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“Her murmured words sounded like a lullaby”: an analysis of eroticism, speech and manipulation in J. Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*.

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at analyzing the novella *Carmilla* (1872), by Irish writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814 -1873), more specifically the relationship between the seductive speech of the vampire Carmilla, its influence in the construction of an erotic atmosphere in the narrative, and also how Carmilla uses her speech to manipulate the people around her so they do not suspect of her vampiric nature. Eroticism in *Carmilla* was analyzed under the concept of erotic(a) by James Latimore (2013), thus it was found that the character Carmilla makes use of two different types of speech with her victim: charming and manipulative. Charming speech is used as a way to lure Laura (Carmilla's victim and main character of the narrative) into her trap. Carmilla, uses exaggerated compliments to Laura's beauty to seduce and create a friendship with the victim, to gain her trust and to feed on the young woman's blood. Moreover, her discourse is also charming because they are always whispered in Laura's ears, and accompanied by embraces. The manipulative speech, Carmilla uses precisely to control Laura, without her suspecting that the vampire is the person who is invading her room at night, sucking her blood and thus causing her to languish. It is concluded, then, that in addition to Carmilla's speech contributing to the construction of the eroticism present in the narrative, her actions and her declarations of love for Laura, also influence the construction of the erotic atmosphere. Finally, the victim, Laura, also proved to be fundamental for the eroticization of the narrative, since she is the narrator, and it is through her perspective that we have access to the seductive figure of Carmilla.

Keywords: Carmilla. Eroticism. Speech. Manipulation. Seduction.

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo analisar a novela *Carmilla* (1872), do escritor irlandês Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814 -1873), mais especificamente a relação entre a fala sedutora da vampira Carmilla, sua influência na construção de uma atmosfera erótica na narrativa, e também como Carmilla também utiliza sua fala para manipular as pessoas a sua volta para não desconfiarem da sua natureza vampírica. O erotismo em *Carmilla* foi analisado sob o conceito de erotic(a) de James Latimore (2013), sendo assim, foi visto que a personagem Carmilla faz uso de dois tipos de falas diferentes com sua vítima: charmosa e o manipulativa. A fala charmosa é utilizada como uma forma de atrair Laura (vítima de Carmilla e personagem principal da narrativa) para sua armadilha. Carmilla, faz uso de exagerados elogios à beleza de Laura para seduzir e criar uma amizade com a vítima, para ganhar sua confiança e conseguir se alimentar do sangue da jovem. Além disso, seu discurso também é charmoso pois são sempre ditos em sussurros ao ouvido de Laura, e acompanhados de abraços. A fala manipulativa, Carmilla utiliza justamente para controlar Laura, sem que esta desconfie que a vampira é quem está invadindo seu quarto a noite, sugando seu sangue e assim causando seu definhamento. Conclui-se então, que a além da fala de Carmilla contribuir para a construção do erotismo presente na narrativa, suas ações que se juntam a suas declarações de amor para Laura, também influenciam na construção da atmosfera erótica. Por fim, a vítima, Laura, também se mostrou fundamental para a erotização da narrativa, pois ela é a narradora, e é através da sua perspectiva que temos acesso à figura sedutora de Carmilla.

Palavras-chave: Carmilla. Erotismo. Fala. Manipulação. Sedução.

LIST OF IMAGES

Figura 1 – <i>Carmilla</i> - Illustration by D.H Friston	17
Figura 2 – <i>Laura in bed</i> - Illustration by Michael Fitzgerald	18
Figura 3 – <i>Funeral</i> - Illustration by D.H Friston	19

SUMMARY

1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
1.1 HISTORICIZING THE FEMALE VAMPIRE	12
1.2 JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU: HIS LIFE AND CAREER	16
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	20
2.1 THE TRANSGRESSIVE RELATIONSHIP OF LAURA AND CARMILLA	20
2.2 FEMALE LANGUAGE: THE FUNCTION OF RETHORIC IN <i>CARMILLA</i>	26
3 UNDERSTANDING EROTICISM	30
3.1 EROTICISM AND SOCIETY	30
3.2 EROTIC WORDS: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN EROTICISM	34
4 ANALYSIS	35
4.1 EROTICISM AND SEDUCTION IN CARMILLA	35
4.2 CARMILLA AND MALE MANIPULATION	44
5 FINAL REMARKS	50
6 WORKS CITED	56

1 INTRODUCTION

The figure of the vampire has been part of Western culture for many centuries and, throughout this time, the vampire lore has been constructed and shaped by different authors innumerable times. While some characteristics of the vampire have changed over the years, others have remained intact, migrating from older texts into more contemporary versions of the creature.¹ In his introduction to *The Vampire Book: The Book of the Undead*, James Gordon Melton argues that the common definition of vampires in a dictionary refers to the creature as a risen corpse who feeds from blood, but he claims this is not accurate once there are different kinds of vampires who do not fit in this definition, such as psychic vampires and energy-drenching vampires (MELTON, 2011, p. xxx). In this sense, it is possible to understand the figure of the vampire as mutable, and that it varies according to each environment, and culture it appears.

However mutable these characteristics may be, seduction has been a consistent feature in the vampire imagination, it is often linked to the symbolism of blood/sexuality, and it is a key attribute that vampiric creatures use to lure their victims. In the chapter entitled “The Vampire”, published in *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of our Worst Nightmares* (2007), Margaret L. Carter states that the vampire is linked, more particularly, to “erotic seduction”, as seen in eighteenth-century fiction such as in Byron’s, and Heinrich Ossenfelder’s poetry (2007, p. 621). The seductive character of the vampire remained a constant feature in nineteenth-century vampires, including the female vampire Carmilla. This female vampire is the main character of the novella *Carmilla*, written by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, in which is the object of this research.

I argue here that the vampire’s seductive power comes with the ability of luring, ultimately holding the victims fascinated. As the title of this study suggests, – “Her murmured words sounded like a lullaby” – Carmilla’s speech is very charming and involves her victims as a lullaby involves a child. In her master thesis entitled *Falling for Lions: Transformations of the Vampire Character in Literature*, Lívia Maria Pinho Paschoal (2018, p. 23) states that:

“Vampires are also frequently described as having the power of hypnosis. The hypnosis serves basically to two main purposes. First, it makes a victim more

¹ I am thinking here of counterexamples i.e. about features that modern vampires have which are not part of the vampire folklore or part of the pioneering literary texts. These mutability includes Edward Cullen’s skin that sparkles in the sunlight, Blade’s drinking of synthetic blood instead of human blood, or Louis de Point du Lac’s good behavior, abiding to social mores.

susceptible to a vampire attack and feeding. Second, the vampire can take advantage of the victim's state of trance and make them do as the creature pleases"

In this sense, the vampire uses control and manipulation to lull their victims before the attack. This is yet another common feature among vampires, and the combination between blood, erotic seduction and the power of hypnosis can also be seen in *Carmilla*. The distinction between her and other vampires is that, in order to make a victim more susceptible to an attack she uses "discourse" i.e. she uses seductive and persuasive language to make people do as she pleases. My hypothesis is that *Carmilla* does not use authentic hypnosis but the power of language, she acts more much subtly than *Dracula* (Bram Stoker, 1897) and other vampires in literature, that is, her manipulation operates implicitly through her speech, keeping people spellbound. *Carmilla's* speech or rhetoric skills are her most powerful tool when seducing her victims.

This research aims at analyzing categories related to the language of eroticism in the novella *Carmilla*, more specifically: a) to investigate how the erotic discourse is constructed in the narrative; b) to understand how *Carmilla's* speech is important in the seduction of her victim, and; c) to explain how *Carmilla's* rhetoric is an important element in the creation of eroticism or erotic undertones in the story. In order to accomplish these objectives, this study expects to answer the following questions: 1) how is the discursive, erotic nature of the vampire shown in the narrative through *Carmilla*? 2) What makes *Carmilla's* speech seductive? 3) In what ways can her speech be considered manipulative? 4) Is *Carmilla's* manipulative discourse expressed different in relation to male and female characters? I highlight here that there is no intention in this study to say that *Carmilla* manipulated Laura into homosexuality, I am aware that people are not manipulated into being homosexual, and that is part of one's being. The purpose here is to analyze the relationship between vampire and victim, and how the erotic aspects of the narrative resolve around the presence of the vampire, nonetheless, since both the vampire and the victim are female, it cannot be denied that their relationship can be considered homosexual, but it is not the focus of this study.

Considering this, the present study is going to build upon a wide variety of research that already have delved on the novella *Carmilla* (Auerbach, 1995; Sage, 2007; Signorotti, 1996), adding a different perspective to the issue of eroticism in the story, given that I analyze how *Carmilla's* speech promotes the erotic tone of the narrative. This study also acknowledges a range of research developed in Brazil that have been carried out about J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (Souza and Souza 2018; Silva and França 2017). The novella

has at least two translations to Portuguese, including by pulp fiction writer, Rubens Francisco Lucchetti (Editora Edrel, 1972), and by José Roberto O’Shea (Hedra, 2008), Emeritus Professor at Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês.

Although there is previous scholarly production on Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, researchers have not treated the combination between blood, erotic seduction and the power of language (discourse) in much detail. Therefore, this research is justified due to a lack of studies that consider Carmilla’s rhetoric skills as a relevant factor in preying, luring and feeding on her victims. In addition, although much published research mention erotic aspects in Carmilla and Laura’s relationship, the issue is either underdiscussed or generalized. What is not clear yet, is the impact of Carmilla’s discourse on the erotic appeal of Le Fanu’s story. Seeking to fulfill this gap, this work focuses on still underexplored issues of rhetoric and discursive practices between the female characters. Eroticism is strongly present and developed through Le Fanu’s narrative, and for this reason it deserves a substantial and thorough analysis.

1.1 HISTORICIZING THE FEMALE VAMPIRE

I will provide here brief history of female vampires discussing how it appears in many ancient civilizations, from Greek mythology, to medieval East-European history, until its incorporation into eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century English Literature. In the chapter entitled “Women as Vampires”, James Gordon Melton (2011, p. 816). states that:

In most cultures, the oldest vampire figures were females. They included the Greek *lamiai*, the Malaysian *langsuyar*, and the Jewish Lilith, among others. Each of these vampire figures points to the origin of vampirism as a myth explaining problems in childbirth.

As pointed out by the critic there is a long history of female vampires coming from different cultures in the world, and the myth of the Lamia is also one source of inspiration for female vampires. Lamia was a Libyan queen, who had a romantic relationship with Zeus, When Hera finds out her husband affair with the queen, the Goddess deprived Lamia of her children fathered by Zeus. Lamia then isolated herself in a cave, and started to attack children, feeding from their flesh, and by drinking their blood. As time passes by, Lamia transformed into a serpent-like beast, due to her horrible actions, however, she is able to transform herself into the image of beautiful woman, to attract men, and feed from them (COSTA, 2017, n.p²).

² Não paginado

Still discussing mythological creatures and its inspirations to the female vampire, there is the myth of Lilith. In the Talmudic period, it describes most of her evil activities. Lilith is Adam's first wife, however since she is made of the same dirt as him, she sees herself as his equivalent being, and did not allow him to take the dominant position during the sexual act. After this, she ran away to a place which is home for several of lecherous demons called the Red Sea, and during her period there, Lilith gave birth to several demons. God then, sent to find her three angels named Sensenoy, Semangelof and Senoy. The angels delivered to her a message sent by God, for her to return. The angels did not agree with her refusal, and threatened her life, so she defended herself claiming that she was conceived to decrease babies's strength, for a short period after they were born. As the angels still did not give up on her return, and Lilith then makes a deal with the angels when they try to force her into obeying God's will. She promised to not attack the children who wear an amulet that contains the names of the angels in it. Even though in a first moment Lilith declines the offer to go back to Adam, she later tries to seduce him, being rejected by him, she still manages to sleep with him despite of his refusal (PATAI, 1964, p. 296-297).

During this time, Adam, now with his new wife Eve, is expelled by God from the Garden of Eden, and is cursed with mortality. Due to his punishment, he initiates a period of celibacy with Eve, but demons took advantage of this situation paying night visits to both of them, making them fathering and mothering several demon babies; it is believed that Lilith is one of the demons who would visit him at night, thus it is from this that there is the superstition that Lilith visits men who are spending the night alone (PATAI, 1964, p. 297) According to Bruno Costa, there is another version of Lilith's myth in which instead of making a deal with the angels sent by God, they torment her by killing all of her demonic children. He also claims that Lilith wants to avenge herself from Adam, and therefore she and her demons, murder Adam and Eve's children by strangling them, or sucking their blood (2017, n.p), thus connecting her image with vampirism.

Another famous story about female vampires is the dreadful imagination built around Elizabeth Báthory, the Blood Countess, which seems to have been the basis for J. S. Le Fanu's character. According to Melton, "the creation of the modern vampire depended in large part upon the nineteenth century's appropriation of information on two historical personages: Vlad, the Impaler; the real Dracula, and Elizabeth Bathory" (2011, p. 817). The latter is a female noblewoman accused of murdering several young women. Elizabeth Báthory was born in 1560 and grew up on the family state at Ecsed in Transylvania. In 1575,

at the age of fifteen, the countess married Ferenc Nadasdy, who was a soldier, frequently absent from home for long periods. It was after marriage that her bloodlust emerged, while disciplining servant girls. Some of the punishments she inflicted on people included putting pins under their fingernails, and stripping victims naked in the winter, only to shove their bodies in water, until they slowly froze to death (MELTON, 2011, p. 41-42).

Her husband died in 1604, and after that, she moved to Vienna, also spending much of her time in her Stately property where nowadays is Slovakia. There, she became acquainted to Erzsi Majorova, who is believed to have influenced Báthory to turn girls from the nobility into her victims too, the countess accepted Majorova's advice - once her ill fame had spread, she was having trouble replacing her servant girls. In the year of 1609, Báthory was accused of murdering a noble girl, which she claimed was a suicide. In 1610 a trial took place, in order to punish the Countess for her crimes. During the court trials, it was presented as evidence a register with the names of six hundred and fifty victims. In addition, there were people who witnessed the deaths and also testified against her, as well as the testimony of the victims who had survived. Despite the large number of homicides and crimes she was accused of, the court could only prove the murder of eight victims. Elizabeth Báthory was sentenced to be imprisoned in a room, without windows and doors, it had only a small space for food, and even smaller ones for air. She remained there for three years, until her death on August 21, 1614. Despite being a condemned torturer and a murderer, that is not the reason the Countess is connected with vampirism.. It comes from the belief that Báthory used to drain the blood of her victims and to bathe in it, in order to remain young; although there was no evidence during the trials that proved she actually performed this practice. It was also never confirmed that Báthory drank the blood of her victims, however, the accusation of draining it from her victims passed down to present days, as a metaphor for vampirism (MELTON, 2011, p. 43).

Female vampires became particularly prevalent in European literature at the end of the eighteenth century. It is often asserted that J. W. Goethe's poem, 'The bride of Corinth' (1797), was the first female vampire from the period. In English literature, Geraldine, the villain from Coleridge's poem *Christabel* (1816) is considered the first female vampire (MELTON, 2011, p. 817). The poem narrates the story of Christabel who, one night, encounters a woman named Geraldine in the forest and invites the stranger to her castle, allowing Geraldine the opportunity to seduce Christabel. Like the facts and myths involving Báthory, the Blood Countess, the echoes of the character in Coleridge's narrative poem also reverberate in Le Fanu's *Carmilla*.

In his chapter “The Female Vampire”, part of the book *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature*, James B. Twitchell states that “while the male vampire story was a tale of domination, the female version was one of seduction” (1981, p. 39). The critic affirms that the archetype of the seductress partially derives from the Classical myth of the Lamia, which was already part of the Romantic imagination, but it was in the nineteenth century that the figure of the seductive vampire and that of the femme fatale was firstly connected. For the critic, Geraldine’s inspiration for Coleridge comes mainly from the Lamia myth, which also inspired John Keats’ female vampires in the poems “Lamia” and “La Belle Dame Sans Mercy”, both written in 1819. Post-Romantic writers, however, focused less on the mythological origins and more particularly on the complex associations between the attractive/dangerous woman, the seducer turned deadly.

Twitchell argues that the situation presented in *Christabel* is “reenacted later in the century in Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*” (1981, p. 47). The novella was published in 1872 and it had an impact of the iconic *Dracula* (1897). According to Melton, “one can see in Le Fanu’s tale, which would later be read by Bram Stoker, the progress of the developing vampire myth to that point” (2011, p. 104). The character Carmilla morphed into different shapes of animals, slept in coffins, had fangs in which she used to suck the blood of her victim’s chest or neck, she had nocturnal habits (but she could walk in the sunlight), she maintained social connections, and was also incredibly strong. The influence of *Carmilla* on Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), can be particularly verified in the characterization of his female vampires in the narrative (MELTON, 2011, p. 104-105).

The female vampires in *Dracula* include his three brides that appear in the beginning of the narrative, but the one that receives more emphasis is the character Lucy Westenra, who is best friends with Wilhelmina “Mina” Harker. Mina is Jonathan Harker’s wife, and is targeted by Dracula after he transformed Lucy. Regarding the latter, she is seduced by Count Dracula and also turned into a vampire. In the narrative, Mina and Lucy spend some time together, in which Mina witnesses Lucy sleepwalk in the room, and in one occasion, the girl even disappears from the room, Mina encounters her outdoors, in a place they used to visit. When she finds Lucy, Mina sees Count Dracula attacking the girl, and notices she has bite marks on the neck. After this, Lucy falls ill, and is treated by doctor Van Helsing, but unfortunately, he is not able to help her, and she dies, only to be raised from the dead as a vampire. As Lucy starts attacking children, Van Helsing, with the help of her *fiancé* kills the vampire by impaling her and then cutting her head off. The importance of Stoker’s *Dracula* to

all subsequent vampire narrative is overwhelming, however, the impact of the novella *Carmilla* on setting a model for the characteristics of female vampires (which connects seduction, violence and eroticism) has not yet been fully investigated.

In contemporary literature, the female vampire persists embodied, for example, in the character Bella Swan, from the *Twilight Saga* written by Stephanie Meyer. The saga contains four books entitled *Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*, published from 2005 to 2008. The books narrate the story of the human Bella, who falls in love with the vampire Edward Cullen, and the obstacles they face to be together. In the fourth book of the series, Bella and Edward get married, they have a daughter named Renesmee. During Renesmee's birth, Bella almost dies, resulting in Edward transforming her in a vampire to save her. Besides Bella's turning, Victoria, one of the villains, transforms another human victim into vampire. Victoria develops a relationship with him only to manipulate him into helping her to avenge the death of a fellow vampire, who Edward killed. Concerning character Victoria, the stereotype of the *femme fatale* is somewhat explored in the series. The saga was adapted to cinema, and it counts with five movies released from 2008 to 2012, once the adaptation of the fourth book was divided in two parts.

In this section I discussed some possible origins for the female vampire and its subsequent developments, and how they have helped to the construction of the image of the contemporary vampire in occidental society. In the next section, I focus on exploring the context of publication and key narrative elements in *Carmilla*.

1.2 JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU: HIS LIFE AND CAREER.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu was born on August 28, 1814 in Dublin, Ireland, and died when he was 59 years old. At the age of 14, Le Fanu writes an ode called *The O'donoghue*, and some years later, he goes to college. It is at the university that he publishes his first literary work "The Ghost and The Bonesetter", in January 1838, at the *Dublin University Magazine*, and while still in college he became editor of the newspaper *The Warder*. In 1841 he graduated, and after a short period, he buys the newspaper he was working as editor. In the next year, 1842, he buys the *Protestant Guardian* and some others journals. He later merged the *The Warder* and two other journals, the *Dublin Evening Packet* and the *Evening Mail*, into the *Dublin Evening Mail*. Three years later, in 1845, Le Fanu publishes his first novel *The Cock and the Anchor*, and two years later he published his second novel *Torlogh O'brien* (1847), but both of these works

and in 1847 published his second novel *Torlogh O'brien*, but these two works did not achieve the status of best-seller at the time. After this, Le Fanu dedicates himself to writing poems and short stories. In 1861, he buys the *Dublin University Magazine*, and in 1863 he starts publishing novels again, and keeps publishing them throughout the next ten years. He wrote his last novel in 1873, the same year in which he died. The novel entitled *Willing to die* (1873) was published after his death (BYRNE, 1973, p. 81-91). Also during this period, in 1866, Charles Dickens's periodical *All the Year Round* published seven of Le Fanu's short fiction, the literary genre in which he seemed to excel (MELTON, 2011, p. 414).

Le Fanu achieved further recognition when publishing prototypal version of *Carmilla*, which was entitled the "Vampire of Karnstein". It first came out in a short-lived magazine called *Dark Blue*, which had only two years of duration. The text was published as serialized edition, released from December 1871 until March 1872 (JONES, 2015, p. 1-3). When *Carmilla* was first published in the magazine *Dark Blue*, the initial story was divided in four parts of which three of them were illustrated. The first part of the story did not received an illustration, therefore there are only three illustrations for the narrative. The second part of the story received one illustration by M. Fitzgerald, and the last two parts, parts three and four of the story, received two illustrations by artist D. H. Friston (JONES, 2015, p. 12-14).



Figura 1 *Carmilla* - Illustration by D.H Friston

The illustration above depicts the moment in which General Spielsdorf is narrating to Laura and her father the moment he discovered that his beloved niece, Bertha, is being attacked by Millarca, one of Carmilla's identity. The image below, depicts the moment in which a funeral procession passes by Carmilla and Laura.



Figura 2 *Funeral* – Illustration by Michael Fitzgerald

The following image, illustrates one of the night visits Carmilla makes to Laura's bedroom to feed from the girl. This is the scene in which Laura sees Carmilla covered in her blood.



Figura 3 Laura in bed – Illustration by D. H. Friston.

In 1872, Le Fanu publishes his famous collection of stories “In a Glass Darkly”, among which *Carmilla* appears compiled in one single text. The narrative is the story of the

vampire Carmilla, who finds her way into the household of her victim Laura. Laura narrates the story as an adult, some years after the events had happened. At the beginning of her account, Laura informs the reader about a childhood dream-like experience she had, in which she wakes up to see a lady in her bedroom. Years pass by, and now Laura is a young lady, when her father welcomes into their home a young woman, who survived a carriage accident in front of their mansion. When Laura meets the girl, she instantly recognizes her as being the woman who appeared in her childhood dream. This woman is Carmilla and when she meets Laura, she tells Laura that she also had dreamed with her before.

After this first encounter in which they recognize each other, Laura and Carmilla feel a strong connection and they instantly bond, which throughout the narrative is developed into a full-blown friendship, without Laura being aware that this friendship can endanger her life. During the time Carmilla is a guest in the house, Laura receives some nocturnal visits, in which she sees strange things in her bedroom. She believes them to be dreams but she also feels a piercing pain close to her breasts, that is caused by Carmilla. At the end of the narrative, Carmilla's true nature is exposed and she is defeated by the uncle of one of her previous victims. However, besides the vampiric plot of the narrative, it is possible to perceive that, the building of Carmilla and Laura's relationship throughout the narrative, is filled with same-sex erotic tension between the characters, creating a subtext that is often linked to homosexuality. In this section I established a few key facts about Le Fanu's writing career particularly in relation to *Carmilla*'s context of publication, providing a brief overview of the plot. In the next section I will dialogue with some critical texts about *Carmilla*.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter I bring here five different critical perspectives on *Carmilla*, addressing what has been established or proposed and debating the critical stance of particular researchers (and how they do not account for the connection between eroticism and speech).

2.1 THE TRANSGRESSIVE RELATIONSHIP OF LAURA AND CARMILLA

One important reading about vampires is Nina Auerbach's book *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1995), in which she writes about vampires in the Anglo-American literary tradition.³ Auerbach debates long-standing examples such as Byron's and Polidori's vampires

³ Examples of vampires in other cultures are the lamiai, from Greece, the *langsuyar* from Malaysia, the *loogaroo*, the *asema* and the *sukuyan* from the Caribbean, and in India there is the goddess Kali (MELTON, 2011, p. 816-817).

and she also dedicates a whole chapter to female vampires, which is entitled “From Christabel to Carmilla: Friends and Lovers”. In the chapter, Auerbach discusses the aspects that make Carmilla different from the other male vampires that have appeared in literature before her. She stresses that one of the main differences is that Carmilla is a lesbian vampire highlighting that:

Carmilla is one of the few self-accepting homosexuals in Victorian or any literature. One might assume that her vampirism immunizes her from human erotic norms, but most members of her species were more squeamish: no male vampire of her century confronts the desire within his friendship. (AUERBACH, 1995, p. 41)

The critic argues that Carmilla is an assumed lesbian vampire once she only attacks and feeds on women, and none of her victims are male, not even the victims she attacks only to quench her thirst for blood. In addition, the quote also stresses the way in which other vampires treat their acquaintances, in contrast with the way Carmilla treats her own, an interaction that is much more intimate than male vampires have with their friends.

Auerbach argues that male vampires satisfy that hunger by draining women, but they connect emotionally to men, and here lies the difference between them and Carmilla. She feeds on and bonds affectively to women only. Still according to Auerbach, “Carmilla feeds only on women with a hunger inseparable from erotic sympathy, distinguishing among her prey only on the sterling British basis of class. She preys on peasant girls but falls in love with Laura” (1995, p. 41). And yet, despite having an affectionate relationship with upper-class Laura, that does not refrain the vampire from draining her blood.

Moreover, the critic focuses on the intimate aspects of Carmilla and Laura’s relationship. Herein, she stresses that the relationship between Laura and Carmilla is built on friendliness and intimacy, stating that Carmilla’s “familiarity is her enchantment” (AUERBACH, 1995, p. 42). She argues that this familiarity occurred in the moment they recognized each other in a dream. Secondly, she argues that this can also happen due to the similarities that they have in relation to their lives: both have lost their mothers (Laura’s is dead, and Carmilla’s is absent traveling) and both have lost their estates. The third aspect in which this familiarity can happen is due to their family ties. Carmilla and Laura are related, Laura’s mother descends from the Karnstein family, the same as Carmilla’s. Finally, she mentions that Laura associates Carmilla with water, connecting her with the familiarity of an element of nature itself.

It is possible to see that Auerbach's perception of Laura's and Carmilla's relationship is romanticized as she does not emphasize the life-threatening dangers that Laura is exposed to by sharing intimacy with Carmilla. The critic briefly mentions a passage in which Laura is warned by her deceased mother (she believes so) about the assassin that is causing harm to young girls in Styria, but even though Auerbach acknowledges this passage, she does it in order to support her argument about Carmilla and familiarity. The critic claims that Laura, when waking up and seeing Carmilla at the foot of her bed bathed in blood, misinterprets the message she received, and somehow merges the image of Carmilla with the image of her dead mother into one idea. By doing this, Auerbach argues that Laura is placing the vampire into the sphere of the familiarity again. The killer nature of Carmilla is put aside in favor of a criticism that adds romantic tones to their relationship.

Another critic who also favors a more amorous interpretation between Laura and Carmilla's relationship is Tatiana Brandão Araujo. In her article "Carmilla's Strange Love: From Le Fanu's Tale to Cinematographic Adaptations" (2017)⁴, she provides a discussion of how Le Fanu's female vampire was adapted to cinema, arguing that Le Fanu's novella is subversive in two aspects. Firstly, in placing a female lesbian vampire as one of the protagonists during the Victorian Era, a period known for being extremely severe with social rules and that repudiated all kinds of activities and behavior that were not part of what they considered the norm. The second is in the intimacy between Laura and Carmilla, that is, between a human and a vampire.

Araujo argues that Le Fanu's text presents a distinctive perspective on vampire/humans relations, stating that: "(...) the author goes beyond the relationship between vampire (predator) and human (victim) since, in my understanding, Carmilla establishes an affective and desirable relationship with Laura" (ARAUJO, 2017, p. 99)⁵. Similarly to Auerbach, Araujo also stresses that the girl and the vampire establish an intimate, loving relationship, and this differentiates Carmilla from other vampire tales. For the critic, Carmilla is a peculiar vampire because her interest in Laura goes beyond the necessity of drinking blood, she affirms that "the fact that she [Carmilla,] is a vampire does not mean that she cannot have feelings that are considered human. Carmilla falls in love with Laura and her words to the girl

⁴ In the original: "O 'Estranho Amor' de Carmilla: do Conto de Sheridan Le Fanu às Adaptações Cinematográficas". Henceforth, all translations present in this study will be done by me.

⁵ In the original: "(...) o autor vai além da relação vampiro (predador) e homem (vítima), já que no meu entendimento, Carmilla estabelece uma relação de afeto e desejo com Laura."

are not only a strategy to conquer, and later kill her, but a way for Laura to be her partner for eternity” (ARAUJO, 2017, p. 105)⁶.

Araujo sees Carmilla as a more humanized vampire, and therefore capable of having feelings for Laura. She speculates that because Carmilla falls in love with Laura, there is the possibility that Carmilla would not kill Laura, but instead, she would transform the girl into a vampire, so they could live together. She acknowledges that there is no evidence that this could be Laura’s fate, but that the amount of time that Carmilla spends conversing with Laura, instead of attacking and killing her at once, is an indication that this could be Carmilla’s plans for Laura. In this regard, by romanticizing and humanizing Carmilla, Araujo is also overlooking the killer nature of the vampire. For the critic, death is not seen as actual death, but a rebirth as a vampire.

Moreover, Araujo draws a brief comparison between Carmilla, and the character Lucy, from *Dracula*. She argues that female vampires in literature tend to be portrayed as *femme fatales*, that is, women who use their power of seduction to attract and destroy men. The critic argues that when Dracula turns Lucy into a vampire, Lucy starts to behave differently from what was considered a proper Victorian lady. Lucy starts to act more seductively and starts to express her desires after the transformation. However, for the critic Carmilla does not fit this pattern, which only reproduces and reinforces standards of heteronormativity, that is, female vampires seducing men. Being a lesbian vampire, Carmilla would not be part of this stereotype. Her comparison with Lucy is based on the dichotomy straight vampire x homosexual, she uses this argument to neuter Carmilla’s seductive skills, even though seduction is a key feature among vampires in general. Moreover, Araujo mentions that when Lucy is being turned into a vampire, her voice changes and she starts to talk more seductively, as well as to move in an attractive manner. Araujo fails to see that the characteristics she uses to classify Lucy in the stereotype of the *femme fatale*, would classify Carmilla as well, since she also behaves like Lucy, while she is talking to Laura. Carmilla seduces Laura throughout the narrative, her first and foremost seduction is persuading Laura into befriending her, even though Laura feared the image of Carmilla since her childhood.

⁶In the original: O fato dela ser uma vampira não significa que ela não possa ter sentimentos considerados humanos. Carmilla se apaixona efetivamente por Laura, e suas palavras para a menina não são uma estratégia apenas para conquistá-la, e para matá-la posteriormente, mas sim, para que Laura seja sua companheira na eternidade.

It is possible to see here that Nina Auerbach and Tatiana Brandão Araujo agree to Carmilla and Laura's relationship being a romanticized connection, thus dismissing that Carmilla, as a vampire, feeds on blood. Carmilla also fed on Laura while living in the girl's castle. Therefore, what these critics purport is an idealized affair, diminishing the fact that Carmilla is a killer and a danger to Laura's life.

Similarly, another study that disregards the threat Carmilla poses to Laura's life "Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in Carmilla and Dracula" (1996). In this article, Elizabeth Signorotti sees Carmilla as a threat, not necessarily to her victim; but to the Victorian patriarchal system. Moreover, Signorotti argues that Stoker's work is a response to Le Fanu's Carmilla. She states that Le Fanu's narrative takes out the power of men in the narrative, and take charge in the control of exchange of women, and thus, Stoker's Dracula is a way of reasserting male authority over women. She argues that women are seen as a valuable "asset", and for this reason they are used in trades between men, which can be seen as a business that will probably lead into marriage. She also affirms that in a patriarchal society the relationship between two male figures, in order not to be considered a homosexual interaction, must be mediated by a female counterpart participating in the interaction, in order for it to form a "triangular configuration rather than a (threatening) linear, male-to-male union" (SIGNOROTTI, 1996, p. 608). In other words, a woman needs to be involved in a male-to-male interaction for it to be considered a safe homosocial interaction.

Regarding relationships among women, Signorotti claims that the way they interact socially is different as compared to men. According to the critic, female homosocial interaction is not directly in opposition to female homosexuality, as male relationships are, and, in this sense, they do not need a man to validate their relationships as non-homosexual. Signorotti adds that:

excluding men from female friendships or from access to women poses more of a threat to male kinship systems than to female. Thus, female homosocial bonds potentially carry tremendous power to subvert or demolish existing patriarchal kinship structures, which is precisely what happens in "Carmilla" (SIGNOROTTI, 1996, p. 609)

The author points out that the homosocial relationship among women can be considered a threat to the patriarchal society of the time, once it would allow women to break or challenge social rules from Victorian period, particularly those about heterosexual marriage and childbearing.

In the article, Signorotti demonstrates how this subversive behavior appears in the narrative, affirming that the ‘system of kinship’ is disrupted already in the beginning of the narrative; since it is Carmilla’s mother who participates in the exchange of women, instead of two men. This is only the first example that the author gives of the threats to Victorian patriarchy she identifies in Le Fanu’s narrative. She states that the transgression of the system happens due to the fact that the men in the narrative, particularly Laura’s father and General Spielsdorf, are unaware of the kind of relationship Carmilla has with her victims. Like Laura’s father, General Spielsdorf also accepts to take care of Carmilla, and welcomes the vampire into his house, which results in the death of his niece, named Bertha Rheinfeldt. Signorotti argues that the men are unaware of the situation until it is too late, in the case of Bertha, the niece, it means death, in the case of Laura, it means that she cannot be inserted back into the “system of kinship” i.e. become an asset for her father to trade with another man. Signorotti states that Laura cannot be the same girl she was before Carmilla entered her life, despite her father’s insistence.

For the critic, Carmilla’s presence in Laura’s life, and the relationship they had, was enough to arouse in Laura a consciousness about her own sexuality, she is now aware that she does not want to be exchanged by her father. Laura resists to be a merchandise in the system and, in this sense, she is refusing marriage. Signorotti develops an impressive reading of Laura and Carmilla’s relationship, but as mentioned previously, the critic does not discuss how the two girls’ relationship is also a threat to Laura’s life. Even though Carmilla feels bonded to Laura, she is a vampire who is draining Laura’s blood and making her very ill. Signorotti does not highlight this narrative fact and it is possible to see that her reading of Carmilla’s death at the end of the novella is unusual. She does not interpret Carmilla’s death as a punishment from the patriarchal order for the harm the vampire caused to Laura and for the death of the other women in Styria. Instead, the critic argues that Carmilla has a transgressive essence, and that the vampire is not bound to the regular social conventions.

To support this argument, Signorotti claims that Carmilla’s shape shifting can be seen as a manifestation of her homosexual nature, which cannot be reversed by any man, intending to submit her to male authorities and trying to insert her into the “system of kinship”. Signorotti is aware that at the end of the narrative, Carmilla receives the usual extermination that happens at the end of most vampires stories in order to reestablish the status quo. However, she states that even though Laura and Carmilla’s “transgressive relationship disrupts the laws of procreation necessary to maintain social order. Le Fanu, however, refrains

from making them culpable for their procreative transgression and from condemning his vampiric representation of lesbian desire” (SIGNOROTTI, 1996, p. 618). In other words, despite Carmilla’s death at the end of the story, the critic argues that Le Fanu did not intend her death to be understood as a punishment for women who disobey the rules established by Victorian society. She also claims that the contrast between Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* and Stoker’s *Dracula* is perceived through this moralizing aspect: Lucy’s death in *Dracula* is shown as a moralizing punishment for women who are not submissive to the authorities or who express their sexuality, while Carmilla’s death is not. She argues that Carmilla’s death, extinguishes her being, but does not undo her impact on Laura. She says that she could have turned Laura and Bertha into vampires, since vampires complete their transformation on their grave, perpetrating female empowerment, while Lucy’s death is a metaphor for male characters recover their power.

Signorotti provides a compelling reading of repression and transgression of gender-based relationship patterns imposed by the Victorian society. In Le Fanu’s narrative, this is represented by the homoaffective relationship between Laura and Carmilla and the desire that the two girls feel towards each other. The critic also highlights that their relationship is based on their desire for the female body. However, Carmilla does not wish solely Laura’s body, she desires more; but in her text, Signorotti neglects that Carmilla also craves for Laura’s blood, (draining her almost to the point of death). So far, I have been discussing here three critics (Auerbach, Araujo, Signorotti) who tend to interpret Laura and Carmilla’s relationship as a rather sentimental, romanticized affair, mostly overlooking the predatory features of the vampire, particularly the role of rhetoric skills Carmilla uses to seduce and attract the victim, a feature that is discussed by Victor Sage.

2.2 FEMALE LANGUAGE: THE FUNCTION OF RHETORIC IN *CARMILLA*

In the book entitled *Le Fanu’s Gothic: The Rhetoric of Darkness* (2007), Sage dedicates to Le Fanu’s novella the chapter “Carmilla: I’ll let you be in my dreams if I can be in yours”. The critic argues that the vampire makes use of rhetoric in order to seduce Laura into her trap. This idea is at odds with Araujo’s statement, who claims that Carmilla falls in love with Laura and her words to the girl are not only a strategy to conquer, and later kill her, but a way for Laura to be her partner for eternity” (ARAUJO, 2017, p. 105)⁷. Sage argues that

⁷In the original: Carmilla se apaixona efetivamente por Laura, e suas palavras para a menina não são uma estratégia apenas para conquistá-la, e para matá-la posteriormente, mas sim, para que Laura seja sua companheira na eternidade.

when Laura first encounters Carmilla, at six years old, the girl truly believes there is a woman lying with her in bed, despite the contrary arguments from her father and other adults present at the time of the occurrence. Nonetheless, Laura is not convinced and she grows up believing that night to have occurred. However, when she reencounters Carmilla in adulthood, Laura's perception of reality is distorted by the vampire's speech, who claims that she dreamed with Laura as a child i.e. she describes what happened to Laura as a child as it had happened to her as well. Sage states that: "Carmilla seizes the dream, and in doing so, possesses Laura's reality. We watch the helpless Laura like watching a terrible wildlife film in which the predator mirrors the movements of the prey" (2007, p. 182). Moreover, Sage argues that the vampire is using the memories of the night when she and Laura first met, to "mimic" Laura's reaction of fearing the lady who appeared in the dream. Taking this stance, Carmilla inverts the facts, assuming Laura's position and placing Laura in hers. Carmilla poses as the frightened child, using this as a strategy to seem innocent and then get acquainted with the girl, seeking to have access to her blood later on.

Moreover, Sage argues that by doing this Carmilla gains control over Laura, making her believe that the situation was a dream, and not reality, as she had insisted to believe so far. Due to the reversal of facts, Laura is now much more susceptible to the enchantments of Carmilla, contributing to their bonding in female friendship. The critic states that "the idea that they dreamed of each other before they met is of course the traditional Platonic 'affinity' of romantic friendship which we can regard as persuasive on Laura" (SAGE, 2007, p. 185). That is, the whole discourse of that first 'dreamed' encounter has an important role in making Laura accepting Carmilla's rhetorical strategy, and then, allowing them to build an intimate relationship. Thus, throughout his text, Sage discusses the aspects in which this 'romantic friendship' is constructed discursively in the novella.

Sage highlights the intimate and erotic tension in the girl's relationship in the act of combing each other's hair, which was a common habit among Victorian girls. Furthermore, he argues that, when speaking to Laura, "Carmilla can't resist the rush of flattery and erotic suggestion" (SAGE, 2007, p. 184), connecting Carmilla's seductive nature to the words of adulation that she says to Laura. Even though he addresses eroticism in these two passages, his focus is not on the erotic, but rather in macabre nature of the vampire. When Sage discusses to the act of Laura combing Carmilla's hair, he points out that the protagonist is not aware that the beauty of Carmilla's hair comes from the blood of other girls she has murdered. Secondly, he focuses on how the flattery is part of the vampire's speech, while applying the

strategy to reverse Laura's notion of reality. Sage's observations are illuminating, however, the critic does not treat in much detail the connection between seduction and manipulative speech, which is precisely the point I will build on.

Still regarding matters of rhetoric, in her master's thesis entitled "*The Bitten Word: Feminine Jouissance, Language and the Female Vampire*" Sidney Wilson addresses the centrality of speech in *Carmilla*. Differently from Victor Sage, who makes a connection between Carmilla's speech and her hunter nature, Wilson discusses the connection between language and Lacan's concept of *jouissance*, which speculates that women can experience an excessive amount of pleasure because of the absence of a phallus. For the critic, this *jouissance* is explored and expressed in the novella through the discursive skills of the female characters, specially Laura's writing, which narrates by means of letters her story with Carmilla. Wilson connects the vampire's bite and fangs to the pen that Laura uses to tell her story. The critic argues that a bite causes a rupture in someone's skins, the same way that the pen ruptures the surface of the paper, both acts symbolizing female transgressions of normative behavior, the bite for her is synonymous for everything that is transgressive, it "is death sentence, orgasm, infection, and queer perversion all at once" (WILSON, 2015, p. 1).

Additionally, the critic states that in the same manner that a vampire can infect the victim with its fangs, Laura's readership (the mysterious lady to whom she sends her letters) can also be infected by her words that express several moments of female passion. For Wilson, the connection between language and *jouissance* is that the latter can only be seen in the narrative through the words written or spoken by the female characters, therefore, this pleasure is also something that the two female characters feel only in the company of another female counterpart, but never with a male companion. Moreover, she argues that the feminine language used during Laura and Carmilla's interactions are quite different from the language used in male interactions in the narrative. It is argued that the language used by Laura's father, General Spielsdorf, the doctor/ physician, the Baron and all other masculine figures in the narrative, is responsible to regulate and suppress feminine pleasure, in this sense, the feminine discourse is a way of defying normative social practices that oppress women.

For Wilson, the masculine language used in the narrative is different from feminine not only in terms of representation, but also in tone. She refers to masculine language as "the unyielding clerical, judicial, and academic language of Laura's unnamed father and his colleagues" (WILSON, 2015, p. 4), and in this regard the use of scholarly vocabulary is an

instrument for the control of the female body. This discourse is oppressive, and it is an attempt to submit these women back into a “masculine Symbolic” (WILSON, 2015, p. 4) of normativity, and is also a way of categorizing Laura’s “relationship with Carmilla as that of vampire and victim” (WILSON, 2015, p. 36), a labeling that does not correspond to Laura’s point of view.

The critic discusses that such ‘branding’ efforts are present already in the foreword of the story, which is narrated by a nameless male character who explains that Laura’s narrative is going to be incorporated in a psychological case-study book, however, the attempt into placing Laura’s voice between a masculine voice is never accomplished, since the same unnamed character who narrates the opening, does not close the narrative. Laura ends the story without being confined between masculine language. Furthermore, at the end of the story, we have General Spielsdorf’s account of his niece’s death, as an “attempt to order the experience of the vampire and her companion into comfortingly containable categories (WILSON, 2015, p. 48). Last of all, there is the documentation to ascertain Carmilla’s death, the utter extinguishment of the threat, which is comprised by the priest, the Baron, General Spielsdorf, the woodman, and Laura’s father.

Still, according to Wilson, all these attempts are in vain. In the critic’s words, at the end of the narrative there are no closing statements by the unnamed character who initiated the narrative, thus, the story finishes with Laura’s voice. Therefore, she and her narrative are “never reinscribed back into the parameters of the initial frame (WILSON, 2015, p. 39)”. General Spielsdorf’s tale also fails its purpose of showing the monstrous side of Carmilla. Despite everything that the vampire did to Bertha, to the peasant girls on the village, and to Laura, the girl chooses not to be influenced by male, gender-branding language; the girls still longed and wished for Carmilla. Sidney Wilson also questions the reliability of the documents, since the protagonist only had access to a copy, implying that they do not have much value for Laura. In addition, the critic states that “the excess of academic information on the oupire⁸ produced by the story’s authoritative male characters and the legal documentation of Carmilla’s death cloud more than clarify the true nature of the subjects they attempt to lay bare” (WILSON, 2015, p. 46). The critic means to show that such analytical discourse is not powerful or comprehensible enough to reinsert Laura into the normative

⁸ The term oupire that Sidney Wilson is using, is the same in which the character "The Hunchback" uses in Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, to refer to the creature superstitious people believed to be attacking women on the region close to Laura's castle.

rules. They serve as justification among a male-oriented society and its scientific/academic discourses but it remains unconvincing to Laura and the other females in the narrative.

Another difference between Wilson and Sage is that, although both address the role of speech in *Carmilla*, Wilson explores it as a way of defying patriarchal structures, resembling Signorotti's reading of *Carmilla*, but not as predatory strategy, as does Victor Sage, to whom the relationship between both women is characterized mainly for their hunter and prey connection. Although Wilson mobilizes a Lacanian framework, her perspective does not differ much from Auerbach and Araujo's, who endorse a more sentimental, romantic perspective of the two girls' friendship (and that also includes Signorotti, who focus on the way that their relationship violates the tenets of Victorian society).

Nonetheless, these five authors I have been discussing in the review of literature, here have something in common, which is overlooking the erotic aspect of Le Fanu's narrative. Although Nina Auerbach and Victor Sage acknowledge the existence of eroticism in the narrative in their studies (however briefly), it is not the focus of their work. Elizabeth Signorotti, highlights the desire that Laura and Carmilla have for each other, and Wilson focus on the exchange of pleasure between them, but none of them fully discuss the eroticism that is a key part of their relationship. Araujo, otherwise, tends to favor the more affectionate side of Carmilla's and Laura's interaction. These critics provide excellent studies upon which I build my reading of Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. However, considering the absence of an in-depth study about the erotic aspects of the two girls' relationship, this thesis is set out to assess this perceived gap in the current criticism about *Carmilla*. Erotic is intrinsic to the narrative and for this reason it requires a more detailed analysis.

3 UNDERSTANDING EROTICISM

Eroticism is one of the central components to the composition of this study, it is an element that will help to orientate how the analysis will be conducted. However, defining what is erotic or eroticism can be an arduous task, therefore in this chapter I will discuss three different approaches to the complex matter of defining what is erotic and I will argue that eroticism is deeply connected with the narrative of *Carmilla*.

3.1 EROTICISM AND SOCIETY

One of the most distinguished critic on the topic of eroticism is George Bataille.

His book *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*⁹, first published in 1957, is key reading to understand the suggestive, concupiscent nature of eroticism. In the introduction, Bataille discusses three types of eroticism, the religious, the emotional and the physical. Concerning the latter, which is the one that most connects to the context of the narrative. Bataille argues that physical “eroticism always entails a breaking down of established patterns, the patterns, I repeat, of the regulated social order basic to our discontinuous mode of existence as defined and separate individuals” (1986, p. 18). In this sense, it is possible to see that Bataille’s definition of eroticism, or of the erotic, is related to the transgressions of the rules determined by people from a specific society. The “discontinuous mode of existence” Bataille mentions, refers to the individuality of each being. He argues that even though we reproduce, we are reproducing discontinuous beings, since the reproduced (child) will not be the same as its reproducers (parents), therefore each being has individualized experiences.

Regarding the issue of physical eroticism, Bataille states that “the whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives” (1986, p. 17). In other words, he argues that eroticism has the power to transform the people participating in the act, to emerge as different persons from who they normally are in society. In *Carmilla*, Laura’s character is a good example of this, since she is initially a lady who fits properly into the established social rules and, after having contact with Carmilla, and developing a relationship with her, she changes dramatically and cannot be the same girl as before, as Signorotti argues, she cannot be inserted back in the “system of kinship” and traded into marriage.

Stemming from Bataille’s ideas about the association of the erotic with transgression of social rules, this study applies his theories to the context and social mores of Victorian society. *Carmilla* is a lesbian vampire, as stated by Elizabeth Signorotti and Nina Auerbach, therefore, her desire is already transgressive, perhaps a literary materialization of ongoing social shifts regarding sexuality. As Tatiana Brandão de Araujo argues in the article “*Carmilla’s Strange Love: From Le Fanu’s Tale to Cinematographic Adaptations*” (my translation)¹⁰, at the time Le Fanu wrote the novella, there were broad social discussions happening concerning homosexual relationships (culminating with Oscar Wilde Trials in 1895).

⁹ First published in English in 1962, under the title *Death and Sexuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo*.

¹⁰ In the original: “O ‘Estranho Amor’ de *Carmilla*: do Conto de Sheridan Le Fanu às Adaptações Cinematográfica”

Araujo also mentions that only male homosexual relationships were condemned as a crime, while female homosexuality was not seen as criminal activity at the time, given that for members of the Victorian society, women's homosexuality was not a possibility and, for this reason, there was no space to discuss it (ARAUJO, 2017, p. 97). This is a male-centered view of sexuality, wherein the absence of a phallus disqualifies the sexual nature of the relationship but may enhance its erotic nature. In this sense, a fully-fanged, female vampire is a very apt metaphor to talk about eroticism and types of sexuality that do not necessarily engage in phallic penetration. As Araujo states “the romantic friendship between Laura and Carmilla, was not perceived as sexual by the other people in the house, which does not mean that this element did not exist” (2017, p. 97)¹¹. The same argument can be used to think about Victorian society, which disregarded these lesbian relationships.

Another critic who also addresses the complexities of defining eroticism is Octavio Paz. In his collection of essays entitled *The Double Flame: Essays on Love and Eroticism* (1996), Paz discusses the distinction between sexuality and eroticism. For him, sexuality is related to the physical act of having sex; he argues that sexuality is connected to our biology and its ‘goal’ is reproduction, in this way, the sexual act is an example of our similarities with other species of the animal kingdom. Eroticism, on the other hand, is much more related to the psychological dimension than with the body itself. Paz argues that:

Eroticism is, above all else, exclusively human: it is sexuality socialized and transfigured by the imagination and the will of human beings. The first thing that distinguishes eroticism from sexuality is the infinite variety of forms in which it manifests itself. Eroticism is invention, constant variation; sex is always the same. The protagonist of the erotic act is sex, or, to be more precise, the sexes. The plural is essential, because even in the so-called solitary pleasures sexual desire always invents an imaginary other ... or many others. Also, in every erotic encounter there is an invisible and ever-active participant: imagination, desire. (1996, n.p.¹².)

For the critic, eroticism is deeply connected with imagination and desire, therefore, it happens according to an individual's psyche, imagination, wish or intention. Another distinction, he points out, is the infinite possibilities that the erotic manifests itself, while sexuality will always happen the same way, meaning that, although there can be variations on the sexual act itself, its consummation remains the same: to procreate. Once the aim of eroticism is pleasure, it is mutable. In *Carmilla*, this desire is present in relation to the vampire's thirst for Laura's blood, her moves and caresses towards Laura are an attempt to

¹¹ In the original: “A ‘amizade romântica entre Carmilla e Laura não era entendida como sexual pelas outras pessoas da casa, o que não significa que esse elemento não exista”.

¹² Não paginado, Epub.

get what she wishes from the girl, her blood. Laura carries in her veins what Carmilla wishes, Laura embodies it, so Carmilla's longing for her blood consequently mixes with her claimed love for the girl, so the desire for blood becomes the desire for the victim.

Paz also discusses the role of eroticism and sexuality in society in general. The critic argues that society needs sex in order to perpetuate the species, but at the same time sex menaces society. For the critic, the human is the only species that does not have a period of heat/celibacy like other species of the animal kingdom, we have a hunger for the sexual act, "the human being is the only living creature that does not possess an automatic physiological regulator of sexual activity" (PAZ, 1996, n.p). In other words, human species seeks the sexual act in order to obtain pleasure, without necessarily fulfilling its biological purpose, reproduction. Due to this, eroticism plays an important role in our culture once its objective "is to take sex and make a place for it in society" (PAZ, 1996, n.p.) i.e. it helps our society and culture to 'accept' and regulate the practice of sex. Moreover, Paz states that:

In all societies there exists a series of prohibitions or taboos – and also of stimuli or incentives – whose purpose is to regulate and control the sexual instinct. These rules serve society (culture) and reproduction (nature) at the same time. Without them the family would disintegrate and with it all of society. The human race, subjected to the perpetual electrical discharge of sex, has invented a lightning rod: eroticism. An ambiguous invention, like all the others we have conceived, its vague outline now comes into better focus: it is repression and licence, it is sublimation and perversion. And the primal function of sexuality – reproduction – is subordinated to other ends, some of them social and some of them individual. Eroticism protects society from onslaughts of sexuality, but it also negates the reproductive function. It is the capricious servant of life and death. (PAZ, 1996, n. p.)

Eroticism works in dual, ambiguous ways. At the same time that it can occur without aiming to procreate, since sexuality can also be part of the erotic act, eroticism also permits society to reproduce itself. Therefore, eroticism serves the purpose of helping to make the uncontrollable sexual arousal in humans as an adequate social practice. In the excerpt above, Paz also highlights that eroticism is necessary for maintaining certain social constructs, particularly, the institution of the traditional family: mother, father and children. Contextualizing Paz discussions of taboo to the Victorian Era, the erotic/sexual act was acceptable in society if it happened within marriage, especially if it aimed at generating a child. In the Victorian society, other erotic/sexual practices that did not conform into this structure would be considered a taboo. In *Carmilla*, this taboo is related to the (homo)sexual act, represented through the vampire's bite. Since this period is known for its rigidity regarding moral values, thus, any sexual activity outside the vows of marriage would be considered transgressive.

Paz and Bataille's perspectives on eroticism are somewhat similar, both authors discuss eroticism in the context of society. For Bataille, the erotic reveals itself when there is a transgression of the rules that society imposes on people. For Paz, the erotic contributes to discipline people, once Paz considers humans to have an everlasting desire for sex, and in this way, the eroticism is a mechanism that would help to minimize humans sexual impulses, and transforming it into a practice acceptable in the eyes of society. A difference between them is that Paz compares and contrasts humans' sexuality and eroticism to animal's sexuality.

3.2 EROTIC WORDS: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN EROTICISM

In addition to Paz and Bataille, James Latimore also discusses the erotic in his book *Language of the Erotic* (2013). However, differently from the other two authors, Latimore discusses what he calls erotica in literature and arts, his objective is "to inquire into what is responsible for the element of arousal in erotic literature, and to present to the reader the simple (...) vocabulary found there" (LATIMORE, 2013, 1.63¹³). He seeks to show several examples of words that contribute to the emergence erotic in literary/artistic texts, an idea that is particularly relevant in the type investigation I propose.

In the first chapter "Sex in America", Latimore differentiates the erotic from the pornographic image. The critic argues that pornography is tied to what is obscene, it can be distasteful, and that the sexual desire aroused by them are indiscipline. Moreover, he affirms that pornographic expression is considered to have none or few artistic quality, and that it is "treated with much less respect" (LATIMORE, 2013, l. 95¹⁴), than erotica.

The complex terms of defining erotica are divided in two ways – one emphasizing sexual love, the other its amatory qualities. Physical love-making is often involved, but so are tender expression of love. And the relationship is not altogether genital in nature, regardless of what happens in the story. Feelings, character ideas – even philosophical thought – have a place here. (LATIMORE, 2013, l. 88-95¹⁵).

From the excerpt above, we can see that for Latimore, artistic eroticism is not connected with the sexual act itself only, it also involves emotional aspects as well, such as tender love, in the several ways which this sentiment can be expressed. Here lies the difference with pornography, which he claims to be solely tied to the genitals. Still regarding erotica, the critics claims that it also is able to sexually arouse a person, however it does so in

¹³ Location on Kindle Paperwhite, zoom number 5

¹⁴ Location on Kindle Paperwhite, zoom number 5.

¹⁵ Location on Kindle Paperwhite, zoom number 5

a “more refined or artistic manner” (LATIMORE, 2013, 1.102¹⁶). Therefore erotica is regarded superior to pornography, once erotica is considered to have refined artistic quality.

Latimore’s view on the erotic has some similarities with Paz’s definition of the term, a central difference is that Paz does not consider love, or emotions (except desire) to have a place during the erotic act. But differently from Bataille (and Paz as well), Latimore does not consider the anthropological origins or the impact of the erotic in society. Although Latimore is discussing eroticism and pornography in contemporary United States, his perspective on eroticism provides some compelling contribution to this study, more specifically in relation to what consists erotic(a) in literature and art. The critic aims at showing the existence of a particular vocabulary that favors the expression of eroticism. This is a valuable idea to this study whose objective is to analyze the erotic undertones in *Carmilla*. Therefore, I am working with James Latimore’s concept of erotic(a), since the critic focuses mostly in the usage of language, and how it can contribute to raise an erotic tone in literary works. Now that these three different approaches have been discussed in its particularities, in the next section will be discussed how the erotic is portrayed in the narrative.

4 ANALYSIS

In this section I provide a thorough analysis of the issue of eroticism in the novella *Carmilla*, and the influence of the vampire’s speech to the erotic tones of the narrative, as well as a discussion of the kind of discourses that *Carmilla* uses to address Laura, and other characters in the narrative.

4.1 SEDUCTION AND EROTICISM IN *CARMILLA*

In this chapter I will analyze the connections between eroticism present in the narrative, and *Carmilla*’s speech. When *Carmilla* is received in Laura’s house, the latter is extremely excited to meet a soon to be acquaintance, however, she does not have a clue that she already knew that mysterious lady. As Laura sees *Carmilla*’s face, she becomes speechless with shock, and *Carmilla* takes advantage of it to start to assert her voice, telling the girl she had already seen Laura before, therefore, lessening the consternation that seeing her face caused in Laura. The vampire then, tells Laura about the ‘dream’ she had as a child, in which she saw the young lady, she claims:

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.

¹⁶ Location on Kindle Paperwhite, zoom number 5

Your looks won me;[...] 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, 2015 p. 14)

Already in this (re)encounter, Carmilla does not waste time and immediately begins to seduce Laura, complimenting the girl’s beauty and looks, but she is not only being very flattering she also exposes her desire by focusing on the lips, which she mentions twice. The double mention (and the double meaning in the language of the erotic) is done in a highly seductive, as the lips are attracting all her attention to them, transforming what was supposed to be the telling of an anecdote in a flirtatious comment. The lips or “labia” encompasses several layers of interpretation, suggesting Carmilla’s desire to kiss the girl, literally or as a figure of speech for the vampire’s bite. Moreover, the vampire’s comments on Laura’s beauty intensifies, as Laura narrates her story:

I don’t know which should be most afraid of the other,” she said, again smiling — If you were less pretty I think I should be very much afraid of you, but being as you are, and you and I both so young, I feel only that I have made your acquaintance twelve years ago, and have already a right to your intimacy; at all events it does seem as if we were destined, from our earliest childhood, to be friends. I wonder whether you feel as strangely drawn towards me as I do to you; I have never had a friend — shall I find one now?” She sighed, and her fine dark eyes gazed passionately on me. (LE FANU, 2015, p.14)

Although the words seem exaggerated, the compliments serve to gain Laura’s trust, ultimately they are part of her plan to seduce Laura. Carmilla exalts the other’s beauty and, at the same time, builds the image of an innocent, disfavored girl. Her dark beauty had already been mentioned by Laura and by Madame Perrodon, so by acknowledging Laura’s, she is suggesting they are so young and beautiful, therefore, Laura has no reason to be afraid of Carmilla. Additionally, Carmilla talks about their encounter being predestined, thus both should be friends, specially because she “never had a friend” (LE FANU, 2015, p. 14). By saying this, she is appealing to Laura’s empathy, who lives isolated in the *schloss* (castle) having as company only mademoiselle de La Fonatine, and Madame Perrodon, thus it is easy for the young lady to relate to Carmilla’s alleged loneliness (Victor Sage’s idea is that Carmilla uses mimicry and deception as a preying strategy). When Carmilla points out so many similarities between them, she is creating the idea of being as inoffensive as Laura, consequently, silencing all haunting memories of her.

The vampire’s manipulative speech impacts Laura as she intended, before the young woman leaves the bedroom, her dreadful impressions of Carmilla have already changed: “I did feel, as she said, “drawn towards her,” but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed” (LE FANU, 2015,

p. 15). Knowing that her strategy had worked, that Laura's initial "shock" and "repulsion" were surpassed, Carmilla swiftly starts to use her words to seduce Laura. The young lady noticing that her guest was feeling tired, wishes her good night, and informs Carmilla that the doctor suggested that a maid spent the night in the room to watch her, but Carmilla refuses saying that she never sleeps with a person in her room, thus even though Carmilla yearns for Laura's presence in the room, she says goodbye to the other girl:

She held me close in her pretty arms for a moment and whispered in my ear, "Good night, darling, it is very hard to part with you, but good night; tomorrow, but not early, I shall see you again."

She sank back on the pillow with a sigh, and her fine eyes followed me with a fond and melancholy gaze, and she murmured again "Good night, dear friend." (LE FANU, 2015, p.15).

Herein, the exact words that she is speaking are not exactly enticing or have a double meaning, as she is just emphasizing that she wished more time to spend with Laura at that moment, however the way she speaks in a low voice, the closeness to the young woman's ear, the embrace that accompanies the speech, and the look Carmilla gives to Laura after saying it, contribute to create an erotic atmosphere in the scene. The combination of words such as, "whispered", "held me close", "pretty arms", "murmured", appearing in this scene, and words like "lips", "beautiful", "face", "pretty", "drawn", that appear in the two previous excerpts presented above on page 34, are in accordance to James Latimore discussion of erotic(a), in which he argues that in written narratives what raises an erotic aura are words, or combinations of words which can contribute to an erotic aura in the story.

Such scenes between both girls become very common as the narrative flows. In the scene where Laura is trying (in vain) to extract more information about Carmilla's family and where she was from, even though she is aware that Carmilla is prohibited by her mother to talk about this subject, Carmilla sees an opportunity to use all her charm to seduce Laura. The vampire, noticing that the young lady was frustrated for not getting any answers from her, the mysterious guest starts to comfort her with embraces and caresses, as Laura describes:

She used to place her pretty arms about my neck, draw me to her, and laying her cheek to mine, murmur with her lips near my ear, "Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness; if your dear heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours. In the rapture of my enormous humiliation I live in your warm life, and you shall die — die, sweetly die — into mine. I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love; so, for a while, seek to know no more of me and mine, but trust me with all your loving spirit."

And when she had spoken such a rhapsody, she would press me more closely in her trembling embrace, and her lips in soft kisses gently glow upon my cheek (LE FANU, 2015, p. 16-17).

Herein, it is possible to see that her advances are bolder, not only does she hug Laura, but she also pulls Laura so close to her that their faces touch; also the proximity of the lips to her ear is emphasized in Laura's account of the facts. This scene also shows Carmilla getting more intimate, kissing Laura on the cheek, and her shuddering aspect only accentuates the desire she feels for Laura – or for her blood. When Carmilla states that she is “draw near to you” (LE FANU, 2015, p. 16-17), she is feeling drawn not only to Laura, but also to her blood that is the reason why she is developing this relationship. The vampire's intense monologue shows her affection in the face of the girl's frustration (as in a sex game, teasing as a prelude for sex), however, some of her vocabulary indicates that she's referring to blood. Carmilla mentions Laura's “warm life,” she means the vitality of the blood running on Laura's veins, meaning that she will be able to live at the expense of Laura's death: “I live in your warm life, and you shall die — die, sweetly die — into mine” (LE FANU, 2015, p. 16-17). In this monologue that sounds as a declaration of love for Laura, Carmilla is also indicating to Laura what is going to happen to her: Laura will die because Carmilla will suck the girl's blood so she can nourish and strengthen herself. She will take Laura's “warm life”, for her to continue existing as a living creature. Laura's death means life for the vampire.

What contributes to understanding all this game of seduction coming from Carmilla is that this is part of her nature as being a vampire. After Carmilla's execution, Laura and her father learn from Baron Vordenburg (a man who dedicates his life to the study of vampirism, and is an expert in vampires) some characteristics of vampirism. Regarding the vampire's longing for blood and the choice of victims, both characters understand the following:

Its horrible lust for living blood supplies the vigor of its waking existence. 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. 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. In ordinary ones it goes direct to its object, overpowers with violence, and strangles and exhausts often at a single feast. (LE FANU, 2015, p. 54)

From this, it is possible to see that Carmilla's affection to Laura is not real. All the actions and declarations of love for the girl are false, since the sentiment she feels towards her chosen victims is only “resembling the passion of love” (LE FANU, 2015, p. 54). Since the

desire for blood is what motivates the vampire to exist, Carmilla's yearns for Laura because her body it is the vessel for what she truly wishes, the blood that runs in Laura's veins. The vampire's flirt, and erotic seduction of its victim is part of its *modus operandi*, and it is part of her being, the vampire needs to seduce a person to extend her lifetime. The baron also describes two ways in which the vampire acts with "ordinary" victims – the ones she does not feel this "passion"– she attacks with ferocity being violent and strangulating victims at once. The other, is what Carmilla is doing with Laura, building intimacy, making a strategy to attract the young lady. Carmilla is playing with her prey before attacking and murdering her victim, which would have happened to Laura if the General had not interfered with her plans. This "passion" that Carmilla feels for Laura is somewhat obsessive as it will only fade when she sucks Laura's life and blood out of her. Besides this, the words that are used to describe the never ending craving for blood, are also erotic, "lust, satiated" are all words that have strong sexual connotations, therefore the erotic is intrinsic in the vampire's longing for blood, and then the longing for the victim's body.

Carmilla's words were not fully comprehended by Laura, but they certainly affected Laura the way she wanted. The power of what Carmilla says to Laura is acknowledged by the young woman, reflecting about her caresses and speech:

From these foolish embraces, which were not of very frequent occurrence, I must allow, I used to wish to extricate myself; but my energies seemed to fail me. Her murmured words sounded like a lullaby in my ear, and soothed my resistance into a trance, from which I only seemed to recover myself when she withdrew her arms (LE FANU, 2015, p. 17)

Here, Laura exposes her mixed feelings towards Carmilla's advances, she wanted to disentangle herself from the vampire's arms, but did not have strength enough to do it, since she feels like she was in a "trance". This shows how manipulative the vampire's speech can be, as it influences the way that Laura feels about Carmilla's approaches. Carmilla's speech is powerful in the sense that her words can make a person much more susceptible to accept her ideas. At first, the behavior is considered strange, and Laura does not approve it, still every time it happens she does not know how to react, becoming very confused with courtship coming from a woman. But despite the negative feeling, she knew that it also awakens pleasurable sensations on 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 (LE FANU, 2015, p.17).

The mixed feelings can be attributed to Laura not understanding what her relationship with Carmilla was. She knows that they are friends, however, she is aware that her friend's behavior is odd for a friendship. She may be young and innocent but she knows that these advances are usually done by gentlemen, thus she even considers the possibility of Carmilla being a young man in disguise trying to win her, but she soon gives up on the idea. Laura thinks the behavior abhorrent because she, in certain aspects, enjoys it, feeling excited, and pleasure when Carmilla caresses her, but at the same time she understands that it is socially inappropriate.

Carmilla's speech manipulation is not a characteristic that is exclusive to her, it also seems to be mastered by the other female vampires of the novella, and Carmilla's mother is a good example of this. At the end of the narrative, while General Spielsdorf is telling Laura and her father how he had been deceived to welcome a young lady into his house, and how it resulted in his niece's death, he reports that he was at a masquerade ball when a mysterious woman approached him, declaring that they had been friends for years, however, he could not remember her. She, then, starts to narrate several encounters that they had before:

She referred to many scenes where she had met me — at Court, and at distinguished houses. 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, 2015, p. 40).

As the General states, he could not remember the Lady, but as soon as she started to speak, it affected his mind, as if she had planted fake memories, or at least she is able to manipulate them as if they are true for him. This contributes to show how powerful a vampire's speech can be, as with their spoken words they are able to make their victims believe in them, and to pass as reliable.

A similar effect can be seen on Laura. The girl's dislike for Carmilla's demonstrations of affection are emphasized at the beginning of their relationship, meanwhile they do not last since Carmilla's speech is so enticing that she does not have the will to fight it:

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. 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.” Then she had thrown herself back in her chair, with her small hands over her eyes, leaving me trembling. (LE FANU, 2015, p. 17).

Carmilla’s manners, and words were compelling to Laura, though she had those mixed feelings, the power of such words and actions prevailed. The vampire’s seductive power here is highlighted through her eyes showing desire, that is the expressed by the “gloating eyes” and “hot lips”. The erotic aspect of these scene is not only composed and heightened by the eager kisses, but also by the description of the hastiness of Carmilla’s breath, and how her chest also moves quickly and how such embraces and caresses were disturbing to Laura. Her shivering at the end could be a sign that she actually desired the “hateful” hugs she received, yet, Laura never states this, so her shaking could also be a sign that Carmilla’s attitudes at this point of their recent friendship scared her, especially because of Carmilla’s possessive statement. Carmilla stating that Laura will be hers shows her obsession with her victim, and also demonstrates part of the maleficent side of Carmilla. However, it is still possible to see that her intimacy with Carmilla heightens throughout the narrative.

The argument here is that these moments start to happen with much more frequency as the story continues, and it is possible to see that Laura’s reaction is increasingly receptive, and naturalized; soon she does not express confusion about these embraces anymore. Their friendship gets more intimate as time passes and Laura ceases to run away from these demonstrations of affect, now she is actually able to talk about it openly with her counterpart. It can be seen in the moment she asks her father whether she can hang Countess Karnstein’s picture on her bedroom’s wall:

“And you asked for the picture you think like me, to hang in your room,” she murmured with a sigh, as she drew her arm closer about my waist, and let her pretty head sink upon my shoulder. “How romantic you are, Carmilla,” I said. “Whenever you tell me your story, it will be made up chiefly of some one great romance.” She kissed me silently.

“I am sure, Carmilla, you have been in love; that there is, at this moment, an affair of the heart going on.”

“I have been in love with no one, and never shall,” she whispered, “unless it should be with you.”

How beautiful she looked in the moonlight!

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. (LE FANU, 2015, p. 23-24).

This is exemplary of how advanced their physical relationship had become. All the disgust Laura felt for Carmilla’s advances is gone. The two now share a kiss and talk about being in love, Carmilla openly declares her feelings for Laura, to which the latter does not

reproach, almost sounding as if she is in love with Carmilla, exalting the language of romance and beauty. Carmilla's shyness functions here as part of her illusionist act of being in love with Laura, to involve her victim in her attractive trap. Carmilla's shuddering hand, and the constant sighing reflects how much she was desiring Laura, and her blood, since after confessing that she loves Laura, she looks to the girl "with eyes from with all fire, all meaning had flown, and a face colorless and apathetic" (LE FANU, 2015 p. 24) what could be indicative that she needs to feed, as this happens in the same night that Carmilla makes her first nocturnal attack on Laura. Also, the kiss mentioned in the excerpt is the preparation for what is about to come, the consummation of such desire.

Around the middle of the narrative, Carmilla's strategy of befriending Laura, hiding her true vampiric nature, had worked. Carmilla can now change tactics and start to drink the girl's blood without raising any suspicion that she could have done such a thing. When she feeds on Laura, the vampire visits the girl's bedroom in her sleep, therefore, in Laura's narration, she believes that she was dreaming. During one of Carmilla's visits, Laura starts to describe how she felt having her blood being sucked out of her body (though she did not realize that), she says:

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. (LE FANU, 2015, p. 30).

The description is deeply related to a strong orgasm during the sexual act. The vampire bite is here a metaphor for sex, but the scene points to this even before the biting, the touch of the hand caressing the face and neck, the rhythmic mention of the kisses, describe the depth of this exchange between the two women. In addition, the sensation that Laura experienced while being attacked, is clearly orgasmic: she has spasms, her breath gets faster, and the "sob" that rose in her throat is the moment in which she achieves pleasure, being the most erotic scene in the novella. Despite the carry erotic tones, it also demonstrates how Carmilla is capable of hurting Laura. Even though the sobs can be related to an orgasm, Laura's description also shows that the sensations she is experiencing are at the same time pleasurable and painful, since she feels strangling and convulsing to the point she passes out.

What also contributes to the eroticization of the moment Carmilla is attacking her victims is one of the illustrations of the book (see image on page 17). This figure illustrates

the moment in which General Spielsdorf is hiding in her niece's bedroom to find out the reason she is getting sick. His narration of what he sees is completely different from what Laura describes, he sees it as a monstrous act, while for Laura that was intense, still, the drawing captures the erotic essence of the novella. In the image, Bertha is lying down in her bed asleep. Her posture at the same time that shows her innocence as a victim, it also eroticizes her: the position of the hand above her head leave her neck and chest exposed, attracting attention to her large and round breasts, in which, one of them is partially nude. Besides this, Carmilla approaching her victim add to the eroticism of the image, once her hand is directed to Bertha's breast, almost touching it. The image makes a good contrast with the situation it is illustrating. While the image highlights the erotic, the scene shows the monstrous and killer side of Carmilla, since the vampire is sucking Bertha's blood for the last time, not only because she ran away after being unmasked by General Spielsdorf, but also because she had already drained the girl's blood and weakened Bertha to the point of killing her.

The interactions between the two women are filled with eroticism. At the beginning, most of it was evoked by Carmilla. First, the vampire's erotic essence is shown by her words, addressing and complimenting Laura's beauty, as well as mentioning parts of the girl's body, the lips for example. Her speech is seductive because she is very flattering to Laura, but not only because of this, her words are almost always spoken to Laura in a whisper and in a murmur contributing to the attractiveness of her discourse. Also, the power of seduction of Carmilla is shown through her eyes, they are emphasized showing desire, and described in several of their moments together. Although these moments may appear very romantic and filled with passion from Carmilla's side, their intention is to seduce Laura, to put down her defenses for the vampire to have clear access to the victim. It is my observation here that Carmilla combines two forms of manipulative speech to be considered trustworthy, the *charming* and the *manipulative*. The charming speech of Carmilla is the one shown in the excerpts presented so far in this research, in which she makes declarations of her affection for Laura to win the young woman's friendship. The manipulative speech is the one that the vampire uses in order to fool Laura and the people on the castle to hide her night visits to Laura, and her activities as a vampire, that I will show in the section bellow.

4.2 THE MANIPULATIVE ABILITIES OF CARMILLA

After her arrival at the *schloss*, Carmilla informs Laura that she locks her room from inside every night, since her home had been invaded by robbers who killed two people. This sounds at first as a way to mislead the residents of her nocturnal activities, nonetheless, it is also part of her strategy to feed on Laura. Due to always seeing Carmilla locking her door every night, Laura is misled by the vampire, and also starts to lock her own door too. When the girl has the first strange visit in her room, in which she sees the “sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat” (LE FANU, 2015, p. 27) and is bitten for the first time - she also sees a woman, opening the door, and then leaving her bedroom. She thinks the woman was Carmilla teasing her, and moves to the door to find it locked.

Carmilla is not only able to fill Laura’s mind with fear of being attacked by burglars, but also shrouds her own attacks using manipulative discourse. When she meets Laura on the next morning after the attack, she introduces the topic of being tormented by nightmares the night before:

“I was so frightened last night,” she said, so soon as 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 chimneypiece, 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, 2015, p. 28).

By stating that she also had been afflicted with such horrors, Carmilla places herself in the same suffering conditions of Laura, and of the other peasant girls that lived nearby; one of the previous victim had “fancied she saw a ghost a fortnight ago, and has been dying ever since” (LE FANU, 2015, p. 19). Laura acknowledges that what happened in her bedroom resembled this girl’s ‘symptoms’, so when Carmilla says that she had a similar dream, the lady accepts that both of them are getting ill. Laura then does as Carmilla instructs and sleeps with the charm, and is able to sleep well for two nights, but later, she starts to have ‘dreams’ again. The vampire nevertheless, proposes a solution as the charm stopped working: she says that the dreams are a symptom of fever, and that the charm is filled with medicine that as it expires, it loses its effect, thus providing a perfect, and natural, explanation to cover her tracks.

Carmilla uses her manipulative speech not only with her victim, Laura. She also uses this strategy to talk to Laura's father after her mysterious disappearance from the house. One night, Laura wakes up from her feverish dreams by hearing a whisper that said "Your mother warns you to beware of the assassin"(LE FANU, 2015, pg 30), and then she sees "Carmila, standing at the foot of my bed, in her white nightdress, bathed, from her chin, to her feet, in one great stain of blood" (LE FANU, 2015, p. 30). After hearing and seeing such things, Laura instantly starts to scream for help, and hurries to Carmilla's bedroom with the "idea that Carmilla was being murdered" (LE FANU, 2015, p. 30). When she gets there, the door is locked – as the vampire locks it from the inside every night – Laura calls out the servants, who are able to break into Carmilla's bedroom, only to find out that her friend is not sleeping there, as she was supposed to. They searched for Carmilla throughout the night and morning without success. Only in the early afternoon Laura encounters Carmilla by passing in front of the vampire's room close to her dressing table. Laura, seeing Carmilla gets extremely excited, and calls out her father and the servants of the house, but Carmilla, does not wait for the other to start her dissimulated act, posing as a scared girl while telling her versions of the facts:

It was past two last night," she said, "when I went to sleep as usual in my bed, with my doors locked, that of the dressing room, and that opening upon the gallery. My sleep was uninterrupted, and, so far as I know, dreamless; but I woke just now on the sofa in the dressing room there, and I found the door between the rooms open, and the other door forced. 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? (LE FANU, 2015, p. 32)

When the others arrive at Carmilla's room, she repeats herself, and Laura's father takes charge of the situation, and comes up with a reasonable explanation. He asks the vampire if she knows that she is a sleepwalker, in which Carmilla's answers that she had episodes in her childhood. After hearing her answers, he then, gets to the following conclusion:

Well, what has happened is this. You got up in your sleep, unlocked the door, not leaving the key, as usual, in the lock, but taking it out and locking it on the outside; you again took the key out, and carried it away with you to some one of the five-and-twenty rooms on this floor, or perhaps upstairs or downstairs. There are so many rooms and closets, so much heavy furniture, and such accumulations of lumber, that it would require a week to search this old house thoroughly. Do you see, now, what I mean?"

"I do, but not all," she answered.

"And how, papa, do you account for her finding herself on the sofa in the dressing room, which we had searched so carefully?"

"She came there after you had searched it, still in her sleep, and at last awoke spontaneously, and was as much surprised to find herself where she was as any one

else. I wish all mysteries were as easily and innocently explained as yours, Carmilla,” he said, laughing. (LE FANU, 2015, p. 33)

In this episode of Carmilla’s mysterious disappearance and reappearance, it is possible to see two things: first, that Carmilla uses the same manipulative speech she uses to Laura, to talk to Laura’s father, and second that she induces the father to reach the conclusion that she is a sleepwalker. Her small frightened speech of waking up in a different place without being waked by the moving, and of finding the door unlocked, without hearing any noise, combined with her absence in the room at the night before, point out to only that solution explained by Laura’s father. Carmilla, by manipulating Laura’s father to reach this conclusion benefits from it. Laura’s father solving the mystery will not raise much suspicions as if the vampire had said it herself. Carmilla vanishing out of the room, and later showing up at the same place they were looking for her, raises questions on Laura’s mind, but when these questions are answered by her own father, the girl does not question his reasoning. Thus, Carmilla uses this as a shield to protect herself and her innocent image, and is able to buy her more time to feed from Laura.

This scene is one of the few that Carmilla interacts with male characters in the narrative, and one of the few that she speaks to men in kind manner. Another moment in which this happens is when General Spielsdorf is telling Laura and her father what had happened to Bertha, and the real reason that she is dead. When he is narrating his first encounter to Carmilla and her mother at the masked ball, it is possible to see that they have a direct conversation, in which he comforts her about her mother hastily parting, and leaving her at the ball to the cares of the General and his niece:

“In the next room,” said Millarca, “there is a window that looks upon the hall door. I should like to see the last of mamma, and to kiss my hand to her.” (...)
 “She is gone,” said Millarca, with a sigh.
 “She is gone,” I repeated to myself, for the first time — in the hurried moments that had elapsed since my consent — reflecting upon the folly of my act.
 “She did not look up,” said the young lady, plaintively.
 “The Countess had taken off her mask, perhaps, and did not care to show her face,” I said; ‘and she could not know that you were in the window.’
 She sighed, and looked in my face. She was so beautiful that I relented. I was sorry I had for a moment repented of my hospitality, and I determined to make her amends for the unavowed churlishness of my reception (LE FANU, 2015, p. 43-44)

In this brief interaction narrated by General Spielsdorf, Carmilla uses the same manipulative speech that she used to talk to Laura’s father, the only difference is that instead of manipulating him to cover her tracks of her vampiric activities, she is using this in order to guarantee that she would be welcomed at Spielsdorf’s house. In this small conversation

between both of them, Carmilla acts as a child that is heartbroken to see her mother leave without taking her, and by seeing the girl's sadness he discards any regret he has by agreeing to accept Carmilla to stay in his house for three weeks until her mother's return.

Another moment in which there is a direct conversation between Carmilla and a man is when Laura's father talks to the two girls and informs them that one more person died of the mysterious illness that is spreading around the habitants who live nearby. He also speaks logically about the illness believing it to be caused naturally, and that it was not a supernatural being's doing as the neighbors believe:

“All this,” said my father, “is strictly referable to natural causes. These poor people infect one another with their superstitions, and so repeat in imagination the images of terror that have infested their neighbors.”

“But that very circumstance frightens one horribly,” said Carmilla.

“How so?” inquired my father.

“I am so afraid of fancying I see such things; I think it would be as bad as reality.”

“We are in God's hands: nothing can happen without his permission, and all will end well for those who love him. He is our faithful creator; He has made us all, and will take care of us.”

“Creator! *Nature!*” said the young lady in answer to my gentle father. “And this disease that invades the country is natural. Nature. All things proceed from Nature — don't they? All things in the heaven, in the earth, and under the earth, act and live as Nature ordains? I think so.” (LE FANU, 2015, p. 21)

In this conversation, Carmilla's response to the man is somewhat rude. This small amount of rudeness coming from the vampire can be in part because he addresses the subject of religion, how everything happens in accordance to God's will. Carmilla questions him if God is the creator of all things, and if Laura's father is certain that those women are getting sick because of natural causes, God is responsible for their illness. Also, everything that is related to Laura's religion infuriates Carmilla. Before this conversation with Laura's father, the vampire gets very mad with Laura because of the subject. She and Laura were in the yard, when a funeral procession passes by them. Laura raises to pay respect, and sings along a hymn with them. Carmilla gets upset by it, and asks for Laura to stop, saying that the girl “pierce my ears” (LE FANU, 2015, p. 18), and asking Laura “how can you tell that your religion and mine are the same” (LE FANU, 2015, p. 21). This aversion to Laura's religious beliefs may be caused because it affects her. After General Spielsdorf exposes Carmilla's true identity of being Countess Karnstein and a vampire, Laura's father asks for a priest to perform religious rituals in Laura's room to prevent Carmilla from appearing during the night and cause more harm to Laura, thus showing that Laura's religious beliefs may affect her vampiric nature.

Carmilla is annoyed by something that Laura says only in this moment of the narrative, but this is more frequent in her interactions with men, one example is Carmilla's conversation to Laura's father mentioned in the example above, and another is when the vampire meets the hunchback who offers the charm for them, Carmilla buys one, and so does Laura. In this interaction, he is the one who is addressing both of the ladies. The girls are in the window, and he approaches to offer his products. Since he is in a lowest level in relation to the girls, when he looks up, he notices the vampire's fangs and makes her an offer, to which she reacts with anger:

In an instant he unrolled a leather case, full of all manner of odd little steel instruments.

"See here, my lady," he said, displaying it, and addressing me, "I profess, among other things less useful, the art of dentistry. Plague take the dog!" he interpolated. "Silence, beast! He howls so that your ladyships can scarcely hear a word. Your noble friend, the young lady at your right, has the sharpest tooth, — long, thin, pointed, like an awl, like a needle; ha, ha! With my sharp and long sight, as I look up, I have seen it distinctly; now if it happens to hurt the young lady, and I think it must, here am I, here are my file, my punch, my nippers; I will make it round and blunt, if her ladyship pleases; no longer the tooth of a fish, but of a beautiful young lady as she is. Hey? Is the young lady displeased? Have I been too bold? Have I offended her?"

The young lady, indeed, looked very angry as she drew back from the window.

"How dares that mountebank insult us so? Where is your father? I shall demand redress from him. My father would have had the wretch tied up to the pump, and flogged with a cart whip, and burnt to the bones with the cattle brand!" (LE FANU, 2015, p. 20)

The hunchback notices that Carmilla is enraged when he offers his dentist services. She distances herself from the window, and shows some of her evil temper, as she wished he would suffer a torturous punishment for suggesting such thing. The reasons for her sudden anger is that when he suggested to make her fangs round, he is also suggesting for her to abandon the only instrument she has to feed herself, and therefore, to give up of what maintains her alive. The other reason is that he almost exposed her true nature to Laura. When she mentions that Carmilla's teeth look like needles, he could have activated Laura's memories of the night that she saw Carmilla in her bedroom as a child, in which she felt something piercing her chest, and the sensation reminded her of two needles penetrating her skin. If Laura made such connection, it could affect the way she sees Carmilla until now. Luckily for Carmilla, she was not feeding on Laura yet, because once the nocturnal attacks started, Laura feels the same sensation of needles puncturing in her chest once again. The vampire's wrath is triggered because she feels threatened.

Whenever Carmilla is exposed, it is followed by rage. While General Spielsdorf is narrating the night of Bertha's death, he says he follows the doctor's instructions, and hides in

the girl's bedroom to discover what is really causing his niece symptoms. He stays hidden in the dark for a while, until he sees "a large black object, very ill-defined, crawl, as it seemed to me, over the foot of the bed, and swiftly spread itself up to the poor girl's throat" (LE FANU, 2015, p. 49). The man then, walks forward, and the vampire noticing him, looks to him with "sulking ferocity, and horror". At this moment, he recognizes the girl he accepted into his house, Millarca – one of the identities Carmilla uses for people not to discover she is Countess Karnstein – he tries to kill the creature with his sword, but the vampire escapes. Carmilla infuriates herself because General Spielsdorf finds out the truth about her, interrupting her eating, and because her life is at risk, since he attacks her. Carmilla does not fight him back here, even though she could, because of her instincts of survival.

The same happens at the end of the narrative, and the two rivals meet again at the ruins of the Karnstein chapel. After he finishes speaking the episode mentioned in the previous paragraph, Carmilla enters the chapel where the General, Laura and her father were talking. When General Spielsdorf sees her, he recognizes the woman who killed his beloved niece, he takes an axe, and assaults her. Laura describes the scene as follows:

I was just about to rise and speak, and nodded smiling, in answer to her peculiarly engaging smile; when with a cry, the old man by my side caught up the woodman's hatchet, and started forward. On seeing him a brutalized change came over her features. It was an instantaneous and horrible transformation, as she made a crouching step backwards. Before I could utter a scream, he struck at her with all his force, but she dived under his blow, and unscathed, caught him in her tiny grasp by the wrist. He struggled for a moment to release his arm, but his hand opened, the axe fell to the ground, and the girl was gone. (LE FANU, 2015, p. 50)

As can be seen, Carmilla turns quite aggressive when she sees her former host. She once again is unmasked, and attacked by him, resulting in her revealing her true nature to Laura and her father. She also shows how strong she is. Throughout the narrative, she is constantly showing herself as a fragile and weak person, who cannot even bear to take long walks, however, this is far from the truth, since she is a small woman but is able to stop an attack with only one hand, holding his arm so strong that he cannot bear the pain and drops the weapon he was using to fight her. Aggressiveness in the interactions between Carmilla and men is a constant in Le Fanu's story, culminating in her bloody and brutal murder, where a group of at least four men, impale her heart, and decapitate her. Therefore, Carmilla's behavior around men is strikingly different from the way she acts around Laura. Despite from that one moment at the funeral procession that she says harsh words to the girl, she is always very sweet and gentle with Laura, what does not happen when the vampire talks to men, unless she will benefit from it. As it was seen, Carmilla's talks gently to men when she needs

to initiate, or proceed with her plan to feed on her chosen victims, as she does when talking to Laura's father at the disappearance episode, and to General Spielsdorf when she spoke to him at the masked ball.

So far in this study, it was possible to see that Carmilla makes use of two forms of speech to speak to Laura, the charming consisting of declarations of love and flattery to construct an intimate relationship with Laura, and the manipulative that she uses to cover her actions as a vampire, so Laura (and the other people living in the castle) would suspect that the Carmilla is the responsible for Laura suddenly feel ill. Also, she uses this manipulative speech with other characters in the narrative when it is convenient for her. She uses this to talk to General Spielsdorf to remove the doubts that he was having by accepting her as a guest in his home, and to Laura's father to hide one of her many visits to Laura's bedroom. I reach here the end of my analysis, thus in the next section, I will provide my main findings, and conclusions for this study.

5 FINAL REMARKS

In this study, it is proposed an analysis of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla*, in order to see how the erotic discourse is constructed in the narrative, as a way to understand the importance of Carmilla's speech to lure her victims, and the importance of it in the construction of eroticism, or erotic undertones in the story. In order to select and analyze the eroticism in the narrative, James Latimore's concept of erotica was used, that is, the critic argues that in erotic literary/artistic texts there are certain words that can be responsible for the arousal of eroticism in such works. The hypothesis for this research is that Carmilla as a vampire does not use hypnosis in order to control her victims as other vampires in literature do, but that her speech is her most powerful tool, in which she uses it to seduce her victims, and to spellbound making them more susceptible to trust her. The research questions that guided this research are the following: 1) how is the discursive, erotic nature of the vampire shown in the narrative through Carmilla? 2) What makes Camilla's speech seductive? 3) In what ways can her speech be considered manipulative? 4) Is Carmilla's manipulative discourse expressed different in relation to male and female characters?

Regarding the first and second questions, 1) how is the discursive, erotic nature of the vampire shown in the narrative through Carmilla? 2) What makes Camilla's speech seductive? I understand that their answers are connected. Mainly because it is possible to see that eroticism in the novella is centered around Carmilla's figure. Every scene in the novella

that has an erotic tone, it is a scene in which Carmilla is present, and her speech is a key element to it. The seductive aspect of Carmilla's speech and its contribution to the eroticism in the novella relies on her use of repetition of words, and mentioning of Laura's body part, as the girl's lips, that she mentions twice in the same utterance. The choice of this word is indicative of the vampire's desire towards her victim, and also implying a sexual connotation since it carries a double meaning. Besides this, it was also seen that Carmilla's way of speaking to Laura is very enticing. The vampire, when she is in an intimate moment alone with Laura, usually makes use of murmurs and whispers to make compliments to Laura, and to declare the love she claims to feel for the young lady. All of these elements are used by Carmilla in order to manipulate Laura into believing that Carmilla loved the young lady.

Despite Carmilla's rhetoric carry a heavy responsibility to build eroticism in the novella, it was also possible to see that all of her romantic monologues said to Laura were all followed of embraces. Whenever she makes a declaration of her passion for the girl, she also touches Laura's body, caressing her, placing her hand on the young lady's waist, taking Laura's hand, placing her face closely to Laura's, the way she looks to the girl, and of course by giving several kisses to the young woman's cheek. The combination of all these elements demonstrate how seduction and eroticism pervade the vampire in this narrative, the erotic is only seen in the narrative when Carmilla is present. In this sense, the erotic essence of Carmilla is shown here through her speech and her actions.

In this sense, when Carmilla bites Laura and drinks the girl's blood, her action is responsible for triggering the eroticism in this scene, even though it is narrated by Laura. Even though Laura is the one describing the sensation she felt while having her blood being drawn away from her body (even though she is not aware that her sensations are ensuing of blood sucking), she feels this because of one of Carmilla's actions. From this, it is possible to see that Laura's perception of the occurrences also contributes to the eroticism of the story. Laura is the narrator, therefore every information we have about Carmilla's actions and her speeches are conveyed by her. One can argue that Laura can be an unreliable narrator, still her personality does not demonstrate that she has a flaw of character. She is a young and innocent girl, raised on religious values, what adds to construct her character as a trustworthy person.

Laura is also an important and relevant element for the eroticism of the narrative, because she conveys what Carmilla does, and says, as well as shows to the reader her own perception that contributed to the erotic atmosphere of the story. It is through her eyes that the

reader has access to several words that help to arouse the eroticism, as for example the several moments in which she mentions the parts of both her own body or Carmilla's. For example, the mentioning of the vampire hiding her face to her neck, the moments in which Carmilla whispers closely to her ear, she noticing Carmilla's excitement by the movement of her chest under the vampire's dress, her depiction of Carmilla's gaze to her, and of course, the words (breast, rose and fell, breathing fast, etc.) that she uses to describe the orgasmic sensation while Carmilla was feeding on her blood. These words of erotic arousal are only present there due to Laura's account.

In relation to question number three, 3) In what ways can her speech be considered manipulative, it is possible to see that Carmilla uses two kind of speech to lure Laura into befriending and not suspecting her. These speeches are the charming and the manipulative. With the charming speech the vampire has the objective to seduce Laura into being her friend and be able to construct an intimate relationship with the girl. She makes her speech attractive by frequently addressing and praising Laura's beauty, constantly making declarations of love and passion for the young lady, and also demonstrating her affection for Laura through her embraces, caresses and kisses. The vampire does all of this to build an image that would appeal to Laura, thus attracting the young woman to her deception.

Carmilla's manipulative speech works differently, this one is used in order to cover her activities as a vampire around the castle, and to hide her nocturnal visits to attack Laura in her sleep. She uses the fact that people are afraid of what they call a mysterious disease that is afflicting people (even though she is the cause of so called illness) to pass as an innocent victim of the symptoms. Through the rumors that grow in the story, the symptoms of the illness consist of people (women, actually) having visions, seeing ghosts and apparitions before getting very weak and dying. The visions of course are treated as fever hallucinations, and the vampire takes advantages of it to deceive Laura. After the first night feeding on Laura, she knows that the girl sees her black immaterial form in her bedroom, and therefore she brings up the subject on the conversation, claiming she had strange dreams during the night, and by stating to Laura that what she sees is a dream, her victim believes her without questioning.

In addition, there is a connection between both kinds of discourse that she uses, since both discourses combined can be extremely powerful. Carmilla could have used only her manipulative speech to fool Laura about her true nature and still be successful, but because

she used it along with the charming speech, it is even more effective. Even though Laura discovers that Carmilla is a vampire, and that her friend is the cause of her illness, she cannot forget her friendship with Carmilla. The image the vampire built as a friend for Laura marked the girl so much that she stills remember her after years of the occurrences at the *schloss* (castle). Thus, the use of the charming speech can increase the effectiveness of the use of the manipulative speech on the victim.

Still considering Carmilla's manipulative speech, it was seen that she does not use it exclusively with Laura. When it comes to achieving her goals, Carmilla will manipulate, and deceive other character to execute her plans. Thereby, question number four, 4) Is Carmilla's manipulative discourse expressed different in relation to male and female characters?, is partially answered. As mentioned previously, Carmilla uses the same manipulative speech she adopts while talking to Laura with General Spielsdorf, and the girl's father. Regarding General Spielsdorf, the vampire uses this speech to deceive him, posing as a suffering child abandoned by the mother to remove any regretful thought he was having after promising to host Carmilla in his house. As for Laura's father, she tricked him into believing she suffers from somnambulism, and that she leaves her room at night due to this condition. However, even though Carmilla's manipulative speech is successful in these two moments, since she does not use her charming speech with these two male characters, its effectiveness is lessened.

Thus, when these two character learn the truth about Carmilla being a vampire, her manipulative speech is not strong enough to sustain the image of the innocent young girl they welcome to their homes, and the image of the murderous blood-chasing vampire takes over them, differently from Laura who can still see Carmilla as a humanized being. After Bertha's death, General Spilesdorf endeavors to find Countess Karnstein, and to cease her from existence, and Laura's father as soon as he finds out the truth by the General, immediately joins his friend in the task of finding the vampire's grave to eliminate the threat. Furthermore, Carmilla's use of the manipulative speech expresses the few moments in which she is gentle to male characters in the narrative, since she uses kindness to her own interests of entering or staying in their houses to feed from their children. Despite these crucial moments for Carmilla, and in casual chatter, Carmilla turns aggressive when interacting to male characters, as could be seen in the scene she gets furious with the hunchback for mentioning her fangs. Carmilla's anger towards men appears every time the truth is (or is about to be) exposed. It happened when the hunchback acknowledged her pointed teeth in front of Laura, when the General discovered she was sucking his niece's blood, and causing her illness, and when

Spielsdorf openly attacks the vampire in front of Laura and her father. Whenever Carmilla's hidden vampire nature is unmasked, she unleashes her wrath.

In conclusion, it is found that Carmilla's speech is an important tool in the narrative for several reasons. Through it, she is able to involve her victim, Laura, and other relevant characters, as General Spielsdorf and Laura's father to believe and trust her invented personalities of Millarca and Carmilla. With her discourse she can be in control of the scenario she created since before she encounters her victims. In order to get into her victims houses, she already has an strategy, and with the help of the other vampire she calls her mother, she achieves her goal. Once she is inside of their homes, she has the advantage of knowing the truth about every strange occurrences in the house or nearby, and thus, she can point the other characters to the directions she desires them to look. General Spielsdorf and Laura's father for some time she directs their look to only let them see the fragile and sweet girl who needs shelter. As for Laura, conducts the girl to be every time closer to her, until the point that the girl would not be able to free herself from her grasp.

Henceforth, I will now leave here my suggestions for further research on the novella *Carmilla*. First, I would like to give the suggestion that Carmilla should be analyzed under a different concept or eroticism. Here, the erotic atmosphere of the narrative was analyzed considering language as the responsible to raise eroticism in the story, especially because it considers Carmilla's speech a significant feature for the seduction of their victims. By having a female vampire as protagonist (and also antagonist) that only chose women as her victims, it is undeniable that the vampire's relationship with Laura is considered homosexual. As I stated at the introduction of this study, the homosexual aspect of Carmilla's and Laura's relationship is not the focus of this analysis, however, if one took homosexuality as the focus of the research, eroticism in the novella could be analyzed under the concept of eroticism discussed by George Bataille, or by Octávio Paz. Both of them discuss eroticism, emphasizing the role of societal moral values into determining what is considered erotic, therefore a homosexual relationship transgresses such values, and also is considered a taboo under its perspective. Thus, an analysis of *Carmilla* considering these aspects would enrich and renovate the gamut of research conducted focusing on Laura and Carmilla's lesbian relationship.

Furthermore, while conducting this study, it was possible to notice that Carmilla's gazes, and looks are constantly mentioned throughout the narrative, therefore it would be interesting to analyze this issue thoroughly. My suggestion to address Carmilla's gaze is that

it could be studied to see if it also has a strong connection to eroticism as Carmilla's speech, since due to time limits it was not possible to be closely explored in this study. Still regarding Carmilla's gaze, it would also be interesting to research if her eyes reveal the truth about Carmilla being a vampire, that is if her act of constantly looking to Laura can denounce her predatory nature. Also throughout research, it was possible to see that Laura had ambiguous feeling towards the figure of Carmilla. Sometimes she thought Carmilla's actions repulsive, in others she would be attracted by them, thus an in-depth study of this curious issue to understand what causes these feelings in Laura. Moreover, Carmilla's obsession in relation to her victim, Laura, can also be studied. As it was possible to see in the story, obsessive passion is part of the way the vampire feels regarding her chosen victims, therefore, to study how this obsessive behavior of Carmilla is portrayed in the narrative, could be an interesting perspective to discuss the two girl's relationship. Still in this sense, Carmilla and Laura's friendship could be analyzed in order to investigate if their relationship can be considered a metaphor for abusive relationships

Despite previous research on *Carmilla* contributing significantly to the wide range of studies regarding this novella on the field of gothic studies (TREVOR 2018; SILVA;FRANÇA, 2017), still could be noticed a lack on studies who would address eroticism properly, and provide a thorough analysis of this issue in the narrative, as well as being dismissive of Carmilla's murderous and deceiving vampire nature (ARAUJO, 2017; AUERBACH, 1995; SIGNOROTTI, 1996), and only few would consider to address the issue of speech and language while researching on *Carmilla* (SAGE, 2007, WILSON, 2015). Regarding this, the present study makes a relevant contribution to research on the field of erotic and gothic studies, since it combines Carmilla's charming and manipulative speech, key-feature elements of the construction of Le Fanu's vampires, and its influence in the arousal of an erotic atmosphere throughout the story. Carmilla is a narrative that merges the unsettling figure of the vampire, with the tenderness of eroticism. Blood being what connects them both. Carmilla as a vampire, projects her desire for blood, towards the image of her victim, what results in the innumerable seductive speeches to lure Laura to her murderous embraces. The connection between them, is also shown in the blood-sucking act to resemble the sexual act. In conclusion, Carmilla's character is a center pillar for the construction of a bloody eroticism in the narrative.

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