerse himself even more in writing, especially at night, accompanied by candlelight in his room, so that he became known as the “Invisible Prince”. His works are characterized by themes which deal with a change from the external sources of horror to the inward psychological potential to strike fear in the hearts of men. In *a Glass Darkly* (1872), Le Fanu provides a selection of short stories and, within that work, “Carmilla” is known as a ground-breaking vampire story. This vampire tale is the strongest contribution to the horror genre and probably could have influenced Bram Stoker when he created his iconic *Dracula*.<sup>3</sup>

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) was in Edinburgh. In spite of his short life affected by tuberculosis, Stevenson had the opportunity to embrace the unconventional features of writing that were reflected in most of his works. Stevenson wanted to follow his father’s footsteps and studied civil engineering at the University of Edinburgh. However, he was forced to renounce this plan due to his weak health. Later on, Stevenson was interested in Law but soon realized that writing was his major passion. Stevenson wrote for several newspapers and magazines such as *The Cornhill Magazine*. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) became one of his best-known works due to his study of split personality and exploration of evil in man and the effects that it carries. In *The Merry Men and Other Tales* (1887) contains six short stories of fantasy and adventure, in which the tale of “Olalla” is introduced and presents some vampiric aspects.<sup>4</sup>

Both remarkable novelists obtained an important place in literature during the Victorian period. They were among the first writers who experimented with this new morbid fascination with vampires, reflecting those characteristics in women, specifically in female vampires. Their mystery, elegance, and danger are portrayed in the characters of Carmilla and Olalla.

The issue of sexuality that is attached to those female creatures—in the vampire body—becomes a transgressive aspect for Victorian society since their sexual behavior is unconventional. Moreover, the description of those dangerous women will be important to consider because it is the

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2. The brief background story for Sheridan Le Fanu was taken from an online database “The Literature Network”. This database deals with books, short stories and poems. Also see “The Novels and Stories of J.Sheridan Le Fanu”, a lecture given by the writer and scholar M.R. James at the meeting of the Royal Institution of Great Britain in 1923.

3. Robert Louis Stevenson’s life background was, in the same way as in Sheridan Le Fanu, taken from the online database “The Literature Network”. Further biographical information is available in the web resource dedicated to the life of Robert Louis Stevenson and his works.

first step for the victim to fall into temptation or in the violations of the community. After all, Carmilla and Olalla are the embodiment of an eroticism that goes beyond the norms considered to be appropriate for Victorian women. Although both stories involve supernatural women, I will pay attention to how they actually represent as provocative seductresses that leads humans to dangerous experiences, or even death. The term ‘vampire’<sup>5</sup> evokes a creature that belongs to the uncommon, dangerous and unknown in the human mind, and usually the sexual behavior manifested by those women goes against the social norms. The vampire’s sexual behavior is based on their need to feed on blood<sup>6</sup>. The action of drinking blood can be linked to the fact that a vampire, universally speaking, bites the victim’s neck which is believed to be an erogenous zone in the human body, a trigger for eroticism and desire. In spite of their transgressive sexual behavior, vampires are desirable beings. Another aspect in sexual behavior that is identified in the vampire/human relationship has to do with the strong features of homosexuality and homoeroticism. Both male and female vampires are attractive for men and women with no exception. This is another element that highlights even more the erotic transgression in the vampire’s behavior.

In Stevenson’s “Olalla” (1887), the story is presented through the eyes of an unknown English soldier who is wounded during the Peninsular war in Spain (1807-1814). This event took place in the Iberian Peninsula which involved the forces of France—under the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte—against the allied group of Spain, United Kingdom and Portugal. Within this historical context, the narrator belongs to the British army that wanted to protect Portugal from the French troops. After his is wounded in this military conflict, the soldier is told by his doctor to spend some time in a *residencia* far away from the pollution of the city for a quicker recovery. The family that welcomes the soldier is formed by a mother, a son and a daughter. The narrator discovers that there is a dark background surrounding the welcoming family. What the soldier discovers about that

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4. In fact, the very origin of the name remains unclear as Katharina M. Wilson describes in her “The History of the Word ‘Vampire’” in which she mentions that the etymology of the term “vampire” was always problematic. Her research, based on Linguistic studies and recorded events, refers to etymologist theorists from four different schools of thought. First, Franz Miklosich, a late nineteenth-century Austrian linguist, suggested that the word “vampire” and its Slavic synonyms “upior”, “uper” and “upyr” come from the Turkish word “uber” that means “witch” (577). Second, there was a classical theory that proposed the Greek verb “to drink” as a possible source for the word “vampire” (577). A third theory claimed that the Slavic origin has the most universal acceptance for the word “vampire”. Its “root noun underlying the term is considered to be the Serbian word ‘BAMIUP’” (577) Other attempts explained that the “Slavic etymology of the word include Sobolevskij’s theory that “vampire” derives from an old Polish or Polabic root and Maszynski’s suggestion that the Serbo-Croatian verb “pirati” (to blow), contains the stem for “vampire”. A. N. The fourth school of thought, mainly English and American, stated that the belief in vampires had its origins in ancient superstition but they concluded that word itself came from the Hungarian the term “vampir” (578).

5. Afans'ev lists several possible theories, among them is the Lithuanian verb “wempti” (to drink)”(qtd. in Wilson 577).

strange family has to do with “the family blood that has been impoverished”<sup>7</sup>. The members do not seem to be mentally well-developed and their intelligence has degenerated, particularly, in the mother and the son, named Felipe. Considering that the story takes place in Spain, there is an element of “Orientalism”—based on the theory proposed by Edward Said<sup>8</sup>—which portrays the “Other” something that in this case refers to the Spanish<sup>9</sup> family living in the *residencia* as dangerous. When the English soldier is preparing to rest, he finds a compelling picture of a young woman. He discovers that there is “something in both face and figure, something exquisitely intangible, like the echo of an echo . . . and [he] stood awhile, unpleasantly attracted and wondering at the oddity of the resemblance” (Stevenson). Although the wounded narrator has not had the chance to meet her, there is a strong and enigmatic attraction towards that nameless woman. Finally, the soldier meets his hostess—now known as Olalla—and he immediately falls in love. Olalla’s feelings seem to be corresponding but she is aware that it is impossible for them to be together. Completely heartbroken, Olalla begs the narrator to leave without her. There is no way for them to be together and the soldier is in danger. This means that their love is not consummated.

In the case of Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” (1872), the story takes place in a “lonely and primitive place” in Styria, Austria. The voice of a young lady named Laura explains the peculiar experiences from her childhood, and how they are all connected to the image of an astounding young woman who first comes to visit Laura in her dreaming states. During one of those dreams, Laura feels that she has been bitten on her breasts, but as soon as she wakes up, there is no trace of such a bite. Twelve years later, Laura sees that lady face-to-face and there is an immediate recognition; the name of that mesmerizing stranger is Carmilla Karnstein. As the story progresses, Laura and Carmilla develop a deep and special friendship that shows some homoerotic traits. Another reason for this bond is related to the fact that Laura’s deceased mother was a Karnstein as well. However, Carmilla’s background is unknown, she shows signs of leading a supernatural life as a predatory beast, a vampire. By the end of the story, frightening details are added by General Spielsdorf, a man

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6. In this research paper, Stevenson’s “Olalla” comes from an online database of literature known as “Read Book Online”. This website offers a vast collection of American and English Literature. Considering that “Olalla” is from a website, there will be no page numbers in the quotations from this tale in the investigation.

7. Edward Said, in his Post-Colonial book *Orientalism* (1979) declares that “[t]he orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes” (1). Non-European people and cultures are considered as the recurrent images of the “Other”.

8. “Olalla” echoes the plot developed in the opera written by Georges Bizet, *Carmen* which is also set in Spain. Basically, Carmen is a Gipsy, desirable, provocative and fierce woman who lives in Sevilla, Spain. Similarly, Olalla (the female vampire) and Carmen are the outsiders and embodiment of seduction and danger.

who has been friends with Laura's father for many years. The General reveals what happened three months ago when his dear niece—who is as young as Laura—has strange symptoms with no possible explanation and finally, dies. The real identity of Carmilla is revealed to be that of the Countess Mircalla Karnstein and since the charming Carmilla is obviously involved in that tragic event, she, as a beast, must be killed<sup>10</sup>.

To begin with, it is important to take into consideration Victorian sexual beliefs that help to understand different points of view that were common for the society of the nineteenth century. Bram Dijkstra in his *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siècle Culture* explains how women were considered in the nineteenth-century society. First of all, he describes the image of women as pure and chaste characters that was created by the male perspective. Dijkstra proposes that “the late nineteenth-century middle-class male . . . wanted to believe in the sexless, virginal purity of the holy trinity of womanhood” (64), and women were expected to fulfill this established patriarchal role in the Victorian era. Women who opposed this ideal represented the biggest abomination in society: a fallen woman who refused to be under the submission of man, and rejected her role as a mother, and wanted to feed her sexual appetite. From the male point of view, sexuality did not match with the pattern of good woman—also described as the “Angel of the house”—and sex was only relevant for reproductive purposes. In Dijkstra's words, this is projected by the idea that a woman had “to mold herself into the vessel of male desire” (64). This is because man was considered to be the strongest in the Victorian society. In fact, the disruption of those male's visions about women was related to the fact that women had experienced an “awakening conscience” (Dijkstra 65). This was the moment when female behavior switched completely. This was the starting point for Victorian society to consider a new perspective about sexuality.

A theory that presents some visions of sexuality in different periods of time is Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. According to him, the topic of sexuality during the nineteenth century was “carefully confined; it [sexuality] moved into the home” (3). Sexuality was not a topic to talk about daily and mostly, it was something constrained in the “parent's bedroom” (3), just to accomplish the role of reproduction. For Foucault, there was a repression of sexuality which coincided with the moment of the rise of the bourgeoisie within Victorian society. Initially, Foucault admits that there was a myth about the repression of sexuality during the nineteenth century. On the

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9. Le Fanu's “Carmilla” is also taken from an online database of fantasy and science fiction. The website is “Madhouse Manor”. For this reason, no page numbers will be provided in the quotations from “Carmilla”.

contrary, there was an increase in discourse on sexuality. This discourse was part of scientific research and theories, for example, Sigmund Freud made allusions to sexuality in his psychoanalysis in order to explain human behavior. Nevertheless, another aspect in which the discourse on sexuality was reflected in the nineteenth-century was in vampire literature as in the case of “Olalla” and “Carmilla”.

As Bram Dijkstra argues, the image of the vampire is closer to this vision about women who are driven by sexual passion. Dijkstra refers to the existence of the vampire based on the binary terms that describe women’s role in the nineteenth century: “the virgin and the whore, the saint and the vampire” (334), this unveils the extreme ideas about women created by the male domination. Therefore, there is a transformation in women who turn into monstrous beings looking for man’s seminal essence (334). The new pattern of behavior depicted in women made them look like a threat for men since this meant that women would lose their dependence on the male and hence the positive direction they gained from his guidance (68). William J. Robinson, a doctor who was chief of the Department of Genito-Urinary Diseases and Dermatology at the Bronx Hospital in the early twentieth century, and who was the author of the popular guide *Married Life and Happiness* (1922), claims that “there is the opposite type of woman, who is a great danger to the health and even the vey life of her husband . . . a hypersensual (sic) woman, a wife with an excessive sexuality” (Dijkstra 334), in other words, this description referred to a collapsed woman—specifically, the vampire—who wanted to “suck the life and exhaust the vitality of her male partner”(Dijkstra 334). Dijkstra clearly mentions that collapsed woman had no control over sexuality. As I will discuss in my paper, in “Olalla” and “Carmilla”, the treatment of vampirism suggests a horror of a sexually empowered woman.

The female vampire symbolizes a social failure to be a submissive woman and the male human becomes a passive character in their relationship, that is to say, there is a role-reversal. Seen in this light, Olalla and Carmilla are the manifestation of transgression because they take the dominant role in their relationship with their beloved ones—or victims. In order to achieve the domineering representation, female vampires make use of their physical appearance with the intention of evoking a type of eroticism that should not be reached, which threatens the Victorian moral codes. Dijkstra declares:



By 1900 the vampire had come to represent woman as the personification of everything negative that linked sex, ownership, and money. She symbolized the sterile hunger for seed of the brainless, instinctually polyandrous—even if still virginal—child-woman. She also came to represent the equally sterile lust for gold of woman as the eternal polyandrous prostitute. (351)

It is clear that the vampire—for the intellectuals in the Victorian period—is the perfect embodiment to represent the worst side of a woman. Despite this, she is a fascinating and inspiring creature in literature. Writers, perhaps unconsciously, project their inner wishes for what is forbidden into literature. As Chris W.H. Woo states in his “Queer Vampiric Desire: Bisexuality on Body without Organs”, there are some common features in the vampires. Generally speaking, “these creatures [vampires], with an insuppressible urge to feed, are formed by our cultural imagination to, at once, warn of the dangers and horrors of unrepressed sexual lust and at the same time open the floodgates to representation of sexual freedom” (2).

The term ‘degeneration’ was prevalent in the nineteenth-century studies since it was associated with the idea of ‘fallen women’ which opposes to the Madonna image. The explanation of degeneration was rooted in scientific grounds. In the late nineteenth century, anthropologists, biologists and sociologists created “The Science of Man” (Dijkstra 160). Their assumptions were usually connected to the idea that “the inherent superiority and inferiority in relation between the sexes, various races, and the different classes in society” (160). The theory of evolution, as it is mainly proposed in Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (1859), appears to be the perfect justification of this inequality existent in Victorian society. Darwin’s famous statement about “the survival of the fittest” was crucial in society. Charles Darwin and Carl Vogt, who was a professor of natural history in the University of Geneva, foreign associate of the anthropological society of London, talked about the possible reasons for the female role in society. In this respect, Dijkstra explains that:

When we consider what ‘improvements’ evolutionists such as Darwin and Vogt made our conceptions of the role of woman in society, we discover that where the woman was concerned the theory of evolution represented a baroquely inscribed license to denigrate and destroy. In fact, Vogt’s beliefs were not at all at variance with de Rougemont’s claim that women did not have much intelligence . . . and where de

Rougemont tried to place women in the gilded cage of intuitive sainthood, Vogt threw them into the dark, ominous dungeon of near-bestial significance. (163)

This scientific explanation evidently showed the idea that nature was more advantageous in men. Rather than being at the same level as men, women had the same mental capacity as that of a child. The difference established between these two genders proposes that men and women are not of the same species. The male gender could reach a higher mental achievement, whereas women were treated like a tool of nature, to accomplish the role of reproduction (Dijkstra 171). A similar insight is proposed by Stephanie Demetrakopoulos in her “Sex Roles Exchanges, and Other Subliminal Fantasies in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” in which she states that “[i]n fact, Victorian biologists theorized that a female child was produced from a passive dormant, energy cell, placing all sexual aggression squarely on the shoulders of the male” (106).

Women’s role was linked to a feeble mind and an animal-like behavior. With this idea, it was very probable that the scientific view stated that women were more prone to fall into degeneration. The undeniable biological female weakness was an invitation to create the ‘fallen’ woman. More importantly, according to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a contemporary French politician, philosopher and socialist, the main concern was “to give woman any role beyond that of the household nun was to release the forces of degradation. Women who wanted to usurp part of man’s place in creation were going against nature, becoming mock-men themselves, caricatures of masculinity, viragoes” (qtd. in Dijkstra 211). In “The Rise of the Fallen Women”, the American professor Nina Auerbach claims that “[n]o doubt the Victorian imagination isolated the fallen woman so pitilessly from a social context, preferring to imagine her as destitute and drowned prostitute or errant wife cast beyond the human community, because of her uneasy implications for wives who stayed at home (33). The fallen woman is thus cast as a savage. The threatening image of the degenerated woman who decides not to have children is the nemesis of the stainless domestic nun. Going back to Dijkstra’s words, a woman is a destroyer of souls, a degenerate ‘freak of nature’—the viraginous woman, the feminist—into a creature with near-magical powers of seduction. Those magical powers can be depicted in the figure of the female vampire.

In her seminal study *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Nina Auerbach, who becomes one of the major exponents of vampire history in literature, presents some brilliant insights about the woman as an appealing vampire. Auerbach emphasizes the main characteristics identified in the figure of the

vampire. In this respect, she claims that “they [vampires] inhere in our most intimate relationships; they are also hideous invaders of the normal . . . they can be everything we are, while at the same time, they are the fearful reminders of the infinite things we are not” (6). Although Auerbach does not refer to the extremes of women as good (angels of the house) or evil (prostitutes), she agrees with Dijkstra on the point that the vampire mirrors the violation of the standards in society. Auerbach adds that the vampire/human relationship treads the thin line between friendship and romance. This is due to the fact that “[i]ntimacy and friendship are the lures of Romantic Vampirism” (14) and this leads to an ambiguity in the vampire/human bondage. In fact, Kathleen L. Spencer declares that in Victorian theory, it is sexual desire reflected in fantasy rather than sexual activity that is the true source of danger (217).

In this paper, I will examine the varied perspectives by which the female vampire embodies a forbidden eroticism, in “Carmilla” and “Olalla”, specifically, in relation to the protagonists/narrators of the stories and the female predators. I will examine the description of the female vampires seen through the eyes of helpless human beings and how those women embody transgressions in terms of physical and sexual behavior.

The history of vampire in the nineteenth century conveys several features that are very common in the image of the vampire. According to Auerbach, “[t]o the jaded eye, all vampires seem alike, but they are wonderful in their versatility. Some come in life in moonlight, others are killed by the sun; some pierce with the eyes, others with fangs; some are reactionary, others are rebels; but they are disturbingly close to the mortals they prey on” (5-6). For Auerbach, the disturbing relationship between vampires and humans comes from the idea that “vampires are neither inhuman nor inhuman nor all-too-human; they are simply more alive than they should be” (6). Vampires are undead beings who walk in the human world and trigger the curiosity and desire to approach them, although there is something dangerous behind their attractiveness. Auerbach adds that “in England (at least until the coming of Dracula), vampires offered an intimacy that threatened the sanctioned distance of class relationships and the hallowed authority of husbands and fathers. Vampires before Dracula were dangerously close friends” (6). In these short stories, we usually see a strong relationship between the vampire and human being. It is clear that the figure of the vampire is inherently charismatic and more powerful. A vampire, as the embodiment of danger and supernatural, can effortlessly evoke an erotic desire in human beings.

In relation to the vampiric fascination, there are some reasons behind the incorporation of those nocturnal beings in literature. Sarah Sceats explains the intense interest in these creatures:

Vampires are antisocial; they are associated with taboo, transgression, and degradation; they are feared, reviled, or sought for the highly erotic undercurrent and contagious nature of their appetites—for what it is that their hunger expresses. Vampirism represents a rebellion against excessive rationality and control and a rejection of the rigidity that would classify experience nicely. In short, the vampire personifies and acts out the return of the repressed. (114)

The Victorian writers want to look into the customs of Victorian society and to express what has been repressed. Vampires are, in a way, a new attempt to talk about sexuality. Demetrakopoulos agrees with Sceats and explains that the “emanations of irresistible sexuality break through into consciousness in fantastic and grotesque forms. [vampire’s sexuality] presents a fantasy world that would have provided for many of the sexual and psychic restraints prevalent in Victorian culture” (106). In other words, the use of vampirism fulfills at least two purposes: it offers an outlet to the erotic imagination and, at the same time, it is a challenge to the Victorian social order.

In regards to sexuality, female vampires represent a greater danger. This threat mainly lies in their physical appearance since they are supernaturally beautiful, vampires are more attractive in sexual terms than a common woman. Le Fanu and Stevenson have chosen to put the female blood-sucking creatures as entities of degeneration, which reflects the attempts of literature to express the destruction of the ideal woman and show what is despised in women through the fascination with the vampires.

For the female vampire, there is a specific key moment in which her degenerated aspect comes to the surface. As undead beings, vampires act in the shadows of the night. The moon in fact is the main element that contributes to the setting where the vampire emerges. Nocturnal life provides a moment in which they expect to satisfy their sexual needs and threatens the social norms in the nineteenth century. It is when the primal beast awakens. Dijkstra proposes that women are the “daughters of the moon” (334), so it is much easier for a woman to be a vampire. The moon triggers the “bestial cycles of nature” (334), an idea that is based on a woman’s bodily functions, specifically, her monthly blood loss. For this reason, “the woman vampire’s hunger needs to

replenish the blood incessantly lost to her system as a result of her degenerative subjection to the reproductive function and its attendant sexual craving” (334). The pale moon is then an instrument of degeneration responsible for unleashing the beast within the female vampire.

In order to satisfy their need for blood, women vampires make use of their appearance to lure men, to seduce them. This means that there is a magnetic effect on men or other possible preys. In the case of Stevenson’s “Olalla”, the soldier is preparing to rest in his chambers, but there is something that catches his attention. It is a picture on the wall. In that image, there is a young lady. Fascinated and intrigued, the narrator describes her:

Her figure was very slim and strong, and of just proportion; red tresses lay like a crown over her brow; her eyes, of a very golden brown, held mine with a look; and her face, which was perfectly shaped, was yet marred by a cruel, sullen, and sensual expression. Something in both face and figure, something exquisitely intangible (Stevenson).

That picture, whose model’s name remains unknown, carries different and unique characteristics. On the one hand, in the first half of the description, the English soldier confesses that there is something angelical in the woman of “golden brown” hair, who seems to be wearing a “crown” and who almost displays a divine figure. On the other hand, the man perceives that there is something vile and lustful. In spite of the fact that it is only a picture, the young maiden in the picture has a spell-like effect on the narrator as he says: “its beauty crept about my heart insidiously, silencing my scruples one after another; and while I knew that to love such a woman were to sign and seal one’s own sentence of degeneration” (Stevenson). But the soldier is aware that there is something dangerous about that young woman, he claims that her wickedness is his weakness. Degeneration turns out to be something very attractive and hard to resist. That lovely maiden is starting to dwell in his mind and he cannot stop to think of her. For the narrator, it is nearly impossible to escape from that enchantment. The soldier acknowledges that he is confused about his feelings. He does not know whether “it is love or just a brute attraction, mindless and inevitable, like that of the magnet for the steel” (Stevenson). It is evident that there is a mixture of devotion and fear towards Olalla.

Similarly, in Le Fanu’s “Carmilla”, the physical description of the female vampire gives interesting facts about her immense attractiveness. When Laura meets a stranger coming out from a

carriage after an accident, there is an immediate attraction in her and the other young lady. Their first eye contact creates a strange fascination. The narrator introduces this woman to the reader:

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 colour a rich very dark brown, with something of gold. (Le Fanu)

The encounter with Carmilla has an ‘uncanny’ effect, a term coined by Sigmund Freud which describes a “class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (1-2). Freud discusses the German words *unheimlich* and *heimlich* that mean unfamiliar and familiar respectively. While the *unheimlich* is related to something uncomfortable, uneasy or repulsive, the *heimlich* is associated with what is friendly, intimate, and homely. For Freud, the meaning of these two terms overlap, so that the *heimlich* (familiar) returns as *unheimlich* (unfamiliar). Seen in this light, it is possible to identify the uncanny effect in this vampiric short story, where there is something *heimlich* embedded. What exactly occurs in “Carmilla” is that Laura remembers a moment that happened more than ten years ago. During Laura’s dreams as a child, there was always a visitor who was crawling over her bed and once, Laura felt a sharp pain in her skin about the neck as if the strange woman has bitten her. Laura recalled that Carmilla is the most beautiful creature she had ever seen. Then, Carmilla has the same feeling of recognition: “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” (Le Fanu). As a matter of fact, the uncanny effect in both Laura and Carmilla makes the attraction even more powerful. Just like the soldier’s confusions in “Olalla”, Laura openly admits that her “love is growing into adoration, and also of (sic) abhorrence”. Laura is puzzled and does not have any clue to explain this new feeling in her.

The physical appearance of the female vampire has many elements to consider. The eyes are the main weapon for vampires. That unknown and fascinating sparkling in the eyes is what seduces humans. This vampiric characteristic has been seen in the Byronic image of Lord Ruthven and Dracula. This recurrent element in female vampires also appears in Carmilla and Olalla. For

instance, the English narrator in “Olalla” admits that there is another spell-binding moment which occurs when the narrator and Olalla finally meet. As a matter of fact, the spell-like effect comes from Olalla’s eyes. This is a thrilling moment for the soldier: “her eyes took hold upon mine and clung there, and bound us together like the joining of hands; and the moments we stood face to face, drinking each other in, were sacramental and the wedding of souls” (Stevenson). It is evident that the English soldier is falling in love for the first time and, literally, at first sight, while Olalla looks at him with “thirsting eyes”. The long moment of eye contact is the beginning of the arousal of desire. The soldier’s main objective and also obsession is to possess that woman and take her away from Olalla’s family. He confesses that in Olalla he can find everything he “had desired and had not dared to imagine was united”.

In the same way, Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” shows how Laura feels a strong attraction in Carmilla’s voice as “a lullaby in [Laura’s] ear, and soothed [her] resistance into a trance, from which [Laura] only seemed to recover [herself] when [Carmilla] withdrew her arms”. The melody in Carmilla’s voice has something of a hypnotic effect on Laura. Everything in the figure of the vampire is dangerously attractive to the wounded English soldier and to Laura.

Apart from the indescribably engaging effect in the vampiric eyes and voice, both descriptions of those beautiful beings reveal that there is an emphasis in the hair as well. For Dijkstra, the hair is an element strongly attached to the image of a woman as a “clinging vine” (210). This notion reinforces the image of women as temptresses. Clearly, for Dijkstra, “the true conflict between man and woman, the true battle of sexes, was that between the male evolutionary spirit and the female hunger for the bestial satisfaction of her material passions (227). This statement reveals the idea existing throughout the nineteenth-century about women as the ones who take advantage of a man’s stability. As a temptress, a woman uses her naked arms and legs to surround the male body and restrain him to earth. Consequently, the man is trapped and cannot develop his intellectual abilities; his world is trapped by the female clinging vine. Specifically, Dijkstra describes the recurrent image of the hair as “a symbolic lasso” (229). Women’s long hair was fetishized in the nineteenth-century and was considered as the perfect example of “cultural entrapment” (Dijkstra). In the same way, Carmilla and Olalla’s hair, as it is described by the narrators in the tales, embody a symbol of a constant threatening attraction.

The physical aspect and behavior in the female vampires can create another aspect that is important to take into consideration. Since they are undead beings, vampires are entities of transgression. Generally speaking, the transgression in the vampire is reflected in the pleasure of drinking human blood in those nocturnal savages and by the way in which they engage a highly erotic relationship with humans. In the case of the female vampire, however, the challenging behavior encapsulates what is transgressive during the Victorian era. In Sceats' words, this means that "[t]ransgression, the crossing of boundaries, is of course the essence of the vampire" (118).

Among the main characteristics that disrupt the standards established by Victorian society, vampire's sexuality tends to be highly libidinous. In fact, Woo states that vampires are "desiring machines" (2) that are represented with "irrepressible, indiscriminate and transgressive sexual appetites" (2). As for the female vampire, this representation of transgressive sexuality goes even further. They enjoy the taste of blood, just like all vampires, but the female's appetite is much bigger. Dijkstra refers to a belief that explains the sexual hunger in women. During the nineteenth century, there was an argument that supported the vision of women as naturally inferior. Once again, Carl Vogt demonstrated this inferiority by "measuring skull sizes and comparative brain" (qtd. in Dijkstra 160). From this analysis, Vogt discovers that women's skull size was smaller and the brain weight was lighter, which scientifically proved that women were inferior. In addition, Proudhon suggested that nature was responsible for making women inferior: "[n]ature has given [woman] a greater penchant for lewdness than man; first of all because she has a weaker ego, and liberty and intelligence therefore struggle less fiercely in her against the animalistic tendencies, and secondly because love is the great, if not only, occupation of her life" (qtd. in Dijkstra 213). Due to those assumptions, there was a huge intellectual bridge between men and women. Female inferiority was a synonym of degeneracy. There was a transcendence of man "into the realm of the ideal would be his liberation from—would constitute his being 'lifted above'—the world of the 'earth-mother' into the higher plane of the masculine spirit" (Dijkstra 217).

The characters of Carmilla and Olalla seem, at first, to be charming creatures with the same elegance and mystery portrayed in Polidori's "The Vampyre", but all those mesmerizing characteristics abruptly shift when their primal instincts demand to be satisfied: to feed on someone else's blood and the sexual connotation in that action. As Woo admits that "[t]he monstrous, sexual appetite of the vampires is feared" (13). Vampires are inherently sexual beings. For this reason, they



have a sexually-driven behavior which represents a monstrosity since vampires are the most explicit example of violations in Victorian society.

Normally, the traditional idea of the vampire reveals that they bite on the victim's neck. This creates an intimate moment and the action of sucking blood out of the victim builds an orgasmic effect. There is pleasure and eroticism which allows for the connection between the vampire and the victim. As Woo adds "through the act of blood-sucking that 'turns' living beings into undeads (sic), the vampire creates amorous and desire-producing subjects" (9), which leads the vampire to feel pleasure in his or her prey. In simple terms, blood means life and it has a more delicious taste when it comes from someone who amuses vampires. Le Fanu explains this "curious lore" in vampires by stating that "the vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons" (qtd. in Auerbach 40).

Additionally, the meaning of blood has another connotation in the female vampires. Dijkstra declares that "it was considered a scientific fact by many turn-of-the-century intellectuals that for woman to taste blood was to taste the milk of desire, and that such taste might turn an innocent, inexperienced woman into an insatiable nymphomaniac" (347). Female vampires were looking for something they did not have but they could possibly get from men since they were the vessels of that so-called milk of desire. Once vampires were feeding, there was no way to stop them. As Sceats suggests, "the vampiric connotations of blood include wounds, death, and menstruation (thus nourishing blood, sexual blood)' as well as its substitution for food or semen. For the nineteenth century drinking blood is a figure for absolute carnality" (117).

Examples of these traits are detected in Le Fanu and Stevenson's tales. In "Olalla", the soldier has a wound in his hand when he breaks a window. After this, there is a deep cut in his wrist and he feels like he needs some assistance with the wound. The soldier is looking for Olalla and Felipe but there is no sign of them. Apparently, the *senora* is the only one around who can possibly help him. However, the *senora* does not exactly help him at all. Actually, she attacks him because the smell of blood awakens her animal instincts. The *senora* puts it in her mouth. Horrified, the soldier feels the sharp pain from the *senora's* teeth and tries to struggle with that bestial woman but he is weakened by the blood loss. Luckily, Olalla lifts him with a supernatural strength and puts him in his room, safe. Even though Olalla is not the one who attacks him, the situation takes an interesting turn by which more evidence about the degeneration in the Spanish family is revealed. The secrets

behind that family go beyond the soldier's imagination because the fangs, nonhuman behavior and extreme desire for blood give the idea that the family members can possibly be vampires.

A similar moment is depicted in "Carmilla" nearly at the end of the tale, when General Spieldorf, who has been friends with Laura's father for years, appears in their Mansion. Full of bitterness and intense fury after the death of his niece, General Spieldorf explains what happened three months ago when his dear child had an encounter in a magnificent masquerade with a young lady under the odd name of Millarca. The frightened General confesses that his niece gradually began to lose her looks and health. Just like Laura, the General's niece has strange dreams in which a spectre in the shape of a beast walks around her bed. Then, the innocent girl feels "a pair of large needles [pierced] her, a little below her throat, with a very sharp pain. A few nights after, followed a gradual and convulsive sense of strangulation; then came unconsciousness" (Le Fanu). Despite their human appearance, vampires completely change because of their need for blood. The animal instincts are much stronger, more insatiable, destructing and fearful.

During the Victorian period, the ideal relationship between a man and a woman was based on the roles of active and passive, superior and inferior. David Halperin states that "[t]he physical act of sex itself required a polarization of sexual partners into the categories of penetrator and penetrated as well as a polarization of sexual roles into 'active' and 'passive'" (qtd. in Davidson 5). Halperin adds that this unequal relationship is connected to the phallic insertion. This action shows the male precedence and their social domination. That is the normal view in Victorian society. The image of the female vampire denotes a role-reversal, which does not portray women with the typical submissive behaviour. Although vampires, generally speaking, do not have genitals, they carry out their act of penetration with their sharp fangs. Generally, the female vampire means a role-reversal, since she takes the active or domineering role in the relationship and is the one who penetrates with her fangs. Sarah Sceats says that "if a woman is infected with desire she becomes transformed into a voluptuous monster, a creature who ceases to be passive recipient of kiss and penetration and becomes instead active and penetrative herself" (114). Echoing what Woo claims in his research, women are without penetrative organs yet in vampire narratives they pose a serious threat to the patriarchal institution (14). Although men have their phallus, they cannot penetrate the female vampire who is much more powerful, so they cannot leave their mark of dominance through their phallus. As a consequence of this reversal that occurs with female vampires, Woo refers to the penetrating woman as the one who has a symbolic "vagina dentata" (14). This denotes the panic-

inducing orifices for she is now able to attack men with her mouth (14). The uncommonly long fangs have become a phallic element. No matter how beautiful and innocent they may look, female vampires have somehow acquired the penetrating capacity and thus, have become masculine. More importantly, the relationship must be taken as that of victim and predator. The female domineering role should not be taken only in how they become literally penetrators but also, in their attitude since they are, in a way, superior. Overall, women vampires are the dominators in Le Fanu's "Carmilla" and Stevenson's "Olalla".

Romance and desire are some of the key words in the description of the vampire since penetration by biting implies an ecstatic feeling that denotes intimacy and eroticism. Kathleen L. Spencer claims in Victorian society, there was a notion about how the ideal romance should be: "the religion of romantic love [was considered to be] the source of salvation, and of the family as a haven for all the human warmth, grace and affection that had been banished from the father's daily life in the world. Woman, as the Angel in the House, was to save Man from his own baser instincts and lead him toward heaven" (205).

The traditional view of romance as pure and virtuous was the embodiment of the ideal Angel of the House. In contrast, the portrayal of vampires offers a transgression to the norms in the Victorian era due to their terrifying powers of degeneracy—mainly in sexual terms—, which were so threatening to society, especially men, that they must at all costs be expelled from the community and from life itself (Spencer 215). The evils of vampiric sexuality were lurking in the nineteenth-century literature. Rather than offering salvation, a romance with a vampire was very likely to be a synonym of doom.

It is very common to see an ambiguity in the sexual orientation of vampires; they do not discriminate gender when it comes to searching for a possible prey. Usually, vampires can choose either a man or a woman based on how amusing and delicious they can be. By nature, vampires are charming creatures and can be bisexual. A characteristic which can also be considered as a violation or a transgression of social moral codes in Victorian times.

Some examples that help to illustrate this transgressive aspect is the case of Lord Ruthven in Polidori's "The Vampyre", who can effortlessly seduce women just to feed on their sweet virginal blood. However, it is important not to forget that men are not indifferent to the spell-binding effect

of Lord Ruthven. For instance, Aubrey, his loyal follower and servant, does not feel rejection or abhorrence at all. Actually, Aubrey feels a strong almost homoerotic attraction. The human companion insists on being with Lord Ruthven in spite of the rumors that he could possibly be a monstrous murderer of young maidens. This unusual and extreme devotion is seen when Lord Ruthven tells Aubrey to remember “[his] oath” (Polidori 38). For this reason, Aubrey is emotionally and impulsively attached to the figure of Lord Ruthven. There is no doubt that Lord Ruthven has a bisexual tendency in the tale. Regarding the concept of bisexuality, Jan Clausen claims that “is not a sexual identity at all, but a sort of anti-identity, a refusal . . . to be limited to one object of desire” (qtd. in Woo 2). Sceats confirms this vision that vampires can be of either sex and any sexual orientation (107); the sexual orientation of these creatures can change from time to time, that is to say, it is a very unstable characteristic in them. Bisexuality can also be explained by the excessive sexual appetite of sex that has been described as part of the general figure of the vampire.

While Robert L. Stevenson offers a heterosexual relationship between the narrator—the wounded English soldier—and Olalla, Sheridan Le Fanu exposes some homoerotic traits in “Carmilla”, which becomes a prevalent element throughout the tale. In the middle of the story, particularly, when Laura meets Carmilla after years of seeing her in dreams, there is an unusual magnetic effect in Laura. When she says “I wonder [Carmilla feels] as strangely drawn towards me as I do to [her]; I never had a friend—shall I find one now? [Carmilla] sighed, and [her] fine dark eyes gazed passionately on [Laura]. I felt rather unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger . . . so beautiful and so indescribably engaging.” Eventually, their close friendship has more and more homoerotic connotation. Their ties become tighter and there is ambiguity in the sense that it is hard to know whether they see each other as friends or as lovers. Regarding this point, Auerbach comments that “[o]nly when vampires are women do their friends become literal prey” (18). Notwithstanding, Carmilla does not see Laura as a mere prey yet. Her interests go beyond merely feeding on Laura’s blood. In Laura’s presence, Carmilla has very human-like manners. There are more instances in the tale that show that the eroticism and intimacy between those two young ladies becomes much deeper. For example, when Laura is curious about Carmilla’s background but Carmilla avoids the topic and then, Laura mentions what happens next:

She [places] her pretty arms about my neck, [draws] 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 . . . I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love; so, for a while, seek to know no more of me and mine, but trust me with all your loving spirit' (Le Fanu).

Carmilla has her own ways to seduce Laura. She can speak in such a way that Laura does not resist at all, she just surrenders and allows herself to be loved by this fascinating and mysterious maiden. There is a moment when Carmilla confesses that she does not want to be in love with someone else except Laura. Then, Carmilla says "I live in you; and you would die for me, I love you so" (Le Fanu) and kisses Laura. So far, their romance seems to be more binding but it is not safe either. Laura is aware of a danger surrounding her friendship with Carmilla. Her fears are confirmed in dreams: "One night, instead of the voice I was accustomed to hear in the dark, I heard one, sweet and tender, and at the same time terrible, which said, 'Your mother warns you to beware of the assassin'". For the first time, there is a different voice that visits Laura and it belongs to her deceased mother. Up to this point, the nameless mother's ghost performs the role of Madonna, which means that she embodies—unlike Carmilla—the voice of normative society and she performs her normal sexual roles by warning her daughter. Laura's mother knows quite well what is going on with Carmilla because she is a Karnstein too, so that the mother has more knowledge about the dark background of the Karnsteins. This means that Carmilla's secret will not remain hidden any longer. Apart from homosexuality in "Carmilla", there are traits of incest since Laura has the same blood as that of Carmilla.

On the topic of seeing two women together, Dijkstra states "the nineteenth-century middle-class male's rediscovery of feminine sexuality [reveals] his discovery of the apparently fearful fact that women could actually 'awaken' sexual feelings in each other" (68). Therefore, two women together now evoke a double "dose of vice" (68). Hence, the homosexual relationship between Carmilla and Laura can be considered as a double transgression. The same-sex relationship goes against the beliefs of the traditional Victorian marriage. When the same-sex relationship involves women, it implies another transgression because it means that women are exploring their sexuality, that is, their sexual feelings are stimulated more than they should. In the middle of the story, the homosexual connotations in Le Fanu's "Carmilla" are developed and become more explicit. By the time Laura has more dreams about places and Carmilla's seductive voice, she has a feeling "as if a hand was drawn softly along [Laura's] cheek and neck. Sometimes it was as if warm lips kissed [her],

and longer and more lovingly as they reached [her] throat, but there the caress fixed itself". The bond established in Le Fanu's tale describes a devoted love and Laura is, in a sense, forced to adore Carmilla. In other words, Laura must be with Carmilla to death.

The world of vampirism has always been present in mythology, these—usually—nocturnal beings have become a part of literature. Originally, vampires were hideous and grotesque beings. During the nineteenth century, vampires like Lord Ruthven portrayed elegance, seduction and mystery as it was analyzed in Le Fanu's "Carmilla" and Stevenson's "Olalla". The short stories are some of the many examples in the nineteenth-century literature that deal with the discourse on sexuality that comes from the morbid fascination with vampires. Within these two tales, the female vampires explore forbidden aspects of erotic desire—or sexual behavior—in the context of Victorian society. Those forbidden aspects in society were represented by women who were the opposite of the acclaimed and perfect "Angel of the House". The new vision of women meant that they could be evil, seductresses, and even prostitutes as a denial of the submissive wife. Portraying them as vampires, women represent all the negative and perverse aspects of women. The forbidden aspects embodied by female vampires have to do with eroticism and desire. Women vampires as seductresses can be threatening for human beings and entities of transgression. The fascination with the vampire has been mainly manifested in the iconic *Dracula* written by Bram Stoker. However, it appears that in female vampires there is more danger and transgression. Another example of this is reflected in *Dracula* with the three sisters and in the character of Lucy as well.

The study of the vampire can also be examined from the perspective of Postcolonial studies, for example, by using Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism". The idea of the "Other" can be applied to the figure of the vampire as someone who does not belong to a social group, the same way in which the British and French colonizers considered the non-European cultures. These undead beings are the "Other" because they are foreign, dangerous and yet exotic and attractive. Even though this vision was briefly mentioned at some point, it was not part of the aspects discussed in this research.

Blood is considered—in the nineteenth-century literature—as the source of life for these undead beings. As soon as the image of the vampires was taking place in films and TV shows, the connotation of blood has taken another connotation. In the twentieth century, feeding on blood meant a transfusion of fluids mostly connected to AIDS. Apart from absorbing life, vampires were

transmitting a lethal disease. During the 1980's, blood drinkers became the embodiment of "AIDS and syphilis" (Auerbach 175). There is a blood transfusion between the vampire and the victim that clearly depicted the blood as contaminated.

Definitely, this new insight is very intriguing and fascinating but it was not considered in this research because it is a theory that came after many years. In recent years, there has been a new fascination with the figure of the vampire, for example, the aspect of homosexuality homosexuality in vampires has been analyzed based on the recent Queer theories. Those approaches can be useful for the future research based on vampire literature written in the twentieth century and surely, there will be new theories coming from the dark shadows that will surround the new generations of writers obsessed with the seducing image of the vampire.

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