



From Dolls to Demons

Exploring Categorisations of the Female Figure in Gothic

Literature through a Selection of Nineteenth and Twentieth

Century Texts

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Declaration of Originality

Declaration: I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and does not contain the work of any other individual. All sources that have been consulted have been identified and acknowledged in the appropriate way.

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Dedication

I like to think that my love of stories comes from my earliest memories of my Dad who was my first storyteller. He always made sure to skip the scary parts so I would like to dedicate this thesis to him as thanks for his efforts in making sure that those tales were always happy ones.

Segments of this thesis have been disseminated in the following conference presentations and publications:

Conference Papers

‘Do you want me to be a doll forever?’: The Gothic Female’s Resistance to Patriarchy’

Conference Name: Department of English Language & Literature

Postgraduate/Postdoctoral Conference

Conference Organisers: Department of English Language & Literature, Mary Immaculate College

Conference Location: Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

Conference Date: 6th December 2011

‘From Dolls to Demons: Constructions of Femininity in the Gothic Female’s Evolution’

Conference Name: Queer Sisterhood in Contemporary Women’s Writing: A

Postgraduate Symposium

Conference Organisers: Postgraduate Contemporary Women’s Writing Network

Conference Location: Queens University Belfast

Conference Date: 29th February 2012

‘Damsels, Doppelgangers and the Death of the Natural Mother: How Fairy Tale Ideology Inspired the Gothic Literary Tradition’

Conference Name: Folklore and Fantasy Conference

Conference Organisers: Sussex Centre for Folklore, Fairy Tales and Fantasy.

Conference Location: University of Chichester

Conference Dates: 13th – 15th April 2012

‘Strained Sisterhoods: A Critique of Femininity and Female Sexuality in Gothic Literature’

Conference Name: Current Research in Speculative Fiction (CRSF) Conference

Conference Organisers: Current Research in Speculative Fiction

Conference Location: University of Liverpool

Conference Date: 18th June 2012

‘Constructions of the ‘Other’ Half in Irish Gothic Literature: Female Representation and Sexuality in Woman’s Role as Wife and Lover’

Conference Name: ‘The Gender Question’: A Mary Immaculate College and University of Limerick Sibéal Postgraduate Symposium

Conference Organisers: Mary Immaculate College and Sibéal

Conference Location: Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

Conference Date: 15th May 2013

Forthcoming Conference Papers

‘Damsels in Distress? The Importance of Illusion to the ‘Monstrous Feminine’ in Irish Gothic Literature’

Conference Name: 3rd Annual Limerick Postgraduate Research Conference

Conference Organisers: LIT PRS, MIC SU, and UL PSU

Conference Location: Limerick Institute of Technology

Conference Date: 29th May 2014

“She was colder than I. She was better at all of it’: Investigating the Male Construction of the Deadly Female through Anne Rice’s *Vampire Chronicles*’

Conference Name: Gender and Transgression in Twentieth Century Britain Conference

Conference Organisers: Newcastle University

Conference Location: Newcastle University

Conference Date: Summer 2014 – exact date to be confirmed

Conference Papers under Consideration

Title: ‘Ladies in the Looking Glass: Exploring the Importance of Mirrors as a Female Space in Angela Carter’s Construction of Identity’

Conference Name: Locating the Gothic Festival and Conference

Conference Organisers: Limerick School of Art and Design and Mary Immaculate College

Conference Location: Limerick School of Art and Design and Mary Immaculate College

Conference Dates: 22nd - 25th October 2014

Title: ‘“People see with different eyes’: Tracing the Subverted Reflections of Female Agency and Identity in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *The Rose and the Key*’

Conference Name: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu Bicentenary Conference

Conference Organisers: Trinity College Dublin

Conference Location: Trinity College Dublin

Conference Dates: 15th – 16th October 2014

Publications

‘The Monstrous Feminine: A Portrait of Female Sexuality in Irish Gothic Literature’

Publisher: Sibéal Irish Postgraduate Feminist & Gender Studies Network

Publication Name: *Sibéal* website

Publication Date: 4th August 2013

‘The Madonna and Child: Re-evaluating Social Conventions through Anne Rice’s Forgotten Females’

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield

Publication Name: *Images of the Modern Vampire: The Hip and the Atavistic* edited by Barbara Brodman and James E. Doan

Publication Date: 1st November 2013

‘Of Monsters and Men: Absent Mothers and Unnatural Children in the Gothic ‘Family Romance’

Publisher: The Centre of Studies for Otherness

Publication Name: *Otherness: Essays and Studies 4.2*

Publication Date: 23rd April 2014

Forthcoming Publications

Title: ‘If you were less pretty I think I should be very much afraid of you’: A Female Personification of Death in Irish Gothic Literature’

Publisher: *Writing From Below*

Publication Name: *Death and the Maiden Issue*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2014)

Publication Date: December 2014

Publications under Consideration

Title: ‘It is men who like to play dolls’: Exploring the Masculine Influence on the Creation of Female Identity in Angela Carter’s *The Magic Toyshop*’

Publisher: *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*

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Title: ‘One Happy Family? Redefining Gender Roles within the Gothic Family Unit of Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*’

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Abstract

This thesis will examine various representations of female agency and identity in both classic and contemporary selected Gothic texts. It will use feminist, psychoanalytic and selected aspects of literary theory in order to analyse four different stages of the female condition within this genre of literature. In doing this it will use examples from the literary Gothic that represent how the identity of these female characters is divided into binary oppositions of 'civilised' or 'native women'. The deciding (and usually masculine) agents of this categorisation, as well as the activity that occurs within the divide between these two groups, will be the focus of this thesis that I will use to portray how female identity is more complex than the rigid limitations of these patriarchal classifications.

My core objective is to analyse the collective image of women in selected Gothic literary texts in order to illustrate how this particular genre has given a voice to the struggles that women encounter during their search for identity within a society that places so many physical and behavioural demands on them. Originally an offshoot of Romantic literature, the Gothic engages with the supernatural in a deliberate effort to validate what is sublime and terrifying about the unknown. In the face of Enlightenment rationality, it facilitates encounters between reader and text that validate fears and insecurities that science often dismisses. This subversive quality of the Gothic, which still remains an inherent and essential feature of modern texts in the genre today, creates an active space for the uncanny, which thereby allows for the subversion of certain realities and identities in fiction that may or may not be possible in real life, and this is especially true in the area of female agency. This study will examine how these selected Gothic texts imagine, represent and explore women's socio-cultural and sexual identity within the divide between these 'civilised' and 'native' women, by offering characters that transcend the normative boundaries of gender identity by imagining gender-construction in a very different and emancipatory manner.

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'[Within] the pervasive cultural condition ... women's lives were either misrepresented or not represented at all.'

Judith Butler
Gender Trouble (1990)

The emerging woman ... will be strong-minded, strong-hearted, strong-souled, and strong-bodied ... strength and beauty must go together.'

Louisa May Alcott
An Old-Fashioned Girl (1869)

Introduction

The core objective of this thesis is to examine representations of female agency and identity in both classic and contemporary Gothic texts in order to discuss how this literary genre reflects social categorisation of women. As the Gothic genre is renowned for its ability to destabilise fixed definitions, it is an ideal medium for the exploration of these issues through various feminist theories. I wish to present these particular female characters as examples of how women are still divided into groups of binary oppositions which separate those who fulfil the standards of the socially-defined 'civilised' woman from the socially rebellious 'natural' or 'native' woman. To elaborate further on this point, I contend that the civilised woman is considered to be the one that submits to socially-constructed standards of feminine beauty and behaviour (which will be listed and discussed in more detail below), and is content to live within the limitations of these conventions. On the other hand, the natural or native woman is any subverted version of the civilised woman and so is considered to be an uncontrollable and monstrous threat to social order due to her disregard for the patriarchal expectations of her gender. The separation between socially-correct civilised women who fulfil their gender obligations and socially-incorrect (but usually liberated) native women is quite distinctive and yet is also incessantly blurred within the Gothic genre, especially within Female Gothic texts. The activity that occurs within this division, both by these women and the men who try to entrap, control, and categorise them, is the underlying basis of my argument and can be read in its very title, which I will explain in more detail presently. But first I wish to highlight the fact that these texts show that the deciding basis of these two

categories is often defined not by the women themselves, but rather by their male counterparts, which thereby illustrates the magnitude of male influence on the formation of female identity and self-perception. I will explain this notion through my exploration of how the classification of these women is dictated by their participation within the entrapping ‘male gaze’ and other gender-specific performatives. The ‘dolls’ mentioned in the title represent the civilised women within this study that are both infantilised and celebrated for their beauty and passivity; likewise the ‘demons’ represent the monstrous or native women that are scorned for failing to submit to their socially constructed sexual and familial roles. The juxtaposition of these definitive categories exemplify the complex duality of the female social position in Terry Eagleton’s claim that, for women, ‘the pedestal is never very far from the pit’ (Eagleton, cited in Purves 2014, p.114) regardless of their epoch and culture.

In order to explore the various components of this argument, the texts in question will be considered through the lens of existing scholarship on the Gothic, as well as through relevant aspects of psychoanalysis and feminist theory regarding the analysis of women’s roles in this literary genre. My use of psychoanalysis focuses mainly on theories regarding identity such as ‘the male gaze’ and ‘the mirror stage’ of identity formation, which are defining factors of both male and female identity but will be a useful way of discussing the outside factors that influence these heroine’s self-awareness and performative behaviour. Additionally, various feminist theories will be used to discuss these heroines, as many of these theories are based upon collective notions that women are usually categorised into ‘group symbols and social types [that] are generally defined by means of autonyms in pairs’ (de Beauvoir 1997, p.255).

The aforementioned concept of performative behaviour is correlated to the notion of femininity, which is a term that appears quite often in this thesis and therefore I would like to explain how its meaning is relevant to the subject matter of my research. My consideration of

‘femininity’ is that the term is connected to a woman’s gender and not to her sex. What I mean by this is that it has certain connotations that are not part of a girl/woman’s biology. Rather it is a social construction made up of a specific appearance as well as certain roles, attributes, and behaviours that girls are trained to desire and possess as they grow up. Long hair, thinness, and little or no body hair denote the typical physicality of the ideal feminine woman.¹ Furthermore, marriage and motherhood are considered to be especially important accolades for women even in today’s society when they have access to the same education and employment opportunities as men, which subsequently highlights how they are still meant to desire these roles above all other possibilities. Empathy, kindness, gentleness, sensitivity, and sweetness are some examples of the attributes that the feminine woman should possess, in addition to a chaste and non-threatening sexual identity. This model of femininity illustrates how the nature of these various components is behavioural rather than biological. Furthermore, society’s celebration of the civilised woman who epitomises ideal femininity, and its condemnation of the native woman who lacks or does not represent femininity, illustrates the power of social influence on female identity.

Due to the feminist nature of my subject matter, I will devote the first section to the representation of women in Male Gothic and the remaining three sections will focus on Female Gothic to present a comprehensive analysis of these female figures. My inclusion of the two Male Gothic texts in Section 1 is only to highlight the presentation of female sexual identity from a male perspective; my central concern is to examine these heroines through the lens of the Female Gothic. But before I describe the specifications of the Female Gothic, I think it is important to start with a brief explanation of the main differences between Male and Female Gothic texts. In *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, Anne Williams breaks down their formulaic disparities into three specific groups: narrative technique, treatment of

¹ This statement is made in relation to modern Western society, which presents this stereotype of idealised femininity through many forms of media on a daily basis. The exact specifications of this female prototype differ slightly throughout other cultures and time periods.

the supernatural, and plot. She notes that firstly, Male Gothic uses multiple points of view to create a narrative technique that focuses on dramatic irony whereas Female Gothic usually has a singular female perspective that only allows the reader access to the same limited information as that of the heroine. This restriction is a deliberate feature that ensures the reader's shared experience of the heroine's 'often mistaken perceptions and her ignorance' (Williams 1995, p. 102) of certain knowledge as events unfold. Secondly, Male Gothic text presents the supernatural as a part of its reality, unlike Female Gothic text which gives an explanation for paranormal events and creatures.² Thirdly, Male Gothic has a tragic plot and narrative closure is uncertain, while Female Gothic demands a conclusion that includes a happy ending for its central characters. While I do agree that these formulae act as accurate classifications of Male and Female Gothic texts in general terms, I assert that some of the novels in this study challenge the boundaries of this rigid categorisation and will note this in the relevant chapters.

The first three chapters discuss the notion of female identity through Gothic literature from the nineteenth century. My reason for beginning my study with texts from this era was firstly because I wanted to focus on a time when female identity was experiencing a huge shift from the private sector to the public sphere. Women were no longer confined to the domestic space of the home as more were becoming educated and employed, which subsequently meant that they were less dependent on men for financial support and as such they were demanding equal rights. These changes also meant that they were more comfortable instigating sexual relations, which was regarded as the most threatening development in female identity at the time. Therefore, the Gothic texts of the nineteenth century depict the social concerns of this emerging female sexuality in monstrous terms using binary oppositions to categorise their female characters in a way that reflected the feelings of

² In *Woman's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley*, E.J. Clery explains that this was a technique was invented by Ann Radcliffe who 'employed the device of the 'explained supernatural' in all the novels published in her lifetime. It became her trademark, and was also widely imitated' (Clery 2004, p.67).

the time. As this laid the foundation of the disapproving social attitude towards female sexuality that still exists today, I felt it was imperative to the concerns of this thesis to include the classification of native and civilised women as depicted in Joseph Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

Secondly, my inclusion of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was an essential text for the discussion of motherhood, which is one of the most essential characteristics of the female figure in terms of her social definition. I also felt that its connection to the twentieth century by means of Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, which is discussed in the same chapter, was a good way of bridging the gap between the two eras of study. The remaining chapter in this section on motherhood uses one of the forgotten female figures from Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* to investigate how this role is presented in contemporary Gothic literature. The remaining sections on the figure of the young girl and womanhood also focus on twentieth-century texts; again, a Rician female in *Interview with the Vampire* is used in conjunction with Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* to analyse the social pressures that the adolescent girl encounters as outside patriarchal factors attempt to maintain control of her emerging sexual identity. Finally, the notion of womanhood is examined using Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* and Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* through the lens of how women are also guilty of defining themselves and their female counterparts through the rigid social categories that are exclusive to female identity.³

The broader spectrum of female identity that is covered by these twentieth-century texts illustrates the social changes in the female condition in the last hundred years. Women are no longer getting married and having children at such a young age which means that they have a longer time for self-discovery during adolescence, and furthermore that they are

³ In *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, Anne Williams observes that the decades of the 1790s and 1960s when the Gothic was most popular coincided with two of the most important Feminist Movements. This connection may suggest a possible reason for the vast exploration of female themes in the genre during these years.

defined as children until an older age. This creates a paradoxical figure that has a childlike identity but a coinciding adult physicality and sexuality, which for the adolescent girl, has the added complexity of existential behavioural stipulations in order to meet the standard of the civilised woman's status. Finally, the last section on womanhood also depicts emerging changes in society as it discusses female identity in relation to how women use other women to perceive and categorise themselves and their female peers. These twentieth-century texts therefore highlight how female identity has become even more complex in the last hundred years in terms of the social pressures that seek to dictate it. In *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*, Natasha Walter discusses the development of women's self-perception. She says that it happened as a result of feminists who encouraged women to cease their service to others and to focus instead on their own desires and independence. In recent years however, this inward focus has been twisted by the media and used against them as a method of self-objectification and consumerism, which collectively signify yet another form of patriarchal maintenance of female identity (Walter 2010, p.65).

As I have mentioned already, Female Gothic is the central focus of this thesis, and so I wish to highlight some of the important focal points in its evolution and demonstrate its importance in relation to feminist theory. While this expression was initially created by Ellen Moers in *Literary Women* (1976) as an umbrella term for 'the work that women writers have done in the literary mode, that, since the eighteenth century, we have called "the Gothic"' (Moers 1978, p.90), it has been reconsidered and recreated in recent years by scholars of the genre. The subject matter of Moers' characterisation of Female Gothic was confined to issues surrounding motherhood such as the horrors of childbirth, postnatal trauma, and the ensuing feelings of entrapment that followed the experience. The 1994 special issue of the *Women's Writing* journal focused on exploring the limits of this categorisation, and investigated how it had moved from being less marginal to more mainstream, but in doing so had also hardened

into its own 'literary category' (Miles, cited in Smith and Wallace 2004, p.1) that was 'too essentialising' (Smith and Wallace 2004, p.1) in its discussion of gender and sexuality in the Gothic. These revisions offered fresh perspectives on Female Gothic as being a response to matters regarding 'the feminine, the romantic, the transgressive, and the revolutionary' (Horner and Zlosnik 2004, p.90) that subsequently inspired the new directions of research that are presented in the May 2004 issue of *Gothic Studies*. The articles in this issue are particularly relevant to the discussion at hand because they consider various ways in which the genre challenges the prevailing models of gender, and in doing so, defamiliarises (socially) naturalised expectations of female identity.

More specifically, they create a sharper focus of issues raised within Female Gothic that reflect exclusive concerns of the female situation, and in doing so, they give a greater meaning to the feminist conditions of the term. Various elements of Female Gothic are discussed, including that of plotlines that specifically centre on the heroine's attempt to escape a tyrannical father figure and her search for an absent mother figure. Furthermore, women's desire to escape their entrapment within the domestic sphere of the home (which is particularly relevant to this study), a circular plot structure that leads the heroine back to the entrapment from which she was trying to escape, the heroine's problematic relationship with her body, as well as female (homo)sexuality and relationships, and the presence of a double who represents repressed (usually sexual) desires, are listed throughout as being essential traits of this subsection of the genre. These elements all contribute towards the central focus of Female Gothic in my opinion, which is to serve as a commentary of social reality for the categorisation of the female figure.

Diana Wallace's summarisation of the female role in 'Uncanny Stories: The Ghost Story as Female Gothic' is especially apt in relation to my research; she classifies Female Gothic as being a 'mode within which women writers have been able to explore deep-rooted

female fears about women's powerlessness and imprisonment within patriarchy' (Wallace 2004, p. 57), and specifically locates their existence outside the symbolic order, which thereby ensures a coinciding disconnected status as mere 'ghost-like' figures within texts that reflect their cultural context. These concerns are evident in Chantal Moore's definition of the Female Gothic's typical narrative; she states that it centres on a 'heroine [who] proceeds on a journey against the patriarchy, yet reaffirms her position in the patriarchal estate at the end of the text' (Moore 2010, pp.5-6). She constructs this meaning from Diane Long Hoeveler's notion that within Female Gothic text, women "fictively [take] control of the masculine world although only up to a certain point" (Hoeveler, cited in Moore 2010, p.6). These formulaic descriptions are evident in many of the texts under discussion and give an explanation for the restoration of social order that is found at the end of these stories despite the heroines' attempts to gain full emancipation from their patriarchal bindings. Therefore the common thread of these conclusions emphasises the concept of female entrapment and how it is an inescapable reality for its heroines, which in turn mirrors the reality of women's social condition.

Additionally, Hoeveler's construction of a 'gothic feminism' element within Female Gothic texts is particularly relevant to my discussion of female identity. She states that term was developed 'when women realised that they had a formidable external enemy – the raving, lustful, greedy patriarch – in addition to their own worst internal enemy, their consciousness of their own sexual difference perceived as a weakness rather than a strength' (Hoeveler 1998, p.10). She defines Female Gothic as a genre that promotes female agency and developed the term of gothic feminism to describe the dangerous species of thought that emerged during the eighteenth century as a result of 'the Sentimentality of [Samuel] Richardson and the hyperbolic Gothic and melodramatic stage productions of the era [whose] ideology taught its audience the lessons of victimisation well (Hoeveler 2004, p. 31). To

elaborate further on this notion, she argues that this philosophy refers to the moral superiority that exists within female characters of these texts as well as Female Gothic texts. Very simply, she describes gothic feminism as not being about the construction of female characters that are equal to men, but rather about the construction of morally superior heroines. This superiority is defined solely by their role as the victim of the text. In other words, the heroines 'earn their special status and rights through no act of their own but through their sufferings and persecutions at the hands of a patriarchal oppressor and tyrant' (Hoeveler 2004, p.31).

As one cannot properly discuss Female Gothic without making some reference to the presence of masochism, it is imperative at this point to note Hoeveler's argument that, while this type of passive-aggressive attitude towards ill treatment could categorise them as being willing victims with masochistic tendencies, it is in fact because they expect to eventually gain 'a substantial return on their investment in suffering' (Hoeveler 2004, p. 31). She summarises the lesson of gothic feminism in basic terms as being that 'the meek shall inherit the Gothic earth' (Hoeveler 2004, p.31). In other words, gothic feminism is inseparable from victim feminism, as in both cases, the heroine is positioned as a consciously passive and victimised figure who is "caught up in an elaborate game of playacting for the benefit of an obsessive and controlling male gaze" (Hoeveler, cited in Moore 2010, p.15) This playacting is an essential component of the heroine's enactment of gothic feminism as her masquerade of inferiority allows her to exert "female power through pretended and staged weakness" (Hoeveler, cited in Moore 2010, p.15). Hoeveler states that the typical conclusion for the gothic feminist is an exchange of her suffering for:

Money and a man, a means of financial support and security. In the melodramatic scheme of things, a victim is always rewarded because justice always prevails, while suffering (particularly if one is young and pretty) can become a kind of lucre to be

exchanged in the strange barter system that women understood as the “shadow labour” of gendered capitalism. (Hoeveler 1998, p.18).

The elements of this concept will arise many times throughout my thesis as most of the female figures under discussion personify this traditional aspect of gothic feminism, and at times fall victim to the controlling male gaze, while others (like Claudia) eventually subvert it and in doing so, present an alternative version of the heroine’s fate in the subsection of the genre. While there is much more that could be said on the subject of Female Gothic in general terms, these are the main points that I wish to cover in relation to this study.

In recent years, there have been many academic texts that focus on Female Gothic from different perspectives such as Diane Long Hoeveler’s *Gothic Feminism*, which contains a broader discussion of the subject matter from her aforementioned article. In it she investigates how the ideologies of “victim feminism” or “professional femininity” can only be understood in relation to their origins in Female Gothic novel tradition, which she says mirrors that of white, bourgeois Western feminism. The central trajectory of her argument considers how gender politics alone do not victimise and oppress women. She focuses instead on how bourgeois capitalism, through the mediums of social, economic, political, religious, and hierarchal spaces, reflects the patriarchal family in its structure of female containment. In response to this observation, she notes how Female Gothic calls for a ‘need to privatise public spaces’ (Hoeveler 1998, p. xiii) in order to feminise these masculine institutions. Hoeveler situates and explores these notions within the literary context of Female Gothic writers from the Romantic era. She focuses especially on the work of Ann Radcliffe, which is universally considered to be the formulaic basis of future Female Gothic texts. Features such as a circular plot, adolescent female sexuality, female entrapment, forbidden passages, and finally, the presence of a passive heroine who manages to indirectly defeat her antagonist and gain a happy ending are analysed in relation to her concept of female oppression within the

patriarchal family. Additionally, she applies feminist theories including those of Luce Irigaray and Joan Riviere to the texts to emphasise how they give further support to the theoretical importance of her ideologies.

Women's Gothic: From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley by E. J. Clery also focuses on how Female Gothic texts illustrate the oppression of the female position in society and suggests that the genre can even be read as a form of writing women into history and literature through its exploration of female issues. Clery considers the notion of gendered language and how it suggests that the female writer has a natural ability to combine the tragic elements of pity and terror, which is the ideal formula for Female Gothic novel. She presents the successful career of actress Sarah Siddons as a way of explaining the rising popularity of early nineteenth-century female professionalism and explains how her success made it more acceptable for female artists and writers to explore darker and wilder themes in the public eye. This progression led to an increase in female authorship in subsequent years which Clery traces using two of the earliest Female Gothic writers, Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee. She follows the progression of the genre by examining Radcliffe's work and how her introduction of explained supernatural subject matter changed the Gothic irrevocably. In addition to these matters, Clery covers the careers of experimentalist authors Joanna Baillie and Charlotte Dacre as well as that of Mary Shelley. Collectively these authors make up the foundation of Female Gothic whose works created many of its formulaic components which in turn paved the way for future female writers of the genre.

In *Female Gothic Histories: Gender, History and the Gothic*, Diane Wallace suggests that women writers of the Gothic have at times used the genre as a mode of female historiography that reinserts them into literary history while also simultaneously highlighting their exclusion from it. She argues that psychoanalysis plays a big part in understanding the complexity of this relationship because when history is considered through this theory it is

seen to be aggressive as “it returns, it haunts, it sometimes dominates the present” (Doane, cited in Wallace 2013, p.4). Similarly, the past in Gothic literature never stays buried. And more importantly it always seems to contain repressed secrets of the past, whose solving often requires a psychoanalytic interpretation. As a result its dedication to rewriting women’s histories means that Female Gothic ‘is always “going back” [as] texts are haunted by their predecessors and, in turn, haunt their descendants’ (Wallace 2013, p.132). Wallace traces this notion chronologically through a variety of Female Gothic authors from Sophia Lee to Sarah Waters, and specifically concentrates on identifying the presence of a ‘Gothic historical’ element in their novels. Additionally, she repeatedly applies Luce Irigaray’s theory on the complex mother-daughter relationship to these texts as a way of examining the unstable position of the female figure in this subsection of the genre.

Similarly, *Women and Gothic* edited by Maria Purves, contains a series of contemporary essays that illuminate the complex relationship between women and the Female Gothic. They explore how this subsection of the genre has been shaped by women’s condition and used by women writers to promote subversive ideas of femaleness or to engender a discussion by making political statements or critiquing their culture. Furthermore, it argues that in return the genre has been used to darken and devalue women, and in doing so, has helped to shape their experience as well as their portrayal in fiction, art and film. Discussions cover some of the definitive Female Gothic authors such as Radcliffe and Shelley but also include many non-traditional texts such as Shelley Jackson’s hypertext *Patchwork Girl* (to which I will return in Chapter 3), Dorothea Tanning’s surrealist art, as well as some of the lesser known works of Mary Robinson, Frances Burney, and Mary Webb to name but a few. While each essay can be read as a stand-alone piece in itself, collectively they depict a detailed outline of the Female Gothic’s evolution since the eighteenth century to the present day as well as its various presentations of female identity.

In a similar vein to these texts, this thesis will examine how female agency and identity has been portrayed in traditional and modern Gothic texts and additionally how the concerns of Female Gothic have had such a major influence on the depiction of these civilised and native women. But in order to do so properly, we must first address some of the tenets of patriarchal culture by following Naomi Wolf's dictum to 'tak[e] them beautifully apart ...' (Wolf 2002, p. 59) so that we can focus on how the Gothic subversion of normative paradigms of the female figure are gradually subverted by Gothic texts. In doing this we will be able to explore how the various components of female identity and its associated femininity are socially-constructed false truths that have created a version of the female figure who is similar the (wo)man-made Everywoman of Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*. Therefore, the layout of this thesis will be divided into sections that undermine and critique traditional (and sometimes familial) female roles. To give a more detailed explanation of this statement, the female figure of my study will be dissected into four sections and a separate stage of her existence will be investigated in each one. My analysis of her roles within these stages will contain a particular focus on my earlier discussion of how these female characters illustrate the binary oppositions of civilised and native women and will also show how their fate is subsequently determined by this categorisation. To conclude, the organisation of the thesis is as follows: 'Part I: The Female Lover' will reflect on woman's position as a sexually repressed and socially controlled partner; 'Part II: Motherhood' will address the role of woman as nurturing presence who embraces her maternal role and has the ability to create a monstrous threat to the social order; 'Part III: The Young Girl' will investigate the social construction of female gender and sexuality as well as the entrapment and the infantilisation of women, and finally, 'Part IV: Womanhood' will study the social influence on relations between women and their participation in the categorisation of their female peers as well as the resultant consequences for their own self-perception. Collectively, these characters will

offer a nuanced and multi-layered reflection of the multifaceted nature of female agency and identity and how it is influenced, categorised, and controlled by their male counterparts.

Part I: The Female Lover

‘Part I: The Female Lover’ will explore how gothic literature portrays the female figure in her role as wife and lover. Concentrating on Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, it will offer a depiction of how the repression of female sexuality is a crucial factor in the determination of whether the female characters are civilised or native women. The figure of the eponymous young vampire Carmilla personifies the threat of a ‘monstrous femininity’ that could undermine the repressive social configuration of the civilised woman in terms of both the continuance of women’s domestic duties, and the traditionally weak female position within the power balance of sexual relations. Consequently, Carmilla’s pursuit of Laura redefines her role as one which is usually undertaken by the male suitor and thus acts as the first example in this thesis of a female character’s ability to behave as a sexually promiscuous native woman who does not conform to social and gender norms. This character also enacts Judith Butler’s notion of performativity and gendered behaviour, which will be discussed in relation to many of the characters in this study. Furthermore, the homosexual undertone of the relationship between Carmilla and Laura mirrors social fears because it undermines the fixed configuration of patriarchy by displacing men in terms of their reproductive role in a sexual context. In doing so, it endangers the traditional family unit and emphasises the unrestrained potential of a liberated female sexuality as a transgressive force in society.

Dracula demonstrates the binary opposition of the civilised and native woman in an effort to illustrate how the text acts a morality tale for women regarding the indulgence of their sexual desires outside of their marital/reproductive duties. Once again, the figure of the

native or sexually-active woman is depicted in negative terms as being both promiscuous and dangerous. She is defined as being a *femme fatale* who must be contained for the protection of social order. In contrast to this deadly seductress, who is represented by Lucy and The Three Sisters, the conception of sexual abstinence is fulfilled by the female figure of Mina, who is celebrated for being a civilised and ideal vision of femininity in the text. Betty Freidman's theory of the 'feminine mystique', and the dilemma of how society has created a female identity that is inextricably linked to domestic duties of marriage and motherhood, will be discussed in relation to the characters in this chapter in order to explore the female role of lover/wife. The theoretical analysis of the patriarchal entrapment and suppression of female sexuality through the various characters in these texts will offer an interpretation of this element of the female condition, and will provide a context for the subversion of patriarchy that is a salient feature of these narratives. The fate of the characters at the end of these tales will also be considered as a significant feature of the overall moral environment of the novels. Most importantly, this section on the female lover/wife will present a reading of woman's situation within a sexual relationship whereby she displays various behaviours that are different to her traditional role of simply being a passive recipient of the attentions of her male suitor.

Part II: Motherhood

'Part II: Motherhood' will focus on various aspects of maternal figures in Gothic literature, and on how the Gothic penchant for subverting traditional roles has led to the creation of unconventional mothers. Therefore this will be considered through the not-uncommon, but often unspoken, issues that are associated with this role. Matters such as the experience and effects of postnatal trauma in addition to woman's inability or disinterest in the undertaking of her maternal role will be analysed in order to challenge the traditional notion of how the

desire to experience motherhood is an intrinsic part of female identity. The shared concept of absent and unnatural mothers will be theoretically investigated through Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to illustrate how alternative portrayals of this facet of womanhood, and of how the 'family romance' is represented in Gothic literature. Moreover, the notion of ominous female sexuality from the first and second chapters will also develop through the elimination of the female Monster and her later resurrection in Shirley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, which acts as a response to her eradication in culture as a whole. The removal of both the other potential mothers will also be examined in relation to their connection to the female Monster, and to the shared inability of these female figures to fulfil their maternal role.

The connection between female identity and motherhood is also an important issue in Anne Rice's *The Vampire Lestat*, and is portrayed through Gabrielle's disinterest in her children. It presents another female figure that does conform to her maternal role as a civilised woman. Furthermore, it offers a type of parent-child bond whereby the usual familial roles have been reversed as a result of a sick or vulnerable parent who has become reliant on the child for protection and security. The blurring of fixed definitions in Rice's text allows Gabrielle to indulge in her desire to emulate masculine behaviour which once again raises the issue of gendered performance from previous chapters. Androgyny and incestuous relations between the parent and child will also be discussed in relation to the characters in Rice's text as a method of connecting their relevance to the female figure in Gothic literature. Together, these texts will allow for the analysis of the maternal figure, and in doing so, they will reveal the complexity of the consequences of conditions like postnatal trauma and the creation of an unnatural female figure who reflects the falsehood of female identity and categorisation.

Part III: The Young Girl

‘Part III: The Young Girl’ will focus on the patriarchal influences of both private and public spheres that surround the young girl from the earliest stage of her development. It will pay special attention to the common occurrences of objectification and infantilisation of women, and will examine how this conduct can be either a deliberate or unintentional consequence of their familial relations. The features of de Beauvoir’s ‘doll theory’ will provide a theoretical perspective on this section, focusing as it does on the patriarchal objectification of women that is an intrinsic part of the young girl’s early development and which has a subsequent effect on various components of her later identity, sexuality, and self-awareness.

Once again, subverted gendered behaviour and familial roles arise in the unconventional family dynamic of Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*. Claudia’s entrapment within the body of a young girl personifies both the parents’ infantilisation of their daughter, as well as the problematic (when considered through the vision of the social paradigm of women), female figure who is unable to fulfil her reproductive or maternal duties. Louis and Lestat’s celebration of Claudia’s doll-like beauty, and their disregard for her frustration at the disharmony between her physical and mental states, emphasises the power-relations in their family. Her helplessness, which demands her reliance on them, illustrates the bindings of patriarchal ruling as she must abide by their rules and emulate the civilised woman’s submissive state until she can successfully replace them and avenge her entrapment. Claudia’s repression will be considered in parallel with the theoretical implications of the narrator’s situation in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The shared containment of these women by the men in their family portrays the masculine control and misinterpretation of exclusively feminine issues such as the struggle with postnatal depression, and existence under the objectifying and controlling ‘male gaze’.

These particular concerns are also addressed through the character of Melanie in Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop*. The family dynamic in this novel is also problematic, and draws particular attention to the sexual identity of the young girl, and her attempts to maintain control of this identity rather than have it exploited by an outside male influence. Once more, the objectification and entrapment of women will be explored through Uncle Philip's celebration of female beauty; through his delight in female suffering and silence; and most significantly, through his attempts to transform his wife and niece into inanimate objects of beauty similar to the puppets in his toyshop. Carter's text will be examined through various psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives, with a special focus on Germaine Greer's concept of 'the eternal feminine' and its correlated position to de Beauvoir's 'doll theory', as well as on Naomi Wolf's discussion of how women are taught the importance of 'being desired' from the earliest stage of their sexual development. The resultant theoretical readings of the characters will demonstrate how patriarchal influence on female identity is an inescapable facet of the young girl's existence. Most importantly, it will reveal how the figure of the young girl is socially-entrapped and groomed to be a civilised woman from the beginning of her development.

Part IV: Womanhood

'Part IV: Womanhood' is the final section of the thesis, and it will concentrate on the intricacies of female interrelationships and theoretically examine the social reasons behind women's tendency to measure their self-worth in relation to their female peers. Additionally, it will study the figure of the transsexual woman, and trace her experience of joining womanhood. The latter part of this section will be a particularly important chapter in the overall thesis due to transsexual nature of its subject matter, which represents the ultimate components of confusion and misapprehension that are part of female agency and identity.

The matters of jealousy and rivalry in female interrelationships will be explored through the female cast in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, which addresses the various influencing factors in how women perceive and compare themselves to their female peers, and in doing so desire themselves to be civilised women who rise to the social demands on their beauty and worth. Wolf's analysis of female nurturing, and the influence of the media on women's self-worth as examined in *The Beauty Myth*, will be crucial to the exploration of the competitive nature of the relationships under discussion. Her treatise on the social value on female beauty and youth will be especially significant in relation to the tension between the young narrator and the older housekeeper in the novel, as the dynamic between these women allows for the examination of how age and physicality are major areas of comparison between women. Furthermore, it will analyse how the male figures in women's lives can also have a significant influence on the nature of their attitudes towards one another. The narrator's incessant self-comparison to her marital predecessor will illustrate how easily feelings of inadequacy can arise from this mindset, which is a form of psychological entrapment that can then lead to overwhelming insecurity and have a corresponding influence on all aspects of the sufferer's life. The analysis of this chapter will reveal the reasons behind this pattern of thinking, which once again tends to be an exclusively female experience that can be read as a result of the patriarchal structure and the influence of the media's treatment of the female figure.

The final character of Evelyn/Eve in *The Passion of New Eve* will address the female role of the transsexual woman. The issue of female relations will be considered through the contrast in Eve's perception of women through her initially male and subsequently female mentality. The change in her post-transformation mindset, and its ensuing repercussion on her interaction with women, will emphasise the difference between the male-female and female-female interplays. It will also raise the concern of the transsexual woman's attempt to be a

socially-correct or civilised woman as well as her position amongst her female peers, and also of how Eve's greatest struggle in her conversion to womanhood is the encompassment of a feminine mentality. The duality of Eve's identity over the course of the novel allows for a comparison between the theoretical 'male' and 'female gazes', and how this aspect of her character personifies Luce Irigaray's exploration of gendered sexual and social roles in *This Sex Which is Not One*. Explanations of post-operative states from queer theory as well as Butler's aforementioned theory on gendered behaviour in *Gender Trouble* and *Undoing Gender* will arise in this chapter in order to trace how the gender-related changes in Eve's character are a direct result of outside patriarchal influences to which she must submit in her new form. Her character allows for the study of the performative demands on women by highlighting them as a social construction rather than a biological part of the female figure.

The diversity of the female characters in this study will present an alternative depiction of the female spectrum, and will illustrate the complexity of their identity by paying particular emphasis on the constant struggle against the omnipresence of domineering and entrapping patriarchal influences that define them as either civilised or native women. In doing so they exemplify Hélène Cixous' claim, in *The Newly Born Woman*, that 'everyone knows that a place exists which ... is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing' (Cixous 1975, p. 72). This emphasises the importance of literature in the re-education and reinvention of female identity in society, and how the shared image of female agency and identity that is represented by the various characters in this study reflects the vulnerability of women in relation to the many patriarchal demands to which they are subjected. Finally, this thesis will demonstrate how the subversive nature of the Gothic offers a way of overcoming these collective stipulations of normative and ideological constructions of civilised or native womanhood in order to gain a true understanding of women's reality.

Part I: The Female Lover

'Perhaps women were once so dangerous that they had to have their feet bound'

Maxine Hong Kingston

The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts (1989)

Chapter 1: The Female Suitor: Exploring Woman's Role as the Sexual Predator in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*

1.1 A Portrait of Monstrous Femininity

This chapter will explore how the role of woman as lover is portrayed in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). The various elements within this novella such as the supernatural villain, the innocent and virginal heroine, the suggestion of doppelgangers, as well as shape shifting, grotesque imagery, and the blurring of familial and sexual identities confirm its Gothic classification. As I already mentioned in the Introduction, *Carmilla* is an example of a Male Gothic text but contains certain aspects of Female Gothic that verify its significance to the discussion at hand. The most relevant one is the narrative technique which concentrates on telling Laura's interpretation of events and traces the changes in her reaction to and perception of Carmilla as the plot unfolds and certain truths are uncovered. Additionally, the open ending can be read as a possible happy ending for Laura as her ability to still feel Carmilla's presence suggests that she may have survived the attack and is still alive. The novella's preoccupation with the maintenance of female identity through the control of female sexuality is central to the discussion of this thesis. The characters of Carmilla and Laura represent the opposing classifications of civilised and native womanhood. Furthermore, Carmilla's entrance into Laura's life illustrates the threat of the native woman's influence over the behaviour of the civilised woman and how this disturbs the social order of the text. For these reasons, it is the ideal text to begin our discussion of the Gothic and female identity.

Carmilla

Carmilla's arrival at Laura's home instantly changes the social dynamics of the novella to a world of gender imbalance similar to that of *Frankenstein* in Chapter 3. *Carmilla's* world however, is one ruled by femininity, with passive men and oppressive women. Her ruthless pursuit of Laura, and the intimate relationship that follows, raises the notion of female homosexuality and of woman's position as the sexual predator. In other words, she represents the dangerous threat of female sexuality with regard to male supremacy, and can be psychoanalytically defined as the 'monstrous feminine', which is the 'feminine excess [that] exorcises fears regarding female sexuality and women's ability to procreate' (Gamble 2006, p.253). Barbara Creed argues that this term is a simple reversal of the traditional male monster, but 'as with all other stereotypes of the feminine ... [the female monster] is defined in terms of her sexuality' (Creed 1993, p.3). This phrase therefore highlights the 'importance of her gender in the construction of her monstrosity' (Creed 1993, p.3), which thereby reinforces Twitchell's argument that femininity, by definition, excludes all forms of aggressive, monstrous behaviour (Twitchell, cited in Creed 1993, p.7). This indirectly supports the notions that, bound by the patriarchal definition of her nature, woman can only exist as the victim (Creed 1993, p.7). She suggests that woman is only portrayed as monstrous in relation to her 'mothering and reproductive roles' (Creed 1993, p.7). Therefore, Carmilla's attempt to replace Laura's mother and to carry out the masculine acts of colonisation, seduction, penetration, and murder, challenges the traditional vision of passive and pure female identity. In accordance with this subverted paradigm, the text offers the figure of the native woman as the female lover, which embodies the danger associated with the social emergence of the 'New Woman' which was an important issue in the context of the time of publication.⁴

⁴ In *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*, Nina Auerbach describes the ideal Victorian woman as being a 'silent and self-disinherited mutilate' (Auerbach 1982, p.8). She argues that the repressive nature of

1.2 Carmilla as an Unnatural Female Figure

Carmilla is a beautiful, young, female vampire who is obsessed with women, and who preys specifically on young girls. Her exclusive interest in, and relations with, other female characters secures her position as lesbian and emphasises the division of gender in the novel, thereby exemplifying Simone de Beauvoir's argument, in *The Second Sex*, on how lesbians avoid interaction with men whom they consider to be their rivals, as their male otherness makes them better equipped to 'seduce, possess, and retain their prey' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.443). Ken Gelder however, notes that the ideology of lesbianism is challenged in *Carmilla* according to the cultural context of its time whereby its status as an unnatural sexuality is illustrated by the deteriorating health of Carmilla's victims when they submit to her and return her affections (Gelder 1994, p.61). This sense of lesbianism as an abnormality also arises in Judith Butler's discussion of Monique Wittig's argument about how the position of the lesbian does not lie within the social constructions of gender, and therefore the lesbian 'is

Victorian culture in general, and its oppression against its female population in particular, portrays a belief in the relation between femininity and power, as illustrated by how women ruled in the palace and in the home at this time (Auerbach 1982, p.188). The myth of womanhood in this period consisted of manufactured fantasies regarding woman's nature, including those of 'inferior brain weight, tendency to brain fever if educated, ubiquitous maternal instinct, [and] raging hormonal imbalance' (Auerbach 1982, p. 12), which perpetuated her inferior position within patriarchal society. In contrast, the 'New Woman' (Grand 1894, p.271), which was a term that was introduced in the late nineteenth century by novelist, Sarah Grand, describes the onset of a group of women who were now educated and employed, and therefore socially and financially independent of men. This alteration of stereotypical gender roles led to radical changes in women's condition, as they were no longer confined to the domestic sphere, and therefore demanded equal rights in the public sphere. These progressions were considered to be a direct challenge to the rule of the patriarchal society, and in an effort to suppress her growing popularity and power, the 'New Woman' was often ridiculed in the newspapers and literature of this time. She was portrayed to be 'a sort of unnatural production', or 'a feminine Frankenstein', who was mocked for her 'crude ideas on life, and ... absolutely impossible remedies for the reconstruction [of society]' (*Lady's Realm*, quoted in Calder 1976, p.164). Much of Victorian fiction was concerned with this figure, and explored the social acceptance or rejection of the status of women and children as individuals (Calder 1976, p.210). The most threatening aspect of the 'New Woman' however, was her candid attitude towards sexuality as, in this era, there was a general consensus that apart from prostitutes, women could not, or should not, 'experience sexual pleasure' (Calder 1976, p.88). Sex was considered to be a 'marital duty [that was] only to be performed for the purpose of procreation' (Calder 1976, p.88). However, women's changing perspectives meant that they now 'felt free to initiate sexual relationships, to explore alternatives to marriage and motherhood, and to discuss sexual matters such as contraception and venereal disease' (Senf 1982, p.35).

Carmilla

neither a woman nor a man' (Wittag, cited in Butler 1990, p.113). Furthermore, she has no sex as she exists 'beyond the categories of sex' (Wittag, cited in Butler 1990, p.113), and so appears to be a third gender that is separate from the rigid binary oppositions of male and female. Butler summarises Wittag's argument in terms of her claim that to be lesbian or gay is to no longer know one's sex (Butler 1990, p.122). She also builds upon de Beauvoir's theory of becoming a woman with the notion that this process is not fixed as 'it is possible to become a being whom neither *man* nor *woman* truly describes' (Butler 1990, p.127). This creates an internal subversion of gender identity in which the binary characteristics are both assumed and propagated to such an extent that they no longer makes sense (Butler 1990, p.127) according to the normative social paradigm. Carmilla disputes this rigid stance with her claim that her sexuality is not unnatural, and even claims that it has been derived from nature itself:

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 2004, p.40)

This illustrates her own ability to recognise, and accept, the ambiguity of her sexual status within the strict gender boundaries of the text. It also subverts the common cultural belief at the time that homosexuality was unnatural by securing its definition as a natural part of sexual identity that should not be seen in threatening or negative terms.

Despite her status as a native woman, Carmilla enters the civilised woman's space of the domestic sphere quite easily, thus compromising the wholesome image of the home that was perpetuated at this time. According to John Ruskin, the ideal home is 'a place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division' (Ruskin, cited in Calder 1976, p.89). Carmilla's ability to reside within the family home may therefore be due

to the familial nature of the three major roles that she fulfils in Laura's life: those of maternal ancestor, surrogate mother, and female lover.

1.3 The Many Faces of Carmilla

Carmilla first appears in the family home during Laura's early childhood years as her strange night-time visitor, who has a 'solemn, but very pretty face' (Le Fanu 2004, p.10), and likes to embrace Laura. Carmilla's initial gentleness with Laura suggests a return of the maternal figure, and creates identification between her character and the mother (Gelder 1994, p.46). This connection is symbolised by her first encounter with Laura, which subverts the union of a mother nursing her infant; Laura describes how Carmilla's actions originally soothe and lull her back to sleep, only to be suddenly awoken 'by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment' (Le Fanu 2004, p.10). Her depiction of this embrace evokes an image of painful penetration that highlights the phallic nature of Carmilla's seduction. Furthermore, her destruction of this maternal imagery is the first implication of Carmilla's role as the sexual pursuer, a role whose gender was traditionally male. This sets up the gender dynamic of the girls' relationship, which can be examined through Calder's notion of how 'the violence of the male predator [in fiction] is emphasized by the helplessness of his victim ... for if the male were preying on an equal the whole effect would be lost' (Calder 1976, p.114). In other words, 'the female must be weaker than the male' (Calder 1976, p.114). Furthermore, Laura's submission to Carmilla's enchantment exemplifies Auerbach's notion of the 'entranced woman [who is] seemingly helpless in the grip of her hyperconscious male oppressor, [and whose] trance is not passivity but an ominous gathering of power as she transfigures herself from humanity to beatitude' (Auerbach 1982, p.40). Laura's role as the helpless female in this instance is also highlighted by the fact that Carmilla's violent and

Carmilla

masculine act of penetration takes place when she is unconscious and presumably safe in her bed, thus there are multiple acts of subversion taking place in this scene.

The trauma that Laura encounters during this exchange adds to her already nervous disposition, as she recalls knowing that the visit of 'the strange woman was not a dream' (Le Fanu 2004, p.11), and for a long time afterwards, she remains 'awfully frightened' (Le Fanu 2004, p.11). Her memory of this event occurs during the first night of Carmilla's stay as their guest, when Laura recognises her 'pretty, even beautiful' (Le Fanu 2004, p.26) face with its 'melancholy expression' (Le Fanu 2004, p.27), as belonging to the same lady from twelve years earlier. This connection leads to her first feeling of repulsion towards Carmilla, which she quickly represses when Carmilla claims to have had a reciprocating vision of Laura. Carmilla's ability to manipulate Laura is further demonstrated by her false claim that she does not 'know which one [of them] should be most afraid of the other' (Le Fanu 2004, p.28), and moreover, that if Laura 'were less pretty [she] should be very much afraid of [her]' (Le Fanu 2004, p.28). These apparently mutual confessions create a budding intimacy between the two girls because they suggest that the union has been predestined, which causes Laura to experience the first symptoms of love or lust towards her new companion; she notes how this connection makes her feel as though she already has 'a right to [Carmilla's] intimacy' (Le Fanu 2004, p.28), and admits to feeling strangely 'drawn towards her' (Le Fanu 2004, p.28). As a result, she consciously represses any feelings of repulsion towards Carmilla, and instead focuses on how she is 'so beautiful and so indescribably engaging' (Le Fanu 2004, p.29), despite possessing an inner 'coldness' that was 'beyond her years' (Le Fanu 2004, p.32). This stage of their bond is a natural part of early adolescence, as explored by de Beauvoir, who notes that 'there are lesbian tendencies in almost all young girls, tendencies that are hardly distinguishable from narcissistic enjoyment ... in her self-adoration is implied the worship of femininity in general' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.366). She argues that it is woman's status as the

Carmilla

'absolute *object* of desire' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.366) that leads to the creation of platonic and carnal female relationships. These feelings are expressed through a sharing of marks of extreme devotion and physical tokens of their love rather than in sexual embraces, and 'pleasure [is] given and received as innocent as it was when each loved herself in solitude' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.367).

In contrast to this natural female bond during adolescence, *Carmilla* embodies the figure of the lesbian in specific terms 'by her refusal of the male and her liking for feminine flesh' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.427). She raises the notion that 'every adolescent female fears penetration and masculine domination' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.427) and 'feels a certain repulsion for the male body' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.427), which makes her desire the female body instead. In particular, the young girl who has experienced a lack of maternal affection in the years of her early development, 'will be haunted all her life by her need for it' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.434) and will seek it out in other women in order to experience 'feminine protection' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.434). This fixation on compensating for the absence of a maternal love is not enough to turn the young girl into a confirmed lesbian; instead, she must go on to refuse to accept her femininity and pursue further sexual relations with another woman before this can happen (de Beauvoir 1997, p.435). Additionally, when the adolescent girl wants to explore her sexuality in a safe environment, she will seek out the female gaze and 'turn to a woman, who is less strange and less frightening than the male, but will have something of male prestige' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.367), so that she can play a masculine part for the girl. This occurs because of the girl's comfort with the female body, and also because of her familiarity with affectionate embraces from her mother and sisters. She labels the older woman of this union as being 'virile' as she:

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Incarnates in the girl's eyes both her father and her mother: she has the father's authority and transcendence, she is the source and the standard of values, she surpasses the world as given, she is divine, but she is also woman. (de Beauvoir 1997, p.369)

Through this experience, the young girl recognises her future self and identifies with her idol. But the fascination she holds for the virile woman is usually transient. As the young girl gains more knowledge of her own character, she realises that this female figure does not have 'sufficient *otherness*' to hold her interest and finds a male replacement for her instead (de Beauvoir 1997, p.370).

An alternative to this outcome is actively discouraged by society, as discussed in Adrienne Rich's essay, 'Compulsive Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', which claims that Western tradition has used the heterosexually-constituted family as the basic social unit to teach women that they 'need men as social and economic protectors, for adult sexuality, and for psychological completion' (Rich 1996, p.140). The underlying implication of this rigid structure is that 'women who do not attach their primary intensity to men [will be] condemned to an even more devastating outsiderhood than their outsiderhood as women' (Williams 1996, p.140). Similarly, Sarah Granlund characterises lesbian sexuality as being one which 'men have no power or control over [as it] represents a female's control and power over her own life; as she takes sexual control away from men, she also takes control of her own life' (Granlund, cited in Gaul 2004, p.8). Her argument supports the notion that lesbian existence rejects a compulsory way of life, because it is a 'direct or indirect attack on male right of access to women' (Rich 1996, p.136). Carmilla's behaviour personifies this threat through her attempt to lure Laura to the native woman's state of the outsiderhood by alienating her from her father/male protector as she becomes the dominating presence in her life. She thereby exemplifies the masculine lesbian who conforms to de Beauvoir's notion of

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the 'masculine protest', which calls for the female to 'masculinise herself' by imitating the characteristics of the male according to the social paradigm, or to 'make use of her feminine weapons to wage war on the male' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.74). Carmilla exemplifies both aspects of this theory: Firstly, she assumes the masquerade of a young and sickly girl in order to fool Laura's father into extending an invitation into his home and granting her unlimited access to his only daughter.

This facade of helplessness demonstrates how a 'woman who wishes for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared by men' (Riviere, 1929, p.303). Secondly, she emulates the male behavioural characteristic of actively seeking out the object of her affection in an effort to fulfil the primal need for sexual relations (and in her case, blood). Her masculine role in the relationship is even manifested in her physicality, which mirrors the traditional male suitor's tall, dark and handsome depiction, as illustrated by Laura's account of how she was:

Above the middle height of women ... her complexion was rich and brilliant ... her eyes large, dark, and lustrous ... her hair ... so magnificently thick ... and in colour a rich very dark brown, with something gold. (Le Fanu 2004, p.31)

Additionally, she had a 'sweet low voice' (Le Fanu 2004, p.31) that she used to put Laura under a deep compulsion during their:

Foolish embraces [from] which I used to wish to extricate myself [but] 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 2004, p.33)

This account of their relationship demonstrates how Carmilla uses masculine attributes to carry out her deadly seduction of Laura, who in turn tries to justify and suppress her attraction to another girl by imagining that she is 'a boyish lover' (Le Fanu 2004, p.35)

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instead. Carmilla can therefore be considered as both a sexualised and native dark double of Laura, through her promise that 'you are mine, you shall be mine, you and I are one forever' (Le Fanu 2004, p.34), as well as a projection of her suppressed adolescent desires. Barbara Creed argues that the most terrifying aspect about Carmilla's imitation of male behaviour is the fact that it 'threatens to seduce the daughters of patriarchy away from their proper gender roles' (Creed, cited in Faxneld 2010, p.2). She claims that the concluding encounter between Carmilla and the band of men at the end of the novel (that sees her staked and decapitated), can be read as a restoration of the social order. The staking reminds the lesbian lover that 'the true function of a woman is that of a receiving vessel' (Creed, cited in Faxneld 2010, p.3), and her decapitation can be read in Freudian terms as a castration that de-masculinises the female demon 'who has expressed an inappropriately masculine and active sexual desire' (Creed, cited in Faxneld 2010, p.3). The method of her destruction is also symbolic in the sense that it is a phallic inversion of her earlier penetration of Laura.

However, the most definitive threat of Carmilla's masculinity or status as a native woman, is the presence of 'the sharpest tooth – long, thin, pointed, like an awl, like a needle' (Le Fanu 2004, p.39), as noted by the anonymous hunchback in the text. The existence of such a phallic feature on a female character suggests her encompassment of a hidden masculinity, and highlights further the blurring of gender definitions in the text. The danger of this attribute is addressed in the hunchback's offer to 'make it round and blunt' (Le Fanu 2004, p.39), so that it will 'not hurt the young lady' (Le Fanu 2004, p.39). Although he speaks directly to Carmilla when he says this, his phrasing is ambiguous enough to suggest that his concern may actually be in reference to Laura and the threat that the tooth poses to her wellbeing. This interpretation is supported by Carmilla's presumption that he is actually addressing both of them, which she reveals through her claim that his words 'insult *us*' (Le Fanu 2004, p.39). Her condemnation of him for this apparent disrespect illustrates a

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coincident fear of interaction with men, as discussed earlier, and a sense of pride in this particular attribute. Furthermore, the existence of this feature appears to influence her behaviour towards Laura as revealed in Laura's confession of experiencing various dream sequences in which she feels:

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 [until she felt a subsequent] sense of strangulation [that] turned into a dreadful convulsion. (Le Fanu 2004, p.57)

This act illustrates how Carmilla adopts the traditional (male) vampire method of hunting and seducing the female victim only when she is asleep, and therefore, helpless. Her incessant attacks on Laura's unconscious form suggest an attraction to her in this specific state, whereby she becomes the personification of 'perfect femininity' (Bettelheim 1991, p.236), according to Bruno Bettelheim's theory of the character of Briar Rose in Charles Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty*. This definition supports Auerbach's hypothesis that female 'desirability emerges only in passive, semi-unconscious states' (Auerbach 1982, p.42). As these encounters occur exclusively at night time when Carmilla preys on Laura's sleeping form, she performs the male act of initiating sex with the object of her desire. Therefore Laura, like Briar Rose, is repeatedly awoken by her lover, whose 'power [is a] mythic projection of [her] self' that grants her 'broader and more disruptive powers' (Auerbach 1982, p.42), as this 'perfect femininity gives way before the woman's power of arousal' (Auerbach 1982, p.42). This traditional tale gave a significant warning with regard to the dangers of female promiscuity, and 'transmitted the religious, sexual and social tensions ... wherein woman was an incipient threat to be subdued' (Auerbach 1982, p.43).

1.4 Examining Female Identity through the Native Woman and the 'Female Gaze'

As already mentioned, the threat that this uninhabited female sexuality poses to male supremacy also links Carmilla to the overtly sexual native woman who epitomises wild and animalistic behaviour, as 'the native *is* the earthly' (Veeder 1986, p.82), 'the enemy of values ... the absolute evil' (JanMohamed 1983, p.5). Carmilla's underlying feral nature is revealed by her ability to shape-shift into a 'sooty-black ... monstrous cat' (Le Fanu 2004, p.52) that attacks Laura and afterwards, reverts back to her female form. Fred Botting argues that the imagery of this feline creature embodies the negative notion of female sexuality because it represents Carmilla's 'sexual, primitive regression and independent femininity' (Botting 1996, p.94), as well as the threat of violence that lies within her character. He states that this ability to shape-shift is a significant reason why her presence is such a threat to the social order, as it implies that she does not have 'a singular or stable nature or identity' (Botting 1996, p.98). Her depiction of different versions of the self despite her role as the 'Other', or the outsider of the text, is a characteristic that can be found in subsequent Gothic tales such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, for which her character was a huge inspiration. This chameleon-like quality is also crucial to her ability to move effortlessly between even the strictest of familial and sexual boundaries as set out by patriarchal society.

Laura's encounter with this feline creature makes her see Carmilla in a different light subsequently, and she realises for the first time that 'there was not the slightest stir of respiration' (Le Fanu 2004, p.52) in her chest. As the reader views Carmilla's character only in terms of Laura's narrative, she is now presented in terms of Laura's new perspective, which finally reveals her true nature. This leads to the most visible depiction of her inner self, which occurs during one of Laura's final encounters with her, where she wears a 'white

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nightdress, [and is] bathed, from her chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood' (Le Fanu 2004, p.58). This imagery signifies the ability of the native woman to simultaneously partake in the dangerous and masculine act of hunting, and also embodies the female act of menstruation, which undermines the division between fixed gender definitions. Laura's recognition of Carmilla's unstable identity after this revelation raises the notion of the 'female gaze', which according to Anne Williams, has the ability to recognise that 'appearances may deceive' and additionally, that 'the identity of the other is complex' (Williams 1995, p.149). Another indication of this skill is evident when Laura recognises the doubling of Carmilla's identity through the discovery of the Countess Karnstein's portrait (Rickels 1999, p.166), which bears an uncanny resemblance to her. While her father admits to seeing no similarity between the two women, Laura claims that the woman in the painting is an identical 'effigy to Carmilla' (Le Fanu 2004, p.44), thereby exposing another aspect of her personal and social masquerade. Laura also discovers that the various revisions of Carmilla's identity through her previous names of 'Mircalla' (Le Fanu 2004 p.105) and 'Millarca' (Le Fanu 2004, p.1.6) are limited to a spelling that 'should at least reproduce, without the omission or addition of a single letter, those, as we say, anagrammatically, which compose it' (Le Fanu 2004, pp.105-6). This gives further confirmation of Laura's ability to practice the 'female gaze' and seek out deception in the other. Additionally, it illustrates her imitation of the traditional/male vampire's constraint, as he cannot lie about his identity, and so must find an alternative way to present a pseudonym that will disguise his true identity from humans.

The ambiguous plurality of Carmilla's identity is also problematic because it suggests that she cannot seem to move beyond the mirror stage of her development, which sees the infant 'recognise [their] own image as such in a mirror', and seek out a 'visual action of an image akin to its own' (Lacan 1966, p.76) for the development of the ego. This suggests that Carmilla's exclusive choice of young, female victims may be an attempt to escape this

stagnant developmental stage. Consequently, Laura becomes her mirror image, and in return Carmilla acts as a reflection of Laura's repressed unconsciousness due to the childhood trauma of her mother's death.

This perspective is supported by their identical illnesses and by their sometimes mirrored routines, such as Laura's admission to copying 'Carmilla's habit of locking her bedroom door ... [and] making a brief search through her room, to satisfy herself that no lurking assassin or robber was ensconced' (Le Fanu 2004, p.51). This act of locking the bedroom door in the latter part of the novel suggests that the nature of their relationship has progressed into a sexual one, as according to Bettelheim, 'a small locked room often stands in dreams for the female sexual organs; turning a key in a lock often symbolises intercourse' (Bettelheim 1991, p.233). Their performance of a sexual act is foreshadowed by Carmilla's early proposition to Laura to 'live in your warm life, and you shall die sweetly into mine' (Le Fanu 2004, p.33). Her confession to Laura that she has 'been in love with no one and never shall ... unless it should be with you' (Le Fanu 2004, p.45) gives further encouragement to their union. They are now open in their affections for one another by walking 'each with her arm above the other's waist' (Le Fanu 2004, p.45), and they no longer hide their kisses as Carmilla vocalises her devotion and intent to 'live in you; and you would die for me, I love you so' (Le Fanu 2004, p.46).

1.5 Conclusion: Rebalancing Gender Relations in the Text

Gelder states that it is the novella's group of men that finally recognise that Carmilla is a vampire, and only do so when they identify her as a patriarchal threat that needs to be managed and destroyed so that they can restore the social order once again (Gelder 1994, p.49). Her masculinity is represented one final time by her ability to procure Spielsdorf's

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sword, which symbolises strength. By taking possession of it, Carmilla subverts traditional roles and embodies the 'male power and control' (Byks, cited in Gaul 2004, p.6) that is associated with this weapon. Despite this ability, her death ensures that gender roles have been returned to their proper state by the end of the story. Even at this stage however, there is a strong suggestion that Laura has begun her transition to immortality when she admits to craving Carmilla's return and 'fanc[ies] that [she] heard the light step of [her] at the drawing room door' (Le Fanu 2004, p.108). Their eventual separation causes Laura a great deal of pain, and she describes many symptoms of heartbreak in Carmilla's 'sinister absence' (Le Fanu 2004, p.101) during which she claims to experience 'nightly sufferings' (Le Fanu 2004, p.101).

She confesses at the end of the story that she is still haunted by the ghost of Carmilla whose image often 'returns ... sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend' (Le Fanu 2004, pp.107-8), which, according to Botting, summarises the 'polymorphous representations of female sexuality' (Botting 1996, p.94) in the novel. He states that it is a reassertion of meaning and sexual difference that finally ends the relationship between the two girls. However, if Laura's changeover has taken place, she will simply replace Carmilla and become the new embodiment of the transfiguring female in the text. Her conversion would also indicate a female ability to procreate without any masculine input, which would be the ultimate female power, and a trope which will be explored in later chapters. Through this process, Laura and Carmilla's identities would unite as one, and Carmilla would overcome the boundaries of nature, and become the creator of a new being, thus fulfilling the role of a God-like figure. This death or re-birth is portrayed as the girls' only possibility to escape the bindings of patriarchy. It is their chance to live an alternative existence where 'they can be free and united in their undead state of being without any of the limitations of a male governed society' (Gaul 2004, p.5).

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The dual uncertainty of Carmilla's identity and sexual behaviour illustrates the complexity of changing social and gender-definitions of woman's role as lover in Gothic literature. From a social perspective, Carmilla's presence within the female space of the home emphasises the disharmony between the two categorisations of women which in turn highlights the ability of the sexually promiscuous native woman to use the traditional feminine attributes of beauty and helplessness to create a masquerade of innocence that threatens power relations between the traditional procreative couple. Finally, the possibility of her continued existence (through Laura) even after her apparent defeat, suggests that the female figure cannot be returned to her previous position of passivity once she has explored new perspectives of her sexual and social roles, which thereby illustrates how her character personifies these aforementioned challenges to the convention of social order.

Chapter 2: The Unholy Trinity: Comparing Portrayals of the Woman as Wife and/or Lover in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

2.1 Woman's Position within the Contrasting Power Relations of Sexual Activity

This chapter will use the socially determined categories of civilised and native women to explore the concept of female sexuality through woman's role as wife and/or lover in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). *Dracula* has become a definitive text of the Gothic genre due to the many Gothic elements that are inherent in its characters and plot. The figure of Dracula represents both a supernatural presence and dangerous threat to the social order of the text. His interaction with Mina and Lucy (who initially epitomise the virtue and piety of the civilised woman), and their subsequent sexual awakening illustrates the danger of the native figure from the perspective of a society that wishes to maintain female identity and to repress female sexuality. This set-up portrays the presence of good and evil in the novel as well as the blurring of fixed definitions. The Transylvanian castle setting, Lucy's demonic resurrection and multiple deaths, as well as religious and graveyard imagery, shape shifting, and grotesque imagery give further evidence of its Gothic roots. Its categorisation as a Male Gothic text can be seen in its narration, which is made up of multiple characters' perspectives of the events, the unexplained supernatural presence of Dracula, as well as the ambiguous details regarding Dracula's death and Mina's pregnancy at the end. However, the patriarchal

control and categorisation of female sexuality and identity that are a central component of the text's subject matter ensure its significance within this study.

Unlike the previous section on *Carmilla*, the sexual predator in this novel is represented by the male figure of Dracula, whose sexual pursuit of Mina and Lucy illustrates the binary oppositions of female identity as constructed by the normative social paradigm. These characters will be examined in relation to their behaviour within the delicate power balance of sexual activity, which requires that woman surrender to her 'naturally' submissive position. However, this 'natural' process can be viewed as detrimental to woman's condition as it demands that she recognise her sexuality but then punishes her for doing so.⁵ The consequences of this hypocritical practice are examined in Stoker's text, which in turn illustrates how the Gothic genre challenges the paradoxical components of this collective ideological paradigm. Mina and Lucy's 'natural' submission to Dracula is quickly contained, and any indulgence of female sexual desire is subverted and/or punished by the Band of (male) Hunters. Their contrasting roles will also be compared to the dangerous figures of The Three Sisters in order to portray a third and final portrait of woman as wife and/or lover in the text. As the dangerous figures of The Three Sisters and Lucy are represented by their overtly sexual behaviour and the patriarchal attempt to manage and control it, they become the complete antithesis of the virtuous figure of Mina. The divide between these women is directly related to the containment of female empowerment in the novel:

In her multifarious embodiments, the pervasive popularity of the dangerous woman reveals the ambiguous politics sustaining such representations. Though extraordinary power is somehow bestowed upon this female archetype, her supernatural faculties stand on shaky moral grounds, laying bare the ambivalent duality inherent in female

⁵ It should be noted that the meaning of 'natural' in this case is a socially-determined state of human nature rather than a biological one.

empowerment. This is apparent in the recurrent dichotomies that juxtapose virtuous female characters to their malicious counterparts (Germanà 2013a, p.61).

This juxtaposition is especially illustrated through the characters of Mina and Lucy who represent dual aspects of the madonna-whore concept that is engrained in the social construction and limitation of female sexual identity which classifies women as either madonnas who need protection, or whores who deserve punishment (Feinman 1994, pp.3-4). The definitions are an essential attribute of the overall examination of native and civilised women, mainly because female sexuality plays a significant the social definition of a woman's identity. In his 1912 essay, 'A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men', Sigmund Freud spoke of what he called the madonna/whore complex. This complex leads the sufferer to polarise the women in their lives by sorting them into two distinct sets, the madonnas, who were very much 'mother-surrogates' (Freud 1912, p.169), and the whores, 'women who practice sexual intercourse as a means of livelihood, and who are for this reason held in general contempt' (Freud 1912, p.171). This complex was 'derived from the infantile fixation of tender feelings on the mother' (Freud 1912, 168/9) and it means that the sufferer 'always feels his respect for the woman acting as a restriction on his sexuality, and only develops full potency when he is with a debased sexual object' (Freud 1912, p.174). It causes a sharp disparity between love and desire as: 'where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love' (Freud 1912, p.173).

As both women are unmarried at the beginning of the novel, according to the severe regulations of nineteenth century society, they should embody the era's model of 'the perfect lady', who was expected to be 'perfectly innocent and sexually ignorant' before marriage (Vicinus 1972, p.ix). This female figure was very different to the 'New Woman' who was briefly discussed in the previous chapter on *Carmilla*, as her sole function was the traditional

one of marriage and procreation. She had no interest in accumulating any social or financial independence. Instead, she was completely 'dependent upon the economic position of her father and her husband' (Vicinus 1972, p.ix) for her own wellbeing. In exchange, she embodied the very essence of Bettelheim's claim that 'women [must] want first and foremost to be womanly companions of men and to be mothers' (Bettelheim 1975). These social limitations were particularly significant because they also ensured women's adherence to the ideological power-relations of sexual activity. Margaret Jackson discusses this concept (which is still relevant today), in *The Sexuality Papers*, whereby she develops Havelock Ellis' model of sexuality. This model states that the balance of dominance and submission during a romantic pursuit is simply 'a matter of scientific fact and therefore normal, inevitable, and essential to sexual pleasure' (Ellis, cited in Coveney 1984, p.77). He claims that the roles of both genders are biologically determined and rooted in man's primitive instincts, starting with:

The sexual impulse [that] manifests itself in the male in the desire to pursue and conquer the female; while female sexual pleasure consists first, in the pretence of resistance, and second, in the surrender to the male, perhaps after considerable persuasion or even physical force. (Ellis, cited in Coveney 1984, p.77)

An essential part of this process is the man's ability to make the woman form 'an emotional condition which leads her to surrender' (Ellis, cited in Coveney 1984, p.77) to him. This development allows him 'to gain real possession of a woman's soul and body' (Ellis, cited in Coveney 1984, p.64). This ideological formulation teaches women not only to accept male violence and sexual demands, but also, that submission is essential to the experience of their sexual pleasure. Consequently, female autonomy is undermined and male power is maintained. Jackson argues that contrary to Ellis' theory, male sexuality is not biologically

determined, but rather, socially constructed through the perpetuation of this hypothesis (Coveney 1984, p19). This in turn supports the notion of how false and socially constructed perceptions of female sexuality still govern women's identity despite multiple attempts from feminists to revise this common misconception.

Furthermore, Ellis argues that force is often a necessary part of traditional courtship between a man and a woman, and dismisses any trauma involved by placing blame on the (usually female) recipient, who he defines as being an 'erotic stimulus' that provokes the attention of the (usually male) admirer, who subsequently acts on his 'natural' biological urges (Ellis, cited in Coveney 1984, p.78). These factors highlight the indivisible union of male desire to dominate with the female desire to submit and support his claim that because 'pain and pleasure are indistinguishable in women' (Ellis, cited in Coveney 1984, p.59), they therefore need pain in order to experience sexual pleasure. This theory relates directly to Madonna Kolbenschlag's claim in *Kiss Sleeping Beauty Goodbye: Breaking the Spell of Feminine Myths and Models*, that 'women have been conditioned to be passive recipients of suffering as well as pleasure' (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.159). Their submission to man's exertion of this pain is also crucial to his sexual pleasure as it functions as 'a manifestation of [his] power' (Coveney 1984, p.59). The events in Stoker's text epitomise the various elements of Ellis' theory, as Dracula's romantic pursuit of Mina and Lucy encompasses both a mental and physical bond that allows him to gain full possession of them. His brief sexual control over them brings with it the joint experience of pain and pleasure through his physical and mental dominance. It entrances them, which thereby gives him further power over every aspect of their beings. His union with these women can be equated to an act of rape, as he physically and sexually violates their bodies without their consent. Female autonomy is denied, both through his actions, and through those of the Band of Hunters, who later ensure

that social order is restored through their control of Mina and Lucy's 'eternal souls', as well as through their sexual and physical entities, for they believe that it is better for a woman be a pure, dead virgin who must lose her head and her heart, than to remain a seductive 'grinning devil' or 'a foul Thing for all eternity' (Stoker 2009, p.266). In other words, the concluding events in the novel ensure that female sexuality and identity is maintained so that it exists only within the strict social paradigm that has been constructed by the male supremacy.

2.2 Women as Objects of Exchange and Competition between Men

This dilemma of female identity in *Dracula* is raised in Auerbach's description of the text's women as being both 'dispossessed and seemingly empty' (Auerbach 1982, p.17) in terms of their characterisation. Their lack of character-development suggests that they may have an alternative purpose in the novel. Anne Williams also hints at this reading through her assertion that *Dracula* is a tale that describes 'the defeat of the father by the sons for the control of women' (Williams 1995, p.22). She states that 'women must be controlled because they represent and embody the energy, power, and life of nature which is culture's paradoxical necessity to control' (Williams 1995, p.129). Her idea is depicted through Mina's declaration that 'brave men have killed their wives and their womenkind, to keep them from falling into the hands of the enemy ... it is men's duty towards those whom they love, in such times of sore trial!' (Stoker 2009, p.407). This social gender-ideology is embodied in Dracula's threat that 'your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall be mine – my creatures to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed' (Stoker 2009, p.376). He recognises that taking control of the Band of Hunters' female lovers and wives would be the ultimate colonisation, as it would invade (and in Lucy's case, completely replace), their bloodline with his own.

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This deed can have permanent repercussions on future offspring as noted by Dacre Stoker and Ian Holt in their official sequel to the text, *Dracula: The Un-Dead*, which reveals that Dracula is the blood/birth father of Mina's son. His actions illustrate Germaine Greer's argument, in *Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility*, that society still adheres to certain tribal laws such as the projection of violence when necessary for protection and survival, and she states that the act of 'killing rival men and the taking of their wives and children' is rewarded with 'increased reproductive opportunity' (Greer 1984, p.34). Consequently, this disclosure regarding Quincey's paternal bloodline demonstrates how Dracula has achieved the perfect revenge in terms of the patriarchal value system, as according to Luce Irigaray, in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 'woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange value among men; in other words a commodity ... woman is never anything but the locus of a more or less competitive exchange between two men ...' (Irigaray 1985, pp.31-2). In this case, Dracula's impregnation of Mina makes full use of her value in terms of her maternal role as the carrier of his progeny. This misuse of woman can be analysed through Betty Friedman's notion of the 'feminine mystique', something which she states cannot be defined in exact terms, but claims that it 'encourages women to ignore the question of their own identity' (Friedman 1963, p.53) and surrender themselves to the fact that society has made them into 'a sex creature [who] has no identity except as wife and mother' (Sanger, cited in Friedman 1963, p.18). According to Friedman, this concept of the 'feminine mystique' is an idea borne from Freudian thought on femininity, and states that 'the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfilment of their own femininity, [which] is so mysterious and intuitive and close to the creation and origin of life that manmade science might never be able to understand it' (Friedman 1963, p.28). Additionally, it states that this aspect of woman's nature 'can find fulfilment only in sexual

passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love' (Freidman 1963, p.29). The different aspects of this theory highlight how women are conditioned to prioritise their domestic roles above all other aspects of their identity and is further evidence of how women are conditioned to be submissive to their male counterparts. These notions can be read through the character of Mina, whose main concerns centre only on 'attend[ing] to [her] husband!' (Stoker 2009, p.131) because she wants 'to be useful to Jonathan' (Stoker 2009, p.67) after they get married. Her classification as the civilised woman is secured by her virtuous and maternal qualities which are continuously praised by her male counterparts who consider her to be a 'pearl among women' (Stoker 2009, p.268).

2.3 Mina's Personification of the Civilised Woman

Mina's position within the text always lies within 'the male gaze', which is a concept developed by Laura Mulvey, and stems from the 'sexual imbalance' of a 'split between [an] active/male and passive/female' (Mulvey 2009, p.19). The function of this gaze is to project the man's 'fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly' and 'coded for strong visual and erotic impact', so that she can 'play to and signify male desire' by being 'on display [and] sexualised' (Mulvey 2009, pp.19-21). There are however, extremely strict regulations to which the receiver of this gaze must adhere in order to maintain the delicate power balance between the pair; these are explored in Germanà's claim that '[f]emale beauty is acceptable as long as [the female figure] is the object of the controlling male gaze; when she strays from the literal and metaphorical enclosures designed for her body by patriarchal authority, she becomes a threat to the very foundations of masculine power' (Germanà 2013a, p.62). Mina's character epitomises the notion of the civilised woman by encompassing a passive femininity as well as by resisting Dracula and returning to the confinement of her

masculine governed life. Professor Van Helsing, who also happens to be the head patriarch of the Band of Hunters, is her most notable observer. He functions as an authority on the development of her characterisation (according to the rigid confines of the feminine mystique), which the reader can follow through his various depictions. Her embodiment of the civilised woman mimics the Victorian notion of the 'angel in the house'⁶, who represented goodness through a devotion to her domestic role, is noted through his praise of her angelic quality in his claim that 'the good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me when he made that so good combination' (Stoker 2009, p.289). He commends her ability to be 'so clever' (Stoker 2009, p.225), at the time as being a 'sweet, sweet, good, good woman in all the radiant beauty of youth and animation' (Stoker 2009, p.378), and notes that her 'husband will be blessed' because of these qualities (Stoker 2009, p. 225). Mina revels in his praise and celebrates these patriarchally-approved qualities in herself as illustrated in her thoughts on how 'we women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked' (Stoker 2009, p.282); this reflection also shows her willingness to embrace her maternal role.

While these attributes confirm her status as the most feminine character in the text in terms of Friedman's categorisations, she also appears to possess a hidden masculinity as suggested by her position within the public sphere of the workforce. Further evidence of this can be interpreted through the paradoxical terms that Van Helsing uses in another description of her whereby he notes that she has 'a man's brain – a brain that a man should have were he much gifted – and a woman's heart' (Stoker 2009, p.289). The presence of such masculinity within a female entity suggests a conflict of identity that subsequently implies the existence of a primitive and passionate internal self, which must be repressed in accordance with social

⁶ Sally Ledger discusses the historical and textual significance of the 'angel in the house' and the 'New Woman' in great detail in *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*.

conventions (Punter & Byron 2004, p.41). Evidence of this sexual curiosity can be found in one of Mina's journal entries, where she mentions that she and Lucy discuss their sexual desire in confidence with one another, and writes that she believes that they 'should have shocked the "New Woman" with [their] appetites' (Stoker 2009, p.110). Mina's confession contradicts Van Helsing's declaration to her that 'good women tell all their lives, and by day and by hour and by minute, such things that angels can read' (Stoker 2009, p.226). Her decision not to correct this assumption firstly implies that she does not wish to reveal any evidence of her sexuality to him, and secondly, that she recognises the taboo nature of the journal's subject matter. This journal admission negates a common belief of the text's era, and can be better understood through William Acton's statement, in *Suffer and be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, which explains how nineteenth century women who displayed any interest in sexual relations were socially condemned as it was then believed that 'a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself' (Acton, cited in Vicinus 1972, p.83), once again demonstrating that in sexual terms, women were very much categorised by the madonna-whore complex. These statements explain the lack of sensuality that Mina appears to embody until she is seduced by Dracula and also suggests that her desire to be regarded as the epitome of the civilised woman is the reason for hiding the details of her journal. With the exception of her journal entry, her sexuality is described in non-threatening terms for most of the novel, which is in direct contrast to all of the other female characters. Anne Cranny-Francis defines her represented sexuality in rigid terms as having 'no expression; it is completely muted, neutered' (Cranny-Francis, cited in Prescott & Giorgio 2005), since neither her physicality nor her physical relationships, are discussed until her interaction with Dracula.

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Her initial submission to Dracula, which is described in her confession that she simply 'lay still and endured, that was all' (Stoker 2009, p. 318) portrays her absolute passivity and does not suggest much enjoyment on her part. Her lack of participation shows that, while she is unable to resist Dracula's male seduction, she still attempts to remain loyal to Jonathan. Her virtue is only questioned after the development of their relationship, whereby she mirrors Laura, in the previous chapter on *Carmilla*, by becoming 'the entranced woman' with whom Dracula forms a blood-bond. The patriarchal ethos of sexual abstinence outside of a marital union is reinforced at this stage as, despite the circumstances, Mina is quickly punished for her promiscuity. This act was considered to be a mortal sin 'of the blackest dye' (Greer 1984, p.81) and is represented in the text by the Mark of Cain that forms when Van Helsing attempts to perform a blessing by placing a communion wafer on her forehead. However, when the wafer makes contact with her skin, it burns 'into the flesh as though it had been a piece of white-hot metal' (Stoker 2009, p.364), thus confirming her impurity as a result of her physical union with Dracula. She considers her inability to resist Dracula's seduction to be confirmation that she no longer deserves God's protection, and she claims that 'I am not worthy in His sight ... I am unclean to His eyes' (Stoker 2009, p.445). The Mark of Cain scar symbolises her temporary fall from grace (Rickels 1999, p.46) through the deterioration of her virtue, and it also indicates her potential to become a figure of evil as Dracula's kin unless she finds the strength to use the blood-bond against him. Her goodness is confirmed by her reaction to this development, as she immediately recognises that she is 'unclean, unclean!', and promises to 'touch him or kiss him no more ... I who am now his worst enemy and whom he may have most cause of fear' (Stoker 2009, p.349).

Her journey towards becoming a native woman is noted in her physicality at this stage, which is described in animalistic and grotesque terms in order to emphasise how

society regards female sexuality in threatening and primitive terms. Once again, her changing identity is portrayed through Van Helsing's gaze, as he notes that 'Madam Mina, our poor, dear Madam Mina is changing' (Stoker 2009, p.396), and does 'not seem the same woman' (Stoker 2009, p.382), as well as through his observation of the development of certain vampiric traits in her natural features, such as her teeth, which suddenly seem to be 'sharper and at times her eyes are more hard' (Stoker 2009, p.396). But in contrast to the other characters who have been enthralled by Dracula, Mina is determined to resist him; her fear of endangering male supremacy is highlighted by the promise which she extracts from the Band of Hunters and from her 'beloved husband – that, should the time come, you will kill me' (Stoker 2009, p.406) if she becomes a sexual or physical threat to him or the others. Her determination to keep her loved ones safe is confirmed in her statement that 'if I find in myself – and I shall keenly watch for it – a sign of harm to any that I love, I shall die!' (Stoker 2009, p.357). This decision, as well as her refusal to submit completely to Dracula, ensures her survival. The containment of her sexual urges, and the Band of Hunters' defeat of Dracula, sees the 'red scar on her forehead of which she was conscious' (Stoker 2009, p.378) fade by the end of the novel, as a symbol of the return of the patriarchal and sexual status quo. It also confirms that she has reverted back to her original status as the civilised woman and so is no longer a threat.

Her deference to the group is portrayed in her confession that 'last night I went to bed when the men had gone, simply because they told me to' (Stoker 2009, p. 316). This complete obedience and co-operation is a crucial component of their eventual success. But despite this, and despite portraying her inner strength by suppressing her sexual urges and resistance to Dracula, Mina is reminded of her apparently fragile nature by Van Helsing in his claim that:

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Even if she be not harmed, her heart may fail her in so much and so many horrors; and hereafter she may suffer – both in waking, from her nerves, and in sleep, from her dreams. And besides, she is a young woman and not so long married; there may be other things to think of some time, if not now ... we go alone. (Stoker 2009, p.289)

He makes this decision based upon the gender-difference between them, stating that Mina is 'too precious to us to have such risk ... we are men, and are able to bear; but you must be our star and our hope, and we shall act all the more free that you are not in danger, such as we are' (Stoker 2009, p.297). Mina accepts Van Helsing's ruling on the matter, which returns the female figure to her socially-determined natural position within the domestic sphere, and this is the first step towards restoring social order within the novel's world. Van Helsing later defends this seemingly harsh treatment of Mina by reaffirming her honour, and by reminding the Band of Hunters of the revenge they must exact for the injustice she has suffered, as 'her loving kindness against our grim hate ... she with all her goodness and purity and good was outcast from God' (Stoker 2009, p.378) after Dracula's actions. From the safety of her domestic position, Mina revels in her role as maternal figure to the men, and uses her blood-bond to lead them to Dracula's castle. This is the only instance in which Mina's otherness is celebrated, through Van Helsing's assertion that 'our dear Madam Mina is once more our teacher. Her eyes have seen where we were blinded' (Stoker 2009, p.433). Through her guidance, the Band of Hunters sees that Lucy's death is avenged, and that Mina's honour is redeemed. Once again, as seen in the earlier section on *Carmilla*, the patriarchal figureheads of the text restore order specifically through the destruction of a social and sexual threat to female virtue.

But despite these events, the bond that Mina shares with Dracula outlasts his apparent death since his blood is still inside her veins when she is pregnant with their son. This blood-bond is formed during the infamous rape scene between Dracula and Mina, which sees them

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partake in a reverse enactment of the breastfeeding act. Philip Martin's essay, 'The Vampire in the Looking-Glass: Reflection and Projection in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', as cited by Gelder, states that there are some crucial differences in Dr Seward's two separate accounts of the incident. He notes that Dr Seward's first version of the incident describes Dracula in violent and domineering terms, and portrays Mina as being a submissive but resistant victim:

With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast, which was shown by his torn open dress. (Stoker 2009, p.346)

However, his recollection of the same event to Van Helsing sometime later portrays the union in far more consensual terms through his recollection of how Dracula's hands were 'tenderly and lovingly stroking [Mina's] ruffled hair' (Stoker 2009, p.350) while she drank from him. This imagery suggests a subversion of the breastfeeding act that sees a male figure nursing his blood to a female figure; and it also mimics the interaction between Carmilla and Laura in the previous chapter and prefigures Claudia and Gabrielle's unions with Lestat in later chapters. The tenderness of this act implies that Dracula's treatment of his victims differs depending on their gender. This argument is supported by Auerbach's statement that he shares his immortality only with his female victims as proven by how The Three Sisters, Lucy, and Mina survive his initial attacks in contrast to his male victims (in the form of Renfield and the Russian sailors) who are not transformed (Auerbach 1982, p.24).

The permanence of this blood-bond is revealed in Mina's later confession to Van Helsing regarding Dracula's promise that the exchange would make her 'flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin ... my companion and my helper' (Stoker 2009, p. 353). This is the most detailed account of Mina's behaviour as she begins the progress towards

becoming a native woman and even during this stage she defends her participation by giving her account of the event, describing how he 'took my hands in one of his, holding them tight, and with the other seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow some of the [blood]' (Stoker 2009, p.354). But despite the presence of this blood-bond, Van Helsing is reassured that her progression to a vampiric state will not take place after he witnesses her reaction to coming face to face with The Three Sisters. His first-hand account of this interaction emphasises 'the terror in [Mina's] sweet eyes, the revulsion, the horror ...' (Stoker 2009, p.451) that their collective presence has on her. Her negative response to them confirms that her virtue is once again intact. However, the combination of Dracula's blood still in her veins, and his baby in her body, stresses woman's inevitable submission to the masculine invasions of intercourse and pregnancy that occur during her role as wife and/or lover. Furthermore, Quincey's birth at the end of the novel ensures that she will remain a fixed figure within the domestic sphere in order to fulfil her traditional gender-roles of wife and mother, which thereby tames and controls her sexuality and confirms her reversion back to being a civilised woman. The reader receives no final word on her feelings about the restricted terms of her new identity, which confirms her returned passivity. Instead, Jonathan's closing depiction of her accentuates her identity according to the constraints of the feminine mystique; he describes her in simplistic terms that focus only on her familial role as a mother to Quincey 'who already knows her sweetness and loving care' (Stoker 2009, p.466). This conclusion is bittersweet, as motherhood may offer her the chance for a new identity according to Freudian thought, which states that becoming the mother of a son allows the woman to 'transfer to her son all the ambition which she has been obliged to suppress in herself' (Freud 1990, p.165), but it is one that she will only be able to experience vicariously through a male figure.

2.4 Lucy's Transformation into the Native Female

While Mina's interaction with Dracula results in her inevitable embrace of the feminine mystique, Lucy's encounters, on the other hand, create a dual persona of conflicting female and male behaviours, as illustrated by how her girlish demeanour during the day is replaced by a deadly predatory version of herself at night time (Auerbach 1982, p.22). Unlike Mina's experience of 'the male gaze', Lucy exists within the text under 'the female gaze' (as discussed in the *Carmilla* chapter) of Mina, who recognises the complexity of her persona and incessantly defends Lucy's innocence despite her contradictory promiscuous behaviour. Mina foresees that Lucy's status as a civilised woman through the combination of her beauty and virtue is a cause for concern from the beginning, and fears that 'she is too super-sensitive ... to go through the world without trouble' (Stoker 2009, p.109), for she has such a 'sweet and sensitive' nature that it makes her feel 'influences more acutely than other people do' (Stoker 2009, p.108).

Initially, she appears to follow in Mina's path of embracing her feminine mystique by dedicating her time and attention to the man she has chosen to marry from among her many suitors. She portrays her devotion to Arthur by declaring to Mina that 'I love him. I am blushing as I write, for although I think he loves me, he has not told me so in words' (Stoker 2009, p.69). She is not punished for her participation in the sexual pursuit on this particular occasion as her interaction is with Arthur who is her betrothed. It is only when she engages in sexual/physical contact with Dracula that she transforms into a voluptuous and over-sexualised version of herself and becomes a native woman who has a newfound primal nature that threatens the social order. This sudden conversion can be read as a warning to women of the time to maintain the social rules of female virtue especially with regard to sexual activity

outside of marriage. In 'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', Christopher Craft states that Lucy's sudden sexualisation after she has been bitten by Dracula terrifies the Band of Hunters because it entails a 'reversal or inversion of (female) sexual identity' (Craft 1984, p.119). This sexual threat relates to Naomi Wolf's discussion of the Freudian notion of social order that demands control of female sexuality because 'civilisation depends ... on the repression of female libido' (Wolf 2002, p.248). Therefore, this physical transformation creates a native version of Lucy that is very similar to that of Carmilla, and also akin to that of The Three Sisters, who collectively signify the danger of the wild and predatory 'native female' who will 'seek out and have sex with *many* partners' (Wolf 2002, p.13).

Like Carmilla, these feral women are represented as unnatural females because they actively seek out the object of their desire in a time when only men were meant to enjoy the 'freedom of sexual expression' (Spencer, cited in Haerberlein 2006, p.10). Their behaviour contrasts with what women are taught when they are little girls, which is:

The desire to be desired [as] both men and women tend to eroticise only the woman's body and the man's desire. That means that women are exaggeratedly sensitive to male desire for their own arousal, and men are exaggeratedly insensitive to female desire for theirs. (Wolf 2002, pp.157-8)

Lucy's transition challenges this paradigm, and has an effect on both her appearance and on her behaviour that likens her to the character of Carmilla when she gains vitality as a result of her feedings from Laura. Mina reports how she is 'a trifle stouter' (Stoker 2009, p.90) with 'the roses ... already coming back to her cheeks ... she in gay spirits and full of life and cheerfulness' (Stoker 2009, p.120), but has simultaneously 'taken to her old habit of walking in her sleep' (Stoker 2009, p.88). The fact that she performs this act while she is asleep suggests that she has an unconscious desire that is not being fulfilled in her life with Arthur.

Her conversion begins to steadily progress as she becomes more desperate to seek this out, and indeed Mina notes this when she describes how Lucy 'began to laugh [it] seemed a little uncanny to me and ... I did not like it' (Stoker 2009, p.121). Mina's ability to distinguish these subtle but complex changes in Lucy gives further evidence of the power of 'the female gaze', and also mirrors Laura's eventual recognition of Carmilla's otherness.

The evolution of Lucy's identity is eventually noted by the other characters as well, and they repeatedly proclaim that she is quickly becoming 'a different being' as the text progresses (Auerbach 1982, p.23). Their most notable attempt to regain control of her occurs after Van Helsing's conclusion that she needs a blood transfusion, as the 'young miss is bad, very bad. She wants blood and blood she must have or die' (Stoker 2009, p. 149). This action has both colonial and sexual connotations, as it incorporates the penetration/injection of their male bodily fluids into her. Van Helsing defends his decision by claiming that Lucy's body 'pine[d] for [Arthur's blood]' (Stoker 2009, pp.149-50) because 'he is her lover, her *fiancé*' (Stoker 2009, p.157) and so, is responsible for her wellbeing. He rewards Arthur for his sacrifice by promising him 'another kiss [from Lucy], which he shall have presently' (Stoker 2009, p.151) despite her helpless state. This scene is particularly significant because the presence of male bodily fluids appear to aid her exchange from the traditional feminine to the 'monstrous feminine' (as discussed in relation to Carmilla), which results in the female figure's imitation of masculine behaviour. It also marks the final time that the Band of Hunters has complete control over the human version of Lucy before she dies and becomes an irrepressible danger to the male supremacy. Her conversion to the 'monstrous feminine' exemplifies Germanà's aforementioned discussion of how the beauty of the female recipient of the 'male gaze' is only celebrated when it does not represent a challenge to the foundation of masculine power. Consequently, Lucy's transition into a different being marks an end to

any further declarations of her beauty as '[t]o the male gaze, the (monstrous) female body is no longer the passive object of the controlling lens of patriarchal power' (Germanà 2013a, p.66). As a result, the changes in Lucy's appearance are henceforth described in exclusively ominous terms and she is considered to be a threat that must be contained and / or destroyed.

When she has made a full transition into a vampire, Lucy becomes 'a carnal woman who must be punished' (Griffin, cited in Gelder 2001, p.77). Her conversion into something different is quickly recognised by the others, as noted by Dr Seward who tells how all at once 'her breathing grew stertorous, the mouth opened and the pale gums, drawn back, made the teeth look longer and sharper than ever ... she opened her eyes ... and said in a soft voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips: - Arthur Kiss me!' (Stoker 2009, pp.197-8). The terms used in this description are nearly identical to how Jonathan recounts his own interaction with The Three Sisters, and will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Lucy's newfound association with The Three Sisters separates her further from Mina and confirms her status as a native woman. In *The Gothic Body*, Kelly Hurley describes this juxtaposition as an illustration of a form of 'perfect femininity'. She notes that Lucy, as the sexually active and aggressive woman, is identified as a 'literal monster', in contrast to Mina, who as her chaste and modest counterpart, is considered to be fully human in comparison (Hurley 1996, p.133). This version of Lucy, as well as The Three Sisters, represents how the figure of the female vampire in *Dracula* is 'a pathological version of womanhood' (Hurley 1996, p. 133) that seduces men and eats children while revelling in her deliberate 'voluptuousness' (Stoker 2009, p. 197) and 'lick[ing] her lips like an animal' (Stoker 2009, p.41).

Hurley's notion is supported by Craft's theory that the female vampires in the text possess a masculine demonism that is 'figured as the power to penetrate' (Craft 1984, p.109).

This creates a concurrence of having a 'feminine form but a masculine penetration' (Craft 1984, p.110) that allows the sexually aggressive/native woman to be a 'feminine demon equipped with masculine devices' (Craft 1984, p.111), or a 'monstrous usurper of masculine function' (Craft 1984, p.115). The merging of male and female characteristics creates a blurring of identity through uncertain gender-definitions. However, the nature of her sexual desire is very definite when examined through Irigaray's reading of the Freudian postulate that 'the libido is always masculine, whether it is manifested in males or females, whether the desired object is woman or man' (Irigaray 1985, p.35). This gives further evidence of Lucy's embodiment of the 'masculine protest', which in part demands that the female figure imitate the behaviour of the male. In this case, Lucy performs the traditionally male act of hunting that leads to the full embrace of her inner feral nature. The strongest evidence of this is the men's later discovery of her feeding on an infant, which mirrors Dracula's earlier act of gifting an infant to The Three Sisters, and also mimics his earlier subversion of the act of breast-feeding with Mina. This 'dreadful parody of motherhood' (Williams 1995, p.126) confirms her transition into a native woman and a female double of Dracula, which is the development that convinces the Band of Hunters to destroy her vampire corpse.

The events that follow this decision have both necrophilic and violent undertones, and can be read through Irigaray's theory on how:

Western sexuality is governed by 'the enactment of male sadomasochistic fantasies ... the desire to force entry, to penetrate, to appropriate for himself the mystery of this womb where he has been conceived Desire/need, also to make blood flow again in order to revive a very old relationship ... to the maternal. Woman, in this sexual imaginary, is only a more or less obliging prop for the enactment of man's fantasies. (Irigaray 1985, p.25)

The group's aggressive treatment of this version of Lucy is discussed in John Stevenson's essay, which states that 'the violence against women in *Dracula*, most vividly rendered in the staking of Lucy, reflects a hostility toward female sexuality felt by the culture at large' (Stevenson 1988, p.145). Therefore, the sexual implication of this scene resembles a combined group rape and murder of an unconscious woman. Her destruction is especially significant due to the various marital allusions that are included in the process. Van Helsing sees her second death as being a clear 'metaphorical consummation of marriage for he insists that Lucy's *fiancé* Arthur drive the stake' (Williams 1995, p.125) so that he 'would restore Lucy to us as a holy, and not an unholy, memory' (Stoker 2009, p.264). Additionally, the dual presence of female pain and blood during this penetrative act resemble elements of the traditional wedding night, as well the brutal act of rape:

[Lucy's] body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut and the mouth was smeared with crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered ... [from] driving deeper the mercy-bearing stake. (Stoker 2009, p.265)

This scene epitomises the union of sexual intercourse and the phallic weapon/symbol in *Dracula*. As a result, the driving action of the stake can be read as a metaphorical 'sexual conquest' that defeats the native or 'lustful female ... within the realm of sexuality, where she must yield to the superior masculine power ... or violence' (Williams 1995, p.131).

Lucy's physical appearance in this scene highlights the deterioration of her virtue. The 'monstrous feminine' is present once again when she uses the disguise of femininity to initially fool the men before the attack, and is described as looking 'more radiantly beautiful than ever [in her coffin] The lips were red, nay redder than before; and on the cheeks was a delicate bloom' (Stoker 2009, p.245). But the angelic beauty that was repeatedly celebrated

when she was a human is quickly described in ominous terms as being a 'nightmare version of Lucy' (Stoker 2009, p.259) when she gains consciousness. Dr Seward recollects how:

When Lucy – I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape – saw us, she drew back with an angry snarl ... [her] eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew. At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing ... (Stoker 2009, p.259)

The repetition of her death in this scene illustrates Wolf's claim that 'women die twice [They] die as beauties before their bodies die' (Wolf 2002, p.103), as the horror and negative aspects of female sexuality are embodied in the phallic imagery of her vampiric physicality. Dr Seward's description emphasises how her 'pointed teeth, the bloodstained, voluptuous mouth – which it made one shudder to see – the whole carnal and unspiritual appearance, [seemed] like a devilish mockery of Lucy's sweet purity' (Stoker 2009, p.262). Their actions can be justified when read through the social paradigm of how female beauty 'does not belong to [woman] ... but what is ugly is hers alone, proof of her sin, worthy of any abuse ...' (Wolf 2002, p.128).

Additionally, Van Helsing rationalises the necrophilic nature of this event through his assertion that it is 'better that a woman be a pure, dead virgin, better that she lose her head and her heart than to remain a seductive, voluptuous wanton, a foul thing for all eternity' (Stoker 2009, p.266), and he even rewards Arthur for his participation in her destruction as well as his resistance to Lucy's plea that her 'arms are hungry for you ... come!' (Stoker 2009, p.260), by granting him permission to 'kiss her. Kiss her dead lips' (Stoker 2009, p.266) afterwards. The instantaneous replacement of the 'foul Thing [with] Lucy as we had seen her in her life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity' (Stoker 2009, pp.265-6) confirms the righteousness of their actions. However, their attempts to suppress female sexuality are arguably futile when examined through Irigaray's concept of female sexuality in

her 'two lips' theory, which states that woman's sexual identity is always divided in two because 'her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact [and therefore she] touches herself all the time ... she is already two' (Irigaray 1985, p.24). This theory illustrates the complexity of female sexuality, and emphasises how it contributes to the multifaceted nature of woman's identity. Finally, its focus on touch shows how woman is able to overcome and subvert man's attempts to control her sexuality simply because touch is a natural feature of the female genitalia and therefore, any negative connotations regarding it must be a social construction made by the male supremacy. The danger associated with the emancipation of female sexuality is embodied by The Three Sisters, who represent the third and final depiction of the wife and/or lover in the text.

2.5 Evil in the Female Guise of The Three Sisters

The figures of The Three Sisters in *Dracula* embody this socially-constructed negative portrayal of female sexuality, and also represent the native female into whom Lucy would transform if the Band of Hunters could not contain her. In *Six Myths of Our Time*, Marina Warner notes that 'male beasts ... or devils ... don't possess the same degree of duplicity [as the female version]: you can tell you're dealing with the devil on the whole. But when evil comes in female guise, you have to beware' (Warner 1995, p.9). Williams' statement that Stoker's narrative 'implies that evil is intimately connected with the female' (Williams 1995, p.22), gives further support to this notion, which is evident through Jonathan's encounter with The Three Sisters in Dracula's castle. In contrast to the socially-determined 'natural' roles of sexual activity that were discussed at the beginning of this chapter, this interaction illustrates how gender becomes blurred in *Dracula* because the men often 'revert to feminine helplessness while the [women] become predatory' (Williams 1995, p.124). Dracula is

responsible for this reversal as it is his initial colonisation of the women that raises the issue of gender-relations by bringing the female characters to the centre of the text. In doing so, he pushes himself out to a peripheral position whereby he becomes the other/traditionally feminine object of pursuit (Auerbach 1982, p.23). This action suggests a subsequent threat of female sensuality/penetration, which is emphasised at the very beginning of the novel in Jonathan's description of The Three Sisters' ominous beauty. He initially thinks they are simply 'three young women, ladies by their dress and manner' (Stoker 2009, p.46) but then sees that:

All three had brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. (Stoker 2009, p.46)

The sexual aggressiveness of their collective physicality suggests the presence of an inner feral nature, which is confirmed when one of them 'arched her neck [and] actually licked her lips like an animal' (Stoker 1992, p.47). The contrast between their behaviour and that of Mina epitomises the notion that the women in *Dracula* are divided between their 'angelic service and vampiristic mutation' (Auerbach 1982, p.25). Jonathan supports this claim by comparing them to 'Mina [who] is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils in the Pit!' (Stoker 2009, p.65), which thereby segregates them entirely from the civilised women in the novel.

Martin however, argues that there are 'dangerous vampire tendencies lurking in all [the] female characters [of *Dracula*]' (Martin, cited in Gelder 2001, p.71). He defines *Dracula's* character as being 'the catalyst which awakens women's desire' (Martin 1988, p.87) and changes their form from civilised to native. When analysed through this perspective, The Three Sisters then symbolise what Mina and Lucy would become if they

were to complete the progression to native women that Dracula initiates with them. But the link between Mina and The Three Sisters is stronger than Jonathan would care to admit, as there appears to be an oedipal connection between his wife and the fair-haired vampire that he seems to know. Gelder suggests that this recognition is a projection of the incest taboo and argues that this vampire reminds Jonathan of his mother, and subsequently his (forbidden) desire for her, as illustrated in his description of her, which contrasts greatly with the negative terms that he uses for the two dark-haired vampires:

Two were dark, and had high aquiline noses ... and great dark, piercing eyes, that seemed to be almost red when contrasted with the pale yellow moon. The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great, wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. I seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear but I could not at the moment recollect how or where. (Stoker 2009, p.46)

This fair-haired vampire is also similar to the figure of Carmilla as both women are described in almost identical physical terms and signify 'a (sexual) return of the absent mother' (Gelder 2001, p.73). Jonathan's submission to this vampire is also significant because it subverts the traditional power relations in sexual activity that were discussed at the beginning of this chapter, and because it foreshadows Mina and Lucy's later interaction with Dracula. His recollection of the event is the only example of a male character's experience of a sexual act in the novel:

Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer – nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there, I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited ...' (Stoker 2009, p.47)

Dracula's interruption of this encounter once again illustrates how female sexuality is contained by the woman's male counterpart, who also symbolises patriarchal control of the female because his actions mirror those of the Band of Hunters, and of the male protectors in *Carmilla*. This act also demonstrates his position of power within the hierarchal order of their vampire 'family' despite the fact that The Three Sisters are viewed collectively by the other characters as being native female doubles who are just as sexual and dangerous as him.

2.6 Conclusion: Deciding the Fate of the Female Figure

Collectively, these female characters embody the inequality and constraints of woman's civilised and native positions within the power relations of sexual activity. They represent various aspects of female sexuality, and illustrate its multifaceted nature when free from patriarchal repression. Although Mina, Lucy, and The Three Sisters initially appear to have very little in common with each other from the perspective of character, they do share a common thread in the fact that their fates are determined by their male counterparts, and are based directly upon the male ability to contain, and govern, the individual woman's sexuality, as well as her physical being and immortal soul. This notion is portrayed in how Mina is the only female figure who is still present at the end of the story. Her survival is undoubtedly due to her ability to resist the temptation of Dracula that would convert her into a sexually promiscuous figure similar to that of the native woman who would subsequently be considered to be an uncontrollable threat to the social order. As the figures of Lucy and The Three Sisters embody this threat they must be removed from the text in order to conclude the events in a way that ensures female identity has been correctly maintained in accordance with the requirements of the civilised woman. This verdict also seems to consider her ability to embrace the socially-determined duality as wife and mother only, which in turn represents

how these ideological constraints on women are engrained in and perpetuated by the male supremacy. The inclusion of such dark subject matter regarding the possible fate of woman's position as wife and/or lover in Stoker's text shows how the Gothic genre recognises and challenges the conventional definitions of gender and sexuality within the patriarchal order. Additionally, the presence of Female Gothic and its focus on subject matter surrounding the social governing of female identity gives further evidence of the genre's importance to the exploration of female sexuality in relation to native and civilised womanhood. And finally, the suggestion that Jonathan saw aspects of his mother in the fair-haired vampire leads the discussion to another important area wherein the Gothic subverts normative gender-expectations, namely the area of motherhood.

Part II: Motherhood

'Being a mother is an attitude, not a biological relation'

Robert A. Heinlein
Have Space Suit, Will Travel (2005)

Chapter 3: The Death of the Mother: Examining the Maternal Figures in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*

3.1 *Patchwork Girl's* Resurrection of *Frankenstein's* Female Monster

This chapter will explore the role of motherhood in relation to the female figure in Gothic literature, using texts that challenge its socially-constructed status as an intrinsic part of female identity. It will use subverted depictions of the maternal figure to address how society uses women's reproductive ability as a definitive factor of the civilised woman's identity. Additionally, the joint presence of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995) in this chapter bridges the gap between the nineteenth-century texts that were used in the previous section and the twentieth-century texts that will be used in the remaining sections. The publication of *Frankenstein* was earlier than that of *Carmilla* and *Dracula* and so may seem slightly problematic in terms of the timeline of this thesis. However, it is situated in this chapter to act as a pretext for my later discussion of *Patchwork Girl*. *Frankenstein's* position as Gothic text is secured by the dark and foreboding atmosphere in which the story is set, as well as the various monstrous images of /nature, the presence of a supernatural creature/doppelganger, and the grotesque corpse imagery that is his formation. *Patchwork Girl* has a similar supernatural presence in the form of the resurrected female creature made up of dead body parts. Additionally, its Gothic classification is illustrated by the hypertext's segmented structure, which serves as a reminder that the reader must

reconstruct the creature using the various corpse pieces that make up the links and lexias of the story. Recurring grotesque graveyard imagery and the blurring of familial and sexual definitions are additional Gothic components in this text. Specifically Female Gothic elements are present in both cases in terms of how scientific experimentation is given as the explanation for the creature's supernatural presence, and also by how the readers of the texts are only privy to the same information as their narrators. Finally, the subverted and unnatural maternal figures that are used to discuss the subject matter of these stories depict their concern with issues regarding female identity.

The traditional notion of motherhood is challenged in the male world of *Frankenstein*, which offers the reader an alternative maternal figure whose presence disturbs the position of the family's natural matriarch. This action subverts the family unit, and leads to social disorder as the mother, who is usually a fundamental presence in their child's life, is suddenly removed, while the new-born creation (in this particular text), becomes an anomaly of the natural order. These shifts challenge the reader's assumptions about the female role of motherhood, and present a different version of conventional familial relationships. Shelley's decision to create a literary world of absent mothers anticipates Cixous' plea in *The Laugh of the Medusa* for women to 'write about women and bring women to writing ... through their bodies' (Cixous 1975, pp.3-14) because it focuses the reader's attention specifically on the female body and the difference of this body from that of the male due to its reproductive ability and the effects of postnatal trauma. Cixous blames the phallogocentric ideology for this maternal absence because it confirms the female position as the 'Other', in social and linguistic terms, through the dominance of masculinity in the construction of meaning in language in both speech and writing, a dominance which sees the male perspective as naturally that of the 'Self'. This is the foundation of her critique. and the reason she appeals

for a specifically feminine writing, an *écriture féminine*, in order to inscribe the female body and difference in language and literature, and thus to raise woman from her social position beneath man. By allowing the reader access to what is essentially a maternal experience, Shelley offers a text that emphasises the importance of this female role within the family unit, which in turn, suggests that the woman also deserves a social status that is equal to that of her male counterpart.

Cixous continues her analysis of gender difference in 'Sorties' by discussing how the patriarchal system creates oppositions, which in turn create a conflict that destroys the couple. This is relevant, in *Frankenstein*, with regard to activity and passivity in the sexual difference that abolishes woman and replaces her reproductive function with man's pursuit for new methods of creation, as driven by his 'desire to be (at) the origin' (Cixous 2008, p.361). Victor's story embodies this underlying originary imperative, because he is the masculine source of all events, despite his quasi-maternal relationship to the Monster. Consequently, he is either directly or indirectly responsible for all actions in the story, because he is the catalyst for the chain of events that start after the birth of his creation. He later recognises this by claiming responsibility for the Monster's terrible deeds, and accepting that his maternal ambitions are responsible for the murder of '[Elizabeth]. William, Justine, and Henry – they all died at my hands' (Shelley 1994, p.179).

The novel is described in distinctively female terms by Gothic critic, Ellen Moers, as being a 'phantasmagoria of the nursery' and 'birth myth' that encompasses the tragic history of Shelley's own efforts to become a mother. She suggests that Victor's wish to bring something dead back to life may have been inspired by Shelley's dream of resurrecting her own baby's corpse by warming it before the fire (Moers 1974, pp.79-84). The text's femaleness is even reflected in its design; it can be viewed as a physical manifestation of

pregnancy, which is illustrated by its 'Russian-doll-like structure' (Rubenstein 1976, p.172) of a framed narrative that contains the Monster's tale within his parent's story. The maternal theme is immediately introduced, as Dr Victor Frankenstein abandons his social and domestic life to alienate himself in Ingolstadt and to endure a 'painful labour' (Shelley 1994, p.50), which makes him the sole creator, and surrogate mother, to a Monster composed entirely of dead body parts. This ability to create new life promotes him to the life-giving role of the mother, and in doing so, erases the reproductive function of the female figure.

3.2 Man's Elimination of the Natural Mother

William Veeder defines Victor's act of leaving the family home as 'the circle motif' (Veeder 1986, p.86), because it highlights his exclusion of all female counterparts from the beginning of the story. His desire to create a doppelganger results in an alternative method to natural reproduction with his *fiancée*, Elizabeth, and his success at bringing his Monster to life without her input is the foundational act that symbolises the death of the natural mother in the text. This development creates an ideal female figure who has been cleansed of menstruation, and this is something which is proleptic of de Beauvoir's work, who speaks of how 'dislike for menstrual blood [comes] from perceptions of a concrete reality' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.285) within patriarchal society. As the female characters can no longer fulfil the role of motherhood, they are effectively removed from the text as they fall victim to the Monster's revenge at being abandoned by Victor.

Victor's study of 'the causes of life' (Shelley 1994, p.49) awakens his desire to mimic the female act of childbirth by 'giv[ing] life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man' (Shelley 1994, p.51). This ambition likens him to Dr Schreber of Sigmund Freud's *Psychoanalytic Notes upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia*, who had

similar aspirations (Veeder 1986, p.91). Schreber, however, believed that in order to achieve this task and be able to bear children, he must be emasculated and transform himself into a woman as he felt that 'already feminine nerves had entered into his body, from which through direct fertilization from God, [new] men ... would issue' (Freud 1903, p.2). This creates a blurring of gender that results in a problematic identity that is neither male nor female, as the lone parent must now fulfil both components of their creation's parental unit. This dilemma is epitomized by Victor in *Frankenstein* as he struggles unsuccessfully to nurture or love the Monster after his birth. He speaks of his admiration for the Monster's physical beauty during its assemblage, only to proclaim his repulsion when it is finally brought to life. This echoes the mother's wariness of her new-born, as discussed by de Beauvoir, who argues strongly against the existence of a maternal 'instinct'. She describes how a young mother can feel threatened by her baby, and that it is her 'attitude ... and her reaction to [her new situation]' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.526) that ultimately decides whether she will accept or reject her child. While the text offers no explanation for the Monster's ugliness, this development contradicts Victor's previous claim that 'his limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful' (Shelley 1994, p.55). Psychoanalytically, this implies, as argued below, that the Monster's transition to the grotesque can be read as Victor's perception of him, which is due to the aforementioned attitude and reaction of the parent to the newborn. This notion is central to the concern of this chapter because it illustrates how the amalgamation of female identity and motherhood is a social construction rather than a biological component of civilised womanhood. In other words, it is not the parent's gender but rather their attitude towards the newborn which dictates their acceptance or rejection of the role, which subsequently proves that motherhood is not an inherent part of female identity.

The shift in Victor's opinion occurs at the exact moment of the creature's rebirth when 'the beauty of my dream vanished and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart' (Shelley 1994, p.55), which suggests that Victor may have simply confused the beauty of the dead parts with the beauty of the whole organism (Baldick 1987, pp.33-5). The overwhelming antipathy that Victor now feels for the awakened creation causes him to reject his child; an act which Moers considers the most powerful, and also the most feminine, in the novel. She links it to postnatal mythology, namely to the natural revulsion against newborn life that encompasses the guilt surrounding birth and its consequences (Moers 1974, p.81). Victor's trauma at this afterbirth makes him unable to nurture, or even to name, his creation, and this henceforth becomes the motive for the Monster's revenge. This is further evidence of how any action carried out by him deflects back on Victor, whose inability to manage the Monster's terrible deeds after he has abandoned him is paralleled in de Beauvoir's study of the mother's struggle to control the infant and how this is a senseless task as she cannot possibly manage 'a being with whom [she is] not in communication' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.531).

In *The Unnameable Monster in Literature and Film*, Maria Beville discusses how the initially gentle and submissive Monster only becomes a monstrous figure after he has been abandoned by his father, which is a development that results in his first-hand experience of 'the inhuman and unfeeling actions of others' (Beville 2013, p.82). In an effort to correct these injustices, and to appease his Monster's desire for vengeance, Victor promises to create a female companion as both a peace-offering and as a plea to end his rampage. His actions can be viewed as a subversion of the typical 'family romance', since his behaviour in this instance illustrates a parent who wishes to gain freedom from his child. But his inability to complete the task for fear that 'she might become ten thousand times more malignant than

her mate and delight in murder and wretchedness' (Shelley 1994, p.160) bespeaks an attempt to control the female and to ensure that her sexuality is not awakened. His reason for refusing her creation voices the fear of femininity that is a common feature of many Gothic texts. Beville defines the threat of her enigmatic nature in terms of how she is 'not just unnameable [but] also unvoiced [because] [s]he represents that which is truly Other to the dominant male subjectivity of the narrative' (Beville 2013, p.88). As a result, she must be removed from the text, which thereby illustrates Cixous' argument that patriarchy always demands for 'femininity to be associated with death' (Cixous 1975, p.13) simply because both subjects are unrepresentable. Victor's destruction of the female Monster portrays this patriarchal demand because it eradicates any remaining semblance of femininity in the text, which subsequently creates a fixed connection between female identity and death.

It can also be argued that Victor's failure to complete the task of her creation is due to his unacknowledged unwillingness to let his Monster go. Arguably, this separation anxiety stems from the death of his natural mother, Caroline, and this severance of mother from child is a split that threatens to be repeated in the creation of a female companion for the Monster, who would then have to honour his word and abandon Victor. Additionally, this female Monster in her finished form would be a companion for his original Monster, which leads to the possibility of a sexual union between them. The procreation of this new species would be dependent on her ability to carry and deliver their progeny, which highlights the ability, and in this case, the threat, of her reproductive organs. Thus the female monster would mean that the power to give birth had again passed back to the female. These factors monopolise her embodiment of a monstrous version of motherhood, as well as a simultaneous new female figure who would be more similar to the native woman than to the civilised woman and over whom society has no power. Victor assumes that her freedom and strength, which are

traditionally male qualities, could entail deadly consequences for male supremacy as her lack of dependence on men would suggest a coinciding inability to fit the traditional mould of motherhood. This can be read as a subversion of the social structure of the conventional family unit and would define her as an outsider similar to the primitive figure of the [original] 'native' whose corresponding lack of compliance with social order makes him/her 'the enemy of values ... the absolute evil' (JanMohamed 1983, p.5).

Furthermore, man's inability to properly manage her would also mean that her sexuality would be uninhibited and similar to that of the overtly sexual native woman, who was already discussed in relation to Carmilla. This practice of containing femininity is explored in Cixous' concept of 'antilove', which designates the patriarchal suppression of female sexuality by teaching women insecurity and self-hatred from a young age, as well as by encouraging them to fear their own sexuality and scorn promiscuous women:

As soon as they begin to speak ... they can be taught that their territory is black; because you are Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous Men have committed the greatest crime against women ... they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies. (Cixous 1975, p.5)

The creation of this 'Dark Continent' ensures women's inability to achieve a proper understanding or love of their bodies, and promotes the idea that men must always govern and control women. As the female Monster would be a new version of this 'Dark Continent', whose conquest is not guaranteed, Victor must subsequently ensure that she does enter the world of patriarchy. He is successful in doing so until Shelley Jackson resurrects the character in her hypertext, *Patchwork Girl*, which can be read as a female response to this act through the creation of a sequel to *Frankenstein* that encompasses a contrastingly strong maternal presence and will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

3.3 Female Passivity and the Removal of the Other Mothers from *Frankenstein*

There is an obvious union of female identity and passivity within the story, which marks the figure of the deceased mother as a symbol of how death is the ultimate act of passivity (Knoepflmacher 1982, p.108). This supports Cixous' claim that 'woman is always on the side of passivity' (Cixous 2008, p.360), because the family structure within male supremacy always leads back to the father, meaning that his position has *de facto* more significance than that of the mother. Her inclusion of religious imagery in women's struggle for equality highlights the absence of a maternal/female presence in the masculine symbolism of the Holy Trinity, which can be interpreted as one of the most powerful signs in patriarchal society. This absence is mirrored in *Frankenstein* through the gradual removal and surrogacy of all other mothers from the text. Caroline secures Elizabeth's role as the replacement mother, when she 'endeavour[s] to resign [herself] cheerfully to death' (Shelley 1994, p.41), and on her deathbed tells Elizabeth to marry Victor. Her demise promotes Elizabeth to her new position within the Frankenstein family. This replacement role as the family's matriarch signifies the ultimate union of both women's identities – an aspect of the story that is best illustrated in Victor's nightmare on the night of his Monster's birth. This dream sequence indicates a warning of future repercussions, as it is riddled with repressive images of death, decay, sexuality and woman (Botting 1996, p.102):

I thought I saw Elizabeth in the bloom of health [but] as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death: her features appeared to change, and I thought I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms. (Shelley 1994, p.56)

The fusion of the two women in this imagery is an example of how identity within the Gothic genre can often be unstable, whereby one character can be replaced by another, usually the perpetrator of their death. Elizabeth's transitional maternal identity is further demonstrated by how her time before Caroline's death was largely spent on the periphery, patiently waiting for her opportunity to secure an important position within the family unit. Additionally, the ambiguity of her status as Caroline's double is suggested from the very beginning of her time with them when she is affectionately called Victor's 'more-than-sister' and Alphonse's 'more-than-daughter' (Shelley 1994, p.34). These terms are evidence that she is simply 'the substitute who is always in the ready position' (Rickels 1999, p.293), and illustrate how, in the world of *Frankenstein*, one woman must die so that another can self-actualise. Caroline's introduction of Elizabeth to Victor when he was just a young boy encourages the male possessiveness that is persistent throughout the novel as Victor declares that his mother 'presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift ... mine to protect, love, and cherish ... a possession of my own ... since till death she was to be mine only' (Shelley 1994, p.34). In this sense, she is immediately defined as Victor's prized possession and inferior other half, thereby demonstrating Cixous' claim of how society positions women below men.

Elizabeth's relationship with Victor is one of inequality that emphasises her situation as the outsider of his family, and so she takes on a servant-like role. The ambiguity of their familial roles as siblings, 'cousins', and a betrothed couple is a direct result of Elizabeth's adoption, which unavoidably defines part of her identity. According to Jane Gallop, who likens Elizabeth to Freud's Dora, because 'the servant is so much a part of the family that the child's fantasies (the unconscious) do not distinguish "mother or nurse"; [ultimately,] she must be expelled from the family' (Gallop 1982, pp.145-7). This suggests that her eviction from the family unit is predetermined as soon as she embraces her servant-like status.

Furthermore, her composite identity as a double is two-fold, as she not only serves as Caroline's double, but also as that of the Monster, who later murders her. The conflict that occurs between these two characters is a direct result of Victor's rejection of the female figure in his domestic life, both through his hesitation to marry and recreate naturally with Elizabeth, as well as through the creation of his Monster (Knoepflmacher 1982, p.109).

Victor's subconscious preoccupation with the death of the maternal figure is also shown in this nightmare sequence, which can be regarded as the antithesis of the childbirth motif. It symbolises the ultimate sacrifice which he must make in exchange for the formation of a female Monster, and suggests that Elizabeth's death is a necessary exchange for 'the transformation of a corpse into a living being' (Baldick 1987, p.49). Moreover, the dream prefigures Elizabeth's fate at the hands of the Monster, who kills the new bride, and in so doing, fulfils his promise to 'be with [Victor] on [his] wedding-night' (Shelley 1994, p.163). This terrible fate is predicted in the nightmare sequence. There is both a necrophilic and an oedipal significance to this event, as Victor only embraces her after she has transformed into his mother's corpse. This can be considered to be a foreshadowing of their eventual union when Victor later holds her corpse after she has been murdered by the Monster. These two occasions are the only times that the couple unite, due to the shadow of death that follows the potential mother, Elizabeth, throughout the story. She can even be defined as the catalyst for absent mothers in the text. As a carrier of death, she is firstly responsible for the death of her own birth mother, who according to the plot-change in the 1831 version of the novel, dies of blood poisoning from residual placenta. This tragedy mirrors Shelley's own tragic birth that cost her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, her life, and also portrays the common belief in many primitive societies that the placenta is the baby's twin, and so must be cared for until it has fully decayed as 'every baby is shadowed at birth by a dead double' (Rickels 1999, p.282).

Secondly, Elizabeth can also claim responsibility for the death of her adoptive mother and Victor's birth mother, Caroline, who catches scarlet fever when nursing her back to health.

The nature of this disease is especially significant because it represents Elizabeth's ability, not only to contaminate and eliminate her sexual rival, but also to take over her role afterwards (Veeder 1986, p.114). Her inadvertent rampage continues with the alternative mother figure of the nanny, Justine, whose death-sentence is secured unintentionally by Elizabeth's testimony, as she is subsequently charged with William's death, for which Elizabeth fruitlessly claims responsibility. This destruction of maternal figures is repeated once more when the Monster murders Elizabeth, and in so doing, removes the last surviving Frankenstein woman and prospective mother from the text. In the same fashion in which Elizabeth kills a maternal figure only to become her replacement, the Monster, in turn, becomes Elizabeth's replacement double. The blurring of these female identities is reflected in the literal binding of female body parts that form the Everywoman's physicality in *Patchwork Girl*. The collective absence of maternal figures extends beyond the Frankenstein household, and is witnessed by the Monster during his time in the wilderness. Here, he encounters the De Lacey family, and notes the sombre atmosphere that surrounds their home, describing them as a 'good' but 'unhappy' family unit, that shares an unspoken sorrow, which seems to be the mourning of their mother. Their household is especially significant as it represents the typical home of the novel that has a father-oriented family whose members never mention the absent parent (Veeder 1986, p.158).

The consequence of a deficient parental figure is examined simultaneously within the concept of the sibling rivalry that is portrayed by the Monster's eventual jealousy of Victor's blood relatives. Bettelheim discusses how special attention given to one child simultaneously insults and belittles another excluded child, as the fear of comparisons and subsequent

inability to win the parents' love inflames sibling rivalry (Bettelheim 1991, p.40), and in the instance of *Frankenstein*, prompts the 'excluded child' to murder his creator's younger brother, William. This character is especially important because he was inspired by Shelley's second deceased child, who was one of three 'Williams' in her life. His name and appearance, as described in the novel, are identical to the portrayal of her late, infant son (Knoepflmacher 1982, p.93). Her personal connection to him is similar to that of Victor, who is portrayed as a parental figure to him more so than as a sibling. As the locket that William wears around his neck symbolizes Victor's affection and pride in his natural kinship with the young boy, so the Monster considers him to be his sibling rival in terms of Victor's parental love and acceptance. His actions are also incited by his jealousy of William's experience of the maternal love and affection that has been denied to him by Victor, and he acknowledges that he will be 'forever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow' (Shelley 1994, p.138). The Monster can be defined in psychoanalytic terms as a projection of Victor's unconscious urges, which would then suggest that the murders of Elizabeth, William, and Justine are enactments of a form of sibling rivalry (Baldick 1987, p.47). Bettelheim expands his argument on this matter by stating that while all young children are occasionally jealous of their siblings, often this develops further into a resentment of their parents for the privileges they enjoy as adults (Bettelheim 1991, p.9). This parental jealousy is illustrated in *Frankenstein* by the Monster's bitterness at his father's romantic relationship with Elizabeth, as well as his other familial bonds. It is also the predominant factor in the downfall of the family unit in later chapters on Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, which mimic the world of *Frankenstein* through the existence of an absent mother figure, as well as the creation of an unnatural child in the form of Claudia. Once again, the rebirth of an unnatural creature occurs as a result of the male desire to create new life. And once again,

poor relations and resentment between the parent and child lead to the destruction of the family unit and to the pursuit of vengeance for disturbing the natural order of life and death.

3.4 The Many Female Identities of *Patchwork Girl's* 'Everywoman'

Cixous endorses her notion of feminine writing as being a solution to the predicament of 'antilove' as 'woman has never had *her* turn to speak' (Cixous 1975, p.7). She believes that the presence of female works in literature will 'bring the "Other" to life' (Cixous 1975, p.20) and will re-introduce the woman to herself by 'giving her access to her native strength' (Cixous 1975, p.8). This will see her finally embrace the aforementioned 'Dark Continent' of her sexuality, but she warns that it can only be done when women heed her advice to 'write your self. Your body must be heard' (Cixous 1975, p.8). Once again, she emphasises the importance of women writers' responsibility in addressing the taboos associated with the female figure, and stresses a necessity for the inclusion of the mother's voice in literature by linking the notion of female writing to the image of breast milk, claiming that 'there is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink' (Cixous 1975, p.9). Jackson fulfils this demand through her definitively feminine hypertext, which reawakens the female creation and replaces Victor with a character version of Mary Shelley as her maternal creator and lover. It examines the complex familial and romantic relationship between the two women, and traces the influence that this loving relationship has on the female Monster during her quest for identity. The blurring of boundaries in the nature of their relationship changes the dynamic of the 'family romance' to one of co-dependency, and as such, it can be viewed as the antithesis of the broken parent-child bond in *Frankenstein*. The text also traces the origins and personal histories of her various body parts and internal organs, because she believes that 'we are who we were; we are made up of memories'

(Jackson 1995). Its format symbolises her self-professed claim that 'I am a mixed metaphor' (Jackson 1995); it is made up of five main sections that contain a variety of over four hundred links and lexias that trace the design pattern of her stitching and allow the reader to dissect and re-assemble her according to their chosen sequence. The guide for doing so is a map in the shape of a graveyard with coffin-shaped hyperlinks, which act as narrative constituents for the reader's version of the story. Additional information in the form of key words and sentences can be found in the various links to her internal organs. This format raises the notion of how objectification of women is such an intrinsic part in the social depiction of their identity that the female figure can simply be reduced to just her body parts. Marie Mulvey-Roberts discusses the text's design in her essay 'The After-Lives of the Bride of Frankenstein: Mary Shelley and Shelley Jackson' and defines the collective figure of the body parts as 'a family of monsters made up of grotesque narrative protuberances derived from images, sequels, and adaptations [who] embody interconnectedness even though, as in the novels of Shelley and Jackson, the bride begins and ends in fragmentation' (Mulvey-Roberts, cited in Purves 2014, pp.81-2). This addresses the notion of how the unconventionality of this female figure ensures that her identity cannot be defined as complete in social terms as she does not conform to the standards of the civilised woman. The shared history of the text's many women answers Cixous' plea for female writing, and highlights Jackson's deliberate blurring of identity and gender, thereby leading the reader on an introspective journey that subverts traditional and social constructions of these features.

Shelley's ability to succeed where Victor failed affirms Cixous' notion that female mythology or 'the Dark Continent' is 'neither dark nor unexplorable' (Cixous 1975, p.13). In order to highlight the bonds of sisterhood in the text, the female Monster becomes a symbol of women's reclaimed identity, and is known simply as 'the Everywoman' who tells her

audience 'I am like you in most ways' (Jackson 1995). This label highlights her anonymity, which is a fairy tale trait that defines a nameless character as 'the Everyman' in order to allow the reader to identify with his struggle and evoke sympathy (Bettelheim 1991, p.40). Furthermore, it confirms her inability to consider herself a reinvention of the female figure because she does not conform to social norms and regards herself instead in fragmented terms. In doing so confirms her self-perception to be that of an anomaly that could only exist within the blurring of a Gothic text: 'I am mostly myself in the gaps between my parts, though if they sailed away in all directions ... there would be nothing left here in my place' (Jackson 1995). As the story unfolds, the Monster becomes a double of the reader, as she represents the '*Unheimliche*' or repressed monstrous potential, in all beings (Brooks 1982, p.217). This doubleness is reinforced by the fact that the narrative consists of a chorus of the female voices that make up the Everywoman's unnatural identity, a narrative mode of enunciation which is a direct contrast with the male narrative voice of *Frankenstein*. By giving a voice to the various parts of her collaged anatomy, Jackson highlights the equality of all women and the bonds of sisterhood for 'if she is a whole, it's a whole composed of parts that are whole' (Cixous 1975, p.17). The fact that the hypertext's story has no fixed sequence gives further proof of the Everywoman's unconventionality, and forces the reader to engage with unfamiliar territory by exploring its disordered layout. The subversion of this traditional aspect of the story, as well as that of the narrative structure and the nature and name of the main heroine, creates a text that examines the ambiguous nature of female identity and sexuality by presenting the reader with a chorus of distinctive, female voices through those of Shelley, Jackson, the Everywoman, and the (mostly) feminine appendages.

She also becomes a double for the fictional version of Mary Shelley, who grafts a piece of flesh from her calf onto the Everywoman and in doing so mimics the biblical

imagery of Adam and Eve. This blurs the definitive nature of their relationship from that of familial figures of parent and (resurrected) child to that of sexual partners, which in turn, illustrates how Jackson uses the lesbian bond between the Everywoman and her creator to subvert fixed definitions. The action is also another reminder that this creature exists solely from the union of other women's body parts and organs, and that despite her female lineage of natural women, she remains an unnatural female figure whose exclusion of men threatens the social order. Mulvey-Roberts identifies her through her position within the gaps of the text at 'the intersection of being and non-being, life and death, the human and the non-human [for] through numerous adaptations of the novel, she has become vastly more than "the thing" on which Victor was engaged before tearing her to pieces' (Mulvey-Roberts, cited in Purves 2014, p.92). The uncertainty of her identity is eventually personified by her body parts which begin to separate and spill from her. The unfixed sequence of the text however ensures that the reader can reconnect these limbs, which subsequently highlights the cyclical pattern of a female identity that is dictated by fragmentation and reintegration.

3.5 Conclusion: The Reasons behind Maternal Absence

The alternative depictions of the maternal figure in these texts symbolise how the dominating forces of patriarchal society demand contrasting definitions of the two genders. In doing so, motherhood is depicted as being an essential characteristic of civilised womanhood upon which social order is reliant. This epitomises Cixous' notion of the literary absence of women in the past, and challenges the traditional paradigm of motherhood as Victor represents the textual and social antithesis of how 'the world of "being" can function to the exclusion of the mother ... [on condition that] it is the father then who acts as – is – the mother' (Cixous 2008, p.360). His failure to sufficiently fulfil his parental role blurs the

division that separates the sexes and in doing so, illustrates the deadly cost of replacing the natural mother with a defective substitute who fails to perform the responsibilities of either parent. Furthermore, his destruction of the incomplete female Monster illustrates the various measures taken by representatives of the patriarchal order to maintain control of the female figure in terms of her physical and sexual identity. It is the fictional figure of Mary Shelley in *Patchwork Girl* who finally responds to this by reclaiming female identity, firstly through her reconstruction of the female Monster, and secondly through their ensuing homosexual relationship, which effectively excuses the man of his sexual and reproductive roles. However, the lack of animosity in the parent-child bond of *Patchwork Girl* in comparison to those found in Shelley's text shows how it is possible for the alternative family unit to function once the demands of each role are understood and fulfilled, and power relations evolve in response to the child's development. Ultimately, it is Victor's encompassing of the maternal female that portrays the emotional and psychological strain of the exclusively female experience of postnatal trauma and demonstrates how it can have a coinciding effect on the parent-child bond that can result in the mother's physical or psychological absence from the child. In contrast, this deliberate multivocality of *Patchwork Girl's* various female narratives emphasises how the power of female identity is revered and celebrated in the text. Its subject matter is particularly significant when it is compared to the repression of the woman through the absent mother and the silenced female figure in *Frankenstein*. Shelley's ability to resurrect and nurture the Everywoman portrays a world that firstly, confirms the importance of re-examination of the repressed female position, and secondly, highlights the need for women to be the instigators of this change. This starkly contrasts the silenced female Monster in the male narrative of *Frankenstein's* world, and Jackson's story thus creates a new legacy and freedom for the forgotten female Monster of Shelley's text.

Chapter 4: The Reluctant Mother: Reversing Parent-Child Relations in Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*

4.1 Rice's Depiction of the Maternal Figure

The publication of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) marked a huge change in the depiction of the vampire in Gothic fiction and was the first of her *Vampire Chronicles* series. Told from the perspective of a lonely outsider who spends his immortality lamenting his lost humanity and feeling at odds with his vampire nature, it offered a new perception of the traditional vampire villain that evoked sympathy from his reader. The presence of these supernatural creatures, in addition to its tyrannical villains, blurring of sexual and familial definitions, and grotesque imagery confirmed its status as a Gothic text. The success of these novels ensured Rice's status as a significant figure within the Gothic genre and propelled her male protagonists to cult-figure status that still exists today. In doing so however, her female characters became overshadowed by their male counterparts despite their corresponding unconventionality as Gothic heroines, and so they became forgotten females of the Rician literary world. It is for this reason that I wish to analyse the maternal figure through the character of Gabrielle in *The Vampire Lestat* (1985), in order to illustrate how her character represents a heroine who moves between the social categorisation of the native and civilised woman. Despite her role as a secondary character to Lestat, Rice devotes a great amount of time in the novel to the depiction of Gabrielle's struggle and to her reluctance to submit to the social expectations of female identity. Her character also embodies Hoeveler's concept of

gothic feminism which can also be read in her passive reaction to her suffering and how it is finally rewarded with immortality which allows her to experience an unprecedented freedom. Despite having a male narrator, its status as a Female Gothic text is confirmed by its detailed account of female suffering on account of enforced domestic roles as well as Gabrielle's happy ending in the form of her departure from the civilised world and all its constraints on her identity.

Just as the previous chapter examined the female figure through the issues associated with postnatal trauma, this chapter will investigate another alternative perspective of motherhood, specifically through Gabrielle's disinterest in fulfilling her maternal role, which is considered to be an essential component of the civilised woman. Using the characters of Gabrielle and Lestat in Rice's text, it will also explore the unconventional relationship that she has with her adult child through the issues of incest and subverted familial roles. In doing so, it will also consider the natural change in the bond that occurs over time and leads to a role reversal whereby the child eventually becomes the parent's care-giver, as well as the adjustment in power-relations that comes with this development. This will offer a depiction of the female figure as a mother who is dependent on her child, which is a maternal stage of that is not highlighted in the social depiction of ideal motherhood. Through the application of feminist and psychoanalytic theory, this chapter will present an alternative perspective of motherhood through Gabrielle, who repeatedly challenges the stereotypical image of female identity through an unwillingness to submit to her domestic roles. Her preliminary silence forces the reader to rely on the male voice of her son and narrator of the book, Lestat, to give an accurate portrayal of her character.

Still a human when first introduced to the reader, Gabrielle is also a Marquise who is married to a blind and indigent French Lord. Lestat first mentions his mother by proclaiming his love for her, but also admitting that no one else in the family shares his feelings towards

her, which immediately raises awareness that she is not a conventional maternal figure. Freud claims that the nature of the mother's relationship with her children is a direct outcome of her own marital relationship (de Beauvoir 1997, p.532), and this concept is reflected in how Gabrielle's bond with her husband is quite a hostile and distant one, and as a result, so too is her bond with the rest of the family, with the exception of her outcast son. The exceptional bond that she shares with Lestat suggests that her true identity may be separate from the traditional domestic realm within which she cannot establish her existence. He mentions how she even hated to be called 'Mother', claiming that it was title in which she had no interest. De Beauvoir discusses the traditional preconception that the mother's relationship with her children depends upon 'her relations with her husband, her past ... herself' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.537), and states that women can find self-realization through maternity, but only when it is sincerely wanted. Subsequently, the civilised woman must be well-balanced, healthy, and aware of her responsibilities in order to be a 'good' mother (de Beauvoir 1997, p.537) to her children. When applied to Gabrielle's blatant detachment from her husband and domestic life, this theory explains why she cannot embrace her identity as the traditional mother figure.

While Gabrielle is indifferent towards her other children, she has a special bond with Lestat which develops as he grows out of childhood and towards adulthood. This bond may simply result from their many similarities, which are reflected in how 'the relation of mother to child becomes more and more complex as the child is a double, an alter ego, into whom the mother is tempted to project herself entirely' (de Beauvoir 1997, pp.205-528). Gabrielle confirms this notion through her confession that she feels that Lestat is the male version of herself, and that they are two parts of the same being. The depth of their relationship is revealed by her apathetic confession of her fatal illness. Lestat's reaction to this situation mirrors Gabrielle's anger and fear at the situation, as their connection makes them become

one both physically and symbolically. It is at this point that Lestat becomes aware of her dependency on him when she speaks of his 'being a secret part of her anatomy ... the organ for her which women do not have', and claims to experience life vicariously through him as 'the man in [her]' (Rice 1985, pp.72-3). Her reaction to the sentence of death is to allow Lestat to kiss her 'for all the times she'd never let me do it. We seemed ... like two parts of the same thing' (Rice 1985, p.72). This is the only instance in which she displays any emotional weakness, and it is undoubtedly an embodiment of the oedipal complexity within their relationship. It represents a different signification of their original union during pregnancy years beforehand, as well as a premonition of the future ties that will form between them.

4.2 Gabrielle's Role in the 'Mirror Stage' of Lestat's Identity

Similarly, Lestat sees Gabrielle as the mirror image of himself in both personality and physicality. His dependence on her for the development of his identity can be more fully understood through Jacques Lacan's idea of the mirror stage, as is discussed in *Écrits*. The mirror stage starts when an infant is about six months old and begins to 'recognise his own image as such in a mirror' (Lacan 2006, p.75). Although the child may be unable to walk or stand yet, it will 'overcome ... his prop in order to ... take in an instantaneous view of the image ... to fix it in his mind' (Lacan 2006, p.76). Lacan defines the act, which is continuously repeated up until the age of about eighteen months, as an essential form of identification on the child's part and continues to influence other stages throughout their life, in the sense that it is:

A transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase ... the assumption of his specular image [while] still trapped in his nursling dependence manifests the symbolic matrix

in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in identification with the other, and before language restores to it ... its function as subject. (Lacan 2006, p.76)

Lacan states that this mirror phase is crucial in tracing the origin of the ego as 'this form situates the agency known as the ego, prior to its social determination' (Lacan 2006, p.76). The family line is also an important factor, as the child will seek out 'visual action of an image akin to its own' (Lacan 2006, p.76). Furthermore, Lacan stresses the role and function of the mother's gaze in this process, as the mirror, in the continuous development of the child's self-perception is 'mediated by the other's desire' (Lacan 2006, p.77). This inaugurates for the child the moment of experiencing that, as well as being a subject, he or she is also the object of the mother's desire and love. The child cannot later recognize himself or herself as a desirable object until he or she becomes the exclusive object of desire at this stage (Rabaté, 2003, p.194), which is known as the imaginary stage of identity formation. Elizabeth Grosz elaborates on this aspect of Lacanian theory by discussing how the co-dependency that is inherent in this relationship can have negative repercussions on a couple:

Imaginary relations are thus two-person relations, where the self sees itself reflected in the other. This dual imaginary relation ... although structurally necessary, is an ultimately stifling and unproductive relation. The dual relationship between mother and child is a dyad, trapping both participants within a mutually defining structure. Each strives to have the other, and ultimately, to *be* the other in a vertiginous spiral from one term or identity to the other. (Grosz 1990, pp.46-7)

She defines the mother-child pairing as a synecdoche of the imaginary order that typifies its mutually-defining and mutually-exclusive structure, because 'there is no way out of the vacillation between two positions and the identification of each with the other' (Grosz 1990, p.47). Because Gabrielle sees Lestat as being her kindred spirit, she becomes dependent on him during this relationship stage, and he soon becomes her counterpart in all aspects of life.

Her affection for him is even more obvious when contrasted with the lack of attention she shows her other children. She becomes his mirror in the text, and the undivided love and attention that she consistently shows him throughout his mortal life is a major contributor to the development of his character and ego when examined through this Lacanian lens. Her dual role as his mother and lover combine the two principal images of female desire, thus making the reflection even more powerful and also challenge the incest taboo, which is one of the most universal cultural taboos, a taboo once again subverted by the Gothic.

According to Freudian theory, the nature of their relationship, even at this stage of the text, threatens the social symbolic order, as it alludes to the desire for an incestuous union between them. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud discusses the issue of incest within an Australian Aboriginal tribe, claiming that 'even the most distant grades of relationship [were] recognised as an absolute obstacle to sexual union' (Freud 1918, p.9) within this primitive society. It was such a major concern for them that any breach of this law was punishable by death. Incest is still one of the most powerful taboos today, and is a grounding motif of the relationships in this book. It can be psychoanalytically examined in the text through Freud's Oedipus complex from *The Interpretation of Dreams* which claims that a young boy harbours a repressed desire to sexually possess his mother and kill his father. Freud uses Sophocles' drama of *Oedipus the King* to illustrate this theory, as it is an overt account of this complex. He defines it as being a sexual preference from an early age, whereby 'boys regarded their fathers and girls their mothers as rivals in love, whose elimination could ... be to their advantage' and claims that 'a boy's first childish desires are for his mother', which causes the father to become a 'disturbing rival' to the son. This desire is usually the result of the Mother's natural instinct to spoil her son, and 'as the child is well aware of this partiality, he turns against that one ... who is opposed to showing it' (Freud 2010, pp.274-5). Carl Jung elaborates on this notion in *The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, which investigates how these

feelings naturally subside because, that which 'surrounds us daily ... loses its compelling charm and thus forces the libido to search for new objects [to] prevent ... inbreeding' (Jung 1915, p.70). These theories help to clarify the complexity and blurring of the bond between Lestat and Gabrielle at this stage.

As they grow closer, the incestuous nature of their relationship grows stronger, leading to Lestat's jealousy of his father and his anger at his father's treatment of his mother. De Beauvoir also explores the Oedipus complex through her argument that the mother is 'the source and origin of all man's reflection on his existence', and so he 'seeks the whole of himself in her because she is All' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.229). Gabrielle represents all that Lestat wants to become, if only she had the patience and desire to share her knowledge with him. In other words, she is the mirror image in which he recognises himself because she embodies his ideal self. He repeatedly mentions how her passion for books and her education keep her isolated from her illiterate family, and he recalls his desire to mimic her interest in literature, but claims that she did not have the patience to teach him how to read. Her lack of tolerance with her children further symbolises her non-conformity to the traditional values of motherhood. Although she is married to a Lord, the text suggests that her family is from a higher social class, which explains the superiority she feels in relation to her husband and sons. But rather than be discouraged by her superiority, Lestat is intrigued by it. He is satisfied only when he has her undivided attention, and thereby portrays how 'man longs not only for one whose heart beats for him alone, but whose hand laves his brow, who radiates peace, order, tranquillity, and who exercises a quiet control over him' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.209). Her interest in Lestat grows as she recognises his dissimilarity to his father and brothers. Their bond really develops when they realise that 'there was a powerful understanding between [them]' (Rice 1985, p.39), as they share an equal hatred of the rest of the family, and a desire to escape their lives in the old castle. Gabrielle's growing

dependency on Lestat over time reinforces de Beauvoir's perspective on the mother-son relationship, whereby the mother relies on her son to be 'her liberator [who will] defend her against the domination of her husband' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.596). As well as supporting Lestat in any arguments with his father, Gabrielle also defies her husband incessantly, thus illustrating her lack of conformity towards the traditional expectations of marriage within a patriarchal society. This mutiny allows her a taste of freedom from the social restraints placed on the female figure. Furthermore, her lack of passivity despite the roles of wife and mother suggests that she does not properly fulfil the components of the civilised woman. Her transformation to the native woman occurs later when Lestat turns her into a vampire, and in doing so, releases her from all social confinement. This emancipatory act not only underscores their relationship, but also deconstructs power relations between the genders through Lestat's decision to share his power with Gabrielle, and to create her as his equal which in turn is an example of the Gothic's penchant for challenging and subverting various paradigms within patriarchy.

4.3 Breaking Female Silence on the Horrors of Childbirth

In what is undoubtedly the strongest rejection of her maternal role, Gabrielle confesses her true feelings about her experience of labour, telling how she associates it with fear and pain, as it was only during the 'vulgar act of giving birth, that I understood the meaning of utter loneliness' (Rice 1985, p.46). Aware of her social obligation as a married woman to have children despite the risks associated with act, her confession echoes John Donne's paradoxical reference of the womb as being a 'house of death' for many women who did not survive the process (Dally 1982, p.31). De Beauvoir also comments on the natural reluctance of the pregnant woman to experience childbirth, because she has persuaded 'herself that she is going to die or that the infant will die' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.520). She says that while the

expectant mother may want to prove that she can get through the experience of childbirth, she also 'bears a grudge against the world, against life, against her family, for the sufferings inflicted upon her, and in protest she remains passive' (de Beauvoir 1997, pp.520-1). Despite the fact that women of this time were expected to accept labour as being their natural duty, and almost to see it as an emancipation of sorts, Gabrielle personifies this aspect of postnatal resentment in de Beauvoir's theory. She recalls her personal experience of labour as being a terrifying and lonely one during which she felt 'that [she]'d gone into the circle of hell and come back out And I felt quiet all over' (Rice 1985, p.46). In doing so, she breaks the feminine tradition of secrecy surrounding how the newborn represents a threat that could result in 'the loss of her own life' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.515), which is echoed in her admission of feeling 'trapped in the pain, knowing the only release was the birth or [her] own death ...' (Rice 1985, p.46).

The connection between death and the mother arises from a different perspective later on when Gabrielle sends Lestat off to Paris, which leads him to become an obsession of the vampire who eventually kills him. His return to Gabrielle afterwards mirrors de Beauvoir's theory of how the hero always returns to his mother to seek out her comfort after his battle, or is returned to her in the event of his death. This confirms that death itself is both maternal and domesticated in correspondence with birth, as both are intricately linked back to the mother (de Beauvoir 1997, p.205). In this particular instance, the hero returns to his mother after his death has taken place, as Lestat returns to Gabrielle in his immortal form. Their shared identity is once again evident through her wish for his presence at her deathbed to symbolise their emancipation from the misery of castle life. Even in death, her only familial interest is Lestat, as she looks to him to save her. Her dependency on him at this point marks the beginning of a familial role-reversal. With her impending death creeping closer, Lestat offers her immortality, despite being uncertain of his ability to bring this about successfully. His

inexperience means that this act has the potential for various complications that could endanger them, and so the act can be considered another Gothic subversion of childbirth. The merging of their blood and identities during the process can be read through de Beauvoir's notion of how the mother finds in her child 'another, combining nature and mind, who is both prey and double' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.527). The blood-exchange involved in this process sees their relationship reach an intimate climax and causes an irreversible unification of their beings in both body and blood.

This union is the ultimate incestuous act that is recognised in Lestat's new definition of Gabrielle as being both his 'flesh and blood and mother and lover' (Rice 1985, p.174). During her transition, Gabrielle temporarily feels the acceptance that she always longed for, as Lestat describes her in raw and honest terms as being 'simply who she was. She was Gabrielle' (Rice 1985, p.174). It is only at this stage that he calls her by her name instead of 'Mother', which shows that the familial nature of their relationship is changing, becoming almost a romantic one. Gabrielle's maternal role is completely removed at this stage, whereby Lestat finally sees her in terms of her own individuality, and yet at the same time, he looks upon her narcissistically, as a mirror image of his immortal self. Their shared immortality demands a corresponding alienation from all others, which causes their dependency on each other to become even more intense. The dyadic and all-consuming passion that they have for each other illustrates that they have sustained the imaginary order well beyond its normal parameters, which suggests that its power does not appear to have suffered the attenuation that usually occurs during the symbolic order of identity formation. This unification means that Lestat has difficulty in adjusting to the unfamiliarity of Gabrielle's complex new identity:

Though I said her name over and over, to make it natural, she wasn't really Gabrielle yet to me. She was simply *she*; the one I had needed all of my life with all of my being. The only woman I had ever loved. (Rice 1985, p.186)

The actual process whereby Lestat feeds his blood to Gabrielle is a deconstruction of the act of nursing a new-born infant. He has taken her old life, and has given her a new one in return. This secures the reversal of their familial roles as Gabrielle has been reborn to Lestat and so is now dependant on him for her survival and sustenance. His subversion of breastfeeding Gabrielle mimics Dracula's union with Mina as discussed in Chapter 2 and in a similar fashion to the effect that Dracula's blood had on Mina during their union, Lestat's blood encourages Gabrielle's transition from being a civilised woman to being a native one.

Their exchange of blood also raises the notion of Adam and Eve, because it results in the creation of new version of Gabrielle that has stemmed from Lestat's body and blood. Her re-birth gives her a new identity that allows her to finally gain the social liberty that she has always desired. By removing her from society, Lestat has given her the freedom to defy her former moulds of wife and mother, and to explore her new self. She does so by taking on an androgynous persona that epitomizes Judith Butler's argument in *Gender Trouble* that gender and sexuality are merely performative constructs and are separate from one's biological sex, which will arise again in later chapters:

The distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any way When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one. (Butler 1990, p.6)

Gabrielle's new appearance and behaviour personify the social paradigm's definition of masculinity, which illustrates her rebellion against patriarchal classifications of female identity. She revels in this newfound independence, and casts no nostalgic thought back on her previous maternal role. Both her lack of mourning for her family life, and her disregard for her other children, illustrates how she differs from the traditional version of the mother. Lestat acknowledges this emancipation from her old self when he describes her new identity as being 'impossible ... [with] no chains ... free to soar' (Rice 1985, p.181).

4.4 Gabrielle's Use of her Womanliness as a Masquerade

Gabrielle's vampire nature awakens her primal instinct for survival by encouraging her to hunt and kill her prey. Her behaviour during this process illustrates a blurring of her old (civilised) and new (native) identities, as she uses the guise of a helpless woman to draw in the first of her many male victims. Even Lestat admits to being fascinated by the juxtaposition of her character at this point, claiming that:

When she moved towards the man, she wasn't human at all. She had become a pure predator, as only a beast can be a predator, and yet she was a woman walking slowly towards a man-a lady ... approaching a gentleman as if to beg for his aid. (Rice 1985, p.182)

Her very first victim is an upper class man who symbolises a social power that Gabrielle has always wanted to emulate, and she performs the act with ease. Her natural ability to kill portrays her absent conscience and an internal darkness. These previously subverted aspects of her character are suggested much earlier in the novel when Lestat confesses to often feeling 'the desire to murder ...' the rest of their family, to which Gabrielle simply replies 'so do I, my son ... so do I' (Rice 1985, p.47). Her admittance of this unnatural desire to harm her husband and children illustrates the depth of her unconventionality as a maternal figure.

Her struggle for identity continues in her vampire life, as she welcomes the opportunity to define herself without social restraint. Poe's doubling technique is evident in Gabrielle's complete consumption of her victims; in a repeat of the reverse breast-feeding paradigm seen earlier, Gabrielle now gains sustenance from her first victim, as she drains his blood completely. Her actions during this process exemplify Butler's claim that 'a woman's fantasy [is] to take the place of men' (Butler 1999, p.65), as she proceeds to strip him down and put on his clothes. In doing so she steals not only his life, but also his masculinity because as soon as 'she put on his garments, she became the man' (Rice 1985, p.189). She continues this re-invention of herself and discards her most feminine attribute by cutting her long blonde hair into a short masculine style, which distances her completely from her old identity. This act is a deconstruction of Butler's masquerade theory, which claims that 'women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared by men ... femininity becomes a mask that dominates/resolves a masculine identification ...' (Butler 1999, pp.51-3). Gabrielle's androgyny epitomizes her rejection of the traditional concept of female sexuality, and underlines her embrace of male identification despite the consequences. She has completely evolved from her earlier maternal role, and looks so different from her mortal self that Lestat confesses his desire to 'ravage her' (Rice 1985, p.189) when he sees her new appearance. His attraction towards her is unconventional in nature because it only reaches its pinnacle after Gabrielle has exchanged her femininity for androgyny, which thereby represents how she portrays a new version of female sexuality in addition to her unconventional depiction of the mother figure.

The construction of their shared human identity progresses greatly at this stage, as immortality has caused a blurring of their genders. Furthermore, her androgynous appearance as a vampire means that she now mirrors Lestat to an even greater extent. Her duplication of his physicality likens her to the child during the aforementioned mirror stage of identity

development, who looks to the mother's gaze for assurance that they are the object of her love and desire. As Lestat is now her creator and sole parent, her certainty as to his desire for her encourages an evolution of her character, and gives her the ability to embrace the freedom that comes with her new life. She quickly becomes an epitome of the traditional vision of the primitive native woman in her new role as a merciless villain that Lestat has always wanted to be as a vampire. Her lack of nostalgia or empathy for others is far greater than his, and as a result, she becomes a crueller and colder version of him. As she has now become an asexual version of herself, she is no longer bound to her previous gender roles of wife and mother. This rejection of her former identity also means a complete disinterest in the fates of the husband and children that she left behind. While Lestat maintains a steady observation of, and interest in, their lives, Gabrielle dismisses them effortlessly and encourages him to 'forget them' (Rice 1985, p.363) too. The ease with which she forgets her old life causes Lestat to step further into his maternal role, as he continues to watch over their family members and care for their health and home, while Gabrielle seems to be genuinely indifferent to their fates. Their role-reversal once again highlights the lack of empathy and maternal instinct that Gabrielle shows towards her progeny, and also sees the beginning of a power struggle between the two characters, as their gender roles gradually become even more blurred.

De Beauvoir states that the vast differences in age and sex prevent any real co-operation between the mother and son (de Beauvoir 1997, p.598). In this particular case, these differences grow stronger with time, as Lestat fails to hide his disappointment with Gabrielle's new androgynous image. The power struggle concerning this issue really begins when Gabrielle chooses to wear men's clothing instead of an upper-class lady's attire, and in doing so completely subverts her previous identity as a civilised woman. This proves de Beauvoir's argument on how the woman's body seems to a man to be his property, covered

with ornamental attire so as to transform it into an idol. The function of this ornamentation is to make her share more intimately in nature, while at the same time removing her from the natural world. In other words, nature is present within the woman, but has been remoulded nearer to man's desire (de Beauvoir 1997, pp.190-1). While Lestat encouraged Gabrielle's rebellious nature towards her husband in the past, he has now replaced him as her patriarchal superior and as such, he wishes for her to conform to society's expectations and represent him in an appropriate manner. His behaviour suggests that he has become threatened by her new status as a native woman and of his ability to contain her. He reluctantly confesses that their power-struggle was partly due to the fact that Gabrielle made a better vampire than he did, as 'she was colder than I. She was better at all of it' (Rice 1985, p.189). In addition to this, he is aware from the beginning that he is the more dependent of the two as 'unlike her, [he] cannot stand to be alone' (Rice 1985, p.310). In an effort to appease and submit to him, Gabrielle wears her hair long and loose again, and dresses in the civilised woman's proper, feminine clothing, and pretends to be 'a great and beautiful lady for a little while' (Rice 1985, p.364). This illustrates Butler's masquerade notion once again. She uses Joan Riviere's essay *Womanliness as a Masquerade* to support her theory that women use their femininity to renounce any desire for possession of the phallus that can be obtained only through castration. She claims that 'this fear of retribution is the consequence of woman's fantasy to take the place of men, more precisely, the father' (Butler 1999, p.51). As Lestat is now her creator and father, this suggests that Gabrielle's masquerade functions mainly as an illusion to disguise her threat to his position. Lestat has already acknowledged her as being the superior predator, and so must feel somewhat insecure in his power over her, thereby making Gabrielle's masquerade a necessary performance in order to maintain the status quo of their fragile union.

Although Gabrielle is aware that Lestat is unhappy with her behaviour and appearance, she will not conform permanently to his idealised version of the civilised woman. His desired vision of her is identical to that of 'the good wife', which is man's most precious treasure for whom he is responsible. He takes more pride in her than he does any other possession, as she is the measure through which his power is illustrated to society (de Beauvoir 1997, p.207). Lestat's wish to adorn Gabrielle in bourgeois clothing and jewels displays his desire to prove his own worth to society, and in doing so, to gain its approval. In other words, he sees Gabrielle as a mirror for the social representation of himself. Unfortunately for him, Gabrielle resists a return to this role and focuses on only representing herself. Her lack of co-operation illustrates her dissimilarity to the submissive woman who would allow herself to be passively worked and shaped by the husband she represents (de Beauvoir 1997, p.208). This means that their peaceful times together are both insincere and transient because Lestat no longer shares her unconventional outlook on the world. Furthermore, her poor communication skills have transitioned into her immortal life, so she cannot express her principles to Lestat. This causes a lot of frustration on both sides, and leads to their inevitable separation. Gabrielle's constant struggle with verbal communication suggests an internal resistance to its development as according to Freudian theory, language is the development of the super-ego.

Consequently, her later decision to discard social regulation in favour of the tranquillity of nature can be seen as the ultimate rejection of her super-ego. This supports Freud's judgement that women develop a weaker conscience or superego to their male counterparts (Heller 2005, p.124). From a Lacanian perspective, her silence can be read as a refusal to move from her imaginary dyadic relationship with Lestat towards the linguistic requirements of the Symbolic order. As the nature of Gabrielle's silence is self-inflicted, it mirrors Claudia's silence in the next chapter, and symbolises an absolute inner harmony with

her id through her wish to fulfil her savage but instinctual need for blood without the intrusion of social conscience or patriarchal judgement.

4.5 The Mother's Return to Nature

Gabrielle's obsession with the natural world begins when she and Lestat look to higher beings in order to gain knowledge of their vampire origins. While Lestat turns to patriarchy by seeking out one of the eldest male vampires who might reveal to him the history and origins of vampires, Gabrielle turns to matriarchy, and relies on all the teaching of nature to gain self-knowledge. Resentment of her patriarchal roles as wife and mother may be another reason behind her decision to turn away from society altogether, and embrace a life surrounded by nature instead. As nature is seen as the universal Mother, Gabrielle considers it to be an alternative substitute to patriarchy. This notion is also raised by Rebecca Scott in 'Scaping the Body: Of Cannibal Mothers and Colonial Landscapes', whereby she states that there is a 'culture/nature binary embedded in Western thought in which nature plays female to a masculinised culture' (Scott, cited in Richardson and Willis 2002, p.151). Gabrielle demonstrates these dividing categories by hinting at the inevitability that one day she will leave Lestat for a life of solitude within nature, and temporarily leaves him for short periods at a time to explore the wilderness, and on her return, tells him of many wondrous places that would have been impossible to see as a human. When she decides to spend her daytime rest within the earth itself, Lestat witnesses the ease with which their union takes place. He emphasises how the earth envelops her effortlessly 'as if [it] belonged to her' and afterwards that 'the leaves settled as if nothing had disturbed the spot ...' (Rice 1985, p.348). This shows the natural union between woman and nature and union can be viewed as an embrace of her voluntary silence and primitive instincts, as she now has the freedom to use her heightened senses and agility to explore the wilderness. Lestat's disapproval of her new passion hints at a

fear that it may lead to a development of her inner feral nature, which raises the possibility that she could transform into a primitive version of herself that would be similar to the figure of the native woman who was discussed in earlier chapters.

Gabrielle expresses her desire for a 'great, dark monarch' to come forth and bring order to the vampire system. She assumes that the gender of this satanic leader would be male, and paradoxically sees him as the only way to defeat the patriarchal system of man. She feels a need for vampires to use their supernatural power to carry out vigilante justice on the world's population, because she sees humanity as being predominantly male and fears that mankind will inevitably destroy the female world of nature. She claims that mankind has become stagnant in his social evolution, and will eventually ruin the natural world in his quest for power. Instead, she wishes for the world to return to a simpler time, when the beauty of nature was revered by man: 'when the world of man collapses in ruin, beauty will take over ... the wild grass and dense forest will cover up all trace of the once great cities until nothing remains' (Rice 1985, pp.365-6). Her vision represents their conflicting attitudes towards society: while Lestat takes comfort in the order of the patriarchal social system, Gabrielle longs for the freedom and chaos of a more primitive world. Aware that these beliefs are major factors in their lifestyle choices, Lestat finally recognises her need for separation from him as 'she could not give me what I wanted of her. There was nothing I could do to make her what she would not be ... what she really wanted was to be free' (Rice 1985, p.381). He understands that he is the only tie that binds her to a society that she hates so passionately, and acknowledges his mistake in wanting her to be a false version of herself for his benefit. The progression of their relationship ends with this knowledge, and because it is no longer familial or incestuous in nature. Its ambiguity ensures that it cannot develop any further and so it simply ceases to exist, thereby allowing them to finally go their separate ways.

4.6 Gender Blurring and Role Reversals

Rice portrays the complexity of Gabrielle's character development throughout the novel by using various methods such as doubling and gender-blurring. On more than one occasion she is likened to the figure of the vampire Armand, as both characters have the outward disguise of a young boy, and the inward nature of a deadly killer. But her identity is most problematic when Lestat becomes her double. His description of a dream sequence is the most significant example of him doubling Gabrielle, and thereby taking on her identity, as in this dream sequence he is portrayed as the matriarchal head of his old mortal family. He has this dream immediately after learning that his brothers have been slaughtered in the French riots, and it sees him surrounded by his deceased family who thank him for sharing his immortality as they are now all vampires to whom he has given life. The major significance of this dream sequence is not only that the mother's role is now fulfilled by Lestat, which illustrates a blurring of gender and identity, but also that he is surrounded by grateful progeny who show appreciation and affection toward him. As he is so obviously haunted by his relationship with Gabrielle, the subject matter of his dream represents a return of the repressed, according to Freudian theory. This raises the idea of repression, and how it is linked to the individual's unconsciousness when dealing with difficult personal issues. As a result, the unconscious part of the mind is left to deal with them, and it does so usually in the form of dreams where these issues can be more easily expressed.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud claims that to dream of a loved one's death, and to be painfully affected by it, is a wish that the person in question may die. He develops this idea through his suggestion that this wish may not be a current desire of the dreamer, but may come from sometime in their past or childhood, and has been abandoned, overlaid, or repressed (Freud 2010, p.267). In this instance, it would be a natural assumption that Lestat's

wish for his brothers' deaths is a result of their childhood rivalry, and of their desire for the mother:

Children are completely egoistic; they feel their needs intensely and strive ruthlessly to satisfy them ... first and foremost as against their brothers and sisters. Many people, therefore, who love their brothers and sisters and would feel bereaved if they were to die, harbour evil wishes against them in their unconscious, dating from earlier times; and these are capable of being realized in dreams. (Freud 2010, pp.268-9)

Lestat's dream also includes his father's death, which Freud claims is a natural reaction to the rule of the father in the ancient family. The son is his destined successor, and so sees himself in the position of an enemy, who is impatient to become ruler himself through his father's death (Freud 2010, p.274). In this case, Lestat is confronted by the family members with whom he has chosen not share his immortality. Therefore, the dream illustrates his guilt for not saving the other family members from death, as well as the repression of his frustration at Gabrielle's lack of gratitude for her new life with him. It also exposes his identity crisis through a blurring of the familial roles, during which he takes on the role of life-giver, and in doing so represents the family matriarch in the dream sequence. This would mean that Gabrielle can be viewed as the equivalent of Frankenstein's creature, because she fulfils the child's role as his progeny. But while Frankenstein destroys his female creature before she can fully transform into something unnatural, in the end Lestat does not attempt to suppress Gabrielle's deadly nature, despite confessing his horror that she is a better killer than him.

4.7 Conclusion: Finding a Substitute for the Natural Mother

Lestat's decision to give immortality to a young girl many years later may have been influenced by her uncanny resemblance to Gabrielle. He illustrates how important Gabrielle's physicality is to him many times throughout the text by referring to her as a 'fair and delicate,

feminine beauty', with facial features that 'made her look like a little girl' (Rice 1985, p.45). Therefore his relationship with Claudia, who is described in almost identical terms, may be an unconscious attempt to reconnect with his mother, and to create a new familial relationship over which he now has control. These actions imitate the natural mother who hopes 'to compensate for her inferiority by making a superior creature out of one whom she regards as her double' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.533). He sees in Claudia the opportunity to mould both a deadlier version of himself, as well as a version of Gabrielle over whom he can exert complete control. Additionally, he mimics the actions of the mother, whose fear of abandonment sees her use her children to bind her husband to the home, when he makes the decision to turn Claudia, partly to prevent his current companion, Louis, from abandoning him (de Beauvoir 1997, p.534). The maternal role becomes even more problematic at this point because it sees Lestat fulfilling the role of the potential, or future, mother through his relationship with Claudia, and in doing so, he replaces Gabrielle as the mother-figure in the text.

While her identity may be quite difficult to define in simple terms, Gabrielle is an example of a civilised-turned-native woman who ultimately wants freedom from social demands and a quiet life among the natural world. This desire for peace is what makes her a sympathetic figure in the eyes of the reader as she represents the female figure's constant struggle against the patriarchal bindings of both private and public spheres. The true horror of her situation is revealed when she removes herself entirely from the world of man to embrace a life of solitude within the natural realm, only to be easily replaced through the doubling technique, by Lestat and Claudia, who at different times take on her role and in doing so, fulfil her absence. This suggests that, within the world of patriarchy, the role of the mother is both an inescapable and permanent one, and while civilised women may consider their maternal role as being just a single part of their identity, patriarchal society uses it to

dominate and define them. The same can be said of the young girl in patriarchal society, who is groomed and ideologically constructed and interpellated into becoming the passive maternal figure, and it is to the representation of the young girl in the Gothic that the discussion now turns.

Part III: The Young Girl

'Female dolls in their nakedness are the most female things on earth ...'

Katherine Mansfield
The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield Volume II (1921)

Chapter 5: The Eternal Child: Depicting the Infantilisation of the Female Figure in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*

5.1 The Rician Female and her Influence on the Identity of her Male Counterparts

As noted in the previous chapter, the release of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) offered a Gothic tale that centred on a vampire protagonist who offered a new perception of his traditional role as villain and evoked sympathy from his reader. Its classification as a Gothic text is grounded in its resemblance to Shelley's *Frankenstein* through its account of an unnatural creation who has a damaged relationship with his maker. The dark and haunting atmosphere, the existence of supernatural creatures, the blurring of familial and sexual identities, and the presence of a tyrannical leader further emphasises its Gothic tone. Its exact position as a Female Gothic text is confirmed by its focus on the patriarchal entrapment of Claudia for the benefit of her father figures as well as her fate as an eternal child whose infantilisation offers a very literal depiction of the helplessness and struggle of the female figure against the controlling elements of patriarchy. For this reason, it can be examined through the perspective of a Female Gothic text that is concerned with highlighting female issues. Louis' effeminate nature justifies his replacement of the traditional female narrator, and in a similar narrative style, he recounts the events from his perspective alone which ensures that the reader shares his ignorance of certain knowledge and truths. In addition to this, his account of Claudia's experience as the doll-like daughter of

their family unit evokes sympathy towards her struggle against the dominating forces in patriarchal society.

This chapter will therefore examine how Gothic literature highlights and challenges the masculine influence on the construction of female identity through the character of Claudia using feminist and psychoanalytic theory to present her as another example of the rigid social constrictions placed upon female identity. Her character represents the eternal child, whose adult psyche is trapped forever within the body of a young girl, and is the most complex and significant female character in *The Vampire Chronicles*, mainly because her character inaugurates the standard classification of the Rician female. Her embodiment of eternal youth and beauty represents society's idealised yet impossible standards for women and are depicted in everyday media aimed at a female audience. However, in Rice's text these attributes act as the catalyst for her descent into madness as they dictate how her male counterparts treat her, which in turn, illustrates again how physicality is such a significant part of female identity from a social perspective.

Rice once described the Claudia as 'a metaphor for the raging mind trapped within a powerless body' (Ramsland 1996, p.21). She sees her as being 'a woman in a child's body' who represents 'the women who are eternally called girls ... when in fact they have a strong mind that is very threatening' (Ramsland 1995, p.69). Her character is inspired by the author's deceased five-year-old daughter, Michele, who died of leukaemia in the year before Rice wrote the first novel in the series. She reincarnates Michele through the character of Claudia, a six-year-old orphan that enters the novel as one of Louis' victims, and who is given immortality by Lestat, who wishes to create a family unit of his own. This act echoes that of Victor in Shelley's text, as a male character has once again created his own unnatural progeny without a female input. His parental role to Claudia is quite ambiguous due to the

blurring of gender boundaries that is inherent in all Rician vampires due to their inability to engage in sexual relations once they have transitioned to immortality. As a result, they have no fixed sexuality or gender. Therefore, her male characters tend to become more feminised as illustrated by Lestat and Louis in this instance. Their inability to fulfil the traditional, separate maternal and paternal roles causes them to construct various parts of the parental unit instead. This results in a dual persona for both mother and father figures. Together, they outline the mother's dual aspect, and can be defined through the Freudian and Kleinian principle of splitting and the ancient Roman myth of the 'Janus face' as theoretically developed by Bettelheim, in which the mother-figure is divided into the role of the good (and usually dead) mother, and an evil stepmother. Despite the mother's role as 'the all-giving protector, she can change into the cruel stepmother if she is so evil as to deny the youngster something he wants' (Bettelheim 1991, p.67). In Rice's text, the wicked stepmother is represented by Lestat, who acts as the 'Janus face' of the good mother, who is represented by Louis. This clear division reassures the child that the monstrous impostor is an independent entity to the kind-hearted, original mother (Warner 1995, p.212); and correspondingly in Rice's text, such a division allows Claudia to separate and discern her parental figures in order to decide which one will make her best possible ally. Lestat's act of turning Claudia into a vampire also imitates the mother who hopes 'to compensate for her inferiority by making a superior creature out of one whom she regards as her double' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.553). He considers her to be an opportunity to mould both a deadlier version of himself, as well as an attempt to replace Gabrielle through the creation of a new parent-child bond over which he has absolute control. His intended version of Claudia would ultimately be a hybrid of female identity as her deadly animalistic nature would mimic the threat of the native

woman but would be disguised by the outward appearance of a civilised woman who possesses no danger to social order.

Despite her physical entrapment within the body of a young girl, her existence within the unconventional family unit is quite peaceful for a time during which she embodies many of the civilised woman's qualities such as passivity and obedience. This is solely due to her unquestionable acceptance of their patriarchal authority because her mind is still that of a child, and according to de Beauvoir's theory 'the little girl ... carries no menace [for] she is under no taboo and has no sacred character' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.180). However, the deadly consequences of her re-birth can be understood through the feminist theoretical position that the potential mother sees procreation as 'a foreshadowing of her death' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.515), which is what Claudia later represents to Lestat. She quickly adjusts to her new role as Lestat and Louis' daughter, and lives peacefully with them while they spoil her with the finest of dolls and clothing. At first, she revels in their affections and returns their love, which gradually becomes incestuous-like in nature. Her relationship with each of them is initiated for different reasons: Louis' is a result of his determination to teach her literary and proper social skills, while Lestat's is a result of his intention to mould her into a deadly and merciless predator like himself. According to Freudian theory, these parent-child relationships threaten the social symbolic order because they allude to the desire for an incestuous union between father and daughter. They can also be explained using Carl Jung's theory of the Electra complex, which defines the young girl's 'typical affection for the father ... with a correspondingly jealous attitude towards the mother' (Jung 1915, p.69). It is the feminine version the Oedipus complex, and was inspired by Sophocles' Greek tragedy *Electra*. This concept is also Rickels, who claims that incestuous relations are a typical characteristic of the Gothic family that is 'held together unconsciously by the incest taboo',

because 'for vampirism, incest is not kept unconscious, is not repressed ... it is the Law, simply ... everybody is made infinitely available to everybody else' (Rickels 1999, p.342).

5.2 Claudia as a Transgressive Female

Primarily, Claudia's relationship with Lestat mimics his previous one with Gabrielle, as he patiently nurtures her ruthless pursuit of blood by showing her how to hunt and develop her feeding skills. Their mutual affection is based upon a shared desire to have companionship during their quest for victims, because Louis' guilt keeps him from participating in their exploits. Her love for Lestat ensures a desire to please him, so that she silently follows his instruction and soon matches his skill; together, they 'hunt and seduce' and 'stay long in the company of the doomed victim, enjoying the splendid humour in his unwitting friendship with death' (Rice 1976, p.109). Their bond only becomes endangered when Claudia's mind matures and allows for a better understanding of her entrapment. Although she is still ignorant of the exact details surrounding her transition to immortality, she assumes that the responsibility lies with Lestat. This brings about a powerful hatred on her behalf, and sees their relationship irreconcilably damaged, as he now considers her to be a threat to his authority. He tries to intimidate her back into submission, but only succeeds in provoking her wrath, which marks the end of her time personifying the civilised woman. Their conflict reaches a deadly climax during an argument where Lestat quotes Ferdinand from Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, 'Cover her face; Mine eyes dazzle; She died young' (Webster 1977, p. 49). His words prove to be his condemnation because they are interpreted by Claudia to be an unrepentant confession of his crime against her mortality. The ensuing disharmony within their family unit mirrors that of Webster's play through Claudia's decision to exact her

revenge on him and begin her deadly plot to 'kill him ... I want him dead and I will have him dead. I shall enjoy it' (Rice 1976, p.137).

Her subsequent betrayal leaves their family torn apart and inextricably destroyed. Additionally, her rebellion against Lestat can be viewed as an example of the aforementioned Electra complex, which de Beauvoir expands upon by discussing the development of an inferiority complex within the young girl, as well as a growing resentment of the father's powerful position within the family. As Lestat is both the matriarch of their family, and the patriarchal leader of their coven, he must face her wrath on both accounts. Claudia's reaction to his authority can be defined as the 'masculine protest', which has been already discussed in relation to Carmilla and Gabrielle. In this instance, Claudia chooses to 'make use of her feminine weapons to wage war on the male' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.74) by using her innocent facade and sexuality to persuade Louis into aiding her betrayal of Lestat. The fluency of these gender roles is symptomatic of the Gothic genre, which often promotes the blurring and uncertainty of fixed social definitions within its texts. Furthermore, indistinct gender classifications are a standard characteristic of Rician literature, as Rice has repeatedly admitted to the creation of deliberately androgynous characters who embody the spirit of her own 'genderless soul' (AnneRice.com 2006). Claudia's relationship with Louis differs greatly to the bond she shares with Lestat, for it is quite sensual in nature. They continuously exchange intimate kisses and caresses and claim to be 'father and daughter. Lover and lover' (Rice 1976, p.112). Over time, they start to see each other as married spouses, and Louis tells her that 'love holds you to me ... we are wed' (Rice 1976, p.269).

However, her resentment towards him grows steadily as her despair at being trapped within a child's body develops, and when her hatred reaches an overwhelming climax, she confesses her inner conflict to him by declaring 'I love you still, that's the torment of it.

Lestat I never loved. But you! The measure of my hatred is that love. They are the same! Do you know how much I hate you!?' (Rice 1976, p.284). When her diary entries are found many years later, Louis finally learns that her love towards him was part of her personification of 'the masculine protest', and of her Machiavellian scheme to gain his loyalty and help her seek revenge on Lestat. The passages reveal her innermost feelings towards her 'evil parents' (Rice 2000, p.249) for her immortal state, for which she actually 'holds Louis far more accountable ... than Lestat' (Rice 2000, 350), but realises that 'Louis will do as I wish, even unto the very destruction of Lestat, which I plan in every detail ... so there my loyalty lies, under the guise of love even in my own heart' (Rice 2000, p.349). Her vengeful intent is two-fold, as she knows that this betrayal will also devastate Louis by weighing heavily on his conscience and lead to his eventual downfall, 'so that his soul, if not his body, is the same size at last as my own' (Rice 2000, p.350).

5.3 Claudia's Changing Identity and Experience of 'the Neurotic's Family Romance'

Rician characters differ from the typical vampire in many ways, most notably in how they subvert folkloric concepts such as their ability to see reflections in mirrors. Traditional vampire lore suggested that the inability to view oneself in a mirror confirmed the absence of a soul. Rice, however, claims that the decision to allow her characters to see their reflections was quite deliberate because she felt that 'despite their supernatural status, [they] should have no more proof of [God's] existence ... than do mortals' (Ramsland 1995, p.301). Instead, they rely on mirrors for a sense of identity in a similar way to the Lacanian 'mirror stage' of identity formation (as discussed in earlier chapters), and look to it for clarity in times of uncertainty or heavy conscience. Rice's complex vision of the vampire soul mirrors her

composite depiction of gender roles in *The Vampire Chronicles*. This portrayal highlights the difficulty of her characters' continuous struggle with good and evil, and emphasises their constant resistance to the loss of any residual humanity by their dominating, predatory nature. Her documentation of this inner conflict humanises the figure of the vampire, and makes it the protagonist of her narrative, which subsequently becomes the first text to offer a tale from the vampire's point of view. Therefore, she often incorporates the image of the mirror into climatic moments in *The Vampire Chronicles*, when there is a forthcoming, unpredictable turn of events.

In Claudia's case at this point, the mirror symbolises the imminent breakdown of her union with Lestat and Louis. This downfall is foreshadowed during an argument when her reflection, as noted by Louis, adopts an ominous disposition during which 'the mirrors trembled with her image as if the earth had sighed beneath [while] she moved through that mirror towards me' (Rice 1976, pp.224-5). The imagery of this incident also suggests that Claudia is physically separating her identity from theirs in a subversion of the Lacanian theory of 'the mirror stage' that has already been discussed in relation to Carmilla and Gabrielle. Although Claudia dies before she can witness his downfall, her memory remains as a constant presence within the subsequent texts of *The Vampire Chronicles*. Just as Lestat is haunted by the memory of Gabrielle and occasionally by that of Claudia, Louis can barely stand the burden of her death and eventually lives 'in torment thinking of one creature' and 'thinks of nothing else' (Rice 2000, pp.5-340).

Claudia's desire to gain emancipation from Lestat and Louis is a natural stage of her childhood development, and it exemplifies Freud's notion of 'the neurotic's family romance', which is a fantasy system that occurs during the 'liberation of an individual, as [they] grow up, from the authority of [their] parents' (Freud 1909, p.237). This phase is essential for the

child's self-awareness and social skills, but inevitably creates tension within the family unit. Nonetheless, Freud dismisses this side-effect as a necessary conclusion since 'the whole progress of society rests upon the opposition between successive generations' (Freud 1909, p.237). The process begins at a young age when the child sees the parents as their 'only authority and the source of all belief' (Freud 1909, p.237), whom they desperately wish to emulate. However, as their intellect develops, the child compares their own parents to others, thus destroying their former belief in the parents' exclusivity, and causing the child to become quite critical of them. This development occurs in unison with the child's Oedipal experience, thus making sexual rivalry an added factor to the dilemma as, the 'boy is far more inclined to feel hostile impulses towards his father than towards his mother and has a far more intense desire to get free from him than from her' (Freud 1909, p.238). As the child differentiates between the sexual identity of both figures, there is an interesting alteration to the family romance, as 'it contents itself with exalting the child's father, but no longer casts any doubts on [their certain] maternal origin' (Freud 1909, p.239). Their fantasised desire to replace the real father with themselves as a superior model is a direct consequence of the child's nostalgia for 'the happy, vanished days when his father seemed to him the noblest and strongest of men and his mother the dearest and loveliest of women' (Freud 1909, pp.240-1).

The 'family romance' occurs twice in Claudia's development; on the first occasion, she casts Louis in the maternal role and focuses her energy on replacing Lestat as the dominant head of the family unit by freeing herself and Louis from his grasp; and on the second occasion, she casts Madeline, the doll-maker, as her new mother-figure, and wishes to replace Louis' parental role by leaving him to start a new life with Madeline as her partner and protector. This is a traditional depiction of the family romance to the extent that the wish for freedom comes from the child's natural desire to gain independence from parental figures,

and it occurs only when Claudia has confidence that she can survive her revolt against the social order in their family unit. This emphasises the importance of self-reliance in relation to the child's progression towards adolescence and a functional adult life, which in turn, highlights how the reverse 'family romance' of *Frankenstein* has such a traumatic effect on the Monster. In this case, the parent's choice to separate himself from his child causes so much pain partly because it occurs at such an early stage when the Monster, as the new-born, is still reliant on Victor's nurture and care. Although the Monster can be defined as an unnatural creature, his hatred towards Victor for committing this crime of nature is a very human reaction, and is also one that stresses the importance of healthy relations within the 'family romance' for the continuing development of the parent-child bond after separation has taken place.

Claudia's desire for freedom comes from an awareness of her physical entrapment and powerless position within the family, which are her greatest concerns, and which prove to be major contributing factors in her steady descent into madness. Her fathers' joint desire to control and condition her according to their specifications of the civilised woman epitomises the female's struggle for autonomy within a domain of male supremacy. The innocent disguise of her youthful appearance masks the inner turmoil of her adult mind, and lulls them into a false sense of security as she plots a way to gain back her freedom and seek vengeance for their crimes. Her helpless situation mirrors the anonymous narrator's entrapment in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, who also manages to hide her resentment towards the dominant patriarch in her life, while silently deciding on how she will govern her own fate. Gilman's text traces a young woman's mental deterioration caused by postpartum depression, when her physician husband, John, recommends the incorrect treatment of acute rest for her psychological condition. This simultaneously illustrates both his lack of

knowledge with regard to postnatal trauma, and his ability to govern her treatment regardless. The power-relations of the family unit within this text mirror that of Rice's as in both instances the male characters govern the fate of the female characters and infantilise them despite their adult status. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the narrator's inactivity causes her to form an overwhelming obsession with the patterned wallpaper of their bedroom, which she imagines to have a collage of 'strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths' (Gilman 1997, p.14), in addition to an army of female prisoners who eventually merge into one female being that only she can see. As her condition steadily worsens, her identity takes on an ominous aspect that makes her even more similar to Claudia as she develops the vampire-like nocturnal habit of sleeping during the day and staying awake throughout the night. She too forms a plan to free herself and the woman in the wallpaper from John, but hides her intentions from him because she becomes increasingly paranoid that he is secretly keeping them both imprisoned.

5.4 Connections between Female Silence and Madness

Claudia's exact definition within the female spectrum is quite ambiguous. Although her mind continues to develop, her body remains that of an eternal child. Her failure to gain a new physical identity over time anticipates her inevitable demise considering, as Bettelheim points out, 'only if the maiden grows into a woman, can life go on' (Bettelheim 1991, p.234). Claudia can be viewed as a personification of this statement, because her inability to reproduce or even evolve into adulthood proves to be her downfall. She becomes increasingly despondent about her physical entrapment, and wishes to encompass a woman's form. However, her later attempt to literally attach a woman's body to her decapitated head leads to her death, as discussed in further detail below. The disconnection between her behaviour and

her childlike appearance becomes clear from a very early stage of her life, and is marked by her constant silence. This is one of her most captivating characteristics and became a standard feature of many succeeding Rician females of *The Vampire Chronicles*, as illustrated by Gabrielle's silent desolation, Pandora's silent indifference, Akasha's inanimate, centuries-long sleep, and the tragically mute Mekare.

The disharmony between her physical and mental states is immediately tracked by Louis. As a new-born vampire, her mind is that of a child struggling to adjust to her new circumstances, so he initially interprets her silence as bemusement. However, as time passes, he begins to read her constant state of being 'mysteriously quiet' (Rice 1976, p.108) as a silent madness. This condition is further suggested by her indifferent disposition towards her victims, which is vocalised in Louis' recollection of how 'mute and beautiful, she played with dolls ... mute and beautiful she killed' (Rice 1976, p.108). Such is the nature of her silence that neither of them realises that inside the masquerade of her child-like exterior, lays a rapidly maturing consciousness. Louis' memory of her evolving behaviour portrays this uncanniness:

She could fall for hours into the pictures in a book and listen to me read until she sat so still the sight of her jarred me, made me put the book down, and just stare back at her across the lighted room; then she'd move, a doll coming to life, and say in the softest voice that I must read some more. (Rice 1976, p.111)

Her psychological evolution is further illustrated by her sudden interest in reading Aristotle and playing Mozart on the piano. Now fully aware of the innocent disguise that her silence and youthful female form give her, she mirrors Gabrielle by using it to facilitate her intent to lure concerned adults as potential victims to her side. Lestat is initially indifferent to her practice of manipulation, but quickly becomes wary of it once he recognises her growing resentment towards him. He realises that the nature of her silence is not one of submission,

but rather of menace intent and pleads with Louis to 'do something with her', while threatening to 'break [her] into a thousand pieces' (Rice 1976, p.121) to eliminate the threat of her presence.

Her diary entries found many years later reveal the truth of her inner psyche beneath the silent masquerade. While her outer facade of love convinces both parents of her loyalty, the diary entries reveal her sinister plan to 'humiliate [both] utterly in destroying [them]' (Rice 2000, p.350) as revenge for taking her life and leading her away 'from a long forgotten mortality into this questionable state of timeless bliss' (Rice 2000, p.349). This revelation further perpetuates her silence because she is absent from the text when her true nature is finally divulged. It also links her to the anonymous narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) because it illustrates how both women rely on their journals as a therapeutic method of keeping their sanity intact during their entrapment. In this sense, the act of writing becomes a form of expression that is not only crucial to their mental health, but can also be viewed as a means of overcoming their self-inflicted silence. Their shared absence of speech illustrates the universal dilemma of how the female voice has been silenced in the past, and also how the publication of various feminist works has proven to be a successful aid in the emancipation of women and their rights. This shows how women have always relied on the written word to reveal the truth of their condition and triumph over silence. Both characters use their journals to admit their innermost thoughts and feelings regarding these situations, while remaining silent and hiding any semblance of female suffering from the male eye, thus perpetuating the feminist notion of 'feminine mystery'. This concept entails man's ignorance of the workings of woman's body and mind and his ability to excuse this lack of knowledge by regarding her in simple terms as 'the presence of a mystery outside himself' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.285), whom he has no hope in understanding. From this negative viewpoint, he

perpetuates the female's position on the margins of society, as according to the central (male) figure 'the [female] *other* is always a mystery' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.286).

5.5 A Magic Doll

Claudia's objectification occurs in response to Louis' continual celebration of her doll-like beauty. Even as a new-born vampire-child, he notes her newly sensual beauty, and how 'her eyes were a woman's eyes, I could see it already' (Rice 1976, p.104). He uses the contrasting descriptions of her child's mouth and porcelain skin with vampire eyes, to portray the complex disorder of her composition. As his obsession with her grows, he becomes fixated on 'how she moved towards womanhood' (Rice 1976, p.112) within a child-like shell that is so innocent. She is compared to a doll incessantly throughout the text, and this association, Rice admits, was intentional, as it emphasised the paradoxical blend of 'innocence and beauty with a sinister quality' (Ramsland 1995, p.107) that is inherent in Claudia. Recalling her continuous development over the years, Louis claims that soon 'her doll-like face seemed to possess two totally aware adult eyes' (Rice 1976, p.113). He confesses his discovery to Lestat, telling him that 'she's not a child any longer ... I don't know what it is. She's a woman' (Rice 1976, pp.116-7). As Claudia's anger reaches its pinnacle, she finally reveals an awareness of her terrible fate to have gained 'immortality in this hopeless guise, this helpless form' (Rice 1976, p.283). Despite Louis' understanding of her inner struggle, she condemns him for his entrapment of her and for ignorance of the morbid conclusion, asking him 'did you think I'd be your daughter forever? Are you the father of fools, the fool of fathers?' (Rice 1976, p.225). His knowledge of the disharmony between her mental state and outer appearance causes him to feel helpless about her situation, and so he attempts to ease the pain of it by simply spoiling her like a young child. His incapacity to address the problem adds to

Claudia's mounting frustration, and encourages her to commence her plans for revenge. She begins to focus on bringing about the downfall of her two fathers as retribution for the terrible fate they inflicted upon her. Her ability to do so without any hint of remorse illustrates how she has now completely departed from her previous innocent and passivity; it also marks the maturation of her state of mind. Additionally, it depicts a subversion of the traditional Gothic heroine's passive attitude towards her suffering and entrapment.

The desire to separate herself from their bindings begins with her revolt against the 'male gaze', which has been already discussed in relation to Mina in Chapter 2. It stems from the 'sexual imbalance' of a 'split between [an] active/male and passive/female' (Mulvey 2009, p.19) that allows the man to project his 'fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly', and 'coded for strong visual and erotic impact', so that she can 'play to and signify male desire' by being 'on display [and] sexualised' (Mulvey 2009, pp.19-21). In this instance, Claudia's experience of the male gaze is encapsulated in her role as a sexualised 'white, porcelain-like doll' (Ramsland 1995, p.107), whose parents dress her only in 'pastel ribbons over puff-sleeved white dresses, tiny bonnets, and lace gloves ... making her look like a doll' (Ramsland 1995, p.71). However, because Rice's vampires are physically incapable of becoming aroused or engaging in intercourse, Lestat and Louis do not have a sexual identity and so cannot be attracted to Claudia. Therefore, their practice of the 'male gaze' serves only to perpetuate her entrapment through the façade of her role as the beautiful child within their 'perfect' family unit. It demands that she uphold this manufactured aesthetic for their benefit, and 'remain as childlike as she looks, so they can take care of her and, by doing so, give meaning to their own lives' (Ramsland 1995, p.107). Many years after her death, and despite her resistance to the charade, Lestat still upholds this false version of her legacy as he continues to think of her as 'a perfect little doll, captured immutably in [all] her childhood

glory' (Ramsland 1995, p.108), thus perpetuating his vision of her as created by the 'male gaze'.

Further evidence of this objectification can be seen in the numerous doll analogies in the text: One of Louis' first accounts of her includes the term 'jointless doll' (Rice 1976, p.83). He later describes her as 'a doll from whom someone had cruelly ripped the eyes and replaced them with a demonic fire' (Rice 1976, p.124). He continues this pattern despite his knowledge of her internal development, and he still celebrates the child-like beauty of her imprisoned form. In doing so, he condemns her to the social consequences of her exterior semblance as a 'doll, doll, I called her. That's what she was. A magic doll' (Rice 1976, p.113). His constant use of her adopted moniker of 'doll' emphasises her inferiority within the family unit, and compares her to an inanimate object that has the sole purpose of providing pleasure through being a substitute for another human being. John mirrors this infantilisation by giving his wife, the narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, various nicknames such as 'blessed goose' (Gilman 1997, p.4) and 'little girl' (Gilman 1997, p.8), which he uses whenever he feels that she is acting in an unreasonable manner. The condescending nature of these nicknames illustrates the power of language in the social infantilisation of women, as similar labels are commonly used by men in conversation with their female partners and family members. While these terms are often used innocently and affectionately, they inevitably contribute to the linguistic creation of a greater divide between the two genders, which in turn promotes social and intellectual inequality.

The significance of Claudia's pet name is further perpetuated by how Louis and Lestat shower her with gifts of dolls throughout her immortal life. While she initially loves them as a child, she soon considers them to be a symbol of her own social misrepresentation, and becomes fascinated with destroying them, claiming that 'yes, I resemble her baby dolls

... Is that what you still think I am?' (Rice 1976, p.224). In an act that portrays her frustration with her physicality, and which also foreshadows her own horrendous annihilation, she crushes a porcelain lady doll in front of Louis to illustrate her discontent and her disregard for social order: 'the hand that held the doll was crushing it, crushing it and popping it so it bobbed and broke into a heap of glass ...' (Rice 1976, p.225). Her actions continue to haunt him afterwards, and he raises the issue later when he asks Madeline, the doll-maker, if 'that [is] what you think her to be, a doll?' (Rice 1976, p.289). The numerous comparisons between Claudia and various kinds of dolls throughout the text, also raise the notion of de Beauvoir's interpretation of Freud's penis envy. Her analysis states that 'to compensate ... and serve [the young girl] as alter ego, she is given a foreign object: a doll [That] will serve the girl as substitute for ... the penis (de Beauvoir 1997, p.306). The confusion with this act is that 'the doll represents the whole body' while simultaneously being 'a passive object', which will inevitably lead the young girl to 'identify her whole person and to regard this as an inert given object' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.307). She argues that this passivity is the essential characteristic of the 'feminine' woman, and is 'a trait that develops in her from her earliest years' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.308), thus perpetuating the docile nature that social patriarchy enforces upon women. Through the doll, she notes that the young girl gains her idyllic representation of physical femininity and civilised womanhood, and thus wishes to be pretty, passive and admired just like her doll. However, in order to do so 'she must [first] make herself an object', and renounce her autonomy to become 'a live doll [that] is refused liberty' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.308). Claudia's juxtaposition as both a deadly and violent vampire-child, and also as an inanimate, doll-like figure within the text, suggests that she can be viewed as a manifestation of the phallic object in de Beauvoir's 'doll theory'. Her ability to be the embodiment of the doll/penis substitute despite her femininity, gives further evidence

of Rice's blurring of fixed gender definitions because it creates an intricate union of male and female entities within Claudia's character.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the conversion to immortality is a re-birth that blurs gender definitions in Rician vampires. In this instance, Louis and Lestat's transition returns them to an infantile state, with Claudia as the alternative doll-substitute for their lost sexuality. Similarly, Claudia's obsession with her doll-collection, and later with Madeline, portrays her penis envy (which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter) in a society that demands compliance based on her child-like exterior. This shows how the social pattern continuously repeats itself through the practice of traditions that are so engrained in patriarchal society that there is no other alternative. Claudia's constant resistance to the male figures of her world illustrates how the bindings of social patriarchy are an inescapable reality for women. Her character also portrays how female resistance to social normative adherence is not strong enough to conquer these perpetual limitations. She considers Madeline to be a replacement maternal figure, but also a lady-doll that she can control. Her actions mimic Lestat's quest for power, while simultaneously challenging the dynamics of patriarchy. Her obsession with the doll-maker begins when she visits her shop and makes the special request for a lady doll. She notes how all of the shop's baby dolls had 'the same face, lips' (Rice 1976, p.224) as an effigy of her deceased daughter, to whom Claudia is also physically similar. Madeline's tragic loss makes Claudia view her as kindred spirit who shares her denied experience of a mother-daughter bond. Madeline's inability to mourn her daughter explains her willingness to become a vampire, as well as her desire to become Claudia's maternal protector, as hypothetically Claudia cannot die. Madeline believes that immortality will ensure that Claudia remains her daughter forever, and this new mother-daughter relationship will allow Madeline to finally fulfil her maternal role, as they

will be 'preserved together in vampirism as a never-dying mother and daughter pair' (Ramsland 1995, p.108). Their relationship is one based on tragedy, and Rickels suggests that this tragedy, namely the disconnection between mother and child, is recycled through the constant doll analogies throughout the story (Rickels 1999, p.320).

Claudia spends her immortal life mourning, not only the loss of her mortality, but also the love of her biological mother, as demonstrated by her hunting patterns. Louis reveals that 'she did not kill indiscriminately', but 'seemed [rather] obsessed with women and children' (Rice 1976, p.115). Her decision to exclusively hunt mothers and daughters illustrates her fixation and jealousy of the bond between these women, which represent an intimate experience that she has been denied. Similarly, the narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper* becomes fascinated with the female form that she sees 'creeping all around the garden' (Gilman 1997, p.12), and quietly cherishing her freedom within the natural world, and thus making the narrator's own entrapment even more unbearable. Their shared obsession with these particular female figures suggests that they specifically seek out women through whom they wish to live through vicariously, because they embody the missing elements of maternal love and freedom in their lives. They search for external projections of themselves when their conditions worsen, as illustrated by Claudia's compulsive destruction of dolls that are an exact 'replica of me, [and] always wear a duplicate of my newest dress' (Rice 1988, p.214). Likewise, in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the narrator becomes increasingly fascinated with the imaginary woman who 'crawls around fast ... takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard' so as to 'shake the pattern' (Gilman 1997, pp.12-3) of the wallpaper. These figures can be viewed as extensions of their entrapment which represent the predicament of their complex situations.

From a certain perspective, both characters gain a measure of freedom from their imprisonment by the end of the texts; Claudia succeeds in gaining her independence from Lestat when she poisons him and slits his throat, claiming that 'he deserved to die ... so we could be free' (Rice 1976, p.154). Her ability to overturn the infantilisation of her situation illustrates how she has evolved into her role as avenger for her captivity. Likewise, Gilman's narrator defeats John by freeing herself of his mental restraints, 'in spite of [him]', and by pulling off 'most of the paper, so you can't put me back!' (Gilman 1997, p.15). While her defiant actions are more subdued than Claudia's, they are still a significant rebellion against the constraints of the patriarchal world within her marriage. These events represent the determination of the female struggle, as both women superficially adjust their behaviour to meet the expectations of their male counterparts, while also hiding certain habits that would be met with disapproval. It is also important to note that Claudia's decision to end her passive suffering and actively revolt against Lestat subverts the conventional figure of the gothic feminist, who according to Hoeveler, 'always manages to dispose of her enemies without dirtying her dainty little hands' (Hoeveler 1998, p.7). Their ability to finally dismiss the feminine trait of passivity, and embrace the masculine attribute of action by seeking vengeance, gives further evidence of the shared gender ambiguity of these characters by the end of their stories, and to the centrality of the theme of female subversion of patriarchal constraints to the Gothic as a genre.

5.6 Conclusion: The Dilemma of Female Emancipation

Lestat, Louis, and the reader of *The Vampire Chronicles*, are all led to believe that Claudia meets her death after a short trial in the Théâtre des Vampires, where the coven find her guilty of the ultimate vampire crime: the attempted murder of her creator. Her offence against

Lestat sees the coven condemn her to the final death, with Madeline, by means of sunlight. However, in a much later text, the vampire Armand confesses his participation in the true events of her demise, which proves to be a morbid reversal of the birth of the Monster in *Frankenstein*, as well as that of 'the Everywoman' in *Patchwork Girl*. Armand recounts how Claudia, who was initially 'made ... to be [Louis'] companion' (Rice 1976, p.130), sees her body disassembled in death, as she begs him to relieve her of her childish anatomy. He tells how, on her request, he decapitated her so as to re-attach her head to the body of an adult vampire, and give her the form that she had always desired, but how instead, he created 'a writhing jerking catastrophe' that was 'a botched reassemblage of the angelic child she had [once] been' (Rice 1998, p.271). Unable to reverse the damage, and finally succumbing to his suppressed jealousy of Lestat's and Louis' love for her, he leaves this spoilt version of Claudia out into the sunlight to be destroyed. This perverse account of the many stages of her death differs greatly from the previous image of the unified death she was believed to have shared with Madeline. Her tragic end suggests that Armand's attempt to move her evolution towards a stage of maturity was always doomed to fail simply because the doll-like figure can only exist in youthful and passive terms similar to that of the ideal civilised woman. This notion is further confirmed by Madeline's fate, as she is sentenced to death immediately after having gained immortality as Claudia's lady-doll, thus proving that the physicality and mentality of the doll-like figure can only exist within the form of the virginal, young girl. Additionally, it portrays the child's inability to successfully endure crucial developmental stages without the input of a devoted parent who wishes for the child to eventually gain independence from them.

While Claudia's identity within the female spectrum may be quite difficult to define in simple terms, she can be viewed as an antithesis of the conventional young girl and

civilised woman, in both textual and social terms. Her rebellion against life with Lestat who represents her patriarchal leader, differs greatly from Gabrielle's quiet revolt and has a more tragic ending, as she blames him for entrapping her and giving her the burden of immortality in such a 'helpless form' (Rice 1976, p.288). The eternal youthfulness of her physicality represents the female figure's struggle against a society that demands utter compliance from the young girl as she struggles to find her own identity, and the consequence of any resistance to this is illustrated by her death sentence from the *Théâtre des Vampires* for committing crimes against her father. Ultimately, her fate mirrors that of Gabrielle because she too is eventually forced out from the social world of the text. This demonstrates the potentially deadly outcome of female transgression against male supremacy, and how any attempt by the civilised woman to prevail over the power of the patriarchal system is futile. It also shows how the Gothic challenges fixed gender-definitions and social boundaries in order to offer alternative versions of these collective concepts. As a Gothic/Rician female, Claudia embodies many of the masculine and feminine qualities that are inherent in the characters of this genre. Her ambiguous nature creates an unconventional and unprecedented version of the young girl that could only be found within the ominous Gothic world.

Chapter 6: The ‘Eternal Feminine’: Investigating Man’s Influence on the Construction of Female Sexual Identity in Angela Carter’s *The Magic Toyshop*

6.1 Melanie’s Quest to personify the ‘Eternal Feminine’

This chapter will use Angela Carter’s portrait of Melanie in *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) to analyse the entrapment of female identity from the perspective of the young girl’s position in society. It will trace her struggle to maintain autonomy during the emergence of her adolescent sexual identity. Melanie’s entrapment within the ominous setting of Uncle Philip’s Bluebeardian-like house sets the dark tone of the novel. Other Gothic elements include the presence of a patriarchal villain, peculiar characters, blurred familial and sexual definitions, incestuous relations, and most importantly, the uncanny presence of the life-size puppets that inhabit Uncle Philip’s toyshop. Its status as a Female Gothic text is evident from Melanie’s narrative, which contains gaps and miscomprehended details throughout the progression of the story, as well as the presence of a happy ending that ensures her emancipation from life in the toyshop as well as a hero and lover in Finn. But while the previous chapter on Rice illustrated the entrapped figure of the eternal child and Claudia’s frustration with her immortal childlike-form, Melanie represents the adolescent young girl as she undergoes an essential transition in her life, whereby her evolving physical and mental states enable the construction of a new sexual identity. She embodies Carter’s concerns with regard to ‘investigating the nature of my reality as a *woman*. How that social fiction of my “femininity”

was created, by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as the real thing' (Carter, cited in Gamble 2001, p.10). Melanie's attempts to become comfortable with her new adolescent identity personify this concept; she represents the universal struggle that occurs during the virgin/young girl's formative years, when her identity becomes defined by the sexualised physicality of her new position as the object of male desire. Society's preference for civilised women who are virtuous and pure ensures its attempt to manage and suppress their emerging sexual identity. Melanie therefore exemplifies woman's endeavour to maintain power over her emerging sexual autonomy in spite of overwhelming patriarchal influence and entrapment of this aspect of female identity. In doing so, she personifies Carter's notion in *The Magic Toyshop* that 'femininity and female subordination [are] cultural constructs' (Palmer, cited in Gamble 2001, p.33).

Carter defines Melanie as 'a silly and over privileged ... bourgeois virgin' (Carter, cited in Gamble 2001, p.32) whose journey of self-discovery begins at fifteen when she discovers that she is 'made of flesh and blood She embarked on a tranced voyage, exploring the whole of herself, clambering her own mountain ranges, penetrating the rich moistness of her secret valleys' (Carter 1981, p.1). Her curiosity is a result of the various radical changes that come with adolescent development, and it epitomises de Beauvoir's claim that 'the body of a woman – particularly that of a young girl – is a "hysterical" body' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.356). This transformation drives Melanie's obsession with her real/physical self, and suggests an inner excitement that her body is evolving towards womanhood, which brings with it a vanity and celebration of her changing beauty as well as an awareness of her newfound sexuality:

For hours she stared at herself, naked, in the mirror of her wardrobe; she would follow with her finger the elegant structure of her rib-cage, where the heart fluttered under the flesh like a bird under a blanket, and she would draw down the long line from

breast-bone to navel (which was a mysterious cavern or grotto), and she would rasp her palms against her bud-wing shoulder blades. And then she would writhe about, clasping herself, laughing, sometimes doing cartwheels and handstands out of sheer exhilaration at the supple surprise of herself now that she was no longer a little girl. (Carter 1981, p.1)

This understanding that 'she was no longer a little girl' is confirmed by her new naked form, and marks the start of her transition from childhood to young adulthood. Her obsessive interaction with her reflection can be read as a repetition of Lacan's 'mirror stage' of development, which marks the onset of the formation of a new identity, as discussed in the earlier sections on Gabrielle and Claudia. Furthermore, this reawakened fixation with her own mirror image represents how her psyche starts to match her evolving physicality when she begins to 'accept her femininity' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.361), and plays up to the version of herself that will be objectified by the masculine onlooker as, put into simple feminist terms, 'when [the young girl] admires herself in the mirror, she is still only dreaming her herself as seen through masculine eyes ...' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.402). This suggests that in order for the young girl to accept her new womanly identity she must first objectify herself and position herself as an object of the obsessive male gaze. In other words, she defines her beauty solely in terms of the masculine concept of feminine beauty:

The young girl who in her mirror has seen beauty, desire, love, happiness, in her own features – animated she believes, with her own consciousness – will try all her life to exhaust the promises of that dazzling revelation [Young girls] believe they are beautiful simply because they feel they are women. Furthermore, the mirror is not the only means of obtaining a double, though the most favoured She [also] sees her double, haloed with glory, in the eyes of others ... (de Beauvoir 1997, pp.644-51)

These actions also show her natural personification of Germaine Greer's concept of 'the Eternal Feminine' as discussed in *The Female Eunuch*, which defines the idealised

feminine stereotype according to the specific preferences of patriarchal society that are maintained on a daily basis through various social channels and ultimately serve to promote and perpetuate the objectification of women:

The stereotype is the 'Eternal Feminine'. She is the Sexual Object sought by all men, and by all women. She is of neither sex, for she has no sex at all. Her value is solely attested by the demand she excites in others. All she must contribute is her existence. She need achieve nothing, for she is the reward of achievement. She need never give positive evidence of her moral character because virtue is assumed from her loveliness and her passivity Nobody wants a girl whose beauty is imperceptible to all but him; and so men welcome the stereotype There are stringent limits to the variations on the stereotype, for nothing must interfere with her function as sex object Her dominion must not be thought to entail the rule of women, for she is not a woman ... *she is a doll*: weeping, pouting or smiling, running or reclining, she is a doll. She is an idol, formed of the concatenation of lines and masses, satisfying the lineaments of satisfied impotence. Her essential quality is castratedness. She absolutely must be young, her body hairless, her flesh buoyant, and *she must not have a sexual organ*. (Greer 2012, pp.67-9)

This concept emphasises the passivity required in the civilised woman's embodiment of ideal femininity and female sexual identity. It also highlights the performative requirements of the woman in this perception of 'the male gaze' which require a removal of certain natural elements that effectively dehumanise her and demote her to the status of an idol or the inanimate object of the doll that is admired only for her beauty and silence. Additionally, one of the most significant factors in this doll-like model of female identity is its focus on the absence of genitals, which ensures that the female 'sexual organs [remain] shrouded in mystery' (Freidman 2012, p.44). This perpetuates the notion of essentialism and endorses the polarising characteristics of masculine and feminine sexuality that are described in Naomi Wolf's notion of 'the beauty myth [which] keeps a gap of fantasy between men and women.

That gap is made with mirrors; no law of nature supports it ... its smoke and reflection interfere with our freedom to be sexually ourselves' (Wolf 2002, p.144). Melanie's immediate compliance with the socially constructed image of beauty, as well as her desire to be the receiver of the objectifying 'male gaze', positions her as the inanimate doll and illustrates the naturalisation of this dual hypothesis on gender and sexuality.

6.2 The Young Girl's Obsession with Male Desire and Marriage

Her reaction to this adolescent process can be explained through Wolf's statement in *The Beauty Myth* which claims that 'what little girls learn is not the desire for the other, but the desire to be desired' (Wolf 2002, p.157). This practice reverts their attention back onto their own bodies, and causes them to obsessively monitor any personal physical changes and compare themselves to their female peers. Additionally, it ensures that they also engage in the objectification of their own physicality, which can create an unhealthy body-image as well as a competitiveness and jealousy of their female counterparts:

The female body and the female breast begin as the focus of desire for the infant girl As girls grow, the myth keeps the sexual focus on the female body, but, unlike the attraction to it felt by men and lesbians, heterosexual women's ungratified admiration often becomes contaminated with envy, regret for lost bliss, and hostility. This situation creates in women an addiction to men's eyes, enforcing what the poet Adrienne Rich calls "compulsory heterosexuality," which forbids women from seeing other women as sources of sexual pleasure ... (Wolf 2002, p.155)

This process encourages the young girl to celebrate her new sexuality and maintain the power of the 'male gaze', which links back to its emphasis on the absent genitals in Greer's composition of the 'Eternal Feminine'. However, the insecurity that the young girl experiences by the end of this process highlights the destructive nature of this ideology

towards the female figure. The social solution to the dilemma of absent female genitals is to substitute the penis with a doll that the girl can view as both a play-thing as well as an inanimate object with which to identify, as discussed in the previous chapter on how de Beauvoir's 'doll theory' was related to Claudia's character. However, the most notable aspect of this practice is that it secures the objectified nature of femininity in a way that the young girl can understand and even celebrate.

Melanie's obsession with her mirror image exemplifies the various aspects of these theories on the objectification of women as she celebrates her new identity and plays up to the imagined 'male gaze' on her adolescent reflection:

Pre-Raphaelite, she combed out her long, black hair to stream straight down from a centre parting and thoughtfully regarded herself as she held a tiger-lily from the garden under her chin, her knees pressed close together. A la Toulouse Lautrec, she dragged her hair sluttishly across her face and sat down in a chair with her legs apart and a bowl of water and a towel at her feet. She always felt particularly wicked when she posed for Lautrec, although she made up fantasies in which she lived in his time After she read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, she secretly picked forget-me-nots and stuck them in her pubic hair. (Carter 1981, pp.1-2)

The various depictions of herself that are created during this exercise are specifically 'those previously inscribed by male authors, painters and women's magazine's writers'. The boundaries of Melanie's adolescent imaginings are thus 'marked by thoughts of her future roles as lover, wife and mother' (Gamble 2001, p.36). Therefore, Melanie's desire to experience these roles means that she spends much time during her performance conjuring up a phantom groom who can appreciate her developing beauty. She becomes obsessed with the sexual rite of passage that comes with the experiences of love and marriage:

She used the net curtain as raw material for a series of nightgowns suitable for her wedding night which she designed upon herself. She gift-wrapped herself for a phantom bridegroom taking a shower and cleaning his teeth She conjured him so intensely ... that she could almost feel his breath on her cheek and his voice husking 'darling' In readiness for him, she revealed a long, marbly white leg up to the thigh ... then, pulling the net tight, she examined the swathed shape of her small, hard breasts. Their size disappointed her but she supposed they would do. (Carter 1981, p.2)

Her preoccupation with beauty appears to be directly linked to her fear of appearing unattractive to men, and is illustrated by her concern with the size of her breasts and waist. This insecurity is directly linked to the masculine concept of beauty and sexuality, and to how she must remain young and slim if she wishes to find a man who will love and marry her, as young girls learn that 'stories happen to "beautiful" women, whether they are interesting or not. And, interesting or not, stories do not happen to women who are not "beautiful"' (Wolf 2002, p.61).

Additionally, the action of pulling the net tightly to her breasts symbolises her wish to attract and ensnare a husband and her intent to use her physical charms to do so. Consequently, she becomes afraid that if she eats too much bread pudding 'she would grow fat and nobody would ever love her and she would die a virgin. A gargantuan Melanie, bloated as a drowned corpse on bread pudding, recurred in her dreams and she would wake in a sweat of terror' (Carter 1981, pp.3-4). This possible outcome is her worst nightmare, and highlights the importance of her beauty to her fate as 'she did not want to think that she might not be already perfect' (Carter 1981, p.9), which in turn shows how women are 'taught from infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, seeks only to adorn its prison' (Wollstonecraft 1996, p.43). This notion arises in more recent feminist theory in Natasha Walter's *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*,

which discusses how the popularity of today's sex industry indicates 'the rise of a culture in which it is taken for granted that women will be valued primarily for their sexual attractiveness' (Walter 2010, p.61).

Although these theories defend the natural development of narcissistic tendencies in adolescent girls, Laura Mulvey claims that it this 'over-involvement with her image [that] is [Melanie's] fault and her downfall [as] it is her fascination with her mirror-image that seduces her into wearing her mother's wedding dress' (Mulvey 1994, p.245). She does this in an effort to envisage herself as a bride, and as a sexually active woman, because despite her belief that 'virtue is fragile' (Carter 1981, p.13), she still prayed: 'please God, let me get married. Or, let me have sex' (Carter 1981, p.8). The dress, which is 'white satin [with] scooping sleeves, wide as the wings of swans', and is accompanied by 'a wreath of artificial roses [for] her forehead ...' (Carter 1981, p.11), foreshadows her later costume as Leda in Uncle Philip's puppet show. Once again, Melanie's performs in front of the mirror as she imagines a bridal version of herself, and checks her reflection to confirm that 'she was beautiful A bride' (Carter 1981, p.16). But this attempt to imitate 'her mother's sexual rite of passage' (Mulvey 1994, p.245) prematurely results in her being 'bruised and filthy ... [bleeding] from a hundred little cuts [with] the dress ... in ribbons ... filthy, streaked with green from the tree and her own red blood' (Carter 1981, p.22). The spilling of her blood onto the wedding dress is the first evidence of fairy tale influence on the overall structure of the story, and can be read through Bettelheim's concept of how these contrasting colours illustrate 'the problems [that] the story sets out to solve: sexual innocence, whiteness, is contrasted with sexual desire, symbolised by the red blood' (Bettelheim 1991, p.202).

Melanie believes this act to be the catalyst that sets off drastic changes in her world, causing her parents' death and her subsequent entrapment within Uncle Philip's house and

adjoining toyshop. It is this extreme change in circumstance that challenges her newfound identity and allows her to experience the full extent of male objectification as the oppression she encounters from Uncle Philip threatens to transform her into a doll-like version of herself who personifies all of the objectifying traits of the socially-constructed civilised woman. She recognises the enormity of this event and considers the act of leaving the family home to be a farewell to her childhood, imagining that a 'part of herself ... was killed, a tender, budding part; the daisy-crowned young girl who would stay behind to haunt the old house, to appear in mirrors ...' (Carter 1981, p.31). As this apparition signifies Melanie's youth and innocence, it represents the childish part of her identity that cannot accompany her to Uncle Philip's house, where she will encounter many difficult experiences because 'in her new position of adulthood, Melanie as a woman is not to be treated as a child' (Day 1998, p.31).

6.3 A Movement towards the Theatre of Dolls

Marina Warner identifies the multiple fairy tale motifs that are common within Carter's fiction, such as the inclusion of 'winged beings, muted heroines, beastly metamorphoses, arduous journeys ... and happy endings' (Warner 1995, p.194). Additionally, the existential dilemma of the natural mother's death/absence, an event that is often the catalytic incident of a fairy tale, is evident in this story, which follows the traditional pattern of this event leading towards the introduction of monsters or doppelgangers. Uncle Philip represents the monster in this particular tale, and his villainous presence functions as an essential factor in the emphasis of Melanie's goodness, because as Bettelheim states, the omnipresence of evil is just as important as that of virtue in fairy tales in order to illustrate both sides of human nature. This element of the tale usually coincides with the suffering of a young woman,

because when 'the too-good mother dies, the new woman is born' (Estés 1995, p.84), and must overcome various hardships before realizing a new identity without her absent mother.

Melanie's struggle begins when her parents' death forces her away from her middle-class social status and into a new life of lower-class labour. This theme of displacement is a favourite in Carter's writing, with many stories centring on the relocation of a middle-class girl into 'the land of interesting barbarians' (Smith 1994, p.9). Consequently, Melanie's search for identity is challenged from the very beginning of this development, as she is suddenly expected to 'be a little mother' (Carter 1981, p.28) to her two younger siblings. Despite her earlier wish for marriage and motherhood, she now finds herself 'trapped, against her will, in conventional family roles and structures Involuntarily, she finds herself slotted into the roles of wife and mother' (Gamble 2001, p.33). This transformation of her familial role is portrayed both in her behaviour and in her appearance: she immediately represses her previous vanity and subdues all pride in her beauty by 'wearing her hair in stiff plaits, in the manner of a squaw. She plaited her hair so tightly that it hurt her, straining hair and flesh until it felt as though the white seam down the back of her head might split and the brains gush out. It was penance' (Carter 1981, p.28) because, although she is not guilty of any wrongdoing, she still blames herself for her parents' death. Regardless of these factors, 'whatever way she might have grown up is simply cancelled after she has arrived at Uncle Philip's' (Day 1998, p.25), as this event has a significant impact on the life that she leads, and the person that she becomes, due to her experiences there.

Upon entering her new home, Melanie's loss of autonomy becomes apparent, and is further emphasised by her dismay at the lack of mirrors and literature in the house. She immediately recognises the feeling of entrapment and a change in circumstance and identity, as she 'feels herself to be like one of her uncle's puppets [as] her feelings of powerlessness

intensify [when] she has no mirror in which to see herself Control of her identity is taken over by [others and] she begins to see herself as she is seen by others' (Gamble 2001, p.36). In other words, the mirror has been replaced with the dual 'male gaze' of Uncle Philip and Aunt Margaret's brother, Finn. Her frustration at the inability to carefully track any changes in her identity is portrayed in her wish 'for a mirror to see herself ... [to see] if she was looking older, if she had changed at all' (Carter 1981, p.125) and wonders if 'I still look the same? Oh God, could I still recognise myself?' (Carter 1981, p.103). The absence of mirrors also highlights the lack of control that she has on her emerging identity as it is being monitored and moulded by Uncle Philip. Furthermore, the toyshop is filled with numerous different puppets that become a presence in Melanie's everyday life, and mirror the doll's function of encouraging self-objectification in young girls, as theoretically discussed earlier. Melanie's presumed fate initially appears to match that of Uncle Philip's wife, Aunt Margaret, because both woman are 'reduced to an automaton' when they move into his house (Day 1998, p.25). Aunt Margaret acts as Melanie's silent alter ego who lives under Uncle Philips' absolute power, and whose existence mimics that of his inanimate puppets. Finn explains the unusual basis of Aunt Margaret's condition to Melanie by telling her how she is simply 'dumb Not a word can she speak. It is a terrible affliction; it came on her on her wedding day, like a curse. Her silence' (Carter 1981, p.37). Melanie is especially sympathetic towards her, as she views her aunt as a proleptic version of herself if she were to continue living under Uncle Philip's roof.

Aunt Margaret's character is based solely on Melanie's interpretation of her, and as such, is initially described as being a mere 'shadow in her mind, a wispy appendage of the toy making uncle' (Carter 1981, p.37). Her early observations of her aunt's doll-like similitude support this vision, as she describes how on the first night there:

She kissed Melanie goodnight on the cheek, taking her in a stiff, Dutch-doll embrace; her arms were two hinged sticks, her mouth cool, dry and papery, her kiss inhibited, tight-lipped but somehow desperate, making an anguished plea for affection. (Carter 1981, pp.48-9)

The genuine kindness that she displays to Melanie and her siblings further emphasises the disparity between the good and evil natures of 'poor Aunt Margaret, who was so gentle' (Carter 1981, p.77) and her husband, thus portraying a very different image of marriage to that of Melanie's romantic vision. Aunt Margaret's situation is examined with horror through Melanie's thoughts that she 'slept (probably) in the same bed as he, for they were married and [yet] she trembled when he raised his leonine voice ...' (Carter 1981, pp.77-78). This passive attitude illustrates her utter compliance with his ruling of the house, and confirms her status as the submissive doll-like figure with whom she is associated in Melanie's various accounts. Ultimately, she represents how life in Uncle Philip's house makes many unusual demands of its female residents; Melanie is quickly informed of his prohibition of trousers for women, which Finn describes as being 'one of his ways [as] he simply can't abide a woman in trousers. He won't have a woman in the shop if she's got trousers on and he sees her. He shouts her out into the street for a harlot ...' (Carter 1981, p.62). Additionally, she is advised to wear 'no make-up And only speak when you're spoken to. He likes, you know, silent women' (Carter 1981, p.63). Finn's description of Uncle Philip's rules for the women of his house emphasises his wish to be surrounded only by inanimate, passive women who resemble his self-made puppets. This practice likens him to the character of Bluebeard, and the uncanny presence of his many puppets in the house coincides with the corpses of Bluebeard's ex-wives as:

Skeletons in the chamber represent, in the most positive light, the indestructible force of the feminine Bluebeard only kills and dismantles a woman until she is nothing

but bones. He leaves her no beauty, no love, no self, and therefore no ability to act in her own behalf. To remedy this, we as woman must look to the killing thing that has gained hold of us, see the result of its grisly work, register ... and retain it in consciousness, and then act in *our*, not its, behalf. (Estés 1995, p.59)

Melanie follows the suggestion of this theory by recognising his complete management of Aunt Margaret's appearance and behaviour, and is wary that he does not repeat the process with her. Her method of avoiding this is to follow her survival instinct and be absolutely obedient to his house rules, while at the same time, recognising the double standard inherent within them. She does this because she is now old enough to understand the workings of patriarchy, and recognises that she is in an inferior position to that of her male counterpart.

She must replace her desire to revolt with an acceptance of her 'natural state' if she wishes to endure her new circumstances peacefully. Her decision can be explained in feminist terms as the:

Contradiction between [the young woman's] status as a real human being and her vocation as a female. And just here is to be found the reason why adolescence is for a woman so difficult and decisive a moment. Up to this time she has been an autonomous individual: now she must renounce her sovereignty. (de Beauvoir 1997, pp. 359-60)

This practice ensures the female's surrender to her lower social status, and it illustrates how it is even considered to be a natural part of adolescence. Melanie soon begins to describe herself in the doll-like terms that she previously used only for Aunt Margaret, which shows that her struggle to remain independent is a difficult one, and this is further supported by her imagined self-image of being 'a wind-up putting-away doll, clicking through its programmed movements ...' (Carter 1981, p.76).

Aunt Margaret's main function as Melanie's silent alter ego is to represent her possible demise under Uncle Philip's control if she is not strong enough to gain emancipation. Melanie reveals that he 'never talked to his wife except to bark brusque commands' (Carter 1981, p.124), and that he objectifies her as if she were one of his puppets. His ill-treatment of her is symbolised in his wedding present, which 'he made ... himself. To his own design' (Carter 1981, p.114) and his wife's distress when wearing it:

Aunt Margaret had one single piece of jewellery, besides her fat gold wedding ring ... a curious necklace which she wore on Sunday afternoons The necklace was a collar of dull silver, two hinged silver pieces knobbed with moonstones which snapped into place around her lean neck and rose up almost to her chin so that she could hardly move her head. It was heavy, crippling and precious and looked as though it may be very ancient Aunt Margaret had to carry her head high and haughty as the Queen of Assyria, but above it her eyes were anxious and sad and not proud at all ... she ate only with the utmost difficulty. (Carter 1981, pp.111-3)

Uncle Philip celebrates her misery by taking 'a certain pleasure from her discomfort ... finding that the sight of it improved his appetite [As] it was the regal and hampering collar which made Aunt Margaret beautiful' (Carter 1981, p.113). Because this ornamentation controls her limited movements, it merges her identity with that of the puppets, thereby warning Melanie of her own possible fate. His actions secure his position as the 'predator [that] is particularly aggressive in ambushing woman's wildish nature. At the very least it seeks to scorn and at the most to sever a woman's connection to her own insights, inspirations ...' (Estés 1995, p.57).

In order to overcome his attempts to control her, Melanie must first do as 'all creatures must [and] learn that there exist predators To understand the predator is to become a mature animal who is not vulnerable out of naïveté, inexperience, or foolishness' (Estés 1995, p.45). This is a particularly difficult exercise for the adolescent girl, because

women receive 'early training to "be nice" [which] causes [them] to override their intuitions. In that sense, they are taught to submit to the predator' (Estés 1995, p.49). Under normal circumstances, the young girl can rely on the mother to be her protector against the (typically male) predator. Bettelheim notes the importance of this maternal figure to the young girl who needs her for both her own protection, and also as a model to imitate during this transitional stage in her life. This is another common fairy tale trait that is present in Carter's tale, and is one which warns the young girl about the dangers of her newfound sexual identity:

[Her] danger is her budding sexuality, for which she is not yet emotionally mature enough. The person who is psychologically ready to have sexual experiences can master them, and grow because of it. But a premature sexuality is a regressive experience, arousing all that is still primitive within us and that threatens to swallow us up The child thus needs to form a strong working alliance with the parent of the same sex, so that through identification with the parent and conscious learning from [her], the child will grow successfully into an adult. (Bettelheim 1991, pp.173-4)

Aunt Margaret's inability to protect herself or Melanie ensures that Melanie must instead undergo the hardship and struggle of the classic fairy tale hero who 'has to search, travel, and suffer through years of a lonely existence before he is ready to find, rescue, and join one other person in a relation which gives permanent meaning to both their lives' (Bettelheim 1991, p.201). As this is a typically male role, and is subversive of the gender-norms of the period, it suggests that Melanie resembles the character of Claudia in the previous chapter as well as those of Gabrielle, Carmilla, Mina, and Lucy, by possessing a hidden masculinity within herself. This adversity is the foundation of her journey, and embodies 'the change in spirit that Carter is interested in' (Day 1998, p.23) as 'when woman re-surfaces from her naïveté she becomes a wiser version of herself who 'draws an internal masculine energy to her aid' (Estés 1995, p.63). Therefore, Melanie must embrace this particular aspect of her

personality in order to overcome the challenges with which she is faced during this period of her life.

6.4 Replacing Absent Mirrors with 'the Male Gaze'

Melanie frequently highlights the absence of mirrors in the house, which subsequently creates an even more foreboding and unfamiliar environment for her in her new abode. She seeks out any indication that she is still herself by looking through the one small broken mirror in the bathroom for any 'glimpses ... of her face as she cleaned her teeth' (Carter 1981, p.29). As I have already mentioned, the mirror has been replaced with the male gaze, which acts as a literal portrayal of how female identity is being monitored and shaped by male influences. This concept can be better understood through John Berger's thought on man's influence on the construction of female identity:

A woman's self being [is] split in two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself And so she becomes the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman Men survey women before treating them. Consequently, how a woman appears to a man can determine how she will be treated One might simplify it by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision – a sight. The function of the mirror was ... to make the woman connive in treating herself as, first and foremost, a sight. (Berger, cited in Day 1998, pp. 110-11)

The ideas in this theory support the earlier theories on gender roles in sexual relations and how they contribute to the perpetuation of essentialist ideas. It also focuses on the female

pleasure of this activity which raises the notion of how women are taught to be desired which in turn teaches them inactivity in relation to the object of their desire. This in turn, promotes the female passivity and virtuous behaviour of the ideal civilised woman.

The most threatening 'male gaze' to which Melanie is subjected is that of Uncle Philip, whose 'brooding and oppressive [presence] filled the house. She walked warily as if his colourless eyes were judging and assessing her all the time. She trembled involuntarily when she saw him' (Carter 1981, p.92). In addition to his constant surveillance, and due to the lack of mirrors in the house, Melanie has only the puppets with which to identify. She is uncomfortably aware of their omnipresence around her:

The walls were hung with ... partially assembled puppets of all sizes, some almost as tall as Melanie herself; blind-eyed puppets, some armless, some legless, some naked, some clothed, all with a strange liveliness as they dangled unfinished from their hooks. (Carter 1981, p.67)

She is initially intrigued with the possibility of embracing different identities, and even admits to being 'repelled, yet attracted by the ferocious masks, she finally tried on one or two, but there was no mirror where she could see herself ...' (Carter 1981, p.84). Her hesitation in fully engaging with the various costumes suggests an underlying awareness of the threat to her identity that links back to the earlier perception of female intuition. Furthermore, her knowledge of this danger is implied in her dismay at her baby sister for already forgetting their parents, as well as 'their precise and real selves. Their figures were dissolving in her mind, their features blurring ... they became dream children' (Carter 1981, pp.94-5).

Uncle Philip resents Melanie for not following suit and surrendering to her new identity, and so tries to subordinate her character by forcing her to partake in his puppet show as the character of Leda. Mulvey highlights this aspect of Melanie's journey as being an

example of how Carter uses her female characters to subvert Freud's uncanniness of 'the beautiful inanimate woman with whom men fall hopelessly in love' (Mulvey 1994, p.246) by diverting the reader's attention to Melanie's resistance to her fate. She visibly rejects her position as the 'fetishised object of spectacle [and] part of a performance in which she is reduced to the status of a wooden marionette' (Mulvey 1994, p.246). This factor is crucial to the overall function of Melanie's character within the story:

Carter ... makes the puppet central. She treats the relations between puppet-master and puppet as symbolic of the control exerted by a patriarchal culture on women, and the roles available to them. The roles, to which Melanie is introduced in her uncle's toy theatre or in other episodes of the novel, include wood nymph, bride or victim of rape. In representing them, Carter pinpoints the ambiguities in woman's position. She foregrounds the contradiction between the romantic images of femininity reproduced in culture and art, and the facts of sexual violence. (Gamble 2001, p.34)

Uncle Philip's efforts to compel Melanie into taking part in the rape scene of his puppet show is an act akin to sexualising the child, and so can be regarded as incestuous in nature. This act also embodies the idea that within the Gothic family 'every body is made infinitely available to everybody else' (Rickels 1999, p.342). This concept undermines the rigid structure of the traditional family unit, and changes the dynamic of familial relations within it, as according to Bettelheim's psychology 'only the acceptance of the child as child – neither as a competitor nor as a sexual love object – permits good relations between parents and children ...' (Bettelheim 1991, pp. 198-9). The blurring of these relations mirrors those of Claudia with Louis and Lestat, and is also evident in Melanie's relationship with Finn, who is essentially a parental figure that she considers to be her uncle, despite his not being her blood relative. In a function similar to that of Lucy and Mina in Chapter 2, Melanie serves as an object of exchange between Uncle Philip and Finn who are the principal male characters of the story.

However, as Melanie's character develops, and becomes more complex, she learns to challenge this simplistic role. Her character-progression is revealed by her reaction to the discovery of the peephole in her bedroom wall:

Someone had made the spy-hole. Why? Presumably to watch her. So she was not only watching but being watched when she thought she was by herself, when she was taking her clothes off and putting them on and so on. All the time, someone had been watching her. All the time she had been in the house. They had not even let her keep her own loneliness but had intruded on it She guessed it was Finn ... who was Peeping Tom ... she pulled a chair in front of the hole and hung her coat over the back, so that the hole was blocked up. (Carter 1981, pp.109-10)

This peephole is an important reminder of how her identity is being constantly monitored and signifies the omnipresent 'male gaze' within the house; her response to it can be read as an active rejection of her submissive position as the recipient of that gaze. To explain further, her reaction to the situation is to take control and reverse the peephole so that she can observe Finn instead. By doing this, she takes on the traditionally male role of the spectator, which suggests her possession of an empowered feminine agency that challenges the fixed gender roles within this concept:

The power exerted by the 'male gaze' is a practical means for men to impose control upon women, as well as a symbol of sexual domination On peering in it [Melanie] catches sight of [Finn] walking on his hands She represents the norm while he, in his odd position, represents the freak and the spectacle Thus, in her treatment of both motifs, Carter indirectly reveals that ... the roles adopted by men and women ... are open to change. (Palmer, cited in Day 1998, pp.30-1)

Her subversion of this voyeuristic act 'draws attention to the power of the male gaze. The gaze is a practical means for men to impose control on women, as well as a symbol of sexual domination She becomes the observer and he the observed' (Gamble 2001, p.35). Despite

being offended by his actions, Melanie also revels in the knowledge that he made the peephole to watch her 'because [she is] so beautiful' (Carter 1981, p.123), and that he envisions a romanticised version of her as illustrated in his portrait in which tells Melanie of 'how he sees you. White chiffon and flowers in your hair. A very young girl' (Carter 1981, p.141). This image reflects that of her younger, innocent self from the beginning of the story and can be described as her idealised self. It is important for two reasons: firstly, it represents the purity of Finn's love for her and secondly, it gives the promise of a future version of Melanie that has escaped the darkness of her current self and is happy.

6.5 Becoming Leda

Uncle Philip's efforts to entrap and transform Melanie into one of his puppets are foreshadowed in the first show that he puts on for her. She recounts how one of the puppets bore an uncanny to herself, and reminds her of her earlier performances in front of the mirror in her old bedroom. As this was the last time she felt beautiful, it emphasises the temptation to repeat this process by becoming one of the puppets that she must resist:

Lying face-downwards in a tangle of strings was a puppet fully five feet high, a *sylphide* in a fountain of white tulle, fallen flat as if someone had gotten tired of her She had long, black hair down to the waist of her tight satin bodice She was in the night again and the doll was herself. (Carter 1981, pp.67-8)

Despite her reservations, Melanie is later forced to partake in one of Uncle Philip's puppet shows, and he ensures her humiliation by casting her as Leda in his staged rape scene of Yeats' poem 'Leda and the Swan'. Her puppet status at this point contrasts greatly with her earlier epiphany of being 'made of flesh and blood' (Carter 1981, p.1), and emphasises how Melanie accepts that 'she must keep her place as Leda to Uncle Philip's Swan in the

mythology of awakening in which women blossom into shuddering subordination' (Roe 1994, p.86), as Carter's heroine's deliberately 'sign themselves up for display' (Roe 1994, p.86). Her transformation represents Carter's fascination with puppet-works and the 'idea of simulacra of invented people, of imitation human beings ... how do we know we're not imitation human beings?' (Carter, cited in Smith 1994, p.9). It raises the notion of blurring reality and identity and questions our self-perception and makes us question how we interpret other people's identities.

Melanie's desire to be seen overshadows her fear as she is nostalgic for her old self and is excited to temporarily emulate this past identity and become 'a nymph crowned with daisies once again; he saw her as once she had seen herself. In spite of everything, she was flattered' (Carter 1981, p.141). The puppet show is a dramatisation of the mythological scene where Jove/Zeus rapes a mortal woman called Leda in the form of a swan. Uncle Philip reveals his unhappiness that Melanie's developing form may hinder his vision of Leda, and complains that she is she is too 'well built for fifteen Do you have your periods? ... I wanted my Leda to be a little girl ... I suppose you'll have to do. And you've got quite nice hair. And pretty legs ... But he was resenting her because she was not a puppet' (Carter 1981, pp.143-4). His irritation with her menstrual development illustrates his resentment of her otherness because it confirms her inability to fully execute his desired (inanimate) role for her, and is also an instance of the lack of control over the female body that has long-been problematic for patriarchy.

Her encounter with the swan puppet is equally unpleasant, as initially she thinks that it is silly and 'nothing like the wild, phallic bird of her imaginings' (Carter 1981, p.165). But her actual interaction with it is more sinister as it is a physical and sexual entrapment that changes her opinion so much that she feels a need to remove herself from the situation. She

does this in order to cope with the objectification of an experience that leaves feeling that 'herself was not herself' (Carter 1981, p.166). The incident makes her realise the ominous nature of the puppet show's subject matter, and she confesses that 'I don't think ... that I want to be Leda' (Carter 1981, p.141). Nicole Ward Jouve claims that Carter's inclusion of this scene in the puppet show is a reply to Yeats' poem which states that the:

The rape of a mortal woman has nothing to do with political violence. The troupe is a patriarchal power trip. Uncle Philip's swan has neither power nor knowledge. He is all cardboard and creaking machinery. Only Melanie's fear makes him overwhelming. (Ward Jouve 1994, pp.168-9)

Melanie exemplifies the helplessness of the rape victim in the play by being 'denied her own sexuality. She must take on the role of angel – passive and virginal' (Mills, cited in Gamble 2001, p.36). She performs the part of Leda with wooden movements and frozen gestures that mimic her earlier rehearsals in front of the mirror (Mulvey 1994, p.247). However, her performance is condemned by Uncle Philip, who tells her that she 'overacted You were melodramatic. Puppets don't overact. You spoiled the poetry' (Carter 1981, p.167). After she has recovered from the trauma of the event, she is happy to abandon the role of Leda and to have her identity returned so that she can be 'Melanie, at last' (Carter 1981, p.176). This suggests a move towards self-acceptance and away from her earlier desire to perform for a male spectator.

6.6 Conclusion: Adult Life after Leda

Finn proves to be Melanie's release from her entrapment, as his persistent acts of chivalry and kindness towards her eventually result in their escape from the toyshop. Despite his inability to fulfil the romantic image of her idealised phantom bridegroom from the beginning

of the novel, she overlooks his physical shortcomings and adverse social status to acknowledge his essential goodness. This development encompasses two examples of fairy tale traits: firstly, Carter's story 'deliberately avoids stating that the heroine is in love ... [For in fairy tales] the rescuers fall in love with these heroines because of their beauty, which symbolises their perfection' (Bettelheim 1991, p.277). Secondly, Finn's reward for his good behaviour is Melanie's ability to see him from a new perspective. The non-rape scene of *The Magic Toyshop* is the best example of both Uncle Philip's mistreatment of Melanie and Finn's love for her. It comes about when Uncle Philip wants Melanie to practice Leda's rape scene with Finn in private, so that he can have an opportunity to force her into having sex with him. Finn reveals the sinister nature of Uncle Philip's request, which is another example of his desire to force her into subordination:

He wanted me to fuck you He's pulled our strings as if we were his puppets, and there I was, all ready to touch you up. He told me to rehearse Leda and the swan with you. Somewhere private. Like in your room, he said. Go up and rehearse a rape with Melanie in your bedroom. Christ. He wanted me to do you and he set the scene. Ah, he's evil! (Carter 1981, p.152)

Finn's resistance to Uncle Philip's exploitation of Melanie is rewarded with her trust, which convinces him to avenge the toymaker's disrespect for her virtue by destroying the swan puppet because 'it covered you. It rode you. I did it partly for your sake, because it rode you Besides, Philip Flower loved it so' (Carter 1981, p.174). His destruction of the swan puppet serves as catalyst for the end of life in the house as Uncle Philip starts a fire that destroys it and breaks up the family unit, which in turn marks the start of Finn's and Melanie's life together. As Melanie's alter ego, Aunt Margaret also benefits from this event as it frees her from Uncle Philip and sees the return of her voice, a resonant metaphor for the enabling of female resistance to this particularly restrictive mode of patriarchy. The reader is

told of how 'struck dumb on her wedding day, she found her old voice again the day she was freed' (Carter 1981, p.197). Carter states her own personal interpretation of the ending as being an alternative to the happy ending of the fairy tale because in her story when 'the house is burnt down ... adult life begins' (Carter, cited in Sage 1994, p.25). The ability of the characters to move forward without the overbearing presence of Uncle Philip confirms their victory against him, and secures their status as real people who can now experience real adult life and freedom instead of being restricted to a stifling existence as one of his puppets. It also suggests that Melanie may reject her earlier desire to become the embodiment of the civilised woman and all her rigid stipulations to become one who is closer to her own desired identity instead, which in turn implies that she may evolve as a figure who is closer to that of the natural or native woman.

Melanie's fate at the end of this story is significant because it shows that the only way that she can finally gain freedom from Uncle Philip is to leave the toyshop, which is the epicentre of social and domestic worlds and male supremacy in the text. Her rebellion against the social order of these worlds forces her into a new position on the outside of the text, which suggests that female rebellion cannot exist within the strict boundaries of the male supremacy, wherein any challenge to its power must be either stifled or removed. Her embodiment of the various changes that occur during adolescence, and her corresponding mentality, demonstrate the power of the male influence on female identity. Additionally, her character's existential crisis compliments that of Claudia, who also struggles with eternal life as a woman trapped within a child's body. Melanie, on the other hand, represents the young girl's difficulty in adjusting to life within a new adolescent body, and within a coinciding masculine construction of her sexual identity, while still retaining a child-like mentality. Once again, this alternative portrait of female identity illustrates how the Gothic genre

challenges fixed gender definitions and often creates non-traditional versions of a collective concept by giving a voice to the young girl as she experiences these changes to her sexual identity and journeys toward womanhood, which is the next stage of female identity to be discussed.

Part IV: Womanhood

'Men are simpler than you can imagine my sweet child. But what goes on in the twisted, torturous minds of women would baffle anyone'

Daphne du Maurier
Rebecca (2007)

Chapter 7: Female Relations: Considering the Female Influence on Self-Identity in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*

7.1 Immediate Ambiguity of Female Identity

Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) mimics the formula of the traditional Gothic novel by placing the female narrator in the dark setting of the grand Manderley estate which is similar to the brooding castle or mansion. Within this location she becomes alternately attracted and repelled by her new husband whose ominous and cold attitude towards her ensures his role as the villain until the story is almost over. Additionally, the blending of past into present, the murder of Rebecca, the supernatural presence of her ghost (in the narrator's mind), as well as the ominous figure of Mrs. Danvers as the narrator's double, secure the text's position within the Gothic genre. Its location within the specific subsection of Female Gothic is often considered to be slightly problematic despite the presence of a singular narrative from a female perspective with omitted details, as well as an explanation for suggested supernatural matters, and this is due to the absence of a traditional happy ending for its heroine. I would argue however that she receives a non-traditional happy ending in the form of her emancipation from the suffocating forces that she endures during her time in Manderley. The components of her entrapment in the form of her unawareness of the secrets of Maxim's past, as well as her disharmony with Mrs. Danvers and her inferiority complex towards Rebecca have been eliminated by the end. Again, as is standard in Female Gothic tradition in relation to gothic feminism, her suffering has been rewarded in the form of attributes that are crucial

to the evolution of her character. By the end of the story she possesses a newfound confidence in herself, an understanding of the true events surrounding Rebecca's life and death, as well as a continued (albeit still rather despondent) union with Maxim in which she now holds the superior position of power.

The function of this chapter is to examine the theme of womanhood and female identity in relation to the female figures in *Rebecca*, and to explore how their relationships with each other have a significant influence on their identities. In doing so it will also investigate how the female perspective on identity can contribute towards how women classify themselves and their peers into the aforementioned civilised or native groups. This subject matter is evident in various aspects of the intricate bonds that exist between the female characters in this novel, which portray the coexisting rivalry and influence that exist within female friendship. These factors are expressed in women's behaviour towards one another as the beauty myth (which was discussed in relation to Melanie in the previous chapter) conditions them into becoming natural competitors in the areas of love and beauty, which in turn ensures their submission to the patriarchal demands that define the civilised woman.

The complexity of the female relationship was a central topic in du Maurier's plans for *Rebecca* from an early stage, and is outlined in her personal notes on the novel in Margaret Forster's biography of the writer:

Very roughly the book will be about the influence of a first wife on a second ... she is dead before the book opens. Little by little I want to build up the character of the first in the mind of the second ... until wife two is haunted day and night ... a tragedy is looming very close and crash! Bang! Something happens ... it's not a ghost story. (Forster 2007, pp. 132-3)

Rebecca

This general plot summary also illustrates how female identity is a deliberately fluid and shared entity in the novel. In *The Rebecca Notebook & Other Memories*, du Maurier confesses to having always immersed herself in the characters of her novels, and this is evident in the case of *Rebecca*, 'especially the narrator' (du Maurier 2005, p.3), who she believes is the reason for its success. The personification of herself through a literary character explains how she was able to create such a sympathetic figure with whom the reader could identify and support in her struggle against both the housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers, and also against the memory of Maxim's first wife, Rebecca.

In order to successfully portray her existential crisis, du Maurier deliberately withholds the second wife/narrator's 'lovely and unusual name' (du Maurier 2007, p.24) from the reader. This absence adds to her problematic identity, and ensures that she is constantly addressed as 'Mrs. de Winter' by the other characters. This title secures her position as Rebecca's double, and encourages a constant supply of comparisons to her predecessor, which adds to her growing torment and uncertainty of self. This anonymity of the female protagonist is a writing technique used to create a connection to the character which will evoke sympathy from the reader, and it was discussed in relation to 'the Everywoman' in Chapter 3. In *Rebecca's* case, the narrator's preoccupation with her new circumstances is reflected in her own self-image, as the only time she mentions her name is when she ponders her new identity through her marital status by proclaiming that she 'was to be Mrs. de Winter' (du Maurier 2007, p.60). Her choice of words in this self-definition serves as catalyst to an endless supply of mental comparisons between herself and her idealised version of Rebecca, who almost takes on the role of a specular and spectral ideal-I in Lacanian terms. Anonymity of character is a typical feature in many of du Maurier's earlier works, where she wishes for the reader to focus on the complexity and interchanges in the relationships

Rebecca

between her characters, rather than on the context in which they are set (Forster 2007, p.54). In *Rebecca*, this technique highlights the connection between the two women in the sense that the narrator's uncertainty of self is presented in contrast to her version of Rebecca, whom she imagines to have been extremely confident and self-assured in both her social position and in her sense of identity as the civilised woman.

The connection between these two characters exemplifies the intricacy that is common in many female friendships, as women often look to other women in their quest for identity and self-validation. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik refer to this aspect of the female bond in *Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination*, by noting the trope of dual identity in *Rebecca*. They claim that the narrator tells a story concerning the nature of female identity in relation to her bond with the other women of the novel. She is haunted by the figure of the Other, the 'real' Rebecca, who the reader can never know because she is merely 'a phantom in [the narrator's] mind' (du Maurier 2007, p.45), as well as being a 'textual creation constructed in mystery' (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, pp.122-5). As female double to the narrator, Rebecca embodies a range of possible identities. Her character functions as a binary opposition of the new wife, from whom she is 'so very different' (du Maurier 2007, p.112), while simultaneously being symptomatic of the 'multiple possibilities inherent in female sexual identity' (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, p.155). Her presence also highlights the narrator's search for identity, which mirrors how in real life du Maurier considered herself to be made up of a multiplicity of different selves (Forster 2007, p.14). Furthermore, the sexual diversity of these women, as well as Mrs. Danvers' obsessive love for Rebecca, challenges the normative image of female sexuality and relationships, and destabilizes the heterosexual orientation of the plot (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, p.125). This

offers an alternative depiction of the married woman whose infatuation with her husband's first wife quickly overshadows her attention and love for him.

Marie Mulvey-Roberts addresses this shifting of attention to female relations in 'From Bluebeard's Bloody Chamber to Demonic Stigmatic', through her claim that by subverting the traditional marriage plot, du Maurier offers the reader 'a new type of heroine who is a sort of psychological detective in pursuit of her own fulfilment' (Mulvey-Roberts 2009, p.103), which she believes can only be achieved once she has taken on the persona of her predecessor:

I was sitting in Rebecca's chair, I was leaning against Rebecca's cushion, and the dog that had come to me and laid his head upon my knee because that had been his custom, and he remembered, in the past, she had given sugar to him. (du Maurier 2007, p.83)

The narrator's presence in Rebecca's room and amongst her belongings, as well as her adoption of her marital name, calls to mind the issue of Edgar Allan Poe's doubling technique, whereby a character can take on the persona of another deceased character. This development in *Rebecca* is confirmed by the narrator's realisation that everything she says and does in Manderley emulates her predecessor, and subsequently awakens her relationship with the ghost of Rebecca. It marks the beginning of the narrator's intense infatuation with the civilised woman that she imagines Rebecca to have been, as well as her inferiority in comparison.

7.2 The Threat of the Older Woman

The disharmonious bond between young and mature women is evident in the text between the narrator and Mrs. Danvers, whom she describes as being akin to 'a black sentinel' (du

Rebecca

Maurier 2007, p.98), with 'the face of an exulting devil' (du Maurier 2007, p.229). Her choice of wording in these descriptions shows her intimidation of the older woman, and believes that the housekeeper's initial resentment stems from the narrator's extreme contrast to Rebecca. This creates a very tense relationship between the two women, and offers a negative perspective of the young girl's bond with the older woman, which may have been inspired by du Maurier's own complex relationship with her mother, who was openly hostile towards her young daughter. Her mother's aggression may have been due to the quasi-incestuous nature of Daphne's relationship with her father, whom she felt 'were too close and that he loved her more that he loved his wife' (Forster 2007, p.64). *Rebecca* portrays this conflict amongst women by encouraging the reader to empathise with the narrator for having to endure Mrs. Danvers' obvious dislike and hostility, regardless of her wish for them to 'be friends and come to understand one another' (du Maurier 2007, p.78), and despite knowing that 'she is comparing me to Rebecca' (du Maurier 2007, p.9). Mrs. Danvers' status as the antagonist/villainess of the novel is immediately secured from her very first interaction with the narrator who describes her as an ominous and foreboding presence:

Tall and gaunt, dressed in deep black, whose prominent cheek-bones and great, hollow eyes gave her a skull's face, parchment-white, set on a skeleton's frame ... when she took my hand hers was limp and heavy, deathly cold, and it lay in mine like a lifeless thing. (du Maurier 2007, p.71)

This behaviour portrays her inhospitality towards the narrator and adds to her feelings of inadequacy of being the new mistress of Manderley as 'this sort of life is new to me' (du Maurier 2007, p.78). Her insecurity is fed by a constant thought process that compares her to her predecessor, and convinces her 'that all the time, whenever I meet anyone new, they are all thinking the same thing – How different she is to Rebecca' (du Maurier 2007, p.141). Her preoccupation with gaining the approval of her peers mirrors that of de Beauvoir's notion of

how the young girl can only be defined through the idealised version of herself that is reflected to others (de Beauvoir 1997, p.382). The young narrator cannot escape the unfamiliarity of her new marital identity because she must endure daily dealings with Mrs. Danvers, whose role as house-keeper, and subsequent knowledge of the workings of the Manderley estate, serves as a constant reminder that she is the native presence/foreigner within the civilised household who cannot compete with the memory of her predecessor. This is especially evident in the narrator's reaction to Mrs. Danvers' presence when she finds her in the west wing of the house near Rebecca's old bedroom:

We stared at each other for a moment without speaking, and I could not be certain whether it was anger I read in her eyes or curiosity, for her face became a mask directly when she saw me. Although she said nothing I felt guilty and ashamed as though I had been caught trespassing, and I felt the tell-tale colour come up into my face. (du Maurier 2007, p.96)

This dynamics of their relationship at the point illustrates how the heroines of the Female Gothic and by extension bourgeois women in general, 'collude and conspire with their oppressors in a passive-aggressive dance of rebellion and compliance' (Hoeveler 1998, p.24). Furthermore, the unification of the past and present in the bedroom scene illustrates the complex pattern of the various feminine friendships within the text: Rebecca is gone, yet her memory is a constant presence that haunts the narrator daily, and Mrs. Danvers resents her proximity to any of Rebecca's belongings, as she clearly deems her unworthy of her new position. Additionally, Mrs. Danvers' uncanny maintenance of the dead woman's belongings illustrates the obsessive love that she still harbours for Rebecca, even after her death. This depicts her nostalgia for the intimate act of caring for Rebecca even in her absence, and there is a possible suggestion of a homosexual element to their relationship. As du Maurier has stressed her disapproval of this particular reading of Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers' relationship,

it can be argued that the existence of a lesbian undertone between them is merely 'a projection of the narrator's own [suppressed] desires' (Light 1984, p.11).

7.3 The Problematic Nature of Female Interrelationships

Kolbenschlag argues that negative behaviour is typical amongst women simply because the most significant relationships in a woman's life are typically with men. As a result, many friendships between women can be defined as 'trivial, inconstant, shallow, and insincere' (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.34) in nature due to the lack of training that they are given in bonding, which subsequently exposes them to male exploitation. She argues that this alienation from the friendship of women has a greater effect on the female psyche than the bindings of patriarchal culture, and that the root of this issue lies with the figure of the mother. This is simply because the mother-daughter bond is the 'most intimate, most intense, most symbiotic and symmetrical bond known to humans ... it is an all-absorbing relationship that generates enormous tensions and conflicts, yet, paradoxically, one that is the least expressed' (Kolbenschlag 1981, pp.35-6). The complexity of this bond is so crucial to the female mentality and to the creation of self-identity, that if the mother is dead or absent, then the young girl will internalise the myth of the mother and spend her life projecting the maternal role onto other female figures in her life (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.36). She also links this behaviour to the negative image of the wicked stepmother by explaining that it is often created as 'a scapegoat for [the] fear and hatred of the mother' (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.30). She builds upon Anne Sexton's image of the female self reflected in the mirror by asking 'who do we kill, which image in the mirror, the mother, our self, our daughter???? Am I my mother, or my daughter?' (Sexton 2004, p.40).

The subject matter of her questions illustrates how mother and daughter eventually become reciprocal mirror-images of each other that inevitably reflect 'a congenital insecurity of low self-esteem and ego denial' (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.40). This causes the boundaries between the self and the mother to eventually become so blurred that the younger female figure looks to other women to become a substitute role model or soul mate instead. This puts a great amount of pressure on her relationships with other women, because it tends to lead to an over-identification with them that causes inevitable disappointment when they behave differently to the ideal expectation of her vision (Kolbenschlag 1981, pp.43-6). This process can be interpreted as another example of the Lacanian *méconnaissance* as discussed in earlier chapters, which creates a great insecurity and self-consciousness in the daughter's psyche. These feelings lead to her suppression of 'an inner self charge[d] with hostility, fear, and envy, who fluctuates between extremes of vanity and self-deprecation', known as the 'formula female' (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.41) who is not likely to create many lasting female friendships as she works best with one or two exclusive friendships (Kolbenschlag 1981, pp.41-6).

Kolbenschlag's theory on identification within the feminine friendship is reflected in *Rebecca* by how the narrator's marriage to Maxim dominates every aspect of her life and brings about many changes that move her closer to her desired role as a civilised woman. Her relocation to the strange new environment of Manderley, and the company of unknown acquaintances, as well as the absence of female relations or friends in her life, creates an unfamiliarity that causes her to initially attempt this friendship with Mrs. Danvers simply because she is an older, strong female presence, and because she is familiar with the house, and the domestic processes of that house. According to the aforementioned theories, the death of the narrator's mother suggests that she may initially see Mrs. Danvers as an alternative

caring, maternal figure, before recognising the housekeeper's disappointment that she was 'no great lady [but] humble, shy, and diffident' (du Maurier 2007, p.78). In other words, at this stage she is closer to being defined as an un-socialised native woman rather than a civilised woman. Her desire to gain the older woman's acceptance illustrates how the dynamics of female relations work: they encourage women to seek out 'admiring inferiors and approving superiors' (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.46) within their friendships. This creates a continuous cycle of passive-aggressive behaviour amongst women that leads to verbal and emotional manipulation, and guilt-producing mechanisms, as they attempt to mask their own insecurity with 'habits of deception', or falseness, so that they can avoid confrontation or disagreement with other women (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.47). This deceptive behaviour is symbolised, on a superficial level, by the narrator's attempt to hide a broken china ornament for fear that the older woman would disapprove of such clumsiness, and by how this action leads to an interrogative exchange where Mrs. Danvers places the blame on one of the staff members in order to heighten the narrator's guilt, as the narrator tells us that 'she did not seem surprised that I was the culprit ... I felt that she had known it was me all along and accused Robert to see if I would have the courage to confess' (du Maurier 2007, p.151).

Mrs. Danvers intimidates the narrator further by pointing out how they never 'had any breakages in the morning room before When Mrs. de Winter was alive we used to do the valuables together' (du Maurier 2007, p.152). This statement emphasises the difference between the two wives, and subtly hints at her dislike of the narrator as 'she simply adored Rebecca' (du Maurier 2007, p.107).

Their complex relationship can also be considered through de Beauvoir's argument that feminine friendships 'are not founded on their individualities, but immediately experienced in generality' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.558). However, this consequently creates a

shared recognition that inevitably invests the relationship with notions of rivalry, because this 'mutual feeling comes from the fact that they identify themselves with each other; but for the same reason each is against the other' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.558). She states that 'the more friendly the women are, the more dangerous their duality becomes' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.559) because it has the ability to easily overpower and destroy the delicate bonds of their relationship. Despite the absence of friendship in their relationship, Mrs. Danvers and the narrator share a duality due to the fact that they are the only women in Manderley on a daily basis, and so together, they make up the female unit of the household. As husband to the narrator, and employer to Mrs. Danvers, Maxim fulfils a significant role in both women's lives that creates an unavoidable strain as female friendships are only sustained when they do not 'conflict with or threaten the important male relationship' (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.46) in a woman's life. This is due to the natural rivalry that is already present in most feminine friendships, as well as to the fact that, from an early age, women are encouraged to put more effort and focus into nurturing their relations with men because this will be more beneficial to their preordained domestic life in later years. These are the determining factors of the civilised woman because they demand that she prioritises her future identity as a wife and mother. Kolbenschlag builds upon de Beauvoir's theory through her claim that 'because women are cut off from self-actualisation and transcendence, they are destined to be envious' (Kolbenschlag 1981, pp.49-50). As a result, envy is a common characteristic in many female relationships, as well as a typical feature of the feminine condition that is fed by a combination of women's insecurity and competitiveness with one another, and which acts as 'the most serious obstacle to [true] friendship and bonding' (Kolbenschlag 1981, p.50).

Kolbenschlag defines this element of the female world as a damaged narcissism that is so inescapable that it has become known as 'a kind of original sin' for women, and can

only be exorcised through the shedding of feminine socialisation that will result in a separation with the mother and the creation of genuine friendships with other women (Kolbenschlag 1981, pp.52-3). This supports du Maurier's own stance on the importance of independence from the family, as embodied in her claim that in order to progress 'you have to stand alone, and not a bitter, doomed alone, but independent of the mother' (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, p.9). Maxim's roles as husband and employer, as well as the narrator's envy of Mrs. Danvers' affection for Rebecca, prevents the two women from ever forming a close bond, and it is these factors that influence the dynamic of their interrelationship, as both women (poorly) attempt to conceal their true feelings while maintaining an outward civility towards each other.

7.4 Feeding the Narrator's Obsession of the Civilised Woman

The intricacy of female relations is also presented in the novel through the narrator's one-sided relationship with Rebecca's memory. This relationship develops as she becomes increasingly preoccupied with the vast differences between them and starts to think incessantly and obsessively about her predecessor and how she symbolises the various components of the civilised woman that she wishes to emulate. The narrator's contribution towards Rebecca becoming such an overwhelming presence in the novel can be understood through Germanà's notion of how a 'paradoxically present absence [is] conjured up by the object of one's desire. Absence and distance, literal or metaphorical, are important conditions of desire in its purest form' (Germanà 2013b, p.116). Mrs. Danvers plays a key role in the nurturing of this one-sided relationship by acting as a mediator between the two 'Mrs. de Winters', with her constant comparisons and references to 'the real' Mrs. de Winter. Her ability to torment and feed the narrator's insecurity on this matter is depicted in her claim that

'it's you that's the shadow and the ghost ... not her' (du Maurier 2007, p.263). Her words emphasise the great divide between the two identities and in doing so they also feed the '[d]esire [that] simultaneously ... structures and unsettles the self and its relationship with the other' (Germanà 2013b, p.125). This has a subsequent effect on the narrator's fear that Rebecca's presence is both inescapable and omnipresent as voiced in Mrs. Danvers' antagonising reflection that she still 'feel[s] her everywhere. You do too, don't you? ... Sometimes I wonder if she comes back here to Manderley and watches you and Mr. de Winter together' (du Maurier 2007, p.184).

This mental and emotional manipulation illustrates how Mrs. Danvers attempts to control the bond between the two women through the narrator's insecurity, and is seen to be a figure of temptation in the construct of her own relationship with the narrator, which suggests that Mrs. Danvers is attempting to eliminate her competition and secure a position as female head of the household. This entanglement illustrates the ominous nature of female relations in *Rebecca*, and it is this factor that foregrounds the Gothic tone of the novel, as the young narrator struggles to maintain control of her senses, while being simultaneously haunted by the memory of her predecessor, and at the same time being tormented by the older figure of Mrs. Danvers. Her situation is worsened by her placement within the strange environment of the marital home, and by the lack of affection and support of her new husband. The combination of these elements emphasises the alienation that the narrator encounters in her married life while she tries to uncover the secrets of Manderley's past, and discover the truth about Rebecca's death. While partaking in these activities she is also trying her best to become the great lady that she imagines Rebecca to have been.

Mrs. Danvers' constant acts of enticement bring a dynamic to their relationship whereby the narrator must resist the temptations of evil. It is not uncommon for her

Rebecca

suggestions to mirror desires that the narrator appears to want, but has tried to repress, such as the exploration of Rebecca's bedroom:

You wanted to see the room. Why have you never asked me to show it to you before? I was ready to show it to you every day. You only had to ask me Now that you are here let me show you everything ... you've wanted to for a long time, and you were too shy to ask. (du Maurier 2007, p180)

As is standard of Female Gothic narrative, the reader is familiar with Mrs. Danvers only through the narrator's interpretation of her, and so within their relationship exists a merging of identities whereby the housekeeper can be viewed as her unknowable double that has the ability to know her unspoken desires. Freud defines the double in 'The Uncanny' as being a consequence of mental processes/telepathy, or an identification that exists between two characters as the product of an uncertainty of self. This results in a 'doubling, dividing, and inter-changing of the self' (Freud 1919, p.12). The power-struggle that exists between these doubles corresponds with William Patrick Day's theory on how the relationship between a character and their double or alter ego can be defined by its inherent power relations, and by the corresponding battle 'between the impulse to domination and the impulse to submission' (Day 1985, p.19). This concept of a shared or dual identity is a major theme in much of du Maurier's work, and is even personified in her claim that she and her husband 'are both doubles. So is everyone. Every one of us has his or her dark side. Which is to overcome the other?' (Forster 2007, p.424). Her preoccupation with this particular element of identity is explored within the disharmony in the relationship between these two characters, and within the narrator's constant struggle to resist Mrs. Danvers' attempts to gain control over her. In her role as the dark double, Mrs. Danvers embodies all of the narrator's darkest fears and insecurities, which are further strengthened by her love and knowledge of Rebecca. This combination makes her the voice of Rebecca in the text, and gives her a huge power over the

narrator which creates the deadly struggle between them. It is therefore crucial for the narrator to win the battle against Mrs. Danvers in order to overcome her dark side and successfully secure a true identity as the civilised woman.

Their duality also emphasises the power that the housekeeper has over the bond between the narrator and Rebecca, because the latter exists to the reader only on a secondary level as a ghost that is remembered and imagined through the other characters in the novel, and whose memory is mostly vocalised through Mrs. Danvers. Apart from the narrator's obsessive thoughts about Rebecca, Mrs. Danvers' daily references to her are a constant reminder that adds to the torment. This is partly due the ambiguous terms that she uses to describe Rebecca, which also contributes to the complexity of her character and her sexuality. She notes how Rebecca possessed the many feminine attributes that are essential to the characterisation of the civilised woman including beauty, sensuality, and social grace. However, she also reveals Rebecca's secret possession of a masculine power and independence that rejects the cultural characterisation of the feminine and subsequently, submissive woman (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, p.122):

She was much taller than you ... she had a beautiful figure ... she had little feet for her height ... you would forget her height, until she stood next to you ... but lying there in the bed she looked quite a slip of a thing, with her mass of dark hair ... everyone was angry with her when she cut her hair but she did not care. (du Maurier 2007, pp.180-1)

This revelation likens her to the character of Gabrielle from Chapter 4, and her encompassment of other similarities to the figure of the female vampire will be discussed in further detail in the final section of this chapter. Furthermore, it creates a paradoxical version of the civilised woman who has the ability to conceal any remnants of undesirable or native qualities that may be regarded as a threat to the social order. The narrator's reaction to this

information is to focus on Rebecca's beauty and her consequent insecurity of how she must appear so bland in comparison, which in turn illustrates the importance of beauty in the attainment of becoming of the civilised woman. Her anxiety at not fulfilling the social demand of female beauty is emphasised when she sits at Rebecca's dressing table and mirror and notes 'how white and thin my face looked in the glass, my hair hanging lank and straight ... the reflection stared back at me sallow and plain' (du Maurier 2007, p.178). Furthermore, her thought process in reaction to this projection once again confirms Rebecca's role as the narrator's ideal-I in terms of her physicality and confidence; it depicts her jealousy of Rebecca's exquisite beauty and of her ability to combine femininity with power, which in turn, emphasises how her own self-image is dominated by her inability to fulfil the physical and behavioural demands of the civilised woman.

7.5 Power Relations between the Various de Winter Spouses

The relationship between the two Mrs. de Winters intensifies with the narrator's quest for knowledge of Rebecca, and can be likened to Charles Perrault's version of the classic *Bluebeard* tale. Her eventual surrender to her obsession with Rebecca's legacy can be considered through Germanà's dual notions of how '[m]anifesting the desire to be something other than oneself ... also point[s] to the female obsession with images and self-representation' (Germanà 2013a, p.120), and furthermore, that '[g]hosts are ... feared because of the potential threat they represent for the living' (Germanà 2013a, p.139). Therefore the narrator's envy of Rebecca reflects on the state of her marriage as it is partly due to the bond of equality that she imagines Rebecca to have had with Maxim due to their corresponding age and social status. In contrast to this, her own marriage to Maxim is one of inequality that she

Rebecca

believes would be rectified if only she were an older woman with more life experience, like Rebecca:

Would we never be together, he a man and I a woman, standing shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, with no gulf between us? I did not want to be a child. I wanted to be his wife, his mother. I wanted to be old. (du Maurier 2007, p.210)

But her desire for maturation quickly becomes a bone of contention between them when Maxim admits repeatedly to liking her youth and lack of knowledge. This behaviour mirrors the process of infantilisation that was discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to Lestat and Louis' treatment of Claudia, and to John's treatment of *The Yellow Wallpaper's* narrator. He seems to equate female experience with sexual knowledge, and subsequently, with evil, as hinted by his accusation that 'you looked older suddenly, deceitful. It was rather unpleasant' (du Maurier 2007, p.215). Once again, the concepts of merging identities and the connection between the two wives are raised in this scene, whereby the narrator so desperately wishes to be like Rebecca that she appears to have momentarily personified her ghost to Maxim. His reaction to this unification is a negative one, since he admits to loathing Rebecca's ability to appear good while embodying what he perceives as wickedness, and later compares life with her as 'living with the devil ... with a face like a Botticelli angel' (du Maurier 2007, pp.292-8). This paradoxical description of Rebecca complicates her revered memory, because it suggests that she had been a deceitful and manipulative character who was very different from the perfect wife and lady that had been previously described by Mrs. Danvers. Furthermore, Maxim's definition of female identity through the use of polarising terms such as 'angel' and 'devil', further separates the binary oppositions of the female 'Other' and in doing so, defines Rebecca as the native woman, and the narrator as good and innocent (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, p.105) civilised woman. Once again, this concept shows how

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women are often compared to each other, and subsequently defined in polarising terms by patriarchy. The underlying basis of these definitions is based upon female sexuality and was also discussed with regard to the female characters of *Dracula* in Chapter 2. In relation to *Rebecca*, this theory secures a stronger connection between the narrator and Rebecca by locating them as (reversed) binary oppositions in Maxim's definition of the female figure.

Maxim tries to ensure that the narrator remains the exact opposite of Rebecca by controlling her reading material. By doing so, he believes that he can prevent her attainment of carnal knowledge. In this sense, Maxim has unknowingly encouraged the bond between the two women by perpetuating her ignorance, which makes her envy Rebecca's wisdom even more, and feeds her desire to learn more about Rebecca in order to emulate her character. His sexual repression of the narrator mirrors the suppression that du Maurier experienced from her own father during her teenage years; she remembers that he 'rejoiced in her femininity, so long as she never grew up' (Forster 2007, p.14), and seemed full of 'agitation [whenever] she appeared attracted to any man or boy' (Forster 2007, p.17). His dislike of her progression into adolescence, and the sexual awakening that comes with it, suggests a desire for her to maintain the innocence and purity of her childhood years. This negative attitude may have had an unconscious influence on du Maurier's work, as many of her texts centre on her 'total disillusionment with the relationship between men and women' (Forster 2007, p.42), and the mistreatment of women by the men in their lives. Furthermore, it illustrates the typical management of female sexuality in the plot of the Gothic novel, as according to Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik's essay 'Keeping it in the Family: Incest and Female Gothic Plot in du Maurier and Murdoch', young women are often the recipients of incestuous attractions from 'tyrannical fathers, father surrogates, or, indeed, rapacious siblings' (Horner and Zlosnik 2009, p.115). There is a shared undertone of incest in much of

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du Maurier's fiction in the form of more socially acceptable relationships, such as the narrator's marriage to Maxim. They also focus on the structure of the parent-child relationship in the text, and how it is based upon a repressed sexual desire because 'the secrets of Freud's family romance are those concerning sex and violence' (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, p.35).

As already mentioned, the contrast between the narrator's ignorance and enforced purity, and Rebecca's knowledge and sexual misbehaviour, sets them up as binary oppositions of female identity within the text. Subsequently, the novel parallels *The Enchanted Pig*, which is the Romanian version of the *Bluebeard* tale that sees a direct connection between dangerous reading material and sexual knowledge, as the curious females of this tale eventually find an open book containing the identity of their future husbands. In both cases of the fairy tale and *Rebecca*, the female figure's struggle to gain knowledge through literature represents the universal struggle of women's right to education in the face of a restricted access to books (Mulvey-Roberts 2009, p. 102). Similarly, Maxim's endeavour to control his young wife compares him to Bluebeard especially when he tells her that 'a husband is not so very different from a father after all. There is a certain type of knowledge I prefer you not to have. It's better kept under lock and key' (du Maurier 2007, p.216). Her eventual acquirement of a greater independence is illustrated by her interaction with texts through her management of Rebecca's engagement diary, and Dr Baker's patient notes at the end of the novel, which contrast greatly with the initial male supervision of her access to literary texts (Mulvey-Roberts 2009, pp.103-5). The control of a curious female who seeks to gain knowledge is a Bluebeardian feature that can be found in many fairy tales and Gothic texts, and is symbolic of the underlying foundation of patriarchal society. She explains that this tale presents the new bride as being naturally curious, and how this (female) trait causes

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conflict with the (male) patriarchal law, which is a concept that is personified through Bluebeard's wives who are forbidden by him to enter the room. This temptation is deliberately put in place to ensure that they will do so and afterward have to suffer the consequences of committing such disobedience. She claims that the narrative technique of this morality tale is sympathetic to the Bluebeard character, and thus, highlights the 'unquestioned reality of male power that makes such murder possible, sometimes even necessary' (Williams 1995, pp.41-46). In other words, his actions are considered to be an essential contribution to the proper maintenance of the social order.

Regardless, the narrator's obsession with Rebecca feeds their bond and although she becomes a part of the new wife's identity her exact definition is quite ambiguous because she is still only a figment of the narrator's imagination. In this sense, she personifies Williams' version of the 'Other' in Gothic fiction, which is defined as being 'not only female, but [also] a ghost' (Williams 1995, p.69). Horner and Zlosnik support the notion of Rebecca's supernatural nature in their argument which defines her as a *femme fatale* who has many vampire-like qualities. Her hypnotising beauty is proclaimed by numerous characters, and likens her to Carmilla who is described in similar terms, as being 'the most beautiful creature I ever saw in my life' (du Maurier 2007, p.144). Additionally, some of Rebecca's most notable characteristics, such as her facial pallor, plentiful hair, and voracious sexual appetite, are mentioned repeatedly throughout the novel, and match the merging of extraordinary physical beauty and sexual promiscuity that is often used to describe the female vampire, whose image is traditionally defined by the figures of The Three Sisters who were discussed in Chapter 2. To recapitulate, the sensuality of these deadly vampires is highlighted through Jonathan's depiction of their 'great dark, piercing eyes' (Stoker 2009, p.46), their 'wavy masses of golden hair [and] brilliant white teeth [with] ruby ... lips' (Stoker 2009, p.46), as

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well as 'a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive' (Stoker 2009, p.47) to him. Rebecca's multiple deaths also connect her character to that of Lucy in *Dracula*, and mirror the traditional necessity of the vampire's multiple deaths (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, p.111). They build upon Christopher Frayling's theory of 'The Fatal Woman' who 'altered the whole direction of the vampire tale from the mid-nineteenth century [as she was] sexually aware and sexually dominant ... attractive and repellent at the same time', thus symbolising the threat of female sexuality in that era, and underlying how these women always destroy the men who love them (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, pp.112-3).

They also suggest that the narrator unconsciously identifies with Rebecca's deadly sexuality, despite maintaining an outward fear and distrust of it (Horner and Zlosnik 1998, p.115). Therefore, her desire to emulate Rebecca's hidden promiscuity shows that the depth and complex nature of female sexuality is a major concern of this novel. Rebecca mirrors Claudia's enactment of 'the masculine protest', as explained in Chapter 5, through the use of her feminine charms to feign the purity and passivity of the civilised woman and in doing so, manipulate the male character for her personal gain in order to procure social status and financial security. Her disdain for men is only revealed at the end through Maxim's eventual confession of their loveless marriage and Mrs. Danvers' admission of Rebecca's ability to exploit and control men throughout her life:

She twisted her father round her little finger A man had only to look at her once and be mad about her They were all jealous, all mad for her. Mr. de Winter Everyone who knew her, everyone who came to Manderley. (du Maurier 2007, pp.260-3)

Once again, this illustrates a vampire-like ability to influence or compel those around her, and it also explains how her memory has the ability to gradually and subtly consume the narrator. Everyone that meets the narrator in Manderley reminds her of how Rebecca's beauty was so

important to the success of the estate, which subsequently reminds her of her own physical inadequacies when put in comparison. This deficiency of beauty, which society dictates to be one of the most crucial female attributes, confirms her position as the weaker figure of their bond and causes her to identify so much 'with Rebecca that my own dull self did not exist, had never come to Manderley ...' (du Maurier 2007, p.214). It is also a turning point in the novel because it reveals to the narrator that Rebecca was not the epitome of perfect femininity that she had presumed all along. By uncovering the truth about Rebecca's true nature, and the unhappy state of her marriage to Maxim, the narrator is finally freed from her influence. She claims that her knowledge of Rebecca's ability to be 'evil and vicious and rotten [meant that she] did not hate her anymore. She could not hurt me' (du Maurier 2007, p.305). This exposure of the real Rebecca proves that her previous image had been strongly influenced by the narrator's perception of her character; furthermore, her emancipation from Rebecca's memory after this discovery illustrates how freedom of comparisons between false perceptions of identity can only be achieved through the realization of knowledge and truth.

7.6 Conclusion: Overcoming the Ghost of Rebecca's Presence

To conclude, it is only when the narrator finally gains knowledge of Maxim's unhappy marriage to Rebecca, as well as knowledge about the inconsistency of Rebecca's identity as the civilised woman, that she finally realises the false persona to which she had been comparing herself. This recognition gives the narrator confidence to no longer feel intimidated by Mrs. Danvers or by Maxim, and this development brings to her a self-assurance and maturity beyond her years. She states that she is 'no longer afraid of Rebecca' (du Maurier 2007, p.305) because she now views herself as Rebecca's equal. By finally stepping out of her shadow and emerging as the superior double or alter ego, which, as

defined by Botting, is 'unlike the doppelgänger [but] a better self, an external image of good conscience' (Botting 1996, p.305), she becomes a closer version of her desired identity. This movement ends the unification of their characters as the simultaneous existence of both entities is impossible for 'there can be no relationship between an individual and her double' (de Beauvoir 1997, p.651). Consequently, the narrator's evolution exorcises Rebecca's ghost from her psyche, and she is no longer preoccupied with obsessive thoughts. This collective transition and victory is clearly marked in the narrator's words to Mrs. Danvers that 'it does not concern me very much what Mrs. de Winter used to do ... I am Mrs. de Winter now ...' (du Maurier 2007, p.312). Her newfound self-assuredness enables her to survive Mrs. Danvers' vicious attempts to destroy their life in Manderley, and to create a new life elsewhere after the estate has been burned down. Furthermore, her decision to define herself solely through her marital identity illustrates how she has finally fulfilled one of the key components of the civilised woman, which is the social demand of marriage. This statement is also particularly significant in portraying how her character has evolved since the beginning of her story, thus illustrating her new certainty of self. By the end of this novel, she has encountered similar challenges to all of the female figures discussed in previous chapters on the Female Gothic. In each case, the female protagonist manages to overcome a deadly encounter with an antagonist, who has attempted to stifle her identity and re-create her according to their own specifications.

Finally, the problematic nature of the female interrelationships in *Rebecca* shows how they can influence and dictate women's mentality and everyday life. They illustrate the significance of the mother's presence or absence in the formation of a woman's relationship with her female peers, and also show how society's strict regulations on female youth and idealised beauty definitions can cause women to divide themselves into these patriarchal

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polarising categories. This in turn shows how women are socially conditioned to define their identity and worth in comparison or contrast to another woman, which offers an explanation for the underlying rivalry that exists in each feminine bond. The destruction of relations between the narrator and Mrs. Danvers and the ghost of Rebecca, as well as the narrator's lack of female company at the conclusion of the story, illustrate the disparaging and delicate nature of female interrelationships due to the rigid social pressures on their identity.

Chapter 8: The Other Woman: Following the Transsexual Journey into Womanhood in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*

8.1 Femininity as a Social Construction

Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1982) is an example of a Female Gothic text that centres on the theme of womanhood from the transsexual woman's perspective. The dark, threatening atmosphere of the novel and the dystopian setting of a ravaged war-torn city filled with violent rebels, as well as the presence of unnatural and (sometimes) grotesque creations, enforced experimental surgery, a patriarchal villain, and multiple sadomasochist themes ensure its position within the Gothic realm of literature. Its specific definition as a Female Gothic text is evident in the singular narrative style of Eve's recollection of the events surrounding her entrapment and involuntary transformation that precede her enforced marriage and repeated abuse by Zero. The presence of the supernatural is evident in the figure of Eve herself who has become a woman (albeit not voluntarily) through the wonders of science. Mother voices her desire to create a new race of reproductively-sufficient transsexual women and is extremely forthcoming about the importance of science to her intent, which can be read as an example of the explained supernatural that is inherent in Female Gothic texts. Furthermore, the presence of a non-traditional happy ending can also be identified in the form of Eve's contentment with her new female identity and her future, despite the painful events of her past and lost love in the form of Tristessa's death. The open ending has

an undeniably optimistic tone that suggests Eve has found happiness despite her adverse circumstances in the form of the self-worth that she had been seeking from the beginning of the story.

The focus of this final chapter is to examine womanhood by tracing the journey of the transsexual female figure as she attempts to make sense of her ambiguous position among her female peers. It will analyse Eve's journey as she struggles to adapt to her new role, and attempts to become the civilised woman who is the embodiment of the perfect femininity. She does this in an effort to ease the disharmony of her physical and mental states as she looks to discard her old masculinity and epitomise the beauty, grace, passivity and maternal nature that are the essential components of this role. In doing so she exposes the training that is required to fulfil the performative demands placed upon women and shows how they are social constructions rather than biological constituents of female gender. Carter's fiction plays a particularly significant role in the Gothic's subversion of fixed gender roles, and social definitions, through her creation of unconventional female characters who 'say some quite specific things about the cultural production of femininity' (Carter, cited in Gamble 2001, p.89). She bases their construction upon the unreliability of appearances and 'the mirroring, doubling, splitting, and dissolution of images of the gendered subject or object' (Rubenstein 1993, p.106). These features are personified by the transsexual character of Evelyn/Eve, whose physical metamorphosis is situated 'along the fault lines of gender: the ambivalent identifications and fractures that exist between biological sex identity and culturally constructed roles' (Rubenstein 1993, p.111). The performative struggles that she encounters in the aftermath of her transformation to womanhood illustrate de Beauvoir's concept of how femininity is merely a social construction:

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; *it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature*, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. (de Beauvoir 1997, p.295)

Eve gains a first-hand experience of life as both genders, and of the power-imbalance between man and woman. Furthermore, her alternative position within a society that is obsessed with rigid classifications concerning gender and sexuality ensures her embodiment of the contemporary Gothic female's avant-garde characteristics. As the core analysis of this character will focus on certain aspects of gender and sexuality, it will explore Wolf's notion that 'female sexuality is not only negatively defined, it is negatively constructed' (Wolf 2002, p. 155), and as the central focus of the final chapter of this thesis, Eve illustrates how the Gothic genre presents narratives that represent and explore the complexity and multifaceted nature of the female figure:

Carter's representation of a male-to-female sex change ... highlights[s] prevailing social constructions of male power and female powerlessness The figure of the transsexual or bisexual is a kind of mediating figure invoked to reconcile symbolically these polarised positions by literally embodying 'the oppositional social constructions of gender'. (Rubenstein 1993, p.106)

The various hardships that Eve encounters within her new female identity portray the universal patriarchal pressures that are placed upon all women to incarnate the socially idyllic qualities of the civilised woman. In this sense, her character acts as a reflection of the various negative aspects of woman's (social and sexual) situation within patriarchal societal structures.

8.2 Eve in her Original Male Form as Evelyn

Eve's ambiguity within the female spectrum of native and civilised women is illustrated by her original status as a heterosexual man called Evelyn, who lives in a desolate version of New York, where social unrest is omnipresent and various political and gender groups are fighting each other for power. He recounts a brief history of his sexual encounters with nameless women that he remembers specifically through the masculine eye, and subsequently describes them only in terms of their physical attributes and sexual deeds. He freely admits to having 'an ambivalent attitude towards women' (Carter 1982, p.5), and for this reason, he is very wary of the female rebel groups that are a part of the ongoing social conflict in New York, as their active quest for power suggests a subversion of the stereotypically passive female figure from the beginning of the story. Instead, they offer an alternative version of womanhood, which had long been associated with passivity and domestic life. Their disregard for social order and unwillingness to submit to domesticity likens them to the figure of the native woman who also exemplifies these qualities and as such is considered to be an irrepressible threat to the patriarchy. As Evelyn is still in his male form at this stage, he views them from a corresponding male perspective, and emphasises his fear of being in their presence, which once again challenges the traditional power balance of gender relations. This group of rebels is known simply as 'The Women' (Carter 1982, p.7), and they are described by Evelyn in violent and menacing terms:

Female sharp-shooters [that] took to sniping from concealed windows at men who lingered too long in front of posters outside blue movie theatres They blew up wedding shops and scoured the newspapers for marriage announcements so that they could send brides gifts of well-honed razors ... the Women practiced humiliation at random and bruised machismo takes longer to heal than a broken head. (Carter 1982, p.13)

These dramatic demonstrations illustrate native female's rebellion against the social institution of marriage, as well as their mutiny against the underlying ideology behind gender relations in a society wherein male supremacy is very much the norm. The issues of sexism that are the driving force behind their revolt are proleptic of the injustice that Evelyn will experience first-hand once his transformation to Eve is complete.

Evelyn recounts just one relationship from his time as a man; he describes the physical and abusive nature of his sadomasochistic union with a dancer called Leilah, whom he sees as a kindred spirit, and as 'the nearest thing to myself I had ever met' (Carter 1982, p.33). She can be read as being both 'an object for the fulfilment of his own sexual desires and a reflection or extension of himself' (Rubenstein 1993, p.107), as well as a mirror that prefigures 'his eventual transformation into his own female-gendered negative' (Rubenstein 1993, p.108). His time with her is spent fulfilling the masculine role as observer to the object of his sexual desire, which is illustrated in his memory of their 'reverie, the self-created, self-perpetuating, solipsistic world of the woman watching herself being watched in a mirror' (Carter 1982, p.26). Likewise, Leilah's pleasure at being watched by Evelyn represents the woman's enjoyment as the object of desire during this act when she is the masculine subject's willing participant. This gender dynamics of this ritual illustrates how their sexual relationship defines the polarising social and sexual roles for men and women as classified by Luce Irigaray in *This Sex which is Not One*:

Woman, in this sexual imaginary, is only a more or less obliging prop for the enactment of man's fantasies. That she may find pleasure there in that role, by proxy, is possible, even certain. But such pleasure is above all a masochistic prostitution of her body to a desire that is not her own, and it leaves her in a familiar state of dependency upon man. Not knowing what she wants, ready for anything, even asking for more, so long as he will "take" her as his "object" when he seeks his own pleasure. Thus she will not say what she herself wants; moreover, she does not know,

or no longer knows, what she wants Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking and her entry into a dominant scopical economy signifies, again, her consignment to passivity: she is to be the beautiful object of contemplation. While her body finds itself thus eroticized, and called to a double movement of exhibition and of chaste retreat in order to stimulate the drives the "subject," her sexual organ represents *the horror of nothing to see*. (Irigaray 1985, pp.25-6)

The imbalance of power in this theory highlights how women have been trained to rely on men for the validation of their sexual identity while simultaneously recognising their role as a passive recipient and sexual object of the masculine subject. The male figure's requirement of a female stimulant for his sexual pleasure is overlooked in an effort to portray women as being more dependent on men, which in turn perpetuates the power imbalance of gender relations. In order to present herself as this male object of desire, Leilah performs a daily beauty routine that results in a more sexualised version of herself, which subsequently enacts aspects of the social demands on women's appearance that Evelyn will later experience through his future female identity. Leilah's creation of a false public face that 'lived only in the not-world of the mirror and then became her own reflection' (Carter 1982, p.24) personifies the female construction of a 'not-self [that] is designed to suit masculine taste' (Day 1998, p.110), because she 'constructs herself as a reflection of a masculine view of what makes her erotically desirable' (Day 1998, p.110). This is an essential practice of the civilised woman because it represents the construction of a new identity that is dictated by the specific preferences of her male counterpart. The cracked mirror through which she performs this ritual illustrates this blurring of fixed gender and identity through the combination of Leilah's dual identity that is interspersed with Evelyn's reflection in the glass:

The cracked mirror jaggedly reciprocated [Leilah's] bisected reflection and that of my watching self To watch her dressing herself, putting on her public face, was to witness an inversion of the ritual disrobing to which she would later submit her body

for ... and as she watched me watching ... she, too, seemed to abandon her self in the mirror, and allowed herself to function only as a fiction of the erotic dream into which the mirror had cast me. (Carter 1982, p.26)

The significance of the mirror's role in the creation of Leilah's false self links to the formation of herself as a civilised woman and also to her identity in general. Specifically, it relates to Lacan's 'mirror stage', which has been discussed in relation to Gabrielle, Claudia and Melanie in earlier chapters, but in this case, the capitulation and unification of these two particular selves present a multifaceted, or joint masculine *and* feminine version of gender, that is evocative of the transsexual figure.

Day argues that this shared image blurs the existing boundary between male identity and the female space of the mirror, which can then be read as an indication of Evelyn's future conversion to womanhood:

In Carter, the masculine subject is itself implicated in the emptiness of a subjectivity defined in terms of representation or reflection. The male subject and his erotic dream of the woman may deprive her of autonomous subjectivity, but she, too, in that act of gazing, becomes a function of the mirror, an agent not of being but of representation ... It may be ... dependant on constructing the woman as an other ... but that male self, constituted in representation, is as empty as the woman who abandons herself to the masculine construction of what she is. (Day 1998, p.111)

The activity within this dynamic highlights the role and influence that one gender has on the construction of the other's sexual/social identity. Evelyn revels in his voyeuristic role as the male influence on Leilah's identity, who in turn represents his final memory of femininity and objectified female sexuality from a male perspective, which he describes as being a 'slow, sweet flesh [that had] suffused my own with its corrupt languor ... the slow delirious sickness of femininity, its passivity, its narcissism, ha[d] infected me because of her...' (Carter 1982, p.33).

8.3 Becoming Eve

Evelyn later abandons Leilah, and gets stranded in the desert, where he is captured by a group of female rebels who take him to their laboratory and force him to undergo a sex-change operation. Their actions can be considered as a representative of the native woman's threat to the male supremacy as their attack focuses specifically on destroying his masculinity, and in doing so it embodies the notion that 'gender is a relation of power [for Carter], whereby the weak become "feminine" and the strong become "masculine."' And, because relations of power can change, this construction is always open to deconstruction' (Robinson, cited in Michael 1994, p.499). Evelyn's enforced transformation exemplifies this concept, because he never again achieves the level of power that he enjoyed as a man. Despite his eventual acceptance of his new female identity, emphasised in his claim that the rebel's compound would become 'the place where I was born' (Carter 1982, p.43), and recognises the ambiguous nature of his post-operation form according to traditional gender definitions. This self-awareness is revealed in a later confession that 'I am not natural, you know – even though, if you cut me, I will bleed' (Carter 1982, p.47).

His conversion to womanhood means that he will have the opportunity to experience life as both genders, which will consequently highlight the need for him to fulfil the performative obligations for each one. This raises the concept of the unification of gender and society as discussed in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*:

Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which

“sexed nature” or “a natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive,” prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts. (Butler 1990, p.7)

She elaborates on this notion through her argument that in either case:

The body is figured as a mere *instrument* or *medium* for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related. But “the body” is itself a construction, as are the myriad “bodies” that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. (Butler 1990, p.8)

Butler's ideas within this theory is portrayed in the next stage of Evelyn's journey where he meets his future creator whose very physicality is a literal personification of the body as a constructed patchwork of gendered subjects. ‘Mother’ is the compound's leader who is a scientist and surgeon who has ‘made herself! She [i]s her own mythological artefact; she had reconstructed her flesh painfully, with knives and with needles, into a transcendental form as an emblem’ (Carter 1982, p.57). Her self-assembled physicality represents the collective principals of the female rebels:

Mother has made herself into an incarnated deity; she has quite transformed her flesh, she has undergone a painful metamorphosis of the entire body and become the abstraction of a natural principle. She is also a great scientist who makes extraordinary experiments and I was destined to become the subject of one of them ... she had been human, once; and now she made herself into this She is the hand-carved figurehead of her own, self-constructed theology. (Carter 1982, pp. 46-55)

Evelyn describes Mother as being ‘a sacred monster’ (Carter 1982, p.56), whose character can be compared to that of Dr Frankenstein, because she too wishes to create and control a new life form based on her own image. Her patchwork anatomy resembles the Everywoman from chapter 3, and personifies one of the main aspects in Wolf's ‘beauty myth’, specifically how a daily ‘torrent of media images show the female face and body split into pieces, which is how the beauty myth asks a woman to think of her own body parts’ (Wolf 2002, p. 230).

Evelyn's imminent position amongst his female counterparts ensures that he, too, will have to accept the disjointed paradigm of female identity as well as the performative demands that come with it.

His time within the compound is spent learning that he will be the first creation in Mother's new race of manmade women, and he then undergoes a psychosexual re-education that forces him 'to view socially constructed images of the feminine as well as atrocities committed on women by men throughout time' (Rubenstein 1993, p.110). These lessons are a radical introduction to his new identity as a civilised woman, and they depict the inspiration behind Mother's reason for creating a new race of women, as well as reinforcing her belief that the feminine form is the only one that is true to nature. She celebrates the faculty of womanhood through her claim that 'the garden in which Adam was born lies between my thighs Because I can give life, I can accomplish miracles' (Carter 1982, p.60), and she wishes to share this female gift with men by relieving them of their masculinity, as in her opinion, 'to be a *man* is not a given condition but a continuous effort' (Carter 1982, p.60). Instead, she wants to create a new society where women hold the power, which in turn demotes and deconstructs, the male hegemonic position.

Mother explains her intent to revise their natural form from one of maleness to one of transsexual womanhood, through her biblically-resonant statement that 'except a man die and be born again he may not enter the kingdom of heaven' (Carter 1982, p.48), as she aspires to redeem 'woman [who] has been the antithesis in the dialectic of creation quite long enough' (Carter 1982, p.64). She justifies her intention to Evelyn by asking him to consider the fact that 'this domination of man has caused us all too much pain? Were you ever happy, when you were a man, since you left the womb, unless you were trying to get back into it?' (Carter 1982, p.73). In this sense, her creation of Eve can be read as a natural reaction to the social

pressure of womanhood when considered through Butler's analysis of de Beauvoir's aforementioned theory on how one becomes a civilised woman through the social construction of gender and the inherent demands that come with it:

Beauvoir is clear that one "becomes" a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one. And clearly, the compulsion does not come from "sex." There is nothing in her account that guarantees that the "one" who becomes a woman is necessarily female. If "the body is a situation" as she claims, there is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings; hence, sex could not qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along. (Butler 1990, p.8)

Butler continues to elaborate on de Beauvoir's claim that if one becomes a woman, then 'it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end' (Butler 1990, p.33). Therefore, Evelyn's operation is an attempt on Mother's part to construct her own version of woman; he accepts the inevitable fact that she will 'transform my I into the other, and, in doing so, annihilate it' (Carter 1982, p.56), and even sees the process as being just retribution for his earlier mistreatment of Leilah:

Vengeance, I call it; though, if I've suffered since then a clarification of the world, if now I comprehend even a little the nature of the flesh, I owe this knowledge to the illumination afforded me by the sullen flash of the Holy Mother's obsidian scalpel – Evelyn, the first victim of her wild justice, trimmed with that knife to Eve, first child of her manufactory. (Carter 1982, p.47)

He is told, in very precise terms, how the transformation in his identity will change the physicality of his gender, by firstly castrating him and then by adopting him into womanhood by excavating 'the "fructifying feminine space" inside you [to] make you a perfect specimen of womanhood. Then, as soon as you're ready, [Mother will] impregnate you with your own

sperm' (Carter 1982, p.65). This process would make him the 'first of all beings in the world [to] seed yourself and fruit yourself ... [to be] entirely self-sufficient ...' (Carter 1982, p.73). Despite its focus only on his physical form, this operation will also ensure a change in his entire identity, as he will become 'a new Eve, not Evelyn' (Carter 1982, p.67), and so will be expected to fulfil the cultural compulsion of performative womanhood as discussed in Butler's analysis of de Beauvoir's theory.

Immediately after the procedure, Evelyn is referenced only in female terms as Eve. She recognises the disconnection between her new female body and her natural male psyche, which suggests a presence of both sexes within the female self. Her post-transformative self personifies Cixous' notion of the 'the newly born woman', which she bases on the Freudian construction of the hysterical female figure whose body represents a conflicting male and female sexual identification that she is unable to consciously express or acknowledge (Rubenstein 1993, p.103). All physical evidence of her previous identity, as well as of her previous gender, has been erased, even in her own eyes, which confirms Gamble's discussion of David Punter's analysis that the novel 'seeks to explode the universal archetypes through which "Woman" is codified as the passive object of masculine desire' (Gamble 2001, p.91). Punter argues that:

[The] inner self forced apart from the subject of self-presentation, and awareness of hollowness, a disbelief that this self-on-view can be taken as a full representation of the person alongside the bitter knowledge that it will be, that at every point the woman is locked into the metaphysical insult of the masculine gaze. (Punter, cited in Gamble 2001, p.91)

The main concept in this theory suggests that the masculine gaze dictates and perpetuates the inferior position of the female figure in relation to her male counterpart. Additionally, it presents female identity as being dictated by her physicality alone and therefore is

irreconcilably superficial when considered from the male perspective. This idea is captured in the first moment that Eve sees her new female form, and with it, her new identity 'as a variation upon what Leilah had been, an incarnation of male sexual fantasy, a "not-self" (Day 1998, p.116):

When I looked in the mirror, I saw Eve; I did not see myself. I saw a young woman who, though she was I, I could in no way acknowledge as myself, for this one was only a lyrical abstraction of femininity to me, a tinted arrangement of curved lines ... I was a woman, young and desirable. (Carter 1982, p.71)

This repetition of Leilah's female identity implies that 'the new Eve, then, is not at all new: she simply reconfirms the patriarchal bias of the old myth of Eve. She is still masculine ... in the sense that her body is a construction of the masculine gaze' (Day 1998, p.117). Her initial reaction to her newfound female form supports this notion, as it comes from her prevailing inner masculinity; she confesses that as she 'stood, naked and a stranger to myself' (Carter 1982, p.72) and realises that she is now 'the object of all the unfocused desires that had ever existed in my own head' (Carter 1982, p.71). Her awareness of the existential disharmony between her female physical form, and her male mentality, raises Butler's discussion in *Undoing Gender* on the performative nature of gender:

Gender is not exactly what one "is" nor is it precisely what one "has". Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes. (Butler 2004, p.42)

Eve's natural/male response to the vision of femininity before her proves this argument and shows that her physical transformation has not changed her gender completely as 'gender is not only an identification with one sex; it also entails that sexual desire be directed toward the other sex' (Rubin, cited in Butler 1990, p.73). Additionally, it illustrates how Eve's female

form was derived from media-images of the civilised woman that merely 'confirm the dominance of the masculine gaze in the culture at large' (Day 1998, p.116). The co-existence of female and male qualities within her new form exemplifies the ambiguity of the transsexual's position within womanhood, and depicts a typical example of the post-operation transsexual state, which can be described as a disharmonious state or an inadequate mode of being:

It substitutes a superficial integration for a total human integrity, which would accept the mind-body unity, and alter the conditions giving rise to conflict, rather than mutilating the body. Transsexualism operates at best on a principal of *androgyny*. This merely adds up qualities thought to be masculine and feminine. Transsexuals therefore combine bits and pieces of physical and social qualities that maleness and femaleness are supposed to have in patriarchy. (Riddell 2006, p.147)

Eve's inner monologue confirms this paradox of identity, because it shows awareness that even in this female form, she is not a natural part of the womanhood, and has 'not yet become a woman, although I possess a woman's shape. Not a woman, no; both more and less a real woman. Now I am a being as mythic and monstrous as Mother herself' (Carter 1982, p.79). She feels like a false woman because, unlike a natural or 'real' woman, she still possesses a masculine mentality, which remains intact despite her transformative surgery.

This artificial, or 'monstrous', status is a self-inflicted label that she creates mainly because she feels defined by the foreign components that make up the female anatomy of her post-operative physicality. The overwhelming sexualisation of her new image, and her identification with Mother, as well as their shared similarity to the Everywoman of Chapter 3, represents how:

The museum of women monsters in Carter's novel reinforces the notion that pornography is a representation of male domination. The museum is an artificial arena

in which men occupy the position of dominance with no hindrances, since women are literally cast as museum objects to be viewed and consumed. (Michael 1994, p.511)

Her immediate correlation with Mother is particularly significant when considered from the perspective that Mother has constructed Eve 'in the same manner as she constructed herself: that is, effectively as a reflection of masculine images of the female [and] according to a masculine view of what the perfect woman should look like' (Day 1998, p.116). Her imminent change of circumstances ensures that she also becomes familiar with the patriarchal/masculine view on how society's notion of the ideal woman should act.

8.4 Eve's Experience of Womanhood

Eve manages to escape the female compound before she is impregnated, but is immediately captured by a poet and villain called Zero, who is a 'stereotyped, phallic figure ... of wicked, irredeemable misogyny' (Rubenstein 1993, p.107), who forces her to become a part of his harem of wives. Her new marital status and position amongst the other women in Zero's harem ensure daily contact with people who have no knowledge of her previous masculinity, and so they demand a very compelling act of femininity from her. In order to present a convincing masquerade, she studies and mimics the behaviour of other wives:

I kept as silent as I could and tried to imitate the way they moved and the way they spoke for I knew that, in spite of Sophia's training in Beulah, I would often make a gesture with my hands that was out of Eve's character or exclaim with a subtly male inflection that made them raise their eyebrows. This intensive study of feminine manners, as well as my everyday work about the homestead, kept me in a permanent state of exhaustion. (Carter 1982, p.97)

This performance is examined in Irigaray's theory of how 'femininity' is not a natural part of the female anatomy, but rather it is 'a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male

systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself, and loses herself by playing on her femininity' (Irigaray 1985, p.84). Butler elaborates on this concept by merging it with the Lacanian notion of the 'female masquerade':

This "appearing as being" the Phallus that women are compelled to do is inevitably *masquerade* On the one hand, masquerade may be understood as the performative production of a sexual ontology, an appearing that makes itself convincing as a "being"; on the other hand, masquerade can be read as a denial of a feminine desire that presupposes some prior ontological femininity regularly unrepresented by the phallic economy. Irigaray remarks in such a vein that "the masquerade ... is what women do ... in order to participate in man's desire, but at the cost of giving up their own Paradoxical as this formulation might seem, it is in order to be the phallus, that is, the signifier of the desire of the Other, that the woman will reject an essential part of her femininity, notably all its attributes through masquerade. It is for what she is not that she expects to be desired as well as loved. But she finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of the one to whom she addresses her demand for love. (Lacan and Irigaray, cited in Butler 1990, pp.47-8)

This theory illustrates once again how the social construction of female identity demands for women to submit to man's desired image of femininity and all its performative demands. Butler continues her interpretation of these combined ideas by discussing how behaviour can have a consequent impact upon the female psyche:

Acts, gestures, and desire, produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. (Butler 1990, p.136)

Despite Mother's ability to bestow on Eve the physical attributes that are necessary for her transition to womanhood, she does not have the opportunity to educate her on the performative demands of her new female form before Eve escapes from the compound. The consequence of this act means that Eve must rely solely on her ability to imitate these gender components in order to partake in the female masquerade, another form of Lacanian mirroring. Her successful execution of this practice is particularly significant in portraying her psychological progression into civilised womanhood because it confirms her possession of a purely feminine thought process that is subsequently reflected in her performative behaviour.

Eve exposes the universal nature of this experience within womanhood in her acknowledgement that 'although I was a woman, I was now also passing for a woman, but, then, many women born spend their whole lives in just some imitations' (Carter 1982, p.97). The idea that feminine characteristics and behaviour are not born naturally out of one's female form, but rather, are social constructs born from the power relations of gender, relates to Riviere's theory from Chapter 4, which raises the notion of a false womanliness once again:

The conception of womanliness as a mask, behind which man suspects some hidden danger, throws a little light on the enigma The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade.' My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference: whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing. (Riviere 1929, p.306)

Butler also discusses the creation of this 'femininity [which] becomes a mask that dominates/resolves a masculine identification, for a masculine identification would, within the presumed heterosexual matrix of desire, produce a desire for a female object' (Butler 1990, p.53). The consequent gender dynamics of this practice illustrate how civilised

'femininity/female is equated with passivity, emptiness, abasement, and terrifying vulnerability, or with voracious, engulfing "suction" [whereas] masculinity/male is characterized by sadism and sexual violence' (Rosinsky, cited in Rubenstein 1993, p.116), and are personified by Eve and Zero's characters. Zero secures his status within the hierarchy of his household by inflicting physical, mental, and sexual abuse upon his wives on a daily basis, which in turn allows Eve to relate to the other women and the powerlessness of their shared position. It also subverts Eve's earlier sadomasochistic relationship with Leilah, and her intrinsic role as the sexual violator, by forcing her to now experience the other/female perspective of sexual violation:

Because of his suspicion that I might be too much of a woman for him, he took great fancy to me and our marital encounters, therefore, took place at a pitch of intensity that filled me with terror And more than my body, some other yet essential part of my being was ravaged by him for, when he mounted me ... I felt myself to be, not myself but he; and the experience of this crucial lack of self, which always brought with it a shock of introspection, forced me to know myself as a former violator at the moment of my own violation. (Carter 1982, p.98)

She likens the traumatic effects of his actions to a horrific type of enlightenment into womanhood, and she even considers it to be a fitting punishment for her previous crimes against women as now 'she is at the receiving end of pain, where she [once] inflicted it' (Ward Jouve 1994, p.157). Therefore, it is Zero's daily abuse and repeated rapes 'that succeed in finally fitting [her] mind to her body' (Day 1998, p.117), thus completing her transformation as according to Butler's earlier stipulations on the multiple components of gender:

I had spent three months as a wife of Zero. It was as savage apprenticeship in womanhood as could have been devised for me and, if Mother had selected me,

however arbitrarily, to atone for the sins of my first sex vis-à-vis my second sex via my sex itself, I would say that ... I had become the thing I almost was. The mediation of Zero turned me into a woman. (Carter 1982, p.104)

8.5 Eve's Alter Ego

The character of actress 'Tristessa de St Ange, billed ... as "the most beautiful woman in the world"' (Carter 1982, p.2), acts as an alter ego to Eve in the sense that she is another incarnation of masculine sexual fantasy who is later revealed to be a transvestite man. Eve's relationship with Tristessa begins as a one-sided obsession at an early age when she is still in her male form as Evelyn, and is transfixed by the 'pure mystification [that was] Tristessa ... beautiful as only things that don't exist can be, most haunting of paradoxes ...' (Carter 1982, p.2). When she eventually learns the truth about Tristessa's gender, she concludes that her appeal was due to her personal knowledge of the female characteristics that appeal to male desire:

That was why he had been the perfect man's woman! He had made himself the shrine of his own desires, and had made of himself the only woman he could have loved! If a woman is indeed beautiful only in so far as she incarnates most completely the secret aspirations of man, no wonder Tristessa had been able to become the most beautiful woman in the world, an unbegotten woman who made no concessions to humanity. (Carter 1982, p.125)

This ability illustrates how the transsexual can 'possess women in a bodily sense while acting out the images into which men have moulded women' (Riddell 2006, p.147). In addition to this, Eve notes that Tristessa also embodies erotic fantasies of the 'eternal feminine' through her representations of female suffering. Her skill at portraying this suffering was 'her vocation. She suffered exquisitely until suffering became demoded ...' (Carter 1982, p.4). Eve

admits to the enjoyment of her earlier role as a male observer to this suffering, and 'remembers the connection that had been induced in him as a boy between sexual arousal and the image of Tristessa's suffering' (Day 1998, p.107). She also believes that this portrayal illustrates Tristessa's true attitude towards women, noting that 'he must have both loved and hated women, to let Tristessa be so beautiful and make her suffer so!' (Carter 1982, p.141), which then creates an image of woman that 'defines a female masochism which is both produced by and sustains sadism. Tristessa ... projects an image of woman as an object [that is] devoid of subjectivity' (Day 1998, p.119). This aspect of her character recalls the figure of the heroine when considered from Hoeveler's aforementioned perspective of gothic feminism because it celebrates the notion of female suffering and the female figure's willingness to submit to it.

Tristessa's role as Eve's alter ego is secured upon their meeting, when Eve admits to immediately falling in love with her. She views the actress as an ambiguous double of her new female self as 'the abyss on which her eyes open ... is the abyss of myself, of emptiness, of inward void. I, she, we are outside history, we are mysteriously twinned by our synthetic life' (Carter 1982, p.122). Their connection occurs through 'the deeper recognition that each is an Other, an abject constructed by others – as in a mirror or in another's gaze – and not a subject or self' (Rubenstein 1993, p.111). Tristessa reveals that her wish to join womanhood was based upon a desire to encompass female 'passivity Inaction ... I was seduced by the notion of a woman's being, which is negativity. Passivity, the absence of being. To be everything and nothing Solitude and melancholy, that is a woman's life' (Carter 1982, pp.134-140). In other words, she wishes encapsulate all of the components necessary to fulfil the social demands of the civilised woman. But the disharmony of these conflicting factors in her definition of womanhood is personified in the corresponding disconnection between her

public appearance and her natural form. Zero forces the two characters into an arranged marriage during which he compels Eve to dress as the bridegroom, and therefore creates a layering of amalgamated gender and illusion that is suggested by her observation that:

I had become my old self again in the inverted world of the mirrors. But this masquerade was more than skin deep. Under the mask of maleness I wore another mask of femaleness but a mask that now I never would be able to remove, no matter how hard I tried, although I was a boy disguised as a girl and now disguised as a boy again ... I only mimicked what I had been; I did not become it. (Carter 1982, p.129)

Her awareness of this inability to return to her former self, despite wearing a mask of masculinity at this point, shows that her various experiences as a woman have had a lasting effect on her psyche that now secure her gender as female. She emphasises the blurring of gender definitions between the couple in her assertion that it was in fact 'a double wedding – both were the bride, and both the groom in this ceremony' (Carter 1982, p.132), which in turn highlights their shared existential crisis and consequential masquerades of gender:

You and I, who inhabited false shapes, who appeared to one another doubly masked, like an ultimate mystification, were unknown even to ourselves. Circumstances had forced us both out of the selves into which we had been born and now we were no longer human – the false universals of myth transformed us, now we cast longer shadows than a man does, we were beings composed of echoes. These echoes doom us to love. My bride will become my child's father. (Carter 1982, p.132)

The mention of Eve's pregnancy someday raises the notion of gender and natural or constructed familial roles. She is told that 'if Tristessa [has] made you pregnant Your baby will have two fathers and two mothers' (Carter 1982, p.183), as both parents are both/neither male/female. This subversion of fixed gender identity can be understood in relation to the theory of 'doubleness':

Doubleness is figured as both feminine and feminist, as a strategy for negotiating differences between and within male and female, centre and margin, inside and outside, public and private, realism and romance. To be “double” is to resist categorization as one thing or the other; to invoke doubleness is to address binary oppositions without resting comfortably in either of the two terms being opposed Feminism has no choice but doubleness Inasmuch as feminist theory seeks to undermine Western culture’s penchant for binary opposition (and the inevitably resulting hierarchies), it makes sense that doubleness – a trope figuring binaries not as opposed, but as coexisting – would appeal to feminists ... (Warhol 1995, pp.857-8)

This theory can be read as a challenge or subversion of fixed gender that is an undeniable constituent of Eve’s identity. She subtly reveals the doubleness of her identity through her confession to Tristessa that she was ‘born in Beulah’ (Carter 1982, p.139), which is the female compound and site of her transformation, but she fails to mention that at this point she still sees herself as ‘a man-made masterpiece of skin and bone, the technological Eve in person’ (Carter 1982, p.142) that was made out of ‘discarded flesh, induced to a new life by means of cunning hypodermics ... my pretty face had been constructed out of a painful fabric of skin from my old inner thighs’ (Carter 1982, p.140). Her ability to use this doubleness as a masquerade to conceal all evidence of her masculine origins recalls Riviere’s aforementioned theory on the female masquerade. She reintroduces the concept of femininity as representation because she believes that femininity is a role but that genuine womanliness is a character-based performative trait. Hollinger discusses how Riviere’s case study maintains that ‘the motivation for such a performance is a negative one: it arises from the need to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if [a woman] was found to possess it’ (Hollinger 1999, pp.27-8). When applied to Carter’s text, this performance can be recognised in how the progression of Eve and Tristessa’s relationship encourages Eve to

overlook the dissonant aspects of herself and finally accept that her doubleness is a reflection of their composite, albeit unconventional, identity:

We were – every modulation of the selves we now projected upon each other's flesh, selves – aspects of being, ideas – that seemed, during our embraces, to be the very essence of our selves; the concentrated essence of being, as if, out of these fathomless kisses and our interpenetrating, undifferentiated sex, we had made the great Platonic hermaphrodite together, the whole and perfect being to which he, with an absurd and touching heroism had, in his own single self, aspired; we brought into being who stops time in the self-created eternity of lovers. (Carter 1982, pp.144-5)

8.6 Conclusion: Eve's Re-examination of Gender from a Female Perspective

After living as both man and woman, Eve offers some perspective on the experience, and examines the traditional characteristics of gender from her own point of view, which highlights the biological disconnection between maleness/femaleness and masculine/feminine behaviour:

Masculine and feminine are correlatives which involve one another. I am sure of that – the quality and its negation are locked in necessity. But what the nature of the masculine and the nature of feminine might be, whether they involve male and female ... that I do not know. Though I have been both man and woman, still I do not know the answer to these questions. (Carter 1982, p.146)

Her opinion on the false nature of gender and its subsequent performative demands mirrors Monique Wittig's theory that gender is merely an unstable construction of the social paradigm that acts as a political foundation of patriarchy:

For us there is no such thing as being-woman or being-man. 'Man' and 'woman' are political concepts of opposition . . . It is the class struggle between women and men which will abolish men and women. The concept of difference has nothing ontological about it. It is only the way that the masters interpret a historical situation of domination . . . for us, this means there cannot any longer be women and men, and that as classes and as categories of thought or language they have to disappear, politically, economically, ideologically. (Wittig 1980)

Eve's experience as a woman embodies Wittig's call for a rebalance of the power relations between men and women, and for a revision of the rigid construction of gender. It also highlights how the incessant social pressures on both genders only add to the concept of essentialism, which in turn perpetuates the inferiority of the female position in society. In turn, this suggests that the rigid specifications of the civilised woman must be reassessed in order to create equilibrium between men and women in all aspects pertaining to socially definitions of gender and power.

After Tristessa's sudden death, Eve is briefly reunited with her old lover Leilah, who is revealed to be Mother's daughter, and is now called by her real name of Lilith. Her contribution to the creation of a new, figurative Eve, who has been constructed solely by female hands, calls into question the religious significance of their names. The bible states that Lilith was Adam's first wife; she was created at the same time as him and so, unlike Eve, who was later created from his rib, Lilith was a separate entity who was not indebted to him for her creation. Hence, Carter's Lilith helps in the formation of Eve as part of an attempt to liberate civilised women from their eternally subservient position in a patriarchal society that is defined by the beliefs of its religious foundation. Eve's ability to recognise Lilith's true identity raises Williams' notion of 'the female gaze' (as discussed in chapter 1), which allows its female host to recognise the deceptive nature of appearances. She quickly notes the connection between 'Leilah [and] Lilith: now I see you are your mother's daughter' (Carter

1982, p.171), and in doing so, proves that her femaleness has gone beyond her physical form and has become a part of her psyche, which in turn secures her position within womanhood. This development is also confirmed by her inability to see a reflection of herself in the cave of origins' mirror at the very end of the story, which suggests a loss of the masculine eye in the gaze that observes the female object:

There was a mirror propped against the rugged wall, a fine mirror in a curly, gilt frame; but the glass was broken, cracked right across many times so it reflected nothing, was a bewilderment of splinters and I could not see myself nor any portion of myself in it. (Carter 1982, p.177)

It can also be argued that the mirror's inability to provide Eve with an image of herself occurs because she is inside the cave at this point, and so has replaced man-made society with a natural environment that nurtures her natural or native state. This location is separate from the world where women are constructed in a particular way and so can be regarded as a construction of Wittig's ideal society whereby the differences between men and women 'have no essential, no natural ground. Men and women can be constructed differently from how they have been. And that is all – or everything – that Eve discovers in the cave of origins' (Day 1998, p.128).

The progression of Eve's journey throughout the story presents a modern interpretation of the female character in Female Gothic tradition, and offers an alternative version of civilised womanhood. Additionally, the complexity of her identity and gender highlights the genre's ability to create a new twist on an unnatural (in the literal sense of the word) form. Carter's role as an author of Female Gothic is especially relevant to transsexual issues, because she uses her stories to create characters like Eve who challenge the social paradigm of attributes such as gender and sexuality. Her ability to blur the rigid definitions associated with the masculine and feminine versions of these qualities encourages the reader

to recognise them as being social constructions, rather than inherent characteristics of either gender. From a feminist perspective, this process focuses on the corresponding performative demands that come with these positions, which in turn raises the notion of unequal power relations between the sexes. In particular, Carter uses *The Passion of New Eve* to highlight the transsexual woman's experience of having to encompass these various demands in her everyday life without the naturalisation of being treated as a female since birth. The subsequent hardships that Eve encounters as she tries to adjust to her new female role embody an ambiguous version of the male experience of womanhood.

Conclusion

The various representations of the female figure that have been explored in this thesis exemplify the rigid stipulations that are still an inherent part of female agency and identity despite significant changes in women's lives. Collectively, the cast of characters that figure in this study represent patriarchal entrapment, control, and categorisation of women into socially-determined native and civilised groups. As I mentioned in the Introduction, this classification is based on their ability to undertake the specific appearance, roles, attributes, and behaviours of femininity that are epitomised by the civilised woman. Failure to meet these standards ensures that they are negatively classed as native women. These heroines, and the Gothic genre in which they appear, challenge the strict social paradigm of femininity and its demands of the female figure. The various female roles that have been explored illustrate the complex nature of female identity, when considered in terms of their social obligations, as well as in terms of their struggle against the patriarchal demands that are intrinsic in even the earliest stage of its formation. Additionally, the survey of selected nineteenth and twentieth century texts in this work verifies the importance of this subject matter for both male and female authors of the Gothic genre regardless of the epoch or socio-cultural context of their texts.

Carmilla's active pursuit of the object of her sexual fulfilment in *Carmilla* presents a portrait of women's identity that challenges her traditionally passive position within the gender roles of sexual relations, and in so doing, she represents an alternative depiction of female sexuality. In addition to this, her exclusive interest in only female victims and lovers excludes the male figure from being a potential love-interest, and so removes his sexual

function from the text. It can thus be seen as a disempowerment of patriarchal sexual control, and a representation of an alternative paradigm. These aspects of her character are particularly exceptional when considered within their nineteenth century context, and so they illustrate the literary Gothic's ability to address subject matter that is relevant to prevailing social issues and to present its readers with unconventional versions of traditional concepts and imagined alternatives to these.

Additionally, the three representations of femininity in *Dracula* aid in the further investigation of the aforementioned topic of female sexuality. Mina and Lucy act as binary oppositions of female identity in relation to civilised and native women. Additionally, 'The Three Sisters' act as a correlative presence to Mina and Lucy, and are an essential addition to the female characters of the novel, because they represent the dangerous potential of the ultimate native woman and her all-encompassing sexual promiscuity. They suggest that sexual dominance is not solely the prerogative of men. In doing so, they mimic Carmilla's ability to undertake certain roles that are usually reserved for their male counterparts, which subsequently challenges fixed gender and social roles and illustrates women's capacity to fulfil men's positions. Social order is restored once the threat to female sexuality/ Dracula is contained and removed from the text.

Victor's role in *Frankenstein* challenges the traditional notion of motherhood as a biological component of female identity. His immediate rejection of the Monster presents a portrait of the maternal figure that is just as natural as acceptance of the new-born, when considered in terms of the common and often unspoken occurrence of postnatal trauma. *Patchwork Girl's* resurrection of the female monster offers yet another alternative mother figure who engages in a romantic relationship with her creation, thereby subverting the traditional parent-child bonds. More importantly however, is the figure of the Everywoman herself, who represents the ultimate unnatural female figure despite her composition of

(mostly) female appendages and despite her female creator. She symbolises the ultimate female threat to patriarchal society because of her absolute inability to encompass traits of the civilised woman, and so uses her otherness to inscribe a new form of female identity by telling the readers the history of her formation. In doing so she reflects the social objectifying image of female identity and represents how women are confined to the constraints of their female physicality.

This issue of motherhood is also considered in *The Vampire Lestat* through Gabrielle's character that represents the female figure as lacking in maternal instinct. Her portrayal of motherhood is one of disinterest, as she eventually becomes the child in her familial pairing with Lestat. She is another figure who is representative of the female potential for active sexuality, and the display of masculine behaviour once she is free from the restrictive bindings of her social position suggests that masculinity, rather than being a predestined and essential quality, is actually a performative, a point which has resonated throughout the chosen texts of this study. The role-reversal that takes place between her and Lestat is a natural development in many parent-child relationships, whereby the child must care for the elderly or sick and vulnerable parent and so represents a dependent stage of motherhood.

Claudia's character in *Interview with the Vampire* personifies another Rician female figure that explores the helplessness of the young girl's situation within a patriarchal order which dictates female identity, and often defines women by their physicality. She personifies an objection to the common practice of men's infantilisation of women, and seeks emancipation from her paternal figures in order to create a new version of herself that is free from all male entrapment. In addition to this, her determination to replace her girlish form with a woman's body highlights the emphasis on physical perfection that is engrained in the female psyche, and which is a direct result of patriarchal influence.

In *The Magic Toyshop*, Melanie shares Claudia's experience of existing within a family unit of absent/silent mothers and domineering fathers. She portrays the young girl's struggle against patriarchal entrapment and control of all aspects of her identity including her emerging sexual adolescent sexuality. Her initial contribution to her own objectification is replaced with a desire for freedom from male influence once she gains a better understanding of her new role as a young woman. Furthermore, her recognition of Aunt Margaret as a personification of her potential future existence within the toyshop shows how women's awareness of their predecessor's oppression encourages their resistance to sharing such a fate.

The female interrelationships in *Rebecca* illustrate the complex nature of women's attitudes and influence on each other. Once again, this is a strictly female experience because the social construction of female identity ensures that women will always categorise and compare themselves to their peers in order to gain a measure of their self-worth, whereas this aspect is not a common aspect of male friendships. The narrator's feelings of inadequacy are a result of her self-comparison with an imagined version of her martial predecessor, who she believes had embodied ideal femininity of the civilised women. Additionally, Mrs. Danvers' mental torment of the narrator depicts an example of women's attitude towards a competitive threat from a fellow female. These behaviours act as examples of the complicated psychology behind female interrelationships and can be read as a reaction to the rivalry that is intrinsic to women's identity formation, which is the aforementioned product of patriarchal order and influence over women.

Finally, Eve's role as the transsexual woman in *The Passion of New Eve* offers a perception of female relationships from a character that has not had the experience of a socially-constructed femininity from a young age. Consequently, her perspective of the female situation is initially a male one, because her mentality remains in its socially-constructed masculine state for some time after the physical transformation has taken place.

Conclusion

Moreover, her impression of women as a transsexual woman is very different to her opinion as her male self, which illustrates how one's gender is a strong influencing factor on their relationships with others of the same gender, or of an opposite gender to their own. Her role as a transsexual character is also important because her post-transformation struggle to fulfil the performative demands on women illustrates the disconnection between femininity and the biological status/sex.

In conclusion, the collective representation of female identity in this study is one that offers a greater understanding of the social constraints and demands on women. The Female Gothic's ability to challenge fixed definitions allows for its depiction of women in relation to their social categorisation through a manner of dissection and exploration that could not be repeated in other literary genres. For this reason, it confirms itself as a field that is vital in the discussion of feminist topics and social concerns with regard to issues of sex and gender. Finally, the texts that have been discussed illustrate how the feminist issues of objectification, entrapment, and categorisation of female identity have always have been a persistent feature of the female condition regardless of epoch or socio-cultural contexts.

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