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# Duality and the Doppelgängers in *Carmilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu

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## Introduction

*Carmilla*, being one of the first vampiric European works, develops different themes that are currently stereotypical within this type of novels, such as the fragile woman being chased by the monster, which could be seductive or monstrous, who captures her female victim. Generally, the vampiric representation corresponds to a male entity, which influences the mind and body of the woman. Nevertheless, in this novella, the vampire entity is an attractive, beautiful, and seductive woman. Taking the above into consideration, Sheridan Le Fanu had to deal with one of the great taboo themes of the Victorian period, lesbianism, which is implicit between Laura and Carmilla. Although this corresponds to one of the main themes of the work, in addition to the use of a female entity as a vampiric monster, there are also other topics, such as the duality present in Laura and Carmilla internally, in addition to the representation of both as the Doppelgänger of the other. Hence, the present dissertation aims to address the topic of duality and the Doppelgänger in relation to the characters of Laura and Carmilla, in the work of Sheridan Le Fanu.

As mentioned above, some of the main topics covered in the novella are homosexual love and female vampirism. Nonetheless, another of the essential concepts, which are not as notoriously explicit as those already mentioned, is the duality of the main characters. To some extent, studying the duality between Laura and Carmilla allows us to cover the topics recently mentioned, along with others such as motherhood and dreams. This

approach gives us a parallel vision between Carmilla and Laura, achieving an analysis between them, in addition to studying each of the protagonists internally and psychoanalytically. In this sense, the importance of studying duality at its different levels lies in an introspective analysis of the characters, covering various themes present in the protagonists. The dual motif has been acknowledged several times within the context of this novella. For instance, Nina Auerbach in her book *Our Vampires, Ourselves* refers to the dual aspects between Carmilla and Laura on a general aspect, emphasizing the repression in Laura and the loving connection between them. On the other hand, William Veeder in his article “The Art of Repression” he deepens one of the most representative elements in Laura’s duality, which is her repression for the non-acceptance of her attraction to Carmilla. Throughout this dissertation, I intend to cover these themes, organizing them mainly through the internal duality in Laura and Carmilla, and then delving into them as the Doppelgänger of the other, that is, the external duality in both. To achieve this is necessary to fully develop the different parameters of the Doppelgänger concept. Taking into consideration that this topic mainly involves an introspective analysis, it is also necessary to focus on psychoanalytic theories to understand some dual aspects that will be explained in the following chapters. In this sense, can be developed the duality or internal division presented in Laura and Carmilla, and finally the Doppelgänger or external Division between them.

## Theoretical Framework

With the purpose of analyzing and interpreting the duality present in the novella *Carmilla* between their main characters, it is necessary to propose a concrete definition regarding the term Doppelgänger, and what duality represents in this context. The present theoretical framework has the purpose of supporting the analysis of the duality of the characters within a mainly psychoanalytic base, which will develop in the first instance internally and then externally, observing the dual aspects related to each other. In this sense, the etymological origin of the Doppelgänger will be described, and its different proposals at the cultural level, in order to acquire a global perspective of duality. Afterward, the reasons why the Doppelgänger is such a widely used resource within the Gothic narrative will be described. Finally, the approaches by Sigmund Freud and Karl Gustav Jung to the concept of duality will be presented, which will provide different perspectives regarding the psychoanalytic concept of the double. Thus, through the review of different authors, the analysis of duality expressed in different formats between the two characters will be carried out in the following chapters.

In the first instance, duality can be represented in different ways. Whether it is referred to as Duality, Doppelgänger, or Shadow Double to the “other self”, its main focus is to complement the original person, and, at the same time, acting as their opposite. Furthermore, taking this into consideration, duality also plays with ambiguity regarding who is the original and who is the double. Milica Živković refers to this point in her article

“The Double as the ‘Unseen’ of Culture: Toward a Definition of Doppelgänger”, stating that “As an imagined figure, a soul, a shadow, a ghost or a mirror reflection that exists in a dependent relation to the original, the double pursues the subject as his second self and makes him feel as himself and the other at the same time” (122). Hence, the concept of duality in all its forms is related to union and division in a complementary way, since exists indeterminacy about the original and the double.

The term usually used to refer to this phenomenon is Doppelgänger. The etymological origin of the word was introduced by the novelist Jean Paul Richter, who in 1796 defined the word in a one sentence footnote: ““So heissen Leute, die sich selbst sehen’ or ‘So are called the people who see themselves”” (122). Based on this work, the term Doppelgänger was adopted in a general way in German, as well as in literary contexts to refer to duality. In this particular case, it follows that the original is the same as the double. Nonetheless, Richter's definition does not provide great detail and precision for those who wish to study the concept more deeply. Albert Guerard refers to this point in his text ‘Concepts of the Double’, indicating that “the word double is embarrassingly vague, as used in literary criticism” (3). Considering the inaccuracy of the term, it is necessary to develop a more thorough investigation regarding how duality should be approached, for which it is necessary to observe the origins of the concept ‘duality’ in culture.

Clifford Hallam in his text “The Double as Incomplete Self” refers to duality beyond the concept of the Doppelgänger, pointing out its origins from traditional culture and folklore. Hallam indicates that “the phenomenon of the divided or reflected self is a widespread common belief, which in turn has been expressed throughout literary history from its earliest oral and written traditions (including mythology, Märchen, and folk epic) to the present” (6). Within these representations of the double, which the author calls “universal Doubles”, are expressed characteristics far removed from rationality, since are addressed stories and beliefs where souls are independent of the body, and twins possess magical features. Along the same lines, it is possible to state that the literature that later developed the concept of duality in its characters is based on these fictitious elements to be able to present their stories. As an example of this type of mythical belief regarding duality in a cultural and literary aspect, James Frazer in *The Golden Bough* referred to the perspective of aboriginal cultures regarding the duality of the human being. Within some of these social groups, it is firmly believed that the spirit and the body are different and independent entities from each other. This portability of the spirit and its independence from the body allows us to raise the idea of duality in people.

Frazer exemplifies this situation through beliefs on Wetar Island, where there is a belief that the soul is directly related to the concept of shadow. Particularly, he mentions: “there are magicians in this place who can make a man ill by stabbing his



shadow with a pike or hacking it with a sword” (189). Within this culture, the shadow can act independently of the body, but maintaining a sensory connection with it: “Often they regard their shadow or reflection as their soul, or at all events as a vital part of themselves, and as such it is necessarily a source of danger to them” (189). As there is certain independence between the soul and the body, they consider it possible to inflict damage on the shadow in order to damage the body. Along these lines, by taking the shadow and the body as separate entities, the concept of the Doppelgänger is presented in a particular way, where although they are not particularly opposite, they are independent of each other to some extent.

The conception that the soul or the shadow can inflict damage to the individual’s body is a topic that has also been developed in the concept of the Doppelgänger. Particularly, the double motif is a recurring theme in Gothic literature. This may be due to both historical and psychological reasons. Claire Rosenfield, the author of “The Shadow within: The Conscious and Unconscious Use of the Double” is particularly concerned with external influences on literature from Romanticism and Gothic narratives. In the first place, the intellectual and philosophical movement ‘the Enlightenment’ had implications in the world. One of these implications was the French revolution, provoking transcendental changes in perception within society, particularly for the European and American. Rosenfield notes that, “with the ‘Rights of Man’ came a new emphasis upon the individual” (328). This revolution caused changes society’s

perception not only collectively, but also individually and introspectively. Second, and related to the aforementioned historical change, the Romantic and Gothic novels, due to these social and cultural changes, also acquired a process of greater introspection through the duality in their characters. The duality of Gothic novels, according to Rosenfield, is not worked exclusively in a superficial way and representing only the physical duality, but also internally and culturally: “the novelist who consciously or unconsciously exploits psychological Doubles may either juxtapose or duplicate two characters; the one representing the socially acceptable or conventional personality, the other externalizing the free, uninhibited, often criminal self” (328).

Like Rosenfield, Živković also refers to the reasons why the *Doppelgänger* began to be used in the literature of Romanticism, taking into account the social and structural changes that were taking place thanks to ‘the Enlightenment’: “A loss of faith in supernaturalism, a gradual skepticism and problematization of self to the world, introduced the double as something more disturbing and less definable but also as a crucial index of cultural limits” (125). This new introspective look was also reflected in some writings from the Victorian period. In particular, it is possible to observe how the historical context influenced the works of Irish author Sheridan Le Fanu. Ireland during the nineteenth century suffered great catastrophes, such as the Great Irish Famine. Mc Cromack in his book *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* refers to Le Fanu’s participation in a campaign against the government because of his indifference to the

national situation (119). In this way, historical changes and great catastrophes lead the individual to a state of reflection and introspection, which can be reflected through the literature of this period. This new introspective look, with a focus linked to the subconscious, requires analysis from a psychoanalytic point of view.

Among the psychoanalysts who have thoroughly developed the concept of the double and the Doppelgänger are Sigmund Freud and Karl Gustav Jung, each with their own particular point of view on the subject. Freud in “The Uncanny”, raises the idea of the double through his analysis of the ‘alter ego’, as a way of representing people’s repressed desires. Freud emphasizes that the unconscious mind works with those thoughts that are not revealed in a clear and rational way in the human mind, but that are manifested through involuntary or unconscious behaviors or feelings (944). Considering the concept of the double used in Gothic literature and later in some literary works of the Victorian period, Freud defines the Uncanny as “that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (930). With this, Freud manages to link what provokes terror in us to those familiar or common elements, through the concepts of Heimlich and Unheimlich:

In general, we are reminded that the word Heimlich is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which without being contradictory are yet very different: on the one hand, it means that which is familiar and congenial, and on the other, that which is concealed and kept out of sight. Thus, Heimlich is a word the meaning of which develops towards an

ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, unheimlich. Unheimlich is in some way or other a sub-species of Heimlich (934).

According to this, the uncanny combines these two semantic levels, Heimlich and Unheimlich, in the sense that those elements that cause us fear and discomfort are at the same time those that we would consider familiar or common for us. As Freud mentions in his work, “this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression” (944). Continuing with the different ways of expressing duality, I believe that it is possible to make a distinction between internal duality, which is experienced by the character on a psychological level; and external duality, which develops between the two different characters. Those aspects that possess uncanny characteristics according to Freud, could be developed through internal duality. In particular, it could be suggested that the character of Laura in the novella *Carmilla* develops under this light, dealing with both dual aspects linked to the repression of emotions, which will be observed in depth in the following chapters.

The duality portrayed by Freud, in addition to presenting itself through the familiar and the unknown, is also developed through transferring mental processes from one person to the other. Within the Gothic narrative, this process of thought transmission or sensory connection is recurrent in the context of the Doppelgänger, which, following Freud’s line,

is also related to what the Unheimlich and Heimlich concepts represent. Freud studies this representation of the Uncanny particularly through Hoffmann's work, stating that:

He accentuates this relation by transferring mental processes from the one person to the other — what we should call telepathy — so that the one possesses knowledge, feeling and experience in common with the other, identifies himself with another person, so that his self becomes confounded, or the foreign self is substituted for his own — in other words, by doubling, dividing and interchanging the self (940).

This way of dividing and interchanging the self presents us with a wide range of ways in which the characters of Gothic literature develop their duality. It is not only about a physical similarity, but also about the transmission of thought and situations that connect both characters in a way that makes them a single entity. Within the novella *Carmilla*, one of the peculiar situations that represent the duality between Carmilla and Laura corresponds to their connections through dreams. Within this dream context, both share situations and experiences where their individuality is confused, achieving in a certain way the unification of both characters.

Among the ways of representing duality is the concept of 'the shadow', mentioned above in relation to aboriginal myths and beliefs regarding duality and its connection between the soul and the shadow. Freud also refers to this term, analyzing it under a psychoanalytic perspective. The author creates a connection between the shadow symbol and repression, indicating that it corresponds to those aspects that are hidden in the

subconscious. Anthony Steven refers to this study through a comparison between Jung's work and the Freudian unconscious:

Jung felt 'shadow' to be an appropriate term for this disowned subpersonality for there is inevitably something 'shady' about it, hidden away as it is in the dark lumber-room of the Freudian unconscious. Unwanted though it is, it persists as a powerful dynamic that we take with us wherever we go as a dark companion which dogs our steps – just like a shadow in fact (109).

Even though in the previous quote Freud's analytical theory is not made explicit, it is inferred that his conception of the shadow corresponds to a part of the unconscious, which remains repressed. On the other hand, Jung's theory does not exclude those repressed elements, considering the shadow as part of the unconscious that we must accept. Živković also delves into the differences between the two authors regarding their own conceptions of 'the shadow' within the personal unconscious:

Unlike Freud, Jung sees the Self as *Complexio Oppositorum*, where good and evil are simply complementary opposites, each a necessary condition for the existence of the other. In his doctrine of the shadow he defines the double as neither good nor bad, but as 'a replica of one's own unknown face' (126).

In *The Essential Jung*, Anthony Storr refers more specifically to the way in which Jung represents the concept of 'the shadow', indicating that, by including all aspects of the unconscious, it is necessary to make a moral effort not to repress those elements that we could consider negative: "The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-

personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as real” (91). Therefore, considering the dual aspect of the shadow concept, according to Jung’s perspective, duality remains within a unified whole. Duality, hence, is incarnated by *Carmilla*’s main characters according to both concepts of duality based on the idea of ‘the shadow’. In this light, Laura represents that Freudian concept of shadow as a repressive aspect. At the same time, Carmilla and Laura manage to relate to each other with respect to Jung’s conception of shadow, represented mainly by Carmilla and her freedom when expressing her emotions towards Laura.

To sum up, the present theory encompasses duality or Doppelgänger from its etymological and cultural origins, to eventually suggest how these concepts are reflected in Gothic literature, a category under which the novel *Carmilla* is classified. Finally, taking into consideration the introspective nature of the Gothic novels, it was necessary to raise the term Doppelgänger based on the theories of Freud and Jung, who developed various works that focus on duality.

## Duality or Internal Division Presented in Laura and Carmilla

Throughout the novel, duality is expressed in varied ways, depending on its characters and the situations that are developed. Particularly with the protagonists of Le Fanu's work, Laura and Carmilla, the duality is reflected both internally and externally. On the one hand, the internal duality in Laura is presented through the repression of her emotions, while in Carmilla is depicted through various characteristics in her personality, such as her languor versus her passion, as well as her childish personality versus her masculine characteristics. Particularly in this chapter, I will address the internal dualities of both characters, to then create a connection with various aspects of their external duality or Doppelgänger characteristics in the following chapter.

### Repression of Emotions

Laura from the very beginning emphasizes her loneliness, constantly repeating how remote her home is, as expressed in the following lines: "here, in this lonely and primitive place, where everything is so marvelously cheap" (1). Furthermore, she highlights how little she has been able to interact with other people than those who live in the schloss: "These were our regular social resources; but of course there were chance visits from 'neighbors' of only five or six leagues distance. My life was, notwithstanding, rather a solitary one, I can assure you" (2). Considering the level of isolation to which Laura is subjected, it is natural that she grew into a withdrawn and shy person, as she mentions: "I



was a little shy, as lonely people are” (12). It seems to me that this correspondence between her loneliness and shyness forms the basis for the repression of those emotions that she does not fully understand. This is due to the few instances of socialization that she has had throughout her life, making it difficult for her to understand certain situations, particularly the feelings that flourish after meeting Carmilla.

Before meeting Carmilla, Laura was eager to have human contact and socialize with other people who were not in the schloss, particularly young ladies and aristocrats like herself. However, her chances of making friends with other people were dashed after Berta’s death. For this reason, when Carmilla’s carriage overturns near her home, Laura could not hide her excitement at being able to share with this young woman while she recovered from the accident. Therefore, the hope of a new friendship arose in the protagonist’s mind. Based on this, it seems to me that Laura felt the need in her life to develop socially, as well as to experience new emotions. The monotonous life she has had at schloss was no longer enough for her, which is revealed through the emphasis on her lonely life in this place and her excitement at welcoming this stranger, as presented below: “I was longing to see and talk to her; and only waiting till the doctor should give me leave” (11).

Although we as readers never meet Berta, we can assume that she lived in the same repressive conditions as Laura, due to the patriarchal and oppressive context in which she live. Ana María Hernández in a study of ambiguity and duality in *Carmilla* refers to Berta's condition, mentioning that, "like Laura, she lives as a prisoner of a patriarchal image in an absolute loneliness, representing the servile and homely aspect of women" (72). The patriarchal system to which the protagonist submits is represented through her father. Although he is not dominant in a violent way, but in a loving and patronizing way over Laura, he represents her highest authority. Also, from my perspective, she feels diminished before him due to his condescending attitude. In the next quote, Laura prefers not to comment on the appearance of the monstrous black figure in her room for fear of being ridiculed, thus repressing her emotions in order not to be belittled and diminished by him:

I could not bear next day to be alone for a moment. I should have told papa, but for two opposite reasons. At one time I thought he would laugh at my story, and I could not bear its being treated as a jest; and at another I thought he might fancy that I had been attacked by the mysterious complaint which had invaded our neighbourhood (25).

Based on this kind of life, where they are involved in a patriarchal system and almost absolute ostracism to the outside world, in my view, both Laura and Berta are emotionally repressed, which prevents them from developing as autonomous women and to explore different emotions and feelings. Considering the social context, like the situation of the

Anglo-Irish in nineteenth-century Ireland mentioned in the last chapter, it is understandable that the repression seems to be a recurring pattern in the novella.

It is due to the repression that Laura perceives in herself that Carmilla represents radical changes regarding Laura's perception of her own emotions. The new feelings that Laura develops due to Carmilla's actions and attitudes remain in a constant ambivalence. Despite having a languid and fragile personality, when she is alone with Laura, the female vampire acts in a completely passionate and energetic way. In these situations, Laura constantly maintains a duality of opposite emotions such as repulsion and disgust, as reflected in the following quote:

In these mysterious moods I did not like her. I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. I had no distinct thoughts about her while such scenes lasted, but I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence. This I know is paradox, but I can make no other attempt to explain the feeling (15).

The last lines claim that she is involved in a paradox of opposite and dual emotions. Being a submissive woman within the patriarchal system, Laura finds a hidden part of herself when she meets Carmilla. In this sense, according to Freud's analysis of the 'alter ego' in "The Uncanny", it is observed how Laura's unconscious mind acts in a dual and contradictory way every time she refers to Carmilla, staying in an internal conflict between desire and revulsion. Carmilla represents the forbidden, the sexually explicit, the

ambiguity, and the homosexuality. Through those moments shared with Laura, the vamp puts aside her languor and expresses herself in a passionate and seductive way, as expressed by the protagonist in the following lines:

It was like the ardor of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet over-powering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips traveled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, ‘You are mine, you shall be mine, you and I are one for ever’ (15).

In *Satanic Feminism*, Per Faxneld refers to the different ways in which nineteenth-century female characters are subjugated. She argues that “female vampires were often used in nineteenth century literature as a metaphor for ‘improper’ female behavior, since the vampires symbolized a threatening type of female who was independent, acted on her sexual desires, and rejected motherhood” (263). In my view, Carmilla in her vampiric form expresses herself in a sexual and passionate way to Laura. The vamp, as a predator, seeks in the first instance the non-reproductive or sterile sexual pleasure of a homosexual relationship, which is considered improper at that time, as mentioned in Faxneld quote.

This last point gives rise to the second element that embodies the internal duality in Laura, homosexuality. Considering that she is involved in a patriarchal context, in addition to her social isolation, we can easily understand the great confusion developed in Laura,

regarding her new feelings for Carmilla. Furthermore, Carmilla's freedom in expressing her emotions to Laura confuses her heteronormative mind.

### Homosexuality as a Form of Internal Duality

In *Idols of Perversity*, Bram Dijkstra refers to this contrast between the two characters, indicating that "So completely opposite is Carmilla from Laura that the latter for a moment even suspects that her new companion might actually be male" (342). The last mentioned is represented explicitly in the following lines: "What if a boyish lover had found his way into the house, and sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade, with the assistance of a clever old adventuress" (16). This proves that, due to the heteronormative context in which she lives, it is difficult for Laura to consider that Carmilla could really love her romantically and not as a friend, and the same happens to her with her own emotions. Based on her reading of romances, Laura tries to understand and manage these feelings focused on the idea that Carmilla is actually a man, considering that the love between two women does not correspond within this patriarchal world. Nonetheless, she believes that this idea does not make much sense and that in great part it only flatters her own vanity.

Homosexuality within this framework represents an opposite duality, since in a heteronormative context is frowned upon. In her article, "Shared Secrets: Motherhood and

Male Homosexuality in Doppelgänger Narratives”, Susan Yi Sencindiver refers particularly to this point, stating that:

for most middleclass inhabitants of this world, homosexuality represented a double life, in which a respectable daytime world often involving marriage and family, existed alongside a night world of homoeroticism. Indeed, the *fin de siècle* was the golden age of literary and sexual doubles (38).

From my perspective, Laura’s emotional repression can be attributed to the social apprehension that existed regarding homosexuality, considering it an impious and prohibited act. In 1885, the rejection of homosexuality in the United Kingdom was such, that this sexual orientation was considered a very serious crime. An example of this situation is Oscar Wilde, who was one of the people arrested for his sexual condition, having to serve two years of forced labor. Along these lines, it is understandable that Laura finds herself in a constant ambivalence between the repulsion and adoration of Carmilla, due to the fear of the reprisals of having this ‘double life’, in addition to her submission to the heteronomy society.

On the other hand, Carmilla develops various dual elements in her personality and behavior, which confuses Laura regarding what the female vampire really means. This is demonstrated through attitudes that are subtle but unusual enough to provoke a degree of strangeness in Laura. Along these lines, we as readers are aware that Carmilla is much older than she appears. However, it seems that in some circumstances she forgot her role

as a jovial and lovely girl, showing a cold and distant attitude that she confused Laura: “There was a coldness, it seemed to me, beyond her years, in her smiling melancholy persistent refusal to afford me the least ray of light” (14). In the same way, Carmilla shows the passionate outbursts accompanied by a masculine behavior, completely opposite to the languid and girlish personality that Carmilla usually presents: “Except in these brief periods of mysterious excitement her ways were girlish; and there was always a languor about her, quite incompatible with a masculine system in a state of health” (16). However, taking into account her supernatural characteristics, one of her most remarkable internal dualities is that of her impressive beauty and her monstrous repulsiveness, represented by Laura in the following lines:

It was long before the terror of recent events subsided; and to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations - sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church (53).

Unlike Laura, Carmilla reflects a range of different dual forms that can be opposed to each other, such as her languor and exorbitant passion, or her colossal beauty and demonic monstrosity. It seems to me that the main reason is that Carmilla belongs to a supernatural parameter, where she has the freedom to present herself as she wants. Laura’s duality regarding her repressed emotions is not handled voluntarily. It is for this reason that Laura felt discomfort and confusion regarding her own emotions. Unlike Laura, Carmilla reflects a range of different dual forms that can be opposed to each other, such as her languor and

enormous passion, or her impressive beauty and devilish monstrosity. Returning to Jung's studies reviewed in the previous chapter, Carmilla manages to develop within the concept of the shadow described by Jung, since in her personal unconscious she embraces those dark aspects of her personality, hiding them only when it is convenient for her. On the other hand, Laura cannot manage the repression of her emotions, so in her case, it would be close to the proposal of Freud's shadow. In this way, Laura felt discomfort and confusion regarding her own emotions, while it is possible that Carmilla has a full understanding of her personal unconscious.

Although, I consider that every human being has the capacity to consciously embrace their homosexual nature, as I mentioned earlier, during the nineteenth century this type of behavior was recriminated and penalized. In this way, due to the rigidity of the period to non-heterosexual sexual behaviors, it seems to me that Carmilla, being in a superior position to the human due to her supernatural characteristics and her ability to manipulate others, is allowed to represent a sexual condition that does not belong to the norm of this period. Hence, Carmilla embraces her sexuality, encompassing her subjective duality in a complete way, which would be considered 'the shadow' according to Jung. While Laura deals with the repression of her emotions, so she faces the dual shadow expressed by Freud. This point of view clearly deviates from what Le Fanu really tried to represent, since being part of the Irish Metropolitan Conservative Society, he belonged to the hegemonic and patriarchal caste.



## Vampiric Duality

In this sense, the vampire like a supernatural entity in the novella is observed as a dual being, as mentioned below by Baron Vordernburg through the information collected by Mircalla's former lover: "He has left a curious paper to prove that the vampire, on its expulsion from its dual existence, is projected into a far more horrible life" (53). Due to its 'amphibious existence', duality is essential to the vampire, as is mentioned in the following lines: "The amphibious existence of the vampire is sustained by daily renewed slumber in the grave" (52). In this sense, it seems to me that it is for this very reason that Carmilla is able to maintain those dual opposites both in her physique and actions as it is part of her nature.

Despite the fact that Carmilla seems to change her physical form at will, and easily manipulate different situations, with Laura there seems to be a different connection than with other victims. As mentioned below, it is part of her vampiric nature to seduce certain victims in order to possess them:

The vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons. 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. (52)

By acting in this way with Laura, Carmilla insists to the protagonist to love her to death and after, which could indicate that Laura is not a mere victim and that Carmilla wants to transform Laura into someone of the same supernatural species:

You will think me cruel, very selfish, but love is always selfish; the more ardent the more selfish. How jealous I am you cannot know. You must come with me, loving me, to death; or else hate me and still come with me. And hating me through death and after. There is no such word as indifference in my apathetic nature (23).

Based on Carmilla's dual vampiric nature, she as a supernatural being belongs to the category of the 'undead'. This state of ambiguity, where she is not really alive or dead, allows her to function in a zone human being cannot. From my perspective, Carmilla wants Laura to accompany her to death and further. She wants Laura to be her lover in the eternity of death since both in their dual form, are connected to the point of being one, something which will be covered in-depth in the next chapter. This strong connection is emphasized when Carmilla asks Laura if she is afraid of death, as presented in the following quote:

'You are afraid to die?' 'Yes, everyone is.' 'But to die as lovers may — to die together, so that they may live together. Girls are caterpillars while they live in the world, to be finally butterflies when the summer comes; but in

the meantime there are grubs and larvae, don't you see — each with their peculiar propensities, necessities and structure' (20).

As has been seen, Carmilla explains to Laura her personal perception of death. In this particular case, she does not express herself through passionate words to confuse Laura, but it seems that Carmilla is speaking to her honestly so that Laura really has the possibility to understand her and to be able to follow Carmilla in her vampire form. In this way, I agree with Andriano's ideas in "Our Dual Existence" regarding Carmilla's representation: "She is the natural tendency that makes the snowy woods of death look 'lovely, dark, and deep'. The beauty of this death-goddess becomes the Gorgon's ugliness only when her promptings are ignored" (54). Carmilla is presented as a 'goddess of death', in the sense that death itself is inevitable for mortals. I believe Carmilla was trying to make Laura understand her reality, trying to explain that for her this is not the end, but only a transformation of herself to an eternal and improved being, like the transformation from caterpillar to butterfly.

Summarizing, both Laura and Carmilla express different elements of internal duality that stand out throughout the novella. However, considering the main characteristics of each of the protagonists, their dualities are very different from each other. Nonetheless, there is a powerful connection between them, which goes beyond the victim-perpetrator relationship. These similarities and differences polarized between them allow us to consider that the relationship between Carmilla and Laura implies something more profound and complex. Along these lines, I believe that the dual existence between both

characters can lead us to a connection between them as Doppelgängers, where both act as the opposite and at the same time as the equal of the other.

## Doppelgänger or External Division in Laura and Carmilla

Duality is not only reflected internally within the Laura and Carmilla, but also externally between them. As explained in the Theoretical Framework, there are several ways to refer to the Doppelgänger concept, which in this chapter will be related to external duality. The most recurrent definition of the term Doppelgänger is the one given by Mary Ellen Snodgrass, who indicates that it is “the shadow double, demon double, and split personality” (83). In this chapter, I will explore on duality between Laura and Carmilla concerning to maternal and family connections and their union through their shared dreams.

### Maternal Connection

In addition to the strong homoerotic relationship that grows between them, discussed in the previous chapter, Laura and Carmilla are also related in a different way, which is hard to elucidate at first sight. According to Sencindiver in “Shared Secrets: Motherhood and Male Homosexuality in Doppelgänger Narratives”, motherhood is a way of representing duality or the doppelgänger, due to the fact that the son detaches from the mother, being originally part of the same body: “only one sex can physically become a hostess to a double; in other words, it is only the female body that is capable of generating a second self” (33). Despite the fact that there is not a mother-daughter relationship

between them, there are several elements that are closely related to motherhood and its dual connection, which will be discussed below.

Laura and Carmilla are part of the same lineage, and, therefore, share blood ties. These are connected exclusively on the maternal side, which is specified by Carmilla: “‘Ah!’ said the lady, languidly, ‘so am I, I think, a very long descent, very ancient. Are there any Karnsteins living now?’” (21). Besides, Laura is not the only one who has blood ties with Carmilla, since Berta is also a Karnstein descendant, as General Spielsdorf mentions to Laura’s father: “‘The house of Karnstein,’ he said, ‘has been long extinct: a hundred years at least. My dear wife was maternally descended from the Karnsteins. But the name and title have long ceased to exist’” (36). The peculiarity that there are only maternal descendants related to Carmilla could be part of one of the uncanny elements mentioned by Freud, due to the unusual repetition of this element. This point will be developed in relation to the duality between Carmilla and Laura in depth in the following lines.

Freud refers particularly to the repetition of some elements as a representation of the uncanny: “there is the constant recurrence of similar situations, a same face, or character-trait, or twist of fortune, or a same crime, or even a same name recurring throughout several consecutive generations” (940). In this sense, the consanguineous relationship between Laura, Carmilla, and Berta can be interpreted as a manifestation of the uncanny,

which in this case is exclusively female. The uncanny is produced by the extreme coincidence that the three characters are descendants of the vamp. Nonetheless, although there is a blood connection between the three, the duality appears particularly between the two protagonists of the novel. According to Freud, there are dual elements that develop through the uncanny, known as *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich*, considering both concepts as part of the other. The first concept, *Heimlich*, is described as one that represents the familiar and congenial, while the second is concealed and kept out of sight (934). This ambivalence is constantly presented throughout the novel between the protagonists. In the previous chapter, the duality regarding the familiar and the strange is explored internally, through the portrayal of Carmilla as a languid and attractive woman (*Heimlich*) and as a monstrous and abominable woman (*Unheimlich*), as well as through Laura's repression of her opposite emotions. Nevertheless, this kind of duality can also be represented externally. Regarding the maternal relationship, there are various ways in which duality is expressed through the *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich* between Laura and Carmilla.

Firstly, both present similarities regarding the absence of their mothers. Laura lost hers in her childhood, being raised by her governess: "My mother, a Styrian lady, died in my infancy, but I had a good-natured governess, who had been with me from, I might almost say, my infancy" (2). In Carmilla's case, she does not suffer the death of her mother, but an absent mother. Considering the role that Carmilla adopts every time her mother leaves her in the house of strangers, in order to feed her upon the blood of the young women who

accept her in their homes, it seems that the pattern of the unhappy and abandoned young girl is maintained. While it can be interpreted that she adopts this role as a mere performance to gain the trust of those who receive her, we have no way of knowing what the real relationship between Carmilla's mother and her is, and if she is really her mother. Taking this into consideration, from my perspective, I think it is arguable that Carmilla really feels miserable every time her supposed mother abandons her to her fate, as General Spielsdorf describes it in his encounter with the vampires: "'She is gone,' said Millarca, with a sigh. 'She did not look up,' said the young lady, plaintively" (41).

Following this line of argument, it is important to bear in mind that Carmilla, Laura, or Bertha do not have a mother figure. Nonetheless, the first meeting between Laura and Carmilla makes a difference in their relationship. The scene of their first meeting seems to show that both complement each other in a maternal way. Laura mentions that moment she was completely alone, which was something that did not happen particularly often. Her only maternal figures, the governesses, were not close to care for her: "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" (2). Laura's attitude in this context is unusual for a six-year-old girl. Instead of reacting as a scared child would, calling her father or mother, Laura feels outraged and angry about being alone. Nonetheless, considering that Laura belongs to the aristocratic class, she could be used to being cared for by nurses and their governesses more than her



own family, in this case, her father. The only thing that interrupts her whining to get the attention of the employees is Carmilla's beautiful face: "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" (2). Thus, the appearance of Carmilla could be seen as a replacement for her nurses and governesses, who in Laura's life fulfill the maternal role by caring for her during her childhood.

Through this encounter, Laura manages to calm down instead of being scared. This situation is also strange since it is natural to feel horrified when seeing someone unknown next to our bed. But even more peculiar is what Laura mentions below: "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" (3). Considering how the scene unfolds, and as I mentioned before, I believe that Carmilla is presented with a certain maternal attitude. When Laura found herself alone, instead of being the nurse or governess who go in search of Laura, it is Carmilla who lulls her in her breast, calming her down until she falls asleep, just as a mother would. In this episode, it is Carmilla who occupies the role of mother for Laura, an experience that she never had the opportunity to live. However, Laura continues her story stating the following: "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” (3). Through this attack on Laura, the intimate maternal moment is abruptly broken, becoming the opposite of the mother.

In this case, the *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich* elements develop within circumstances that are uncanny in themselves. The care and affection that Carmilla provides to Laura imitate an emotion that could be natural and familiar in a normal context, which is to sleep peacefully on her mother’s breast. Nonetheless, neither this situation nor what happens afterward could be considered as normal and common situations. In Andriano’s words, “Carmilla is the mother in her terrible aspect, who withdraws the breast as punishment. So traumatic, in other words, is the loss or withdrawal of the mother, that her absence becomes a demonic presence: a devouring antimother” (50). Carmilla possesses that duality of mother and antimother mentioned by Andriano. Nevertheless, I do not consider that Carmilla is precisely the representation of the ‘punishing mother’ for Laura. This is because, taking into consideration the uncanny context in which the scene takes place, Carmilla does not develop as a simple punishing or strict mother. From my perspective, the moment in which she bites Laura’s breast, the role of mother is reversed, since it is Laura who feeds Carmilla. Moreover, it is important to take into consideration that Carmilla does not bite Laura’s neck, the place where vampire bites are recurrently performed, but rather she bites her breast, which could symbolize the act of breastfeeding.

Regarding the maternal relationship, in addition to highlighting the development of the 'second self' through the detachment of another human being from the female body, the act of breastfeeding is also considered an important connection. This role, on a symbolic and nutritional level, serves as an essential development in the newborn child, as well as a particular connection with her mother. In that manner, even though Carmilla is sucking Laura's life through her breast, Laura nourishes the vamp with her blood. In an uncommon way, each becomes each other's the mother in different forms, giving the other what she could never have as a daughter: Laura being caressed and protected by Carmilla, an experience that she will never be able to live due to the early death of her dead mother; and Carmilla being 'breastfed, a situation that in her vampiric form she never managed to experience, since her transformation or birth is not related to life, but to death. This communion between both characters is reflected in the following way according to the words of Nina Auerbach: "in the flow of female dreams, murderer and murdered, mother and lover, are one; women in Carmilla merge into a union the men who watch them never see" (43). In my view, this scene represents the duality and connection that exists between both characters, inasmuch both represent opposing differences, but at the same time they have a connection so deep that it can be compared to the maternal one.

### Connection Through Dreams

In addition to the aforementioned experiences through maternal connection, the dual union of the main characters also developed through dreams. Throughout the novel,

dreams are a recurring element, which unfolds in different ways and gives us different perspectives regarding what Laura and Carmilla represent. Without going any further, the supposed dream mentioned recently, which is presented as their first interaction, is also lived by Carmilla.

When the vamp arrives at the schloss, the first conversation the two protagonists have is about their dream. It is Carmilla who breaks the silence when she sees Laura enter the room: “There was a silence of fully a minute, and then at length she spoke; I could not ‘How wonderful!’ she exclaimed. ‘Twelve years ago, I saw your face in a dream, and it has haunted me ever since’” (12). Again, this situation could imply that she pretends to have shared the same experience as Laura, in order to gain her trust. Nevertheless, I think there is a possibility that Carmilla really fails to handle these vampiric transformations, thus entering a state of unconsciousness in which she is not able to remember or control her actions. It is worth noting, as Nina Auerbach does in her book *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, that before the twentieth century the complexities of vampire life were not explored (42), so neither Le Fanu nor other authors from the nineteenth century referred in detail to the psychological aspects of these characters. The outbursts of passion mentioned in the previous chapter could be a reflection of this state of unconsciousness, as she then controls herself and acts as if nothing happened. A similar situation occurred with the shared dreams between them. A particularly important dream takes place when Laura, already feeling increasingly fragile and languid, experiences the following:

One night, instead of the voice I was accustomed to hear in the dark, I heard one, sweet and tender, and at the same time terrible, which said, 'Your mother warns you to beware of the assassin.' At the same time a light unexpectedly sprang up, and I saw Carmilla, standing, near the foot of my bed, in her white nightdress, bathed, from her chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood. I wakened with a shriek, possessed with the one idea that Carmilla was being murdered (28).

In this particular dream, Laura confuses the message that is delivered to her, thinking that it is Carmilla who will be killed, and not that she is the murderer. Again, this may be a representation of their union of both as the Doppelgängers of the other, as their personalities and characteristics are confused with each other. This 'premonitory' dream, for us as readers, reaffirms that Carmilla is the murderer. Nevertheless, considering the dual characteristics of both characters, I think that this dream symbolizes that Carmilla would also be killing herself when she kills Laura. Moreover, the mother's voice could act as the representation of her dual maternal connection. In this dream, Carmilla, Laura, and Laura's mother are merged into the same identity, where their personalities become confused and temporarily cease to be independent individuals.

As a result of this dream, a scared Laura goes in search of Carmilla, finding herself surprised that she is not in her room. After everyone in the schloss desperately searches for her, Carmilla suddenly appears in her own room.

‘Last night has been a night of wonders’, she said. How could all this have happened without my being wakened? It must have been accompanied with a great deal of noise, and I am particularly easily wakened; and how could I have been carried out of my bed without my sleep having been interrupted, I whom the slightest stir startles? (30).

Even though it is very likely that Carmilla is faking these types of situations in order to achieve her attack, there is also the possibility that she is not really aware of these transformations. Just like a sleepwalker, Carmilla may be undergoing these ambivalent shifts between being rational and being irrational in her vampiric state.

There are also other types of dreams in which both characters are involved, Laura develops dreams with peculiar characteristics after being bitten by Carmilla. In this context, Laura maintains a constant attitude of lassitude and languor, a fundamental characteristic of the female vampire. Hence, while Laura begins to adopt characteristics of Carmilla through the vampiric transformation, she also begins to live her union with the vamp within her dreams:

Sometimes there came a sensation as if a hand was drawn softly along my cheek and neck. Sometimes it was as if warm lips kissed me, and longer and longer and more lovingly as they reached my throat, but there the caress fixed itself. My heart beat faster, my breathing rose and fell rapidly and full drawn; a sobbing, that rose into a sense of strangulation, supervened, and turned into a dreadful convulsion, in which my senses left me and I became unconscious (28).

Inasmuch it is Carmilla who visits Laura in her dreams, the description of these dreams makes us consider that the union between Carmilla and Laura develops not only in a maternal way, but also in a sexual way. This symbolism could demonstrate the union between Carmilla and Laura as dual beings, through dreams as a setting. Within this oneiric context, where different situations are possible —such as the appearance of Laura’s mother—, Carmilla and Laura have the possibility of unfolding differently than they can in the real world. In this scenario, where there are no social taboos that repress Laura’s desire, both characters are allowed to connect deeply. Thus, both dual elements find their unification through dreams, expressed with their sexual passion. In this sense, it is worth highlighting Jung’s theory regarding the concept of ‘the shadow’. Although Laura tends to repress her emotions, which is linked to Freudian theory as mentioned previously, when she is connecting with Carmilla within the dreaming subconscious, that unknown phase mentioned by Jung is presented. It could be considered that it is in the world of dreams where Laura frees herself from those moral aspects, which keep her repressed. Although she is not fully aware of what is happening, to a certain extent Laura in this context manages to free herself through the sexual act, allowing her to observe an unknown face of herself. With her outbursts of passion towards Laura, Carmilla tends to be repetitive regarding her need to unify with Laura: “You are mine, you shall be mine, you and I are one for ever” (15). Beyond the sense of belonging that Carmilla shows for Laura, the vamp also shows her interest in being one with her: “‘Darling, darling’, she murmured, ‘I live in you; and you would die for me, I love you so’ (22). This almost obsessive relationship with her may be due to her vampiric personality, since, as can be

seen in the following quote, vampires maintain a certain pattern when approaching their victims:

The vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons. In pursuit of these 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 (52).

Notwithstanding, the first meeting between the two of them makes a difference in the way Carmilla operates with her victims. After hugging and tenderly caring for Laura, Carmilla decides to bite her. Anyhow, she does not stalk her again after twelve years. Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Carmilla is interested in explaining to Laura her point of view regarding life and death. This may imply a greater interest in Laura, beyond just being prey for Carmilla. In this sense, a special connection between Carmilla and Laura can be observed beyond the romantic perception of love and passion. This type of deep connection between the two could involve their union as a Doppelgänger, where both are part of the same entity. In addition to their union, Carmilla's outpouring of passionate love towards Laura repetitively emphasizes the fact that they must be one both in life and in death, as can be seen in the quote above. I think this insistence on Carmilla's part reflects her Doppelgänger personality with Laura. Perhaps unconsciously, Carmilla has the certainty that Laura is her other self, her dual



representation. Whether in their meeting when Laura was a child or after twelve years, the relationship between them exceeds the common relationship of victim-perpetrator or common lovers. Under this line, both tend to be part of the other, and, at the same time, their respective Doppelgänger or opposite.

## Conclusion

The duality between Carmilla and Laura posed through their differences and similarities shows us a diffuse separation between the two characters, where their relationship has such a particularity that it involves them as the same entity, but at the same time as completely opposite entities. Hence, it was necessary to make the Doppelgänger concept explicit. In this context, it is reflected as ‘the shadow double’, since both are opposite as if they were the reflection of a mirror, but at the same time, they are part of the same unit. Being a topic that requires an introspective study, it was also necessary to address psychoanalytic theories such as those of Freud and Jung. In this sense, the concept ‘the shadow’ stands out, which refers to the duality presented within the unconscious. After having determined the elements already mentioned, an analysis was developed on the internal duality in Laura and Carmilla individually.

Laura’s duality, on the one hand, is reflected through Laura’s repression of her emotions, which are directly connected to the repressed homosexuality of the Victorian era. On the other hand, Carmilla demonstrates her internal duality through various characteristics of her personality, which seem to be opposed to each other. The reason that Carmilla is shown as such an ambivalent person, being excessively languid and passionate, or her impressive beauty versus her monstrous appearance, could be due to her supernatural aspect inasmuch it is part of her vampiric characteristic to have a dual

existence. Finally, having already analyzed the internal dual aspects, the external one was studied, which corresponds to their role as the Doppelgänger of the other, observed through their maternal connection and shared dreams. These elements that reflect the external duality between Laura and Carmilla are developed through the concepts mentioned by Freud, Heimlich and Unheimlich, since the maternal care that Carmilla gave to Laura is broken by the bite on her breast. The same happens with the dreams, since both seem to connect in a sexual way through these, a context in which each character seems to blur as an individual, both becoming the same entity.

Having analyzed the general aspects of the dissertation, it is worth highlighting the strengths and weaknesses when developing my arguments. First of all, I think the strength present in my arguments is constantly considering Carmilla's deceptive personality when examining the different situations that arise in her moments with Laura. On the other hand, among the weaknesses, the most recurrent corresponds to the lack of discussion with the novella. In this sense, my arguments could have been given greater value and emphasis by interpreting the primary text more thoroughly. In addition, when studying the duality between Laura and Carmilla, I would have liked the opportunity to develop the duality beyond them, studying the different triads formed in Le Fanu's work, which I did not achieve due to the extension of the dissertation. Henceforth, I could have expanded the study of the maternal connection between Carmilla and Laura by analyzing the triads that represent maternal and family care. These triads correspond to Matska, Carmilla's mother,

and Carmilla and the triad of Laura, which consist of her governesses, Madame Perrodon, and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine. Through the study between the two triads, I could have extended the analysis of the Doppelgänger concept not only in Carmilla and Laura but also through those female groups that make up his family.

Finally, after reflecting on the different points of the dissertation, I believe that one of the most relevant elements when studying the duality between Carmilla and Laura is the representation of the subconscious through the concept 'the shadow', studied by Freud and Jung. At a general level, Laura is characterized mainly by her repression, interpreted by Freud as the shadow found in the unconscious. This dual repression between attraction and repulsion by Carmilla could involve the collective thinking of the queer people of the Victorian period since homosexuality was something forbidden at that time. On the other hand, there is Carmilla, who although she belongs to the Victorian era, she is not tied to the rules or subjugations of that period, since she is a supernatural being. Hence, her duality is presented in a completely different way since Carmilla is not restricted to the ethical norms of the period. In this aspect, the vamp would coincide with Jung's description of 'the shadow', where moral ties no longer influence the character's subconscious. To conclude, I think it would be interesting to further study the aforementioned mentioned, taking into consideration that the acceptance of the repressed reflects what the queer people of the Victorian period could long for, like Laura herself.

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