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Turning the Queer into Monster: Vampiric Queerness in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*

Kuiri Canavara Dönüştürmek: Sheridan Le Fanu'nun *Carmilla*'sında Kuirlik ve Vampirlik

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Abstract

This article examines the intersection of queerness and monstrosity in Le Fanu's 1872 novella *Carmilla*. This study argues that Carmilla's simultaneous depiction as a vampire and a queer figure serves as a critique of Victorian societal norms regarding sexuality and gender. Unlike existing studies that primarily compare *Carmilla* with other Gothic vampire stories, this research focuses on how Carmilla's queerness intensifies her monstrosity, thus reflecting and amplifying Victorian anxieties about non-conformity and social deviance. The paper is divided into two main sections. The first explores how Carmilla's queerness and vampirehood symbolize deviance, arguing that her relationship with Laura disrupts the era's rigid norms surrounding family and sexuality. This section emphasizes how Carmilla's love for Laura, which excludes male dominance, challenges Victorian values of monogamy and heterosexuality. The second section explores societal reactions to Carmilla's transgression, which illustrates how fear and allure towards her queerness and vampirehood escalate into hostility and rejection. The study concludes that Carmilla's monstrosity is not rooted solely in her vampirism but in her queerness, which defies the societal framework of her time. This dual identity makes her an ultimate representation of the "other," whom society seeks to exclude and eradicate. By decoding these elements, the paper sheds light on the historical mechanisms of othering and the cultural constructions of monstrosity. This research highlights the importance of examining cultural fears and societal impulses to alienate those who challenge normative structures.
Keywords: Queer theory, *Carmilla*, vampirehood, gothic literature, Victorian England.

Öz

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Sheridan Le Fanu'nun 1872 yılında yayımladığı *Carmilla* eserinde yer alan kuirlik ve vampirlik kavramlarının kesişim noktalarını analiz etmektir. *Carmilla* karakterinin hem bir vampir hem de bir kuir olarak resmedilmesini, Viktorya dönemi toplumunun cinsiyet ve cinsellik meseleleri üzerine kurduğu normatif yapıya bir eleştiri olarak yorumlayan makale, bu eser üzerine yapılmış birçok araştırmadan farklılaşmaktadır. Çalışmanın ana argümanlarından biri, kuirliğin özünde bir canavarlık unsuru olarak kabul edilmesi ve vampirlikle birleştiğinde, Viktorya dönemi toplumunun normatif yapıdan sapmaya dair derin korkularını yansıtmasıdır. Bu çalışma iki bölüme ayrılmıştır. İlk bölüm Carmilla'nın kuirliğini ve vampirliğini bir sapma sembolü olarak ele alır. Carmilla ve Laura

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arasındaki dönemin erkek egemenliğini tamamen dışlayan ilişkinin heteroseksüellik, monogami ve benzeri Viktorya toplumu değerlerinden bir sapma olduğunu savunur. İkinci bölüm ise bu sapmanın toplumdaki karşılığını merkezine alır. Carmilla, eser içinde korku ve cazibenin vücut bulmuş hâli olarak Viktorya toplumunu bir bilinmezliğe sürükler. Bu bilinmezliği kaldıramayan normatif yapı, düşmanlık ve Carmilla'yı toplum dışına itme yoluyla çözüm arar. Sonuç olarak, Carmilla'yı canavar yapan şeyin sadece vampirliği değil, aynı zamanda dönemin sosyal yapısını yıkan kuirliği olduğu iddia edilmektedir. Bu çift yönlü karakterizasyon, onu toplum gözünde tamamen reddedilmesi gereken bir "öteki" yapar. Bu çalışma, ötekileştirme ve yabancılaştırma kavramlarının tarihsel ve kültürel arka planlarına ışık tutarak, normatif yapıya uymayanları dışlama üzerine kurulu kültürel korkuların ve sosyal dürtülerin incelenmesinin önemini vurgulamaktadır.
Anahtar sözcükler: Kuir teorisi, *Carmilla*, vampirlik, gotik edebiyat, Viktoryan İngilteresi.

Introduction

"Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness" (Le Fanu, 2013, p. 41), says vampire Carmilla to the narrator and protagonist Laura, insinuating a homoerotic relationship between the two characters. Written in 1872 by the acclaimed Victorian author, Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla* is a product of Gothic literature that strives to pare down its time's normative structures regarding sexuality and gender norms, going above and beyond what Victorian society deems 'appropriate' in matters that govern society (Neicul, 2023, p. 5). It's not a mere vampire story but a deconstruction, illuminating the nooks and crannies of what it means to be an individual carrying desires viewed as monstrous by society.

In her dissertation, Camil Arancibia argues that the 'vampire other' is a commonly used means to characterize society's, especially Victorian society's, inherent fears and anxieties about sex, monogamy, homosexuality, and normative gender roles that every individual should abide by (2023, p. 4). *Carmilla* is a fitting example in this regard. Placing a 'queer other' at the forefront of the narrative, which also happens to be a vampire and an actual monster, the story takes on a different shape and form. It becomes a cautionary tale for those who consider stepping out of the normative framework (Snoddy, 2016, p. 10). It achieves this point by utilizing the queerness of vampires, shedding light on humanity's deepest yet most authentic desires on monstrous terms. Inspired by this aspect of the narrative, casting the queer on monstrous terms, the following research question has been formulated: "To what extent does Carmilla's simultaneous depiction as a vampire and a queer embody Victorian society's anxiety regarding sexuality, family structures, gender norms, and homosexuality?"

Casting his main characters on queer terms allows Sheridan to critique the normative structure embedded within Victorian society. While discussing the Gothic attributes of *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* I argued that Gothic authors leverage the blurred boundary between appearance and reality to offer substantiated critiques of Victorian society (Altun, 2023, p. 226). Such is the case in *Carmilla*. At first glance, it appears as though *Carmilla* is a mere story of horror and terror evoked by vampires. However, underneath this layer, one can see that Carmilla's vampirehood and queerness are intertwined, and this intricacy is nothing short of a symbolism for Victorian society's anxieties about deviations from preconceived familial orders and the notion of sexual conformity (Snoddy, 2016, p. 19). Utilizing Carmilla's dual identity as a vampire and a queer, Le Fanu blurs the line between lover and monster as well as showcasing the social proneness to demonize 'the other.' In this context, this otherness challenges the rigid family norms by introducing a form of intimacy between Laura and Carmilla that subverts conventional sexual and familial roles. This relationship not only exposes the fragility of societal norms but also demonstrates that the absolute horror lies not in the vampire's otherness but in society's harsh rejection of these non-conformist identities.

Therefore, this paper will argue that in Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, queerness is the primary factor that differentiates the vampire imagery by employing the technique of symbolic deviance, which reinforces its monstrosity. Victorian society does not alienate monsters based on the physical harm they might inflict on the community but rather through the potential threat they impose upon its established moral order. Given that homosexual practices fall within the era's zeitgeist, by embodying the deepest and repressed sexual

desires of her society, Carmilla, with her mere existence, threatens to pare down the norms society deeply holds onto.

Methodology

This study focuses on Carmilla's depiction as a queer vampire and her subversion of Victorian society's normative structure. To be able to thoroughly discuss these issues, this essay is divided into two chapters. In the first section, vampirehood and queerness will be discussed as symbols of deviance, delving into Carmilla's dual identity and how she challenges the conventional villain archetype of the time. Within the section, the discussions will revolve around this dual identity's implications for Victorian society and the way she transgresses the gender/ familial roles of society, ultimately resurfacing societal anxieties. The second section, on the other hand, will center society's reaction to her transgression, manifested as othering and alienating Carmilla, whether it be impulsive or deliberate, due to her vampirehood and monstrosity that is reinforced by her queerness. The mechanism of othering and how fear operates within society will be discussed along with the aforementioned reaction. Accordingly, this mechanism's ancient roots will be incorporated into this chapter, too, to showcase that the 'other' has always been ostracized through similar methods across different ages and cultures.

There are various studies in academia regarding Carmilla's subversion of Victorian society's normative framework, with many of them being comparisons of Carmilla with other acclaimed Gothic vampire stories. In this sense, Elizabeth Signarotti's *Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in Carmilla and Dracula* stands out as an exemplary piece that explores the queer dimensions of Carmilla's character, thus enhancing the discussion on vampirehood as a social transgression. Signarotti is a pioneer in this discussion, as she offers nuanced insights into the ways in which vampirehood can be utilized to shed light on the alienation of queer individuals, particularly within Victorian society (Signarotti, 1996). In this paper, I will strive to utilize this aforementioned methodological framework to decode the influences of social transgression. By integrating Signarotti's perspectives on how desire undercuts traditional Victorian norms, this paper extends the conversation to include a more comprehensive examination of the intersections between gender, sexuality, and monstrosity. This approach not only acknowledges the established academic discourse but also pushes its boundaries by focusing on the specific manifestations of queerness and otherness in *Carmilla* as form of monstrosity.

Moreover, this paper sets itself apart as an exemplary study by employing a dual-chapter structure that allows for a comprehensive exploration of both the internal identity struggles and external societal reactions Carmilla faces. The methodical separation of internal identity and external reaction facilitates a detailed analysis of how these two dimensions interact and influence each other within the narrative. This structure also enables the incorporation of historical and cultural contexts, making the study both specific in its focus and broad in its implications.

The Mechanism of Othering As a Means of Social Alienation: Antiquity

The mechanism of othering is not specific to Victorian society, but rather, it can be traced back to antiquity. John Block Friedman's *The Monstrous in Medieval Art and Thought* grants a comprehensive insight into the factors that make someone/something a "monster" by Western standards, even when they are not entirely monstrous. "The unusual races of men that make up the subject of this book represented alien yet real cultures existing beyond the boundaries of the European known world from antiquity through the Middle Ages. (…) I call them 'monstrous' because that is their most common description in the Middle Ages. But many of these people were not monstrous at all. They simply differed in physical appearance and social practices from the person describing them" (Friedman, 2000, p. 1). As Friedman himself explains, some people were depicted as monstrous, but they only differed in physical appearance or cultural rituals. In his book, monstrous races were India, Ethiopia, Albania, and Cathay. These "exotic" people, by the standards of Europe, were, more often than not, seen as degenerate or having fallen from an earlier stage of grace in the Judeo-Christian tradition, with even their humanity, souls, and rationality questioned (Friedman,

2000, p. 2). Some would even go so far as to question God's will to keep these people alive and whether they can be converted to Christianity at some point. The fundamental reason behind their exclusion was no other than differences in diet, language, behavior, cultural practices, or even location. This matter demonstrates that the established normative framework, in order to keep itself intact and remain harm-free, quickly resorts to othering and alienation in the face of differences. This perspective mirrors Edward Said's notion of Orientalism, where the Western construction of the 'Orient' involved exoticizing and othering Eastern societies to reinforce Western dominance and superiority (Said, 1978, p. 3). Similarly, Friedman's depiction of 'monstrous races' reflects a parallel dynamic in which distinct physical and cultural attributes were exaggerated into monstrous characteristics, fostering a narrative that justified the marginalization of foreign societies.

A similar notion of alienation and othering can be seen in In Juan Gines Sapulveda's letter, too, written in 1547. In the letter, he explicitly alienates and belittles the Indians, where their normative structure differed from that of the Spanish structure. "They have established their nation in such a way that no one possesses anything individually, neither a house nor field" (La Sepulveda, 2010, p. 1). Because they did not possess religion, values, language, or definitive location, Spanish colonies saw them as threats and othered them to cope with the differences they witnessed (La Sepulveda, 2010, p. 1). The quasi-transhistorical nature of othering and alienation proves that what Carmilla went through in the narrative is not specific to Carmilla or Victorian society but can be applied to anyone, despite time and location, who refuses to conform to the norms presented by society.

Unraveling *Carmilla:* A Tale of Forbidden Allure and Gothic Horror

Carmilla by Sheridan Le Fanu is a pivotal work within Gothic literature, notable for its subversive approach to the rigid norms of Victorian society. It tells the mundane story of Laura and her family living in a secluded castle in Austria, or rather, how this mundane life and its trajectory abruptly changed when mysterious and beautiful Carmilla, who will later on turn out to be a vampire, becomes Laura's companion after they decide to take her into their home as a guest following a carriage accident near their castle. Having lost her mother in childbirth and living with her father in an isolated place with limited interaction with her peers, Laura starts to grow romantic feelings towards Carmilla, only to find reciprocity for these unconventional feelings. The unfolding story reveals Carmilla's true nature and dark history as a vampire. The narrative, conveyed through Laura's perspective, begins with her recollection of a strange, childhood encounter with a spectral visitor, which is an experience that prefigures Carmilla's later intrusion into her life.

Carmilla's presence brings with it a series of mysterious and troubling events. Laura begins to suffer from vivid nightmares and a gradual decline in health, symptoms that eerily parallel the unexplained deaths of young women in the surrounding area. These elements are skillfully woven into the narrative, heightening the Gothic atmosphere and the sense of impending doom. Le Fanu meticulously crafts Carmilla's character to embody both the seductiveness and the danger of the vampire archetype. Carmilla's aversion to religious symbols and her nocturnal habits are classic vampire traits that contribute to the growing tension. The narrative's climax arrives with the intervention of General Spielsdorf, whose niece has fallen victim to a similar fate. His account of encountering Carmilla under the guise of Millarca reveals her true nature and sets the stage for the novella's resolution.

The discovery of Carmilla's tomb and her ultimate destruction are depicted with the eerie and macabre detail characteristic of Gothic fiction. Found resting under the name Countess Mircalla Karnstein, Carmilla is subjected to the traditional vampire-slaying rites: staking, decapitation, and incineration. These actions are portrayed not merely as necessary for eradicating evil but also as a symbolic cleansing of societal transgression.

Carmilla transcends its Gothic trappings by engaging deeply with themes of identity, desire, and societal norms. The relationship between Laura and Carmilla, laden with homoerotic undertones, serves as a pointed critique of Victorian societal norms. Carmilla's dual identity as both a seductive companion and a predatory vampire encapsulates the anxieties surrounding sexuality and otherness. Her queerness,

intertwined with her vampirism, challenges the rigid constructs of gender and familial roles, highlighting the societal impulse to ostracize those who deviate from the norm.

Viewing Vampirehood and Queerness as Symbols of Deviance

Defining Victorian society's normative structure is an essential part of this paper to comprehend vampirehood and queerness as symbols of deviance. Defined by the reigning monarch of the time, Queen Victoria, Victorian society was one surrounded by rigid norms about matters that shaped the day-to-day lives of the population. In her paper entitled "Victorian System of Values," Vira Shastalo discusses the normative framework of society, offering insights into the relationship between men and women, family, the way gender operates, and sexuality within the community. She argues that being virtuous, confining sexual relationships to marriage, maintaining monogamy, being a patriot, and overall leading a "pure" life were at the forefront of society's "perfect image" (Shastalo, 2018, p. 354). These ideas can easily be applied to *Carmilla* as a narrative. "She [Laura's handmaid] spoke French and German, Madame Perrodon [Her other handmaid] French and English, to which my father and I added English, which, partly to prevent its becoming a lost language among us, and partly patriotic motives, we spoke every day" (Le Fanu, 2013, p. 13). As can be inferred from the excerpt, despite Laura and her family leading a life away from England, his father, as a patriotic Englishman, still enforces these ideas on his daughter and shapes her life accordingly.

At the beginning of the story, Laura is seen as yearning for female friendships. "He [A friend of Laura's father, General Spielsdorf] was to have brought with him a young lady, his niece and ward, Mademoiselle Rheinfeldt, whom I never seen, but whom I had described as a very charming girl…This visit, and the new acquaintance it promised, had furnished my day dream for many weeks" (Le Fanu, 2013, p. 19). Albeit nowhere in the narrative does Le Fanu explicitly articulate that Laura is a homosexual, her disappointment due to General Spielsdorf's cancellation of his planned visit signals the reader that Laura can only sustain her happiness through female companionships and not through any other type of relationship. By painting a picture for the reader regarding Laura's priorities in social connections, this implication alone lays the foundations for the upcoming and more explicit romantic relationship she will develop with Carmilla.

Right after receiving the news that General Spielsdorf and her niece won't be coming to visit, the abovementioned carriage accident happens, leading Laura's family to take in the injured Carmilla as a guest for a while. As they welcome Carmilla into their home, Laura immediately finds herself drawn towards her. Noticing this initial attraction, Carmilla chooses to reciprocate these feelings. "If you were less pretty I think I should be very much afraid of you…" (Le Fanu, 2013, p. 36). Carmilla utters these remarks after Laura tells her about a weird dream she had 12 years ago in which she saw the exact face of Carmilla, which marks the beginning of their homoerotic relationship. Encountering a woman whom she finds sexually appealing for the first time in her life, Laura finds herself in a predicament of remaining true to the values she grew up with or pursuing this love interest. As the story and their intimacy develop, she chooses the latter.

As a young lady who spent her life away in isolation and confined to rare female friendships, Laura does not know any better than what her father taught her growing up. Her divergence from the values that defined her life, which are parallel with Victorian values, through sexual liberation, therefore, brings up a new threat for the family and household who embody the aforementioned Victorian values (Arildsen, 2018, p. 23). Even worse, Laura achieves this sexual liberation through a lesbian relationship with Carmilla that excludes men's domination altogether, which Elizabeth Signorotti articulates as "usurping male authority" (Signorotti, 1996, p. 607).

In the discourse regarding monstrous queers, Judith Halberstam's book S*kin Shows: Gothic Horror and Technology of Monsters* has an influential place. Halberstam argues that the figure of queer monsters in Gothic literature and horror films personifies cultural anxieties about difference, oftentimes seen as sexual differences but can also be applied to many different branches of social life (Halberstam, 1995, p. 138). Halberstam further discusses that the monster is a kind of cultural shadow, embodying what the dominant culture defines as "other" or aberrant, which more often than not includes queer identities,

especially if one is talking about Victorian society (Halberstam, 1995, p. 53). *Carmilla* reflects these points in its core. Although it is at the end that the reader learns that Carmilla is a vampire, one can assert that, despite her captivating beauty and kindness that transcend the conventional monster archetypes of the novel's time, she has always been a monster due to her queer characterization and the fact that she introduced Laura as a type of affection that goes against the norms of her society, eventually turning her into a deviant, just as Halberstam argued in his book.

Aside from the homosexual relationship that Carmilla ignited between Laura and herself, Carmilla also subverts another pillar of Victorian society's social order throughout the narrative: Monogamy. Diego Neicul argues that in Gothic stories, 'vampire bite' in itself is a metaphor for sexual acts, manifesting within other acclaimed Gothic literary pieces, such as *Dracula*, as much as it does in *Carmilla* (Neicul, 2023, p. 4). In chapter four, when Laura and Carmilla witness a funeral procession of a young lady who died after allegedly seeing a 'ghost,' which will later turn out that Carmilla killed her by biting her, Carmilla utters the following statement: "I don't trouble my head about peasants. I do not know who she is" (Le Fanu, 2013, p. 45). After the demise of this girl, young ladies in nearby towns start experiencing similar fates and perish in the same way. These words she nonchalantly speaks reflect that she does not care about the girls she 'bites' and kills but rather views them as mere sustenance for her blood-thirsty standards of living. The only person she explicitly shows emotions and devotion to is Laura, hence the claim they are in a relationship. Although she bites Laura, too, she still continues to love her. Nevertheless, even when she's in a relationship with Laura, Carmilla still goes out and pursues new hunts to ease her lust, which could be interpreted as an act of transgression that diverges from Victorian society's cornerstone values, not only because she's a vampire, but because she refuses to adhere to the normative framework imposed on her.

'Othering' as an Impulsive Reaction: Understanding Victorian Society's Response Towards Carmilla's Transgression

The mechanism of fear and anxiety in Victorian society results in the othering and alienation of certain groups and behaviors (Baumeister & Tice, 1990, p. 167). Within *Carmilla*, this mechanism manifests through the juxtaposition of fear and allure and escalation to hostility and rejection. Almost as a repeated motif, Laura expresses her fascination with Carmilla over and over again throughout the narrative, though with a pinch of hesitation. However, Laura's response towards Carmilla is not her personal response; in the grand scheme of things, Laura encapsulates how society views the unknown and unconventional: both in awe and in hesitation. "Sometimes my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again (…) It was like the ardor of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful yet over-powering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs' you are mine, you shall be mine, you and I are one for ever'" (Le Fanu, 2013, p. 42). Narrated by Laura herself, this scene depicts Laura's convoluted feelings towards Carmilla. Her mysterious demeanor is the backbone of Carmilla's allure. Yet, Laura finds herself in a predicament where Carmilla's behavior seduces her, but she also feels the strangeness exuding from her. However, she is unable to pinpoint or trace this unease. Le Fanu makes the conscious choice of conveying the unease Laura feels to his reader through specific and contrasting words within the extract, such as "strange" and "beautiful," and "hateful" and "over-powering." Here, fear and allure merge, and Laura finds herself unable to categorize this strange creature whom she finds both sexually and emotionally attractive. Not being able to entirely perceive who Carmilla is, Laura's attitude shifts from that of an affectionate lover to a hesitant bystander to the catastrophe unveiled by her lover.

In this context, it is essential to reminiscence the scene where Laura recounts her feelings during one of Carmilla's nocturnal visits, stating, "I experienced a strange sensation of an evil influence near me; a kind of savage and sharp want of sympathy of all that was overheard in my room" (Le Fanu, 2013, p. 46). This passage not only highlights the fear engendered by Carmilla's otherness but also subtly links it to her queerness, an affection and presence that is simultaneously seductive and terrifying. Carmilla, in this sense, gets her strength from the hypocritical normative structure of society, where people put a heavy emphasis on appearance but not on what's underneath it. Since Carmilla possesses an immense beauty that captivates

her victims, despite the statements that could be regarded as possessive and almost monstrous, the society, characterized by the narrator Laura, does not think that Carmilla could be the monster she is, hence the confusion between fear and allure. Finding itself in a dead alley where it finds Carmilla's transgression both charming and terrifying, Victorian society, voiced by Laura, resorts to hostility and rejection, for its normative structure is not strong enough to sustain this dichotomy.

As the story progresses, Laura's suspicion, subsequently her fear, starts to escalate and capture the gradual unveiling of Carmilla's true nature as a monster and a vampire. As already discussed, this revelation stirs both Laura's personal and Victorian society's societal rejection. The intricate relationship between allure and terror reaches a climax, when Laura finally finds herself unable to turn a blind eye to Carmilla's strange behaviors at night and during the day. Laura then confesses to her reader, saying, "Certain vague and strange sensations visited me in my sleep [Referring to Carmilla]. The prevailing one was of that pleasant, peculiar cold thrill which we feel in bathing, when we move against the current of a river" (Le Fanu, 2013, p. 51). Laura's internal conflict encapsulates the societal mechanism of 'othering' in which Carmilla's deviation from normative bounds of behavior and affection renders her a societal outcast in the eyes of Laura, the reader, and, eventually, Victorian society.

The aforementioned exclusion from society is effectively highlighted when General Spielsdorf sheds light on Carmilla's true identity at the end of the book, and this revelation marks a turning point in hostility and societal response. He states, ""Aye, with a hatchet, with a spade, or with anything that can cleave through her murderous throat. You shall hear," he [The General] answered, trembling with rage" (Le Fanu, 2013, p. 82). These remarks are nothing but embodiments of the shift from individual suspicion to a condemnation on a grander scale imposed on Carmilla by society. This expression of hatred and vengence aimed at Carmilla, as Carmilla bit his niece and killed her, demonstrates not just a personal grievance but can also be interpreted as an impulsive action to eradicate what society perceives as an anomaly; in this scenario, it's no other than Carmilla herself. Spielsdorf's hostile language is also noteworthy in conveying this impulsive action, for it reflects the Victorian tendency to demonize and eliminate those who defy societal norms. By doing so, he encapsulates the era's discomfort with both the supernatural and the sexually unconventional, two of the features that define Carmilla as an individual.

With General Spielsdor's discovery, Carmilla's vampirehood becomes a known fact, and it confirms the fears of Laura and others, as well as justifies the harsh measures taken against Carmilla. This narrative, therefore, does not merely explore the personal consequences of fear and allure, but it also tackles society's impulse to destroy or assimilate what it cannot categorize or decipher. In the end, the reader interprets Carmilla's somewhat tragic demise at the hands of General Spielsdorf as an outcome of Victorian society's inability to sustain the dichotomy between appearance and reality, resorting to harsh measures for those who are unable to conform to the rigid normative structures presented by society itself.

Conclusion

A monster is an "other," and an "other" is a monster. In the narrative *Carmilla*, Carmilla's simultaneous depiction as a vampire and as a queer function as a means to defy the normative structure of Victorian society. She is not a mere vampire who threatens the lives of those who live in the community, but she's also a lesbian, an act of defiance in and of itself. Her relationship with the narrator and protagonist, Laura, goes against every core value of Victorian society, rendering them deviants who shall be put to harsh sentences.

In this paper, I discussed the intricate relationship between Carmilla's queerness and vampirehood and the ways that this intricacy makes her a monster in the eyes of society in two sections. In the first chapter, I explored how queerness and vampirehood can be viewed as symbols of deviance in Victorian society. In doing so, I argued that the relationship between Carmilla and Laura, which excludes men's domination, is a divergence from the norms concerning family and social connections. I first depicted Laura's characterization and then explored the chronological alteration in this characterization under the influence of Carmilla. In this section, I primarily focused on Carmilla's queerness, for her vampirism is a mere cover for her actual monstrosity, which stems from the tempting and alluding nature that corrupts

Laura and turns her into a deviant. Within the chapter, I also argued that Carmilla, with her blood-thirsty nature, defies another pillar of Victorian values: monogamy.

In the second chapter, I discussed societal responses toward Carmilla's transgression and deviance. I argued that the mechanism of fear manifests as a juxtaposition of fear and allure and escalation to hostility and rejection. Confusing Laura with her over-possessive and strange nature, Laura too starts to reject her and casts her on monstrous terms. In this section, I compared Laura's response to society's response and argued that Laura represents society's impulsive solution to alienate those whom it cannot categorize and decipher properly.

In conclusion, arguments presented in this paper revolved around decoding Carmilla's simultaneous depiction as a queer and as a vampire. It is concluded that what makes Carmilla a monster in the eyes of Victorian society is her transgressive nature and her willingness to transcend the normative structure, both as a vampire and as a queer who embraces herself. The harsh rejection she faced was not because of her vampirehood but because of the blend of her queerness and vampirehood, confusing people and making it impossible for them to characterize her. Not being able to sustain this dichotomy, Victorian society resorted to the best next thing, othering, excluding, and alienating Carmilla, which, in turn, served as a cautionary tale that advises the readers not to step out of the preconceived normative system if they do not want to end up with a similar faith of exclusion and alienation.

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