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IZABELLY OHANA DE MORAIS INÁCIO

DECEPTION AND MANIPULATION IN JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU'S *CARMILLA*

João Pessoa
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I am out with lanterns, looking for myself.

(Emily Dickinson)

From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were—I have not seen
As others saw—I could not bring
My passions from a common spring—
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow—I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone—
And all I lov'd—I lov'd alone—

(Edgar Allan Poe)

RESUMO

A literatura gótica tem o estudo e a exploração da mente humana como um de seus principais temas. A novela *Carmilla* (1872), do autor irlandês Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, aborda em sua narrativa a caça ardilosa e sedutora da vampira Carmilla pela jovem Laura. O objetivo deste trabalho é analisar como a personagem Carmilla engana e manipula suas vítimas utilizando-se de meios psicológicos e sobrenaturais. Para conduzir esta análise a autora baseia-se no aporte teórico de Botting (2013), MacAndrew (1979) e Punter (2013) acerca das definições do gênero gótico e suas implicações, além do embasamento nos estudos de Galasiński (2000), e Coons e Weber (2014) para as noções de engano e manipulação. Com sua análise, a autora conclui que Carmilla engana e manipula suas vítimas pelo uso de meios psicológicos como mentiras e evasão, e também por meio de seus poderes vampirescos e sobrenaturais de ilusão.

Palavras-chave: Literatura gótica, ficção gótica, manipulação, enganação, vampiro.

ABSTRACT

Gothic literature has the study and exploration of the human mind as one of its main themes. The novel *Carmilla* (1872), from the Irish author Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, tackles in its narrative the artful and seductive hunt of the vampire Carmilla towards the young Laura. The objective of this study is to analyze how the character of Carmilla deceives and manipulates her victims using psychological and supernatural ways. To conduct this analysis the author relies on the theoretical framework of Botting (2013), MacAndrew (1979) and Punter (2013) about the definitions of the Gothic genre and its implications, as well as basing the notions of deceit and manipulation in Galasiński's (2000), and Coons and Weber's (2014) studies. The author concludes that Carmilla deceives and manipulates her victims through the use of psychological means such as lies and evasion, and also through her vampiric and supernatural powers of illusion.

Keywords: Gothic literature, Gothic fiction, manipulation, deception, vampire.

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INTRODUCTION

In the world of Gothic literature, besides the commonly associated grotesque, the idea of transgression and inner workings of the human psyche are one of the main themes found in the genre. Since its conception in the 18th century, the Gothic uses fiction as an analogy to the real world and its anxieties, exploring good and evil, breaking the boundaries of reality with its supernatural flair. An array of Gothic villains haunt the pages, and even though most of the time they're already doomed by the narrative, they *are* the most compelling characters and become beloved by readers. Going even further, the female villain expresses how society views women, or at least, plays into it. Most of the time, they are duplicitous figures with an inherent capacity for seduction, ready to ruin lives by playing with people's minds.

With that in mind, we chose to focus on the main villain of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 novel *Carmilla*: Mircalla, the Countess of Karnstein, also known as Carmilla. The objective of our analysis is to understand Carmilla's deceit and manipulation of her victims Laura and Bertha, and their respective guardians, looking further at how she uses manipulation and deception to gain control over them, coupled with the use of her vampiric, supernatural powers.

In Chapter 1, we dive into Le Fanu's historical and literary context. We refer to the studies of McCormack (1991) and State (2009) for a brief look into Ireland's history and political strife with England in the 19th century. As the nation struggled with the Act of Union and the Famine, many changes happened to Ireland at that time. Based on the works of Ó'gráda (1995) and Kelleher and O'leary (2006), we highlight the decline of the Irish language and the rise of a new literary wave that reflected the sentiments of the Romantic period. To review Le Fanu's life and literary work, we take the biographies written by McCormack (1991) and Jones (2001; 2015) into account, discussing his political views and his immersion in spirituality that led to a change in his writing style. We end this chapter with a brief summary of *Carmilla*.

In Chapter 2, we map out the theories surrounding Gothic fiction, deception and manipulation. We reach to authors such as Botting (2013), MacAndrew (1979) and Punter (2013) in order to define the Gothic, which is a literary genre that deals with taboo topics, monsters and societal decadence. Furthermore, we comment on the very nature of Gothic villains, the cunning figure of the vampire and what they represent in literature. In accordance with Senf's (2006) review of *Carmilla*, we also consider how the figure of the vampire is used by Le Fanu to comment on the 19th century societal view of the woman. She understands the

vampire as a creature that has an inherent power of influence over others, therefore it's their very nature to be a tricky monster. Finally, for the purpose of this thesis and analysis of Carmilla's character, we take into account Galasiński's (2000) definition of **deception**, **lies** and **evasion,** and Coons and Weber's (2014) definition of **manipulation**.

In Chapter 3, using the notions laid out in the previous chapters, we analyze the character of Carmilla and present the results of how she was able to deceive and manipulate people using her supernatural and vampiric powers along with mind tricks. First, we are going to dissect Carmilla's theatrical schemes that grant her access to her victims. Secondly, we look further into her lies and how she paints *herself* as a delicate victim. Thirdly, we assess Carmilla's use of evasion to avoid answering any questions about herself or her life. And, finally, we discuss how she uses dreams to make her victims confused between what is real and what isn't.

In the Conclusion section, we discuss how Le Fanu was able to implement in *Carmilla* the anxieties of his time, and also how he contributed to the evolution of the Gothic genre with his writings. We wrap up this section with our final thoughts on Carmilla as a villain and as a reference for vampires even today.

1 JOSEPH THOMAS SHERIDAN LE FANU: Historical and literary context, life and *Carmilla*

1.1 Ireland and the 19th century: historical and literary context

The turn of the 19th century in Ireland commenced with the Act of Union Bill, which was implemented in 1801 and merged Ireland, England and Scotland into the United Kingdom. The purpose of the union was "to heal the breach between England and Ireland, and had been accompanied by promises of emancipation for the Catholic majority." (McCormack, 1991). However, McCormack (1991) states that the termination of the Irish Parliament sent the capital, Dublin, into "a total decline". The Victorian period was a troubled time for Ireland, mainly for the poor and underprivileged Catholic population, who had to undergo the political consequences and negligence of English rule.

The aftermath of the Union gave space to an even more divided nation after the previous 200 years of the named Protestant Ascendancy, "an era in which Protestant communicants of the Church of Ireland exercised total control over Irish affairs, subject only to the Crown and Parliament of England" (State, 2009, p. 127). The ones in favor of the Union were mostly the newly installed Anglo-Irish Protestant elites, who aimed to maintain their status and were favored by the English government. Although it seems contradictory, the opposition to the Union consisted of the working class, primarily Presbyterian Protestants, because they feared England would bestow Catholics equality (State, 2009). According to State (2009, p. 129),

> The polarization between the Protestant ruling elite and the tenants, who were predominantly Catholic in religion and Irish in origin, language, and culture, was everywhere apparent, and the stereotypes engendered became deeply embedded on both sides of the religious and cultural divide. To the English the Irish were lazy, ignorant, superstitious, and duplicitous. The Irish saw the English as arrogant, greedy, intolerant, and cunning.

The promises of equality proposed by the English Parliament failed to come to fruition, although the Irish population was in its majority Catholic, their biggest obstacle was not having one united front against the union and the Protestant elite, as well as having little to no political power. Ultimately, many years of being overlooked and neglected led to the Catholic population leaving aside their internal trifles and joining hands in an organization that appealed to the masses and in 1823 the Catholic Association was established by a man named Daniel O'Connell (State, 2009).

O'Connell succeeded in his plan to win the public. By exercising a nonviolent approach and putting into action his tactic of using priests to preach for the people and a

subscription model of one penny to join the Association, he managed to be voted into the Parliament in 1829 (State, 2009, p. 179). O'Connell's influence and the Catholic Association's rallies over the years helped elect politicians who were in favor of Catholic liberation. On April 13th, 1829, for fear of an uprising by the public, the Parliament passed the Catholic Emancipation Bill stating that "Catholics were now eligible for all positions in public affairs, save for the government's top executive and judicial posts, namely, the lord lieutenancy and lord chancellorship of Ireland, respectively" (State, 2009, p. 179).

Another prominent event of the 1800s was what later would be called The Great Famine, a calamity that lasted from 1845 until 1855. In 1845, a crop disease spread through Europe, swiftly killing plants and deteriorating produce. According to State (2009, p. 185),

> The leaves would turn black and crumble into bits at the slightest touch. [...] It was caused by a fungus from North America, *Phytophthora infestans*, and because it attacked without warning and very rapidly, it spread terror wherever it struck. The infestation appeared in places across northwestern Europe in 1845, notably in Scotland and Belgium, but nowhere else were so many people so utterly dependent on the potato crop as in Ireland.

The fungus continued to spread over the years, causing hunger and starvation across the land. As Ireland was almost completely reliant on potato farming, it suffered greatly as there was virtually no other abundant source of food. These harsh conditions forced large numbers of people to flee from the hunger and desolation that fell upon the Irish land, State (2009) reports that roughly 2.1 million people left Ireland between 1845 and 1855. Ó'gráda (1995, p. 62) explains that,

> The Famine meant that emigration peaked earlier in Ireland than in other countries participating in the great trans-Atlantic diaspora. The Irish outflow was so great - removing one-third to one-half of each rising generation - that it provoked repeated warnings of depopulation.

As a consequence, although grim, post-famine Ireland showed a rise in quality of life. After the mass emigration and many deaths, resources and accommodations became less scarce, Ó'gráda (1995) explains that the famine halted overpopulation and the following years were prosperous as population drop has a tendency of decreasing class disparity, despite its inability to eradicate it. The socioeconomic shift reflected in ways such as better housing, for instance, as a large part of the population used to live in "'fourth-class' dwellings" before The Famine and "the rise in literacy, travel and personal savings also suggest higher living standards" (Ó'gráda 1995, p. 58).

Undoubtedly, these historical events contributed to much of Ireland's literature of the 19th century, creating a huge shift in tone and in content of the previous written work. The Act of Union, the Catholic emancipation and The Famine brought to the forefront strong

sentiments of nationalism. The Union inspired people to write and through means such as pamphlets, speeches and poems, vast texts of literature began to emerge (State, 2009). It is important to note that these developments coincided with the Romantic period, which started in the late 1700s and lasted until the mid 1800s, a movement that in itself fostered nationalism (Kelleher; O'leary, 2006).

Therefore, due to a desire of having a separate identity from Britain, the Irish recognized that they needed to carve for themselves a strong cultural register and, as a result, "Ireland emerged from this period with a renovated reputation as a naturally distinct national culture" (Kelleher; O'leary, 2006, p. 408). The Irish language, however, saw a decline in usage due to multiple factors of the time, such as rapidly growing commercialization and urbanization, but mostly related to emigration and the popularization of English as the language of law and literacy (State, 2009). According to Kelleher and O'leary (2006, p. 550), this phenomenon continued throughout the 1800s and thus,

> [...] Irish became the language of the outsider, the marginalised, the dispossessed, the rural backward poor, and English during this same period became the language of political and cultural hegemony, spoken by the insider, the privileged, the ruler and the urban middle and upper classes.

The beginning of the 19th century began with the rise of the novel and the release of Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800), taken as one of the first of its kind and the first to be "specifically Irish in subject matter" (State, 2009, p. 172). Other notable works of the 1800s are Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806); Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820); *Fairy Legends and Traditions in the Southwest of Ireland* (1825–28); The Banim brothers' *Tales by the O'Hara Family* (1825-1826); Gerald Griffin's *The Collegians* (1843); and Sheridan Le Fanu's *The House by the Churchyard* (1863), *Uncle Silas* (1864) and *Carmilla* (1872).

1.2 Le Fanu: life and literary work

Born in Lower Dominick Street, Dublin, Ireland, Joseph Thomas Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873) became known for his haunting stories and eccentric writing. His literary work incorporated the Gothic, historical fiction, supernatural and sensational elements and expressed "preoccupation with a loss of position and prestige, with spiritual and physical decay, and with the guilt of an imperial class fast losing ground to Catholic political challenges" (Kreilkamp, 1998, p.96 *apud* Jones, 2011, p. 271).

Le Fanu was a descendant of the Huguenots, and came from the well-known Sheridan family, being related to famous writers such as his great-uncle Richard Brinsley Sheridan (*The*

Rivals, 1775), his cousin Caroline Norton (*A Voice from the Factories,* 1836) and his nephew Rhoda Broughton (*Tales for Christmas Eve*, 1873) (Jones, 2015). In 1839, Le Fanu studied Law at Trinity College in Dublin, but would dedicate his life and career to literature and journalism (Jones, 2015; McCormack, 1991). During his lifetime, Le Fanu wrote for different magazines of the time but mainly for the *Dublin University Magazine*, which from 1861 to 1869 he would own and be the chief editor of. This allowed him to publish his works without outside interference or censorship, Le Fanu's ownership of the magazine put him "in touch with every level of literate society, presiding over—if he did not always direct it—the most important organ of Irish Victorianism in literature and ideas" (McCormack, 1991, p. 199).

In 1843, Le Fanu got married to his wife Susanna Bennet and together they had 4 children: Eleanor Frances, Emma Lucretia, Thomas Philip and George Brinsley. The couple was married for 15 years until on April 12th, 1858, Susanna was overtaken by a sudden illness and died after having a "hysterical attack" (McCormack, 1991). In a mournful letter to his mother, sent on the same day of Susanna's death, Le Fanu wrote, "Pray to God to help me. My light is gone. [...] She was wiser than I & better & would have been to the children what no father could be" (Le Fanu *apud* McCormack, 1991, p.132). After his wife's passing, Le Fanu became reclusive and isolated himself from the world, immersing himself in Swedenborgian[1] spirituality.

As explained by Zuber (2006), Le Fanu's connection to Swedenborgianism would later be present in many of his works. Both through the spiritual nature of the narrative and by the manner in which the characters are constrained by the limitations of language, the influence can be seen especially in *Uncle Silas* and the collection *In a Glass Darkly* (1872). Swedenborg's main idea was the theory of correspondence, characterized as the notion that everything that exists in the natural world comes from the spiritual world and that the mortal life of human beings exists in the middle plane between Heaven and Hell (Swedenborg *apud* McCormack, 1991).

This theological background, Zuber (2006, p. 75) notes, was what made Le Fanu become such a big impact in the literary world, as his work helped shape the current structure of Gothic fiction,

> Without Swedenborg's theory of correspondence or his notion of influx from a spiritual world, Le Fanu could not have uncannily anticipated post-structural work on linguistics and hybrid identity, nor would Le Fanu's oeuvre be theorized as critically important for moving the gothic mode away from clanking chains and

[1] Swedish theologian and scientist Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) claimed to have communicated with angels and spirits after having mystical dreams and visions. His theology focused on the unity of the physical and the spiritual plane, and Christian afterlife (Swedenborg, 2024).

> clichéd ghosts toward a subjectivity of the self, where the true terrors of the night are the uncertainties of one's own mind.

At the same time, Le Fanu's writings were devoid of clear political beliefs on Irish affairs, as his viewpoint and opinions varied throughout his life. McCormack (1991, p. 18) notes that "Le Fanu's career can only be appreciated if we are prepared to make the connection between his failure to evolve a viable political stance in Ireland and his experiments in English sensationalism".

Similarly, critic Anna Maria Jones (2015) breaks down Le Fanu's literary career into two distinct phases. The first being the historical fiction phase, where Le Fanu wrote novels set in 18th and 17th century Dublin with *The Cock and Anchor* (1845) and *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien* (1847). His 1863 novel, *The House by the Churchyard,* is seen by Jones as a transitional novel, as it blends both historical-fiction and Gothic elements. The second phase is defined by a sensational and Gothic approach, as Le Fanu's works overflow with "nefarious plots, disguises, murders, family secrets, fraudulent documents, and sinister guardians, governesses, and asylum doctors" (Jones, 2015, p. 1).

In this second stage Le Fanu published the novels *All in the Dark* (1866); *Guy Deverell* (1865); *Wylder's Hand* (1864); *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869) and short stories collections such as *The Chronicles of Golden Friars* (1872); *In a Glass Darkly*, and two posthumous works with *Willing to Die* (1873) and *The Purcell Papers* (1880). Additionally, Jones (2015, p. 2) discloses that Le Fanu's influence can be found in the works of authors like Charlotte Brontë, James Joyce and H. P. Lovecraft while asserting that "Le Fanu's explorations of psychological terror helped define the genre of the Victorian ghost story", although he is not as critically acclaimed and studied as other notable authors of the 19th century.

1.3 Carmilla

Regarded as Le Fanu's most famous piece of work, *Carmilla* was first published in a serialized manner in the periodic journal *The Dark Blue* (1871–72), appearing later in the collection *In a Glass Darkly* as a complete novel. Narrated by Laura, and set in a Styrian landscape, the reader follows the retelling of the past of a girl that was once the victim of a cunning vampire.

Laura resided in a *schloss*[2] with her father, her governess Mademoiselle De La Fontaine the housekeeper Madame Perrodon, along with other nameless servants of the castle.

[2] German word for castle or palace.

Laura lost her mother as a child, and in her infancy she was marked by the apparition of a girl in her room at night, followed by a sharp pain of two needles on her breast. Laura lived a very lonely life as they resided far away from the city, therefore, when an accident happened in front of their *schloss*, her father happily took a frightened young girl named Carmilla under his care and as a companion to Laura, promising her mother to take care of her daughter as she embarked on her three month "journey of life and death" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 11).

After accommodating Carmilla, Laura soon realized the lady exhibited a sort of odd behavior and recounts how she would shift moods abruptly, caress her with the passion of a lover and carry herself in a languid manner. The guest would also not disclose nearly anything about her life, only giving vague answers and facts about her family and place of origin. Laura described Carmilla as "so beautiful and so indescribably engaging" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 19) and that she felt not only entranced by her but also had strong feelings of repulsion.

Following Carmilla's arrival, many young girls of the region started to die of a sudden and unknown illness, causing grief and the fear of a plague coming soon. Additionally, Laura's father received a distressed letter from his friend, General Spielsdorf, announcing the passing of his niece, Bertha Rheinfeldt, to the same infirmity. One night, Laura had a "dream" of an enormous black figure that resembled a cat in her room. The animal climbed on her bed and she felt the same pain from her childhood on her breast, as if two sharp needles sank into her skin. As she woke up from this "dream", she saw the figure of a girl by her bed that soon exited through the locked door. Soon after this encounter Laura started experiencing repeated strange occurrences in her sleep and began to fall ill. Laura described vague and dark dreams, an everlasting feeling of a "pleasant, peculiar cold thrill which we feel in bathing, when we move against the current of a river" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 42), and described her new weary appearance, saying "I had grown pale, my eyes were dilated and darkened underneath, and the languor which I had long felt began to display itself in my countenance" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 42).

Laura's father brought a doctor to examine Laura, who quickly diagnosed Laura and gave orders for her to be accompanied every hour of the day. Soon after, Laura's father received another letter from General Spielsdorf and proceeded to head over to Karnstein along with Laura and Madame Perrodon, Carmilla and Mademoiselle De La Fontaine went with them. On the road, they met General Spielsdorf who was heading to Karnstein, he revealed that Bertha was killed by a vampire and he was going to find its grave to exterminate it. The man explains he was taking care of a girl named Millarca, after her mother left her under his care during a masquerade party, and she was the demon who killed his niece. Once they

arrived in the old Karnstein Chapel, Spielsdorf saw Carmilla and immediately recognized her, revealing “That is the same person who long ago was called Mircalla, Countess Karnstein” (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 77). The General attacked Carmilla, and she fled, disappearing inside of the Chapel. A strange man arrived at the scene, and together with some documents he and the other men present were able to find Millarca’s grave, and in her coffin she was submerged in a pool of blood. A stake was carved in her heart, her head severed and her body cremated. Laura says that from then on she no longer was plagued by any disturbances or grievances, only the haunting memory of Carmilla was left.

Pre-dating Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), *Carmilla* established a recognizable and iconic vampire mythos that prevails in literature to this day. According to Hirschmann (2010), apart from being the first lesbian vampire, conventions such as sleeping inside a coffin, affliction by religious symbols and shapeshifting into an animal form were, at the time, chilling and unique ideas.

2 GOTHIC FICTION AND DECEPTIVE VILLAINS

2.1 Gothic fiction

Gothic fiction had its beginnings in the late 18th century, including an assortment of nefarious monsters accompanied by haunting descriptions of extravagant architecture and nature, and to many writers the genre began functioning as a way to guide and instruct the reader to avert evil and pursue a virtuous path (MacAndrew, 1979). Punter (2013, p. 112) defines Gothic fiction as "a literature whose key motifs are paranoia, manipulation and injustice, and whose central project is understanding the inexplicable, the taboo, the irrational". Yet, many critics of the time were not fond of this new literary production and opposed it, claiming it broke the traditional values that arose after the Enlightenment[3] period. According to Botting (2013, p.14), "Buildings, works of art, gardens, landscapes and written texts had to conform to precepts of uniformity, proportion and order", and Gothic works challenged these principles by not abiding to the rationality and sophistication of the new rational era. For this reason, Gothic fiction was deemed escapist literature and not worthy of literary analysis as it was only "intended to inspire terror for terror's sake" (MacAndrew, 1979. p. 4).

The word 'Gothic' itself has negative origins dating back to the 1600s, besides referring to the Germanic people, "It was used in the 17th and 18th cents to mean 'not classical' (i.e. not Greek or Roman), and hence to refer to medieval architecture which did not follow classical models" (Oxford, 2024). Botting (2013) discloses that the term was derogatory and entailed crude and barbaric notions, and claims that the Gothic movement was socially transgressive on the grounds that it threatened morality and order. As MacAndrew (1979) explains, following the ideas of thinkers like John Locke[4], the 18th century was heavily focused on studying and analyzing the human mind and human nature. This shift was then reflected in the literary work of the time, where "writers chose the Gothic tale as a vehicle for ideas about psychological evil—evil not as a force exterior to man, but as a distortion, a warping of his mind" (MacAndrew, 1979. p. 5).

Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is deemed the first Gothic novel, subtitled in its second edition as 'a Gothic tale'. It was Walpole that introduced defining characteristics of the Gothic genre, such as the motif of the story being a retelling of events of

[3] The Enlightenment was a philosophical and intellectual movement of 17th and 18th century Europe that believed in the use of human reason and science over faith and superstition.

[4] John Locke (1632—1704) was a philosopher of the 17th century, known as the "father of liberalism" and one of the founders of British Empiricism. His most important work is *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), it discusses how human intellect works and how people acquire knowledge (Rogers, 2024).

the past (a found manuscript, a translation, an account by a third party etc.), and the castle itself as a character. Punter and Byron (2004, p. 179) note that in *Otranto* "it is possible to see how architecture, the labyrinthine and claustrophobic spaces of castles (q.v.), monasteries, ruins and prisons, will come to serve an important function in suggesting such emotions as fear and helplessness".

In relation to the Gothic form and literary conventions, Hume (1969) lists four critical elements of the classic Gothic novel: (1) the setting of the story is far removed from the reader, usually set in a distant place and time, so that the audience can't make any connections to the morality and standards of their present time; (2) the story has a moral norm, the reader has to be able to discern that the villain is evil through his actions, relating to their own morality even if the setting is far removed from reality; (3) the villainous protagonist is a complex character, ambiguous and chilling in nature, showing great force and grand power; (4) Gothic novels blur the lines between right and wrong, and end up exuding anticlerical sentiments because "writers simply cannot find in religion acceptable answers to the fundamentally psychological questions of good and evil which they were posing" (Hume, 1969, p. 287). Furthermore, although these characteristics are similar and replicated by an assortment of authors and throughout several novels of the genre, they are presented differently by each one. A few more examples of the Gothic form and its applications presented by Botting (2013, p. 29) are

> [...] dark subterranean vaults, decaying abbeys, gloomy forests, jagged mountains and wild scenery inhabited by bandits, persecuted heroines, orphans, and malevolent aristocrats. The atmosphere of gloom and mystery populated by threatening figures was designed to quicken readers' pulses in terrified expectation. Shocks, supernatural incidents and superstitious beliefs set out to promote a sense of sublime awe and wonder which entwined with fear and elevated imaginations. Though many devices and settings were repeated, they were inflected differently. A hybrid form from its inception, the Gothic blend of medieval and historical romance with the novel of life and manners was framed in supernatural, sentimental or sensational terms. The consistency of the genre relied on the settings, devices and events.

Additionally, one of the most distinctive features of Gothic fiction is its sublime nature. The idea of sublimity is most often linked to Edmund Burke's treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), where he discusses in great detail what it is that captivates the reader about beauty and what provokes intense fear. He describes the sublime as "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror" (Burke, 2015, p. 33). Endless labyrinths, obscurity, unknown sounds, sharp objects, the idea of infinite space where sight doesn't reach, are all examples of elements that might spark nightmares. This kind of setting is what makes a

Gothic novel Gothic, and why it possesses a rather constrained characterization. The writer needs to be able to create a world and feeling peculiar to the genre and these devices help to establish an unusual, off putting narrative (MacAndrew, 1979).

One of the most famous Gothic writers of the 18th century is Ann Radcliffe, with *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). Her technique relied heavily on building suspense and differed from other Gothic works because, in response to the strange occurrences of the plot, the female leads would invoke ghostly figures, and supernatural anxieties were grounded in reality. Because of her unique style, her work was heavily copied and many writers tried to replicate her style in view of her success. (Botting, 2013). The late 1700s was also marked by Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777), Lawrence Flammenberg's *The Necromancer* (1794) and Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) that led to the birth of a new 'diabolical' branch of Gothic fiction.

In the 19th century, Gothic fiction saw a change in narrative, from a medieval and aristocratic setting to an urban and contemporary landscape. Magnificent castles became old houses, the Gothic plot grows more domestic and realistic where the man/woman becomes chased by his or her own ego - a double, and evil lurks in more distinct places, thus, "the moral absolutes of eighteenth-century thought crumble before a shifting, relative morality" (Botting, 2013; MacAndrew, 1979, p. 7). According to Bomarito (2006, p. 15), in the 19th century Gothic there was also an oscillation between the mental and physical aspects of the haunting (see section 1.2 in regards to Le Fanu's influence to this shift):

> Throughout the nineteenth century [...] the Gothic careens incessantly between the strictly psychological, where ghosts or monsters are more mental than physical, and the unabashedly supernatural in which an other-worldly horror violently invades the space of the self from outside its boundaries.

Some of the most prominent productions of this century are Jane Austen's satire *Northanger Abbey* (1817); Mary Shelley's fusion of Gothic and Sci-Fi in *Frankenstein* (1818); Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820); Edgar Allan Poe's short stories such as *William Wilson* (1839) and *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843); the sisters Emily and Charlotte Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) respectively; Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* and *Carmilla*; Robert Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886); Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890); Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892); and perhaps most importantly, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

Gothic fiction in the 20th century presents the aforementioned classic Gothic tropes now in a social environment grounded in reality, exploring feelings of alienation yet still looking inwards towards the self, although MacAndrew (1979) says that it is now bordering

on the absurd, like Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915), for example. Nonetheless, according to Botting (2013), Gothic fiction was kept alive in the 20th century thanks to the rise of cinema, with its abundance of adaptations of the classic Gothic works to film, keeping the genre ingrained in popular culture as it had always been.

In the 21st century, Wester and Reyes (2019) discuss that postmodern Gothic fiction no longer follows the same narrative constrictions of the past, which gives way for the expansion of the style while still borrowing and reflecting the same stylistic choices of the prior centuries, and blurs the limits of artistic genres. Gothic fiction now embraces horror, science fiction, speculative fiction, magical realism, "and all generic hybrids that contain elements traditionally associated with the Gothic (such as monstrous figures like the ghost and the vampire or grotesque and macabre tableaus) (Wester; Reyes, 2019, p. 1-2)**.** Moreover, many subgenres developed under the Gothic literary umbrella, each with its own unique traits, such as: (North) American Gothic, US Southern Gothic, Urban Gothic, Future Gothic, Domestic Gothic and Gothic Science Fiction. With all these ramifications, Gothic fiction has changed and evolved massively since the 18th century, taking new forms in the contemporary world. According to Punter (2013, p. 4), currently

> A particular attitude towards the recapture of history; a particular kind of literary style; a version of self-conscious un-realism; a mode of revealing the unconscious; connections with the primitive, the barbaric, the tabooed - all of these meanings have attached themselves in one way or another to the idea of Gothic fiction.

The word "Gothic" is no longer only characterized by haunted castles, terrified heroines, unsightly monsters and ghosts, the term has also begun to be applied to many other types of fiction and storytelling, even if it has a substantial amount of influence. However, one feature that prevails throughout all of the fiction that is deemed Gothic is the element of unrelenting fear (Punter, 2013).

2.2 'Not so dead as you fancy': the vampire, deception and manipulation

To analyze the deceitful character of Carmilla, the Countess of Karnstein, in *Carmilla*, beyond the general literary context of Gothic fiction, we need to understand what exactly makes a clever Gothic villain. Thus, we cannot delve into her character without discussing the very nature of the vampire, its desires and what it symbolizes in literature. In this particular case, it is also essential to speak of the role of women in the 19th century and how it reflects on Le Fanu's writing of a sexually charged female villain.

Punter (2013, p. 207) emphasizes that "in Le Fanu's work, precisely because it was being bypassed by sensationalism, the Gothic is pared down to psychological essentials".

Carmilla preys upon young girls to satisfy not only her personal desires but also her vampiric hunger for blood, and she does it through both **supernatural** means and by accessing the **psyche** of her victims through verbal deception. In this section, we look into what literature tells us about the terrifying, bloodsucking monsters and how being manipulative and conniving is embedded in their mere essence, as well as understanding what we mean when we talk about manipulation and deception through a pragmatic lens.

2.2.1 The (female) vampire

Gothic fiction uses the instability of language and its deceitful disposition to convey shadowy and idiosyncratic ideas, the genre itself carries ambiguous messages in its foundation where no word is used at random (Berthin, 2010). In Gothic works "[a]mbivalence and uncertainty obscure single meaning", and some of the major sources of fear in this narrative is the feeling that there is no way out of the murky maze of language, deception and duplicity are regarded as one of the main devices of Gothic narratives and imagery (Botting, 2013, p. 2). When it comes to villainous characters in literature in general, Fahraeus and Çamoğlu (2011, p. 8) state that:

> Villainy is integral in narratives that reflect the innermost fears of the human psyche, and is often a significant part of the construction of loss, whether it is loss of innocence, loss of loved ones, loss of power, or loss of self and/or identity. The conflict that in the end produces and constructs the hero is the battle to overcome the antagonist or opposition, and resolve the transgressions that disrupt harmony, order, etc.

In Gothic fiction in particular, villains symbolize the diabolical (and often supernatural) evil lurking around the good and righteous character and/or path. To MacAndrew (1979), they are unnatural, unrelenting cryptic figures used to convey ethical relativism and moral questions while at the same time intended to evoke sympathy in the reader for their corrupted and repressed souls. To Botting (2013, p. 3) they are "the awful spectre of complete social disintegration in which virtue cedes to vice, reason to desire, law to tyranny". To Frank (2006, p. 92), "a two-sided personality, a figure of great power and latent virtue whose [...] evil is the result of a clash between his passionate nature and the unnatural restraints of conventions, orthodoxy, and tradition". Additionally, Punter (2013, p. 9-10) highlights that the villain is often the most intricate and compelling characters in Gothic stories, and even on the most unskillful hand they are:

> awe-inspiring, endlessly resourceful in pursuit of his often opaquely evil ends, and yet possessed of a mysterious attractiveness, he stalks from the pages of one Gothic novel to another, manipulating the doom of others while the knowledge of his own eventual fate surrounds him like the monastic habit and cowl which he so often wore.

These villainous characters are cunning and often use deceptive means to infiltrate people's lives and psyche in order to achieve their wicked goals. The mere figure of the vampire itself is of mendacious nature, an alluring and decadent monster that corrupts and threatens the social order after being invited inside, far from being human, it is a polymorphous creature that appears at night to drain away the innocence of its victims (MacAndrew, 1979). To Punter (2013, p. 104) the figure of the vampire is "elegant, well dressed, a master of seduction, a cynic, a person exempt from prevailing socio-moral codes", a renegade who rejects society because it came before its conception.

Simply put, vampirism encompasses the enticement of the night, the forbidden knowledge, the degeneration that society wants to hide. The consequence of being a nocturnal creature leads the vampire to be, time and again, connected to the world of dreams (or nightmares). Its appearance and nightly sightings threads the illusionary, the confusion between reality and fantasy, as Punter (2013, p. 104) explains:

> The connections between the vampire and dream are very strong; both are night phenomena, which fade in the light of day, both are considered in mythological systems to be physically weakening, both promise - and perhaps deliver - an unthinkable pleasure which cannot sustain the touch of reality. Also the vampire, like the dream, can provide a representation of sexual liberation in *extremis*, indulgence to the point of death. The question of power is central: to the vampire's victim, the vampire seems all-powerful, compelling, hypnotic, [...].

Considering that the villain is often a commentary on societal anxieties, to Senf (2006, p. 19), Le Fanu's use of the vampire motif in *Carmilla* was a way to give his input on the role of women in the 19th century:

> Both vampires and women are parasitic creatures the one only by nature, the other by economic necessity. Both are dead, the one literally, the other legally. Both are defined primarily by their physiology rather than by their intelligence or emotions. Finally, however, both have a latent power to influence the lives of others.

This is a particular aspect of the female villain, in both Gothic fiction and in literature in general, the idea that it is inherent to women to seduce and that it is inevitable; women are powerless in society, but at the same time cunning and manipulative with the capacity to ruin men's lives. Female villains are characterized by (and often reduced to) their gender and undisguised sexuality in a way that their male counterparts are not (Fahraeus and Çamoğlu, 2011). In *Carmilla*, however, this inherent seduction of the woman is not targeted towards men but shifts its focus to women, adding another layer of immorality to Carmilla's character. Senf (2006) highlights that Carmilla is aware that she can utilize this pretense of passiveness instilled into women by the society she's in to her advantage, and she manages to trick the people around her with the ever-present illusion of idleness.

2.2.2 Deception and manipulation

To discuss Carmilla's deception, we are mainly going to use Dariusz Galasiński's book *The Language of Deception: A Discourse Analytical Study* (2000) to understand the pragmatics of deception, focusing on lying and evasion. His theory applies only to explicit verbal communication or the avoidance of doing so.

Firstly, Galasiński (2000, p. 20) defines **deception** as a "communicative act that is intended to induce in the addressee a particular belief, by manipulating the truth and falsity of information". Deception can take many configurations in theory, but it is generally distinguished as passive and active, or by omission and commission. Galasiński establishes **deception by omission** as "when the speaker/deceiver withholds some information from the target. [...] One who deceives by omission does not offer anything in lieu of the withheld information", while the receiver has to be unaware of the relevant information for the deceptive act to take place. And **deception by commission** happens when "An active deceiver [...] causally contributes to the target's acquiring or continuing a belief that suits the purposes of the deceiver", and can happen through explicit/spoken or implicit information.

Secondly, Galasiński understands **lies** as "*statements* that the speaker *believes to be false* and that are *intended to mislead* the addressee", and **evasion** as utterances "that are *semantically irrelevant* to the questions to which they are a response; [...] their irrelevance is *intentional*". Evasion is another way of averting the truth, but instead of telling a lie, one *withholds* the truth. Deception is always used to benefit the speaker, it is a convenient way of being avoidant and dodging questions instead of dealing with the truth, granting them the upper hand and utmost control of any interaction (Galasiński, 2000, p. 97-98, author's emphasis).

Deception and manipulation are not interchangeable concepts. To Galasiński (2000), the act of deception is purely communicative, but the act of manipulation itself can take many other forms. Manipulators often favor deception and covert ways to use on their target, because it is in their best interest when the other person is unaware of the action, however, it is not a *requirement* for manipulation to be either deceptive or covert (Coons; Weber, 2014). The definition of **manipulation** used in this analysis is the definition by Coons and Weber (2014, p. 52): "directly influencing someone's beliefs, desires, or emotions such that she falls short of ideals for belief, desire, or emotion in ways typically not in her self-interest or likely not in her self-interest in the present context". For Coons and Weber, there are many variations of manipulation that can take place, but the one relevant to this analysis is the covert variant. **Covert** manipulation means that "the manipulated person does not realize the

way in which she's being influenced", contrary to overt manipulation, which means that the person being manipulated knows that they're being influenced but still lucidly accepts it (Coons; Weber, 2014, p. 58).

Moreover, according to Ibe (2023), telltale signs of a manipulative relationship are: the doer will often isolate the victim from their surroundings or other people; randomly become passive-aggressive in conversation when faced with opposition; victimize themselves to always seem weak and wronged; and perform what is called 'love-bombing', which is a "pattern of behavior where a partner is overly affectionate and shows extreme attention to their partner". This excessive display of love and devotion causes the victim to feel special, and combined with the alienation and the belief that the other person is in need of constant care and attention, the attachment feels even stronger. The manipulator will use any means necessary to control the narrative or situation they're in, as "[m]anipulation commonly involves ethically suspect behavior such as deceiving, harming, undermining autonomy, or bypassing or subverting the rational capacities" (Coons; Weber, 2014, p. 58). In that sense, Gothic fiction is the perfect genre to explore this notion of breaking the laws of ethics as it is one of the key features of the style according to Punter (2013, see section 2.1).

Summing it all up, to Galasiński (2000), the concept of **deception** is only possible through speech and it can configure as **deception by omission**, meaning that one withholds important information from the target, or **deception by commission**, meaning the the deceiver perpetuates a false idea that the deceived already has. **Lies** are statements that the speaker knows are false and are designed to mislead the target, while **evasion** are only statements that are irrelevant to a *question* being asked. And **manipulation**, to Coons and Weber (2014), exists when one directly influences someone else's beliefs and makes them act in a way that they otherwise wouldn't, even if it's not in their best interest. Manipulation can only happen in a **covert** way, because the target *has* to be unaware of it in order for them to be successfully manipulated. As naivety in the Gothic narrative is seen as something to be taken advantage of by a lurking evil, MacAndrew's idea that "The price of purity is lack of experience and the inexperienced are the most easily misled" (1979, p. 90) is perfectly articulated in the deception and manipulation present in *Carmilla*. These two distinct sides, the conniving villain and the unaware victim, are reflected in Le Fanu's characters Carmilla and Laura.

3 'TRUST ME WITH ALL YOUR LOVING SPIRIT': ANALYZING MANIPULATION AND DECEPTION IN *CARMILLA*

The narrative in *Carmilla* is written by the victim Laura, as she recounts to Doctor Hesselius in a first person point of view what happened to her during the time that a vampire vampire entered her life and her house. Through Laura's story we are let into the circumstances that led to the extermination of Carmilla and the many ways Laura was deceived and manipulated by her beautiful guest. *Carmilla* also contains a lot of foreshadowing through parallels and actions derived from Carmilla herself.

From the very beginning, we are made aware that the tale takes place in an isolated place, a *schloss* in the middle of nowhere in Styria. This knowledge is accompanied by Laura's constant reminder of how lonely she feels, she has no friends and there is no one living close to their residence for miles. To accentuate Laura's solitude and the bleakness she felt at the time, at the start of her account she says they were supposed to welcome General Spielsdorf and his niece Mademoiselle Rheinfeldt as guests, but the visit was halted as the young girl had died. This setting provides us an idea as to why Laura's father was so susceptible to accepting a complete stranger into the house, as he was also described by her as "the kindest man on earth" (Le Fanu, p. 2).

Besides her father, Laura had no immediate family members living with her, only the housekeeper Madame Perrodon and her governess Mademoiselle De La Fontaine. In chapter I, Laura describes herself as "[...] a rather spoiled girl, whose only parent allowed her pretty nearly her own way in everything" (Le Fanu, p. 2), which leads us to believe that she thinks her coddled nature, her father's permissive and kind behavior are partly to blame to the events that occurred.

This atmosphere establishes the convention of disrupting innocence and order, for Carmilla, then, takes advantage of both their naive personalities and isolation from the world. As a novel, *Carmilla* reflects the 18th century Gothic, it possesses the essence of the genre in its entirety. Mystery, desolate areas, magnificent architecture, immorality, psychological warfare, and unexplained powers are all present in Le Fanu's work. These fantastical elements in *Carmilla* portray the anxiety behind the central character of the vampire, the transgression she brings to the world is a menacing depravity. In Botting's (2013, p. 1) description of the Gothic he writes that the genre contains "threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression,

mental disintegration and spiritual corruption", and these are precisely the elements we experience while reading *Carmilla*.

Carmilla uses many devices to deceive and manipulate people, she not only delves into people's minds by playing with psychology but she also uses her supernatural abilities to reach her goals. Our analysis focuses on Carmilla's manner of deception and manipulation towards her coveted victims: she puts on dramatic acts; fabricates lies about herself that will benefit her in the long run, such as pretending to be weak and scared; and she also manages to evade every question about herself. Alongside her psychological approach, that could also be done by humans if they so wish, she also has the unique power of projecting 'dreams' into her victims to protect herself. Carmilla uses this skill to confuse her victims and make them question between what is real and what is fake, hiding behind these haunting 'dreams' while feeding on their blood. She combines her supernatural power with her power of deception and manipulation to make herself seem like the prey and not the hunter.

3.1 Carmilla's 'artful courtship'

3.1.1 Theatrics

Carmilla seems to have a particular *modus operandi* to get invited to (or rather, to force her way in) the houses of unsuspecting young victims. She uses the guise of immediately needing a place to stay while her mother has to urgently leave town to tend to pressing business, and Carmilla can't go because her fragile health status would slow the trip down. We see her use this procedure twice in the course of the narrative, first with Laura, and later on the retelling of the events that happened with General Spielsdorf and his niece Mademoiselle Rheinfeldt (to whom Carmilla is known as Millarca). When the General tells his own account later in the novel, Laura recalls that "having just listened to so strange a story [...] and every incident of which bore so awfully upon my own mysterious case [...] a horror began to steal over me" (p. 75).

At the very beginning of the narrative, we are presented with the foreshadowing of Carmilla's arrival through the General's letter, which Laura describes as "violent and incoherent" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 8). In his afflicted message, he announces that his visit to Laura's father can't happen as they had planned because his niece died, and he blames himself for what happened to his beloved child: "I curse my conceited incredulity, my despicable affectation of superiority, my blindness, my obstinacy—all—too late" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 7). The General says, then, that he will dedicate the rest of his life to chasing and exterminating a

monster, and that had become his purpose. We learn later in the narrative that this "monster" is, of course, Carmilla. The General says that: "'The fiend who betrayed our infatuated hospitality has done it all. I thought I was receiving into my house innocence, gaiety, a charming companion for my lost Bertha. Heavens! what a fool have I been!'" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 7). It took him a long time to realize that Carmilla wasn't actually innocent and that they were enraptured in her lies, *infatuated* with her pure image.

We can evidently see here the parallels to Laura's description of her father's own naivety and willingness to give Laura everything she wanted, including a companion, without second thought. This set up for the narrative is already showcasing the Gothic nature of the tale, as we will soon see the "monster" be invited to their house to destroy Laura's innocence and prey upon her. Laura's father feels dejected after learning of Bertha's death, he says he feels sad and is in a gloomy mood, and because of the General's letter he felt "'[...] as if some great misfortune were hanging over us" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 9). Even after having this foreboding feeling, when they see an accident happen in front of their *schloss*, the residents are quick to help the people of the carriage who had just crashed into a tree.

After approaching the carriage in a frightened manner, Laura's father talks with Carmilla's mother, whom Laura describes as being an extremely dramatic and strange woman. It's then that she says that she is on a "'journey of life and death'" and can't take the young girl with her: "'My child will not have recovered sufficiently to resume her route for who can say how long. I must leave her: I cannot, dare not, delay'". The mother asks where the nearest inn is, but Laura asks her father to take in the young lady: "'Oh! papa, pray ask her to let her stay with us—it would be so delightful. Do, pray'" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 11). As it has been established, the father would do anything to please his daughter so he promptly offers the lady to take in her daughter as a companion to Laura, who has just suffered a misfortune.

Laura, however, is an observant girl and she quickly notices that the mother is *trying* to look prestigious and noble, instead of letting her looks and entourage speak for itself: "There was something in this lady's air and appearance so distinguished and even imposing, and **in her manner so engaging, as to impress one**, quite apart from the dignity of her equipage, with a conviction that she was a person of consequence" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 11, our emphasis). Since later we find out these scenarios are all made up to fool others, we can assess that the entire "accident" and the fact that Carmilla's mother leaves her behind are all premeditated acts and a lie to get her into the house and near Laura. Her mother was acting in a way to captivate and influence the father's decision, to make herself seem of great relevance.

After the lady accepts the offer, Laura sees a change in the woman's attitude, she notices that the woman no longer seemed to be as aggravated and concerned with the young girl as she was just moments before, nor seemed to be acting in that weird, over-the-top theatrical way:

> The lady threw on her daughter a glance which I fancied was not quite so affectionate as one might have anticipated from the beginning of the scene; then she beckoned slightly to my father, and withdrew two or three steps with him out of hearing; and talked to him with a fixed and stern countenance, not at all like that with which she had hitherto spoken (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 12).

Laura is also confused as to how her father did not notice the switch in the woman's posture and demeanor when talking to him, "I was filled with wonder that my father did not seem to perceive the change [...]" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 12). The mother talks to her father in a hushed tone for a few minutes, then whispers something to Carmilla and leaves. Almost as soon as the carriage leaves, the young girl wakes up "confused" as to where her mother is and where *she* is, after Madame Perrodon explains everything that happened to her she starts weeping. This is one of the ways Carmilla sets herself as a victim, this behavior further discussed ahead in section 3.1.2.

After they have all gone inside the *schloss,* Laura, Madame Perrodon and Mademoiselle de La Fontaine (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 15) talk and the two older ladies are enchanted by Carmilla. Madame describes her as the "'prettiest creature I ever saw; [...] so gentle and nice'" and says she "'has such a sweet voice!'" while Mademoiselle says she is "'Absolutely beautiful'". The women are all curious about the people who were on the young lady's entourage, they figured she was going to explain the situation to them after she had recovered from the shock but Laura's father disagrees:

> '[...] but I dare say the young lady will tell you all about it tomorrow, if she is sufficiently recovered.'
>
> 'I don't think she will,' said my father, with a mysterious smile, and a little nod of his head, as if he knew more about it than he cared to tell us (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 15).

It is revealed that Carmilla's mother explained to Laura's father that the young girl had a delicate health but said that she was sane and not prone to being delusional. Laura finds that strange, saying it was "odd" and "unnecessary" to reveal that information. Her father continues the account of what the lady said to him:

> She then said, 'I am making a long journey of *vital* importance—she emphasized the word—rapid and secret; I shall return for my child in three months; in the meantime, she will be silent as to who we are, whence we come, and whither we are traveling.' That is all she said. She spoke very pure French. When she said the word 'secret,' she paused for a few seconds, looking sternly, her eyes fixed on mine. I fancy she makes a great point of that. You saw how quickly she was gone. I hope I have not

> done a very foolish thing, in taking charge of the young lady (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 16, author's emphasis).

Therefore, we conclude that it was in Carmilla's best interest to make sure that everyone knew she was susceptible to getting "weak" but that she was not insane. Carmilla's arrival to the *schloss* seemed to be perfectly arranged for her to look like an innocent girl in need of help in a dire time. Aside from immediately being made into someone that doesn't pose any threat, she was also protected by her mother's insistence that she would not reveal anything about who they are and what they are doing.

Laura's father had a physician come in to check on the lady who had been very affected and crying over the issue, but when he arrived she was already completely fine: "She was now sitting up, her pulse quite regular, apparently perfectly well. She had sustained no injury, and the little shock to her nerves had passed away quite harmlessly" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 16). In a few hours Carmilla had become well, as if nothing had happened. This behavior of playing the victim is repeated throughout her stay in the *schloss*, constantly appearing to be in distress but then being in perfect health in a few minutes/hours after achieving her goal.

That theatrical entrance with the accident was Carmilla's way of maneuvering herself into Laura's place, a lie that she *had* to be left behind and a lie that involved her mother persuading a loving male/parental figure in the life of the young girl. Laura already lives in isolation from the world and from people, which makes her an easy target. Furthermore, Carmilla's first appearance in her life is rooted in victimhood, going in line with what Ibe (2023) said about manipulative behavior.

As mentioned before, the same method of procedure was used with General Spielsdorf and his niece Bertha Rheinfeldt, albeit not through an accident but with a meeting at a party. When Laura and her father meet with General Spielsdorf on Chapter XI while heading to Karnstein, the General was also going to the same place to fulfill what he had said before about exterminating the "monster" that took his niece. It's then that he tells Laura's father his devastating story with the vampire. He asks Laura and her father to not think of him as an insane man, and that although his story is absurd they must believe him. The General begins his account saying it all started at a masquerade party he and his niece were attending. Two masked women approached them: a young girl sat next to Bertha and an older lady stood next to him. He recalls that the lady started to talk to him as if she knew him: "'She alluded to little incidents which I had long ceased to think of, but which, I found, had only lain in abeyance in my memory, for **they instantly started into life at her touch**'" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 59, our emphasis). In this instance, it seems like the lady was using some sort of supernatural power

to put fake memories of her into his mind, going beyond the general tactics of deception and manipulation and delving into the mystic, vampiric abilities.

At the same time Carmilla, under the name of Millarca, talked to his niece:

> 'She introduced herself by saying that **her mother was a very old acquaintance of mine**. She spoke of the agreeable audacity which a mask rendered practicable; she talked like a friend; **she admired her dress, and insinuated very prettily her admiration of her beauty**. She amused her with laughing criticisms upon the people who crowded the ballroom, and laughed at my poor child's fun. She was very witty and lively when she pleased, and after a time they had grown very good friends, and the young stranger lowered her mask, displaying a remarkably beautiful face. I had never seen it before, neither had my dear child. But though it was new to us, the features were so engaging, as well as lovely, that it was impossible not to feel the attraction powerfully. My poor girl did so. I never saw anyone more taken with another at first sight, unless, indeed, it was **the stranger herself, who seemed quite to have lost her heart to her**' (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 60, our emphasis).

Millarca backed up the lies of her mother, by 'confirming' that the General *did* know her, she also used the love-bombing strategy mentioned by Ibe (2023) on Bertha, by praising her and telling her how she was amazed by her beauty, now seemingly completely devoted to her. Millarca's friendly behavior and flattery won Bertha's heart and attention from the start. At this instance, Millarca removes her mask - revealing her identity and making herself even more trustworthy in comparison to her mother who refused to show her face to the General. The lady asked if "'Can any request be more unreasonable?'" and said to him "You have no mask to remove. You can offer me nothing in exchange'", besides that, she also claimed to have grown old and he might not recognize her anyway (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 60). Millarca's mother had evaded every question from the General, even when he asked for her name:

> 'At all events, you won't deny this,' I said, 'that being honored by your permission to converse, I ought to know how to address you. Shall I say Madame la Comtesse?'
>
> 'She laughed, and **she would, no doubt, have met me with another evasion**—if, indeed, I can treat any occurrence **in an interview every circumstance of which was prearranged, as I now believe, with the profoundest cunning,** as liable to be modified by accident (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 61, our emphasis).

The General claims that, now looking back, he believed that their meeting and their interactions with the lady at the masquerade were entirely made up and rehearsed by Millarca and her mother. At the time of their meeting however, he was manipulated by the lady in a **covert** way through her countless lies. Moreover, he wouldn't hear her answer, or rather, her *evasion* to his question about her name because at that moment they were interrupted by a gentleman who wanted to speak with her. After conversing for a few minutes, they returned and the lady was now waiting for her carriage. When asked if she was leaving for a few hours, the woman said she had to go for a few days or weeks. Delivering a speech and a story with

similar details to what she told Laura's father when the accident happened in front of their *schloss*:

> 'You shall know me,' she said, 'but not at present. We are older and better friends than, perhaps, you suspect. I cannot yet declare myself. I shall in three weeks pass your beautiful schloss, about which I have been making enquiries. I shall then look in upon you for an hour or two, and renew a friendship which I never think of without a thousand pleasant recollections. **This moment a piece of news has reached me like a thunderbolt. I must set out now, and travel by a devious route, nearly a hundred miles, with all the dispatch I can possibly make. My perplexities multiply.** I am only deterred by the compulsory reserve I practice as to my name from making a very singular request of you. **My poor child has not quite recovered her strength. Her horse fell with her, at a hunt which she had ridden out to witness, her nerves have not yet recovered the shock, and our physician says that she must on no account exert herself for some time to come.** We came here, in consequence, by very easy stages— hardly six leagues a day. **I must now travel day and night, on a mission of life and death**—a mission the critical and momentous nature of which I shall be able to explain to you when we meet, as I hope we shall, in a few weeks, without the necessity of any concealment' (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 62, our emphasis).

Before leaving, she had made clear that they should not attempt to find out who she was or what she was doing, and in similar fashion to her encounter with Laura's father, said that Millarca was not going to reveal anything of her whereabouts or what she was doing: "'My daughter will observe the same secrecy, and I well know that you will, from time to time, remind her, lest she should thoughtlessly disclose it'" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 62). Even the same departure was deployed by her mother, as we can see in these two passages from the meeting with Laura's father and with General Spielsdorf:

> She kneeled beside her for a moment and whispered, as Madame supposed, a little benediction in her ear; then hastily kissing her she stepped into her carriage [...] (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 12).

> 'She whispered a few words to her daughter, kissed her hurriedly twice, and went away, accompanied by the pale gentleman in black, and disappeared in the crowd' (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 64).

The General said that the mother spoke in a manner that it wasn't like she was *asking* for a favor, but rather that he *had* to grant her this wish. Millarca and Bertha had also come to ask him to take the young girl under his care, another way of clouding his decision-making, because he wanted to grant the wishes of his lovely niece. With Millarca and her mother pressing him, he felt cornered:

> 'The two ladies **assailed** me together, and I must confess the refined and beautiful face of the young lady, about which **there was something extremely engaging**, as well as the **elegance and fire of high birth**, determined me; and, quite overpowered, I submitted, and undertook, too easily, the care of the young lady, whom her mother called Millarca' (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 63, our emphasis).

The General here uses the word *assailed*, meaning he felt like this was a rather violent approach to his resistance. He was not only persuaded by their supposed (and imposed) high

status, as he had said earlier that at the masquerade he was "'[...] almost the only 'nobody' present'" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 58), but also by Millarca's captivating figure. This enchanting nature of Millarca/Carmilla can be linked to the supernatural force that attracts and allures by the nature of her condition as both a woman and as a vampire (as described in the 2.2.1 section). Both ladies successfully influenced the General's emotions, making him behave in a way that he would never have otherwise, following the definition of manipulation by Coons and Weber (2014).

Millarca's mother's interactions with General Spielsdorf reveal a pattern of behavior: **(1)** she doesn't disclose her identity but acts as if she is someone of importance; **(2)** she has to go on a 'journey of life and death' who can't wait any second; **(3)** she has to leave her daughter behind because she has fragile health (this time because she fell down with a horse). Although the circumstances and context are different, this seems like another rehearsed play by Millarca and her mother. In the novel we only have two detailed accounts of these plans being put into action, however, they appear almost *too* scripted and perfectly executed to have happened only twice.

The strategy adopted by Carmilla seems to be of these odd encounters that give her permission to enter the homes of young girls, and after achieving the goal of getting into the house, she will continue to try and entice her victim. The lore explained in *Carmilla* says that vampires ordinarily kill at once, attacking the victims with violence and killing immediately, but when it finds a special target, someone that it longs for:

> [...] it will exercise inexhaustible patience and **stratagem**, for access to a particular object may be obstructed in a hundred ways. It will never desist until it has satiated its passion, and drained the very life of its coveted victim. But it will, in these cases, husband and protract its murderous enjoyment with the refinement of an epicure, and heighten it by the **gradual approaches of an artful courtship.** In these cases it seems to yearn for something like **sympathy** and consent (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 82, our emphasis).

Therefore, it is clearly specified in the text that vampires will create schemes to get close to their victims, if they find any interference (in this case, the parent/male figure of the young girls) they will try to work around it. Carmilla's way to win sympathy will be discussed further in the 3.1.2 section.

We must add that it's not confirmed that the lady that accompanies Carmilla is in fact her *actual* mother, nor is there any explanation to who are the people that make up her entourage (a coven?). Given the Gothic nature of the story, it could be argued that the vampire is capable of casting hallucinations on its victims and Carmilla uses this power to trick people. At the beginning of the narrative, exactly *before* the accident happened, Laura (Le Fanu,

2007, p. 9-12, our emphasis) says that Mademoiselle declared that a full moon meant high spiritual activity and "The effect of the full moon in such a state of brilliancy was manifold. It acted on **dreams**, it acted on **lunacy**, it acted on nervous people, it had marvelous physical influences connected with life". And right *after* Carmilla's mother had gone away from their *schloss*, Laura points out that "Nothing remained to assure us that the adventure had not been **an illusion of a moment** but the young lady [...]". So, perhaps these interactions are a mirage, an illusion of a random encounter in its entirety, but it still shows that there is a plan and a final goal to be reached with these visions cast.

Carmilla here exercises the full power of a female Gothic villain, not only by utilizing her supernatural abilities that the narrative allows, but by exercising her alluring and duplicitous personality and making people give up reason to her beauty and enthralling figure, as noted Botting (2013).

3.1.2 Carmilla's lies: feigning weakness

Once Carmilla is successfully left behind by her mother, she has already established herself as someone of delicate health and prone to sudden flare ups of her 'illness', which she uses as an excuse for her languid behavior and odd habits. Besides her 'delicate health', She comes up with various lies to make herself look like she is faint-of-heart, a coward, when she's actually the opposite. This strategy makes her seem fragile, looking like a pitiful girl to the eyes of her hosts. This tactic is one of manipulation, when a person victimizes themselves to earn commiseration and empathy, how could she take advantage of anyone when she is powerless and anxious herself?

When Carmilla is taken into Laura's *schloss*, she is offered a room to herself and a maid is to be by her side on doctor's orders. However, since she can't reveal her true nature she rejects it with a lie:

> 'I shan't require any assistance—and, shall I confess my weakness, I am haunted with a terror of robbers. Our house was robbed once, and two servants murdered, so I always lock my door. It has become a habit—and you look so kind I know you will forgive me. I see there is a key in the lock' (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 19).

Following Galasiński (2000)'s definition of **lie**, a statement intended to mislead with the goal of benefiting the deceiver, here we can see how Carmilla is using the pretense of being afraid of robbers because of an attack to her house to achieve three goals at once: first, rejecting someone to monitor her; second, keeping her door locked whenever she pleases; and third, making herself appear as a traumatized victim. However, according to Laura (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 21), although Carmilla was said to be of fragile health "there was nothing in her

appearance to indicate an invalid" but her movements and behavior were still described as "languid—very languid—indeed".

Carmilla (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 21, our emphasis) uses the health excuse to hide one of her anger fits in one of their outings. While sitting under the trees, Laura and Carmilla witness a funeral passing by and Laura stands up and to pay her respect, sings the hymn together with the passing funeral crowd which enrages the other girl who roughly shakes Laura. Laura says she was "vexed" and "uncomfortable" by her actions, fearing the people in the procession would notice them so started singing again, an action which Carmilla interrupted:

> "You pierce my ears," said Carmilla, almost angrily, and stopping her ears with her tiny fingers. "Besides, how can you tell that your religion and mine are the same; **your forms wound me**, and I hate funerals. What a fuss!"

In this passage there are a couple of aspects to notice. First, Carmilla feels extremely affected by the hymn, which could relate to the vampire *mythos* where they feel aversion to any sort of religious symbols or expressions. The song **pierces** her ears, and she had felt the need to stop Laura from singing it completely. Later, Laura reflects on this particular detail of Carmilla's company, saying she had never heard the young lady speak anything about religion and calls attention to her own naivety: "If I had known the world better, this particular neglect or antipathy would not have so much surprised me" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 25). Secondly, Carmilla again victimizes herself saying Laura **wounds** her by continuing singing even after she had asked her to stop. Following this flare up, the girls discuss discuss the girl who was being buried:

> 'She? I don't trouble my head about peasants. I don't know who she is,' answered Carmilla, with a flash from her fine eyes.
>
> 'She is the poor girl who fancied she saw a ghost a fortnight ago, and has been dying ever since, till yesterday, when she expired.'
>
> 'Tell me nothing about ghosts. I shan't sleep tonight if you do' (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 25).

This excerpt reveals to us what has been discussed in the previous section about how vampires kill when the victim doesn't mean anything to them. The girl who died is a victim of Carmilla, but to her she is nothing more than a 'peasant' and she doesn't bother thinking about her any longer than she needs to. Additionally, she plays the victim another time when Laura mentions ghosts, claiming she will not sleep that night, and she seems to feel anxious about discussing the young lady when she looks at Laura 'with a flash'. Here, Carmilla asks Laura to not go on further with her talking as a way to change the subject regarding the manner of death of the deceased girl. Laura, however, brings up another girl that had died a week before by the same symptoms and innocently blames an incoming plague. To this,

Carmilla reacts by saying that she hopes the girl's funeral is over and that their ears should not "be tortured" by the hymns again. Sitting on a bench, Carmilla (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 25) holds on to Laura and seems to have some sort of 'attack':

> Her face underwent a change that alarmed and even terrified me for a moment. It darkened, and became horribly livid; her teeth and hands were clenched, and she frowned and compressed her lips, while she stared down upon the ground at her feet, and trembled all over with a continued shudder as irrepressible as ague. All her energies seemed strained to suppress a fit, with which she was then breathlessly tugging; and at length a low convulsive cry of suffering broke from her, and gradually the hysteria subsided. 'There! That comes of strangling people with hymns!' she said at last. 'Hold me, hold me still. It is passing away.'

The hymn Laura and the procession sang and even just mentioning it in conversation set Carmilla into a vampiric fit, which she had to use all of her strength to suppress. At the end of the passage she asks Laura to hold her - presumably so that she can calm down with her touch, and Laura notices that Carmilla is trying to divert the attention from her agony: "perhaps to dissipate the somber impression which the spectacle had left upon me, she became **unusually** animated and chatty" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 25, our emphasis). Laura says that this outburst was the first time she had witnessed symptoms of the delicate health Carmilla's mother talked about and also the first time she displayed *any* mood other than her ever present languid demeanor.

It's important to note that when Laura notices Carmilla's odd behavior and actions, or sees her trying to divert attention from herself and her actions, she is still completely unaware that she is being misled and falling for the girl's deceit. Laura doesn't have what Galasiński (2000) calls **relevant information** to *know* that Carmilla is lying to her about anything. If Laura knew the lady was a vampire who got into her house to prey on her, only then it would not be considered deception, because Laura would not believe any of her words or actions as factual.

Another instance of Carmilla feigning weakness to save herself was when she and Laura were walking by the drawbridge. They were talking about the Karnstein portrait that looked like Carmilla, one that Laura's father had renovated, and she loves the fact that Laura asked for the painting to be put in her room, so she embraces and kisses Laura. Laura (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 32) describes that with this embrace, "Shy and strange was the look with which she quickly hid her face in my neck and hair, with tumultuous sighs, that seemed almost to sob, and pressed in mine a hand that trembled", and upon seeing Carmilla like this she jumped away from her, alarmed. Laura says her eyes were "all fire" and her face was "colorless and apathetic". Carmilla realizes Laura got scared and promptly starts acting like she was being

affected by the cold weather: "'Is there a chill in the air, dear?' she said drowsily. 'I almost shiver; have I been dreaming? Let us come in. Come; come; come in.'"

Laura tells Carmilla she looks ill, and she quickly accepts her help. With a perfect example of Galasiński's (2000) definition of **deception by commission**, Carmilla keeps up the façade of being "ill", and Laura says her father would be aggravated to find out their guest is not feeling good and hasn't notified them. Suddenly becoming better, Carmilla (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 34, our emphasis) responds: "'[...] dear child, I am quite well again. There is nothing *ever* wrong with me, but a little weakness'". Here, although Laura is not aware, she tells the truth: she is *never* actually sick, the 'weakness' she exhibits are her flare ups when she is either thirsty for blood or angry. But to shield herself from any sort of doubt, Carmilla lies and says her delicate health is what causes her to relapse and have flashes of illness. That is the strategy she uses to justify herself when her vicious nature appears:

> 'People say I am languid; I am incapable of exertion; I can scarcely walk as far as a child of three years old: and **every now and then the little strength I have falters, and I become as you have just seen me.** But after all I am very easily set up again; in a moment I am perfectly myself. See how I have recovered.'
>
> So, indeed, she had; and she and I talked a great deal, and **very animated** she was; and the remainder of that evening passed without any recurrence of what I called her infatuations. I mean her crazy talk and looks, which embarrassed, and even frightened me.

Again, Laura says that after one of her sudden outbursts, Carmilla becomes 'animated' to distract her from her exhibition of 'weakness' and for what Laura calls 'crazy talk'. This attitude from the vampire shows that she is aware that her behavior doesn't come off as normal and is actively trying to dissuade Laura from probing into why she acts like that. Carmilla instilled this notion of her being weak and scared of everything so well, that Laura now believes that she is a "coward" entirely. When Mademoiselle de Lafontaine (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 40) thinks that the road behind Carmilla's room is 'haunted' because one of the servants saw "the same female figure walking down the lime tree avenue" twice, Laura immediately interjects: "'You must not say a word about it to Carmilla, because she can see down that walk from her room window,' I interposed, 'and she is, if possible, a greater coward than I'".

Taking all of this into account, we conclude that Carmilla efficiently manipulated Laura into believing she was innocent and weak, with her frequent display and remarks of illness alongside her apparent lack of courage. With the influence on Laura's emotions and reasoning, once more, Carmilla was able to hide her true, vicious nature.

3.1.3 Evasion

Another deceptive tactic used by Carmilla besides lying, is the act of evasion. From the moment she arrived at the *schloss*, she was 'instructed' by her mother to not say anything about her life or where her family is from. This planned setup to keep any queries at bay did not stop the ever-questioning Laura from inquiring about Carmilla's life but she was, nonetheless, unsuccessful.

Laura's (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 21) complaints about the lack of answers she got from Carmilla were plentiful. In the beginning, she soon realized that her guest kept "[...] everything in fact connected with her life, plans, and people, an ever wakeful reserve". Still, Laura felt extremely frustrated that Carmilla seemed to not trust her enough to confide her secrets to her: "Had she no trust in my good sense or honor? Why would she not believe me when I assured her, so solemnly, that I would not divulge one syllable of what she told me to any mortal breathing". Laura stated that she seemed cold and older than she actually was, and her behavior in refusing to tell her anything reflected this feeling.

Laura says that what Carmilla told her added up to nothing at all, as she would not disclose anything about her family, her origins or where she came from. Even so, Laura declares that she did not press the lady on these subjects, but would wait for the chance to ask her relevant questions:

> "You are not to suppose that I worried her incessantly on these subjects. I watched opportunity, and rather insinuated than urged my inquiries. Once or twice, indeed, I did attack her more directly. **But no matter what my tactics, utter failure was invariably the result.** Reproaches and caresses were all lost upon her. But I must add this, that her **evasion** was conducted with so pretty a melancholy and deprecation, with so many, and even passionate declarations of her liking for me, and trust in my honor, and with so many promises that I should at last know all, that I could not find it in my heart long to be offended with her" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 22, our emphasis).

In this excerpt we can see that Carmilla would not falter in her stance of keeping secrets, and whenever she answered to Laura her words would be totally *irrelevant* to Laura's inquiries. This fits the definition of evasion given by Galasiński (2000, see section 2.2.2) but not the one about deception by omission, although Carmilla is omitting information from Laura, deception by omission requires the target to be *unaware* of the deceit taking place. Here, Laura *is* aware that her guest is keeping information from her as she clearly states that Carmilla conducted her evasions in a self-deprecating way and with many declarations and caresses (which is configured as love-bombing). In these instances, Carmilla not only manages to avoid answering but also puts herself in the victim position, making herself look so pitiful that Laura could not feel upset with her. Her evasions were so successful that they

did manage to manipulate Laura, and whether intentional or not, she also deceived her by commission: by contributing to a *false* belief that would suit her interests. As we can see in the following excerpt, the manipulation took place because Carmilla directly influenced Laura's beliefs about her origins:

> She sometimes alluded for a moment to her own home, or mentioned an adventure or situation, or an early recollection, which indicated a people of strange manners, and described customs of which we knew nothing. **I gathered from these chance hints that her native country was much more remote than I had at first fancied** (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 25, our emphasis).

Being evasive was part of Carmilla's plan to keep Laura as far as possible from her true identity and evading questions was likely easier for her to maintain than constantly coming up with lies to soothe Laura's questioning. Additionally, it's important to note that vampires seem to have some supernatural constraints in *Carmilla*: "Micarlla seemed to be limited to a name which, if not her real one, should at least reproduce, without the omission or addition of a single letter, those, as we say, anagrammatically, which compose it" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 83). Perhaps, this subjugation encompasses other pieces of information about her such as her surname, her place or origin, etc., and her way to work around these limitations was by creating a lie — that her 'mother' won't let her disclose anything — as an excuse for her evasive behavior.

3.2 Dreams *versus* reality

In conformity with Punter's (2013) explanation that the vampire is heavily connected to dreams, in *Carmilla* we can observe this notion being put into action with the way Carmilla uses dreams (and nightmares) to trick her victims when she visits their room while they sleep. As it has been established, she lies and misleads Laura — and all of her coveted victims — many times in the course of the narrative, but one of her main fabrications resides on making them confused between reality and dreams. When Carmilla wants to drink blood from her victims she shows up in their rooms at night, either in her normal appearance or in the form of a huge black animal resembling a cat. However, through some power she possesses these visitations will often seem like either a vision or a dream/nightmare to those afflicted by her nightly attacks.

In the beginning of the story, Laura (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 3) recounts an incident that happened to her when she was a child:

> I can't have been more than six years old, when one night I awoke, and looking round the room from my bed, failed to see the nursery maid. Neither was my nurse there; and I thought myself alone. I was not frightened, for I was one of those happy children who are studiously kept in ignorance of ghost stories, of fairy tales, and of

> all such lore as makes us cover up our heads when the door cracks suddenly, or the flicker of an expiring candle makes the shadow of a bedpost dance upon the wall, nearer to our faces. I was vexed and insulted at finding myself, as I conceived, neglected, and I began to whimper, preparatory to a hearty bout of roaring; when to my surprise, I saw a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of the bed. It was that of a young lady who was kneeling, with her hands under the coverlet. I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling; I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again. I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly. The lady started back, with her eyes fixed on me, and then slipped down upon the floor, and, as I thought, hid herself under the bed.

This episode left Laura in a state of panic, and as her father tried to soothe her that she had only had a nightmare she says that she was not comforted by those words and "for I knew the visit of the strange woman was *not* a dream; and I was *awfully* frightened" (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 4). Laura was left traumatized by this event, so when she sees Carmilla for the first time inside the *schloss* she is filled with terror because the young girl looks exactly like the apparition in her room when she was little. Carmilla (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 17), on the other hand, receives Laura with a "smile of recognition", because she says she also saw her many years ago in a dream and has been haunted by her face from that point on. After this reaction from Carmilla, Laura calms down and only sees the girl as a soft lady. As soon as Laura recognized her face from the visitation of her infancy, she immediately started to change the situation in her favor. She, then, tells Laura her 'version' of the story:

> 'I must tell you my vision about you; it is so very strange that you and I should have had, each of the other so vivid a dream, that each should have seen, I you and you me, looking as we do now, **when of course we both were mere children**. I was a child, **about six years old**, and I awoke from a confused and troubled dream, and found myself in a room, unlike my nursery, wainscoted clumsily in some dark wood, and with cupboards and bedsteads, and chairs, and benches placed about it. The beds were, I thought, all empty, and the room itself without anyone but myself in it; and I, after looking about me for some time, and admiring especially an iron candlestick with two branches, which I should certainly know again, crept under one of the beds to reach the window; but as I got from under the bed, I heard someone crying; and looking up, while I was still upon my knees, **I saw you—most assuredly you**—as I see you now; a beautiful young lady, with golden hair and large blue eyes, and lips—your lips—**you as you are here**.
>
> 'Your looks won me; I climbed on the bed and put my arms about you, and I think we both fell asleep. I was aroused by a scream; you were sitting up screaming. I was frightened, and slipped down upon the ground, and, it seemed to me, lost consciousness for a moment; and when I came to myself, I was again in my nursery at home. Your face I have never forgotten since. I could not be misled by mere resemblance. You *are* the lady whom I saw then.' (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 18, **our emphasis**).

Here, Carmilla takes what happened to Laura and makes up a story that would make Laura believe she experienced the same events but from a different perspective. She emphasizes that twelve years ago she was a child just like Laura was, this way she established

that there would be no way for Laura to believe she saw *her* face more than a decade before their 'first' meeting. Laura recounts to Carmilla her version of the 'vision', and Carmilla (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 18) then says to her that she doesn't know who should be more afraid because of this frightful encounter that they *both* shared. After both girls had exchanged experiences, Laura (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 20) explains that "the unpleasant remembrance of the face presented in my early dream, had lost the effect of the first unexpected recognition" and they laughed at the fact they had been scared of each other.

Carmilla's lies in these excerpts successfully manipulate Laura's initial negative emotions towards her. Through **deception by commission**, she utilizes Laura's previous belief that she saw her face before and expands the story to her benefit and how Carmilla had also seen Laura's face before, too. Of course, Laura believes it would have been impossible for the girl to have seen her grown up face when the incident happened when she was a small child, just as it would have been impossible for Laura to have *actually* seen a grown up Carmilla when she was six years old. We conclude here that Carmilla successfully deceived Laura so she would not be afraid of her, but in turn empathize with her, even though Laura had been dreading her face for more than a decade since her first visitation twelve years before. Carmilla's story also established, in Laura's mind, a mysterious connection between the two girls - as if they were fated and were bound to meet each other.

Another instance where Carmilla makes Laura believe something that happened to her was a dream, was when she started feeding on her again. Laura (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 38) recalls that this dream was the beginning of her agony, when she started getting weak and sick because of the vampire's constant drinking of her blood. Here's Laura account of the incident:

> I saw, or fancied I saw, the room and its furniture just as I had seen it last, except that it was very dark, and I saw something moving round the foot of the bed, which at first I could not accurately distinguish. But I soon saw that it was a sootyblack animal that resembled a monstrous cat. It appeared to me about four or five feet long for it measured fully the length of the hearthrug as it passed over it; and it continued to-ing and fro-ing with the lithe, sinister restlessness of a beast in a cage. I could not cry out, although as you may suppose, I was terrified. Its pace was growing faster, and the room rapidly darker and darker, and at length so dark that I could no longer see anything of it but its eyes. I felt it spring lightly on the bed. The two broad eyes approached my face, and suddenly I felt a stinging pain as if two large needles darted, an inch or two apart, deep into my breast. I waked with a scream. The room was lighted by the candle that burnt there all through the night, and I saw a female figure standing at the foot of the bed, a little at the right side. It was in a dark loose dress, and its hair was down and covered its shoulders. A block of stone could not have been more still. There was not the slightest stir of respiration. As I stared at it, the figure appeared to have changed its place, and was now nearer the door; then, close to it, the door opened, and it passed out.

When feeding on Laura, Carmilla not only shape-shifts into the form of a huge black cat but she's also capable of casting some sort of illusion on her. Laura believes to be

dreaming, but she feels conscious of it - then she ‘awakens’ once she is successfully attacked by the animal in her room. Laura, for a moment, thinks that the female figure she saw was Carmilla playing a prank on her but her door was as locked as she had left it. When Laura meets Carmilla the day after, when she comes downstairs even later than usual, she immediately tells her an eerily similar story:

> ‘I was so frightened last night,’ she said, so soon as we were together, ‘and I am sure I should have seen something dreadful if it had not been for that charm I bought from the poor little hunchback whom I called such hard names. I had a dream of something black coming round my bed, and I awoke in a perfect horror, and I really thought, for some seconds, I saw a dark figure near the chimney-piece, but I felt under my pillow for my charm, and the moment my fingers touched it, the figure disappeared, and I felt quite certain, only that I had it by me, that something frightful would have made its appearance, and, perhaps, throttled me, as it did those poor people we heard of’ (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 40).

Carmilla is smart, she knows Laura saw her the night before so she promptly tells her of this strange ‘dream’ she had. It is even more believable because, to Laura’s knowledge, the other girl is completely unaware of the affliction she had suffered herself. The charm mentioned was one they both bought from a merchant, who said it would protect them against vampires. After Laura tells Carmilla her own version of the dream, she asks her if she had the charm with her and Laura denies. Thus, following this particular episode, Laura slept with the charm under her pillow and says her nights became peaceful and she was not plagued by the nightmare again, to which Carmilla (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 40, our emphasis) responds with:

> “Well, I told you so,” said Carmilla, when I described my quiet sleep, “I had such delightful sleep myself last night; I pinned the charm to the breast of my nightdress. It was too far away the night before. I am quite sure it was all fancy, except the dreams. **I used to think that evil spirits made dreams, but our doctor told me it is no such thing.** Only a fever passing by, or some other malady, as they often do, he said, knocks at the door, and not being able to get in, passes on, with that alarm. ”

Of course, the charm does not work in protecting people from vampires (or any sort of evil), and Carmilla uses this to put into Laura’s head that there is no such thing as evil spirits - but that these dreams are the symptoms of nothing more than a fever. She says the charm is infused with drugs against malaria and asks Laura, “you don’t suppose that evil spirits are frightened by bits of ribbon, or the perfumes of a druggist’s shop?” and says that the charm worked because the antidote contained in it was absorbed by their body: “That I am sure is what the charm has done for us. It is nothing magical, it is simply natural” (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 41).

It was convenient for Carmilla that Laura stayed skeptical of any kind of supernatural behavior or any imminent danger related to evil beings, her manipulative tactics here consisted of lying to Laura about her ‘dreams’ and about the charm. In the end, Laura

believed her as she did not have those dreams again for a while, but she was becoming increasingly weaker by the day and starting to fancy death itself. Laura, however, would not disclose her illness to her father, and she was now in a very advanced stage of her condition, which Carmilla took advantage of: “Carmilla became more devoted to me than ever, and her strange paroxysms of languid adoration more frequent. She used to gloat on me with increasing ardor the more my strength and spirits waned” (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 42).

After some time, Laura started having strange occurrences in her sleep again and the nightmares now plagued her slumber once more. Carmilla, too, kept complaining of strange dreams and sensations to Laura, keeping the façade that she was also suffering from the same tribulations and nightly terrors. Laura’s refusal to tell her father what was happening to her was because she believed she was not being affected by anything supernatural: “It could not be that terrible complaint which the peasants called the oupire, for I had now been suffering for three weeks, and they were seldom ill for much more than three days, when death put an end to their miseries” (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 43).

The **covert manipulation** taking place by Carmilla, through **deception by commission**, led Laura to ignore not only her symptoms but also refuse to tell the only person who could help her that she was sick. The vampire had effectively groomed Laura to *be* and to *act* exactly like she wanted to, even though she should have been alarmed by her declining health and constant affliction. Precisely as described by Coons and Weber (2014), the manipulation made Laura fall short on seeing what was best for her. Typically, as she had said it herself, she was a spoiled girl who would tell and ask her father for anything, but now she was refusing to seek help even though she was sick to the point of craving for death. Now that Carmilla had completely enraptured Laura in her lies, and instilled in her the belief that those strange dreams were nothing more than a symptom of illness, Laura was completely at her disposal and she was finally feeding on her whenever she pleased.

Similarly, the same scheme involving dreams was used with Mademoiselle Rheinfeldt, as General Spielsdorf (Le Fanu, 2007, p. 68) recalls in his story to Laura’s father:

> “My dear child began to lose her looks and health, and that in a manner so mysterious, and even horrible, that I became thoroughly frightened.
>
> “She was at first visited by appalling dreams; then, as she fancied, by a specter, sometimes resembling Millarca, sometimes in the shape of a beast, indistinctly seen, walking round the foot of her bed, from side to side.

Millarca seems to have executed a similar method to take advantage of Bertha, by plaguing her with ‘dreams’ that weren’t actually dreams. The General says that after he had tried to seek help for his niece, he had received a letter from a Doctor saying the girl’s

suffering was caused by a vampire. The General had thought this absurd but he hid in Bertha's room to see if what the Doctor said was true, and he witnessed the same scene the "dreams" of both Laura and Bertha's revealed: a large animal looming over the bed, feeding on Bertha. When the General attacked it, it transformed back into Millarca and she fled the room unscathed.

In sum, Carmilla finds a way to disguise her attacks as nothing more than a nightmare or a vision to her victims. Be it Laura or Bertha, both girls had their nights plagued by the vampire's visit and both were unaware of it happening, as they were unable to discern between reality and dreams. The manipulation Carmilla inflicted on her victims went beyond the psychological, combining her supernatural powers with her artful schemes, she was almost unstoppable.

CONCLUSION

Victorian Ireland was a place of many changes and conflicts with England, the land was riddled with anxieties and uncertainties that penetrated its children. Reportedly, Sheridan Le Fanu rarely stood strong for any political belief or party, always on the fence when it came to the current rule. His early literary work consists of historical fiction set in 17th and 18th century Ireland, and later on he would write Sensation and Gothic novels following his immersion in Swedenborg's branch of theology. His legacy in the Gothic genre is significant, as he was one of the first writers to focus on psychological terror and the fears of the subjective mind, shying away from the grotesque branch of the genre.

In *Carmilla*, Le Fanu brings out the anxieties present in Gothic literature. Beyond the magnificent castles and architecture, the genre set out to not only instruct but also warn about the dangers of society and the evil monsters lurking in the dark corners. Gothic fiction explores how the mind can also be haunted by ghosts and nefarious creatures, expanding beyond the extravagant physical space of the house. In the particular case of *Carmilla*, the figure of the character Carmilla as a female vampire is the focal point of the story, as the reader, we stand amazed as we read her artful hunt of the ever innocent Laura.

Carmilla's way of courting her victims was one of the main aspects that intrigued us about the novel, because instead of using overt violence to get to her desired prey, Le Fanu's choice of having her use a more psychological and manipulative approach was captivating. Therefore, it led us to look further into Carmilla's position both as a woman and as a female villain in a Gothic novel of the 19th century, and *how* she used deception and manipulative tactics with her victims Laura and Bertha, and the people surrounding them.

With our analysis, based on Galasiński's (2000), and Coons and Weber's (2014) studies, we conclude that Carmilla was successful in her attempts of deception and manipulation because she managed to influence people's thoughts and behavior in a way that granted her power and control of the situation. She used tactics such as **lies** and **evasion** to deceive them and **covert manipulation** to directly affect their emotions and behaviors. Additionally, because of her vampiric nature, she also used supernatural and illusionary means to further assert power and influence over Laura and Bertha. By making them confused between dreams and reality, she could take advantage of them during the vulnerable time of night without suspicion.

Carmilla's character also highlights the conventions of the female Gothic villain and the prejudiced way the Victorian times saw women in society, especially in comparison to the

naivety and purity present in Laura. She is portrayed as overtly feminine and extremely beautiful, an alluring girl with an air of fragility and idleness, aspects that she then uses to practice evil deeds. Carmilla reflects the notion of the woman as a natural temptress, her intelligence in manipulating others contradicting her apparent powerless status, a decadence that sweeps into Laura's life in order to destroy her innocence and carry her to the evil side.

On a final note, Carmilla is a seductive and cunning villain. Her attitude and her schemes were prepared and rehearsed with the final goal of winning the hearts of her victims and draining their blood. With the combination of psychology and the supernatural, Carmilla became one of the most fascinating and alluring vampires in literature.

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