

Masters of the Mind

A Study of Vampiric Desire, Corruption, and Obsession in Polidori's *The Vampyre*, Coleridge's *Christabel*, and Le Fanu's *Carmilla*

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Table of Content

Acknowledgments	1
Abstract	3
Introduction	4
Chapter 1 <i>The Vampyre</i> (1819)	10
1.1 Introduction	10
1.2 Main Gothic elements in <i>The Vampyre</i>	11
1.3 Analysis of the text: The psychological vampire	14
1.4 Development of the relationship	16
Chapter 2 <i>Christabel</i> (1816).....	20
2.1 Introduction	20
2.2 Main Gothic elements in <i>Christabel</i> (1816).....	21
2.3 Analysis of the text.....	25
2.4 Development of the relationship	26
Chapter 3 <i>Carmilla</i> (1872)	31
3.1 Introduction	31
3.2 Main Gothic elements in <i>Carmilla</i> (1872)	32
3.3 Analysis of the text.....	35
3.4 Development of the relationship	37
Conclusion.....	39
Work cited list	42

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the establishment and the development of the relationship between the three main vampiric protagonists and their human victims in John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816). This will be done by close reading the texts from a sociohistorical perspective and focusing on the characteristics and keywords of nineteenth-century vampire fiction, such as the analyses of frequently-occurring Gothic themes, the Byronic vampire, and the exploration of the vampire psyche. The three texts will respectively be divided into three chapters and each of the three chapters will be divided into an analysis of the main gothic elements, an analysis of the text, and an analysis on the development of the relationship between the vampire and the victim. These analyses will then be compared and contrasted in the conclusion. Through the comparison of the three texts, the conclusion will provide an answer to the vampire's power on a psychological level.

Keywords: vampires, nineteenth century, close-reading, Byronic vampire, Gothic fiction.

Introduction

Throughout the shadowy world of ghosts and demons there is no figure so terrible, no figure so dreaded and abhorred, yet dight with such fearful fascination, as the vampire, who is himself neither ghost nor demon, but yet who partakes the dark natures and possesses the mysterious and terrible qualities of both. (Summers in Waltje 1).

The vampire has been the subject of enduring fascination throughout Western history. However, while the vampire has always been "a central figure in popular culture" (Waltje 1) in time the vampire has changed from folkloristic beast to aristocrat. According to Jörg Waltje, this transformation is an example of the "mythopoeic process in which myths are recognised according to the changing popular beliefs or interests" (1). This means that as society and its interests changed, vampires changed as well. In her book *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy*, Milly Williamson elaborates on vampire attraction. She explains this attraction through a contradiction, in which she says that from the very first reports on vampirism that seeped into Europe, we are told to be wary of them, yet are utterly fascinated at the same time (1).

Interestingly, the elements that make vampires so attractive to their audience, are the same elements that bind vampires to their victims. Vampires evoke feelings of terror in readers, for they embody a fear of death, yet they fascinate us with their monstrosity, their sin, success, charisma, supernatural powers, with beauty, and romantic entanglement. In nineteenth-century literature, vampires have had similar grasps on their victims. As Auerbach observes, "Vampires were not demonic lovers or animalistic stalkers in the nineteenth century, but formed close psychological bonds or friendships with their victims" (Auerbach 13). Gordon Melton aptly describes this bonding experience of the nineteenth-century vampires in the following words: "While the early literary vampires pictured by such writers as Goethe, Coleridge, Shelly, Polidori, Byron, and Nodier were basically parasites, possessing few traits to endear them to the people they encountered, nevertheless they performed a vital function by assisting the personification of the darker side possessed by human beings. The romantic poets of the nineteenth century assigned themselves the task of exploring the dark side of the human consciousness" (xxxii). Part of the vampire's allure is their mystery, their grace, and their association with sexuality. Vampires are rebellious and they embody our

secret sins. These traits, including an obsession with humans, seem to have a desiring effect on the audience. A desire that would change overtime, from, for example, the nineteenth-century Romantic vampire known for luring its victims into intimacy, and friendship to a modern vampire becoming a semi-dangerous love interest. Vampires appear to survive by their "uncanny" ability to transform into "whatever our society shuns, but secretly demands" (qtd. in Hallab 1). Vampires are also said to appeal to those in society that do not really fit in: rebels, the isolated, the shunned, and those that see beauty in darkness. Teenagers struggling in situations they wished they had a close friend, or people yearning for passionate love. Thus, the vampire's power partly lies in their ability to fill the roles of friend and lover. This can be seen, for example, in Thomas Alfredson's *Let the Right One In* (2008), in which a young vampire befriends a young, lonely, bullied human boy or in Stephenie Meyers' series *Twilight* (2005), which revolves around a young woman's attraction to a vampire and a werewolf.

Another reason for vampire's success with both their victims and their audience is their adaptability. Nina Auerbach aptly describes how "[g]hosts, werewolves, and manufactured monsters are relatively changeless, more aligned with eternity than with time," while vampires possess the ability to "blend into the changing cultures they inhabit" (6). Vampires invade the lives of their victims and occupy an invisible spot deep within society. Therefore, they become the "hideous invaders of the normal" (Auerbach 6). This ability to blend and change with time by adapting to a period's interests allows vampires to become a reflection of their era. However, adaptability is only one reason for their success. According to Milly Williamson, one of the other criteria for stalking prey is sharing a common ground with their victim. Richard Dyer explains that "[i]f the vampire is an Other, he or she was always a figure in whom one could find one's self...the despicable as well as the defiant, the shameful as well as the unashamed, the loathing of oddness as well as the pride in it" (qtd. in Williamson 2). Vampires are able to form such close relations with their victims because they serve as a mirror, a reflection of the human. This correlates to the vampire lore that they are often portrayed without a reflection. Considering the previous paragraphs, it can be seen that there are multiple answers for explaining the power of the vampire allure. Their success might be attributed to a paradoxical fascination of a fear they awaken in us, and their ability to transform, adapt, and become a reflection of their era.

Over the years, research has been mainly focused on contemporary vampire fiction rather than the earlier vampire literature, which has remained relatively underexplored as a result. However, it is the nineteenth-century literature that has shaped the vampire into the creature that we know and love today. What is it exactly that draws us to this type of vampire,

how does its power work, and how is it able to maintain its grasp on its victim? The essence of their power appears to lie in the psychology bonds they form with the human. However, previous research on both nineteenth-century and contemporary vampire fiction have primarily focused on the sexual aspects of vampire seduction, while it is the psychological aspect in particular that nineteenth-century authors and critics have been interested in. While sexuality certainly played a role in many early vampire-victim relationships, the basis of these nineteenth-century relationships were initially emotional and psychological. Researching these aspects not only provides different perspectives, but also enables the exploration of the gradual shift in vampire fiction; from the blood-sucking monstrosity to the sexual and desirable being. Above all, it gives an answer to deep-seated parasitic grasp vampires have on their victims. Exploring the psychological aspects from a sociohistorical point of view allows for a better understanding of this era's fiction, and thus leads to a better understanding of these types of vampire-victim relationships.

The literature chosen to conduct the research with are John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816), and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). All three texts can be seen to differ tremendously in regards to the main vampiric characters, the gender of the human victims, the perspective from which the texts are written, the Gothic conventions they adhere to, the length of the texts, and even the types of text. While both *The Vampyre* (1819) and *Carmilla* (1872) are, for example, prose, Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816) is considered a long narrative poem, and while *Carmilla* is told from the first person perspective, the texts by Polidori and *Christabel* are not. Unfortunately, proper analysis of all these different texts lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this thesis focuses on the psych dimension of the vamp human relation. The texts were chosen for adhering to the similar theme of psychological vampirism, which allows for coherent analyses. Also, the chosen texts, though published in the nineteenth century, were written during different parts of the era. Researching this literature will thus not only yield interesting similarities and differences, but will also shed a light on the earlier-mentioned gradual shift in vampire fiction. Due to the fact that the literature contains elaborate descriptions on the human and vampire psyche, and the development of their bonds, make these texts excellent choices for exploring the psychological vampire. It is therefore interesting to research in what ways the bonds are formed in the texts, how they develop and how they are maintained, and what effect they have on the human counterpart. The research question will then be as follows: How are the psychological development and effect of the relationships between

vampires and humans represented in Polidori's *The Vampire*, Coleridge's *Christabel*, and Le Fanu's *Carmilla*.

Despite their popularity, vampire fiction is a relatively new phenomenon in Western Europe. According to Victoria Nelson, Western Europe's sudden interest in vampire lore ,after the large influx of vampire fiction from Eastern Europe, correlates with the simultaneous decline of witchcraft and the tradition of burning witches. The Witches' Sabbath "and the blasphemous reversals of the Christian ritual" (119) had been seamlessly replaced by the vampiric enactment of the Christian Blood Sacrament (119). At that time, a small amount of vampire reports sparked an immense interest in England, France, and Germany where a "great shift in world view during the seventeenth century had led...to much ambivalence around the matter of supernatural agency" (119). This shift meant that "the natural world" and "God's heaven" (119) were increasingly seen as operating on their own terms. Attributing inexplicable phenomena to witches became less justifiable, because "witchcraft couldn't be proven using the materialistic rubric of the new sciences" (119). Thus, the idea of witches as an actual phenomenon faded, and all that was left was a "nostalgic attraction to supernaturalism" (119).

Since the introduction of the word "vampire" into the English language over two hundred years ago, these creatures of the night were able to maintain their popular status within its genre. Jörg Waltje believes that the development of vampires as a "central figure in popular culture" has been accelerated by the introduction of film, but that the genre has mainly been shaped by the Romantic era in which it found its "first literary expression" (1). In this era, the previously folkloristic beast-like abomination gradually changed into the attractive and aristocratic gentleman or woman that most readers and viewers know today. There was no longer an emphasis on the vampire as a blood-sucking monster. Instead, the new vampire was charming, intimate, aristocratic and above all psychological. Joseph Melton aptly explains this by saying that "it is not necessarily the blood itself that the vampire seeks but the psychic energy or 'life force' believed to be carried by it." (xxx).

This influence and the aforementioned shift in vampire characters stem from several key texts from the nineteenth century, in which the vampire makes its first appearance in English literature through poetry. According to Melton, the possibly earliest mention of vampires in British literature is Robert Southey's poem "Thalaba" (62).

Another prime example is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816), a poem famous for debuting a vampire-like creature in a leading role. It tells the story of the eponymous young girl who is being tricked and beguiled by Geraldine, a shape-shifting

supernatural being. Melton explains how the "[t]he Romantic era of vampire-themed poetry set the context for the first vampire prose story in English" (62). Prose such as *Carmilla* (1872) by Sheridan Le Fanu and *The Vampyre* (1819) written by Lord Byron's former travelling physician John William Polidori, became highly influential and set the tone for many works. The latter's work contributed to the creation of the so-called Byronic vampire. The Byronic vampire was inspired by the "Byronic hero", who is a man that is cynical, moody and feels deeply troubled, yet is capable of profound love and affection. The Byronic vampire is related to the Byronic hero in having an attractive and rebellious side which cannot only be seen in Polidori's Lord Ruthven, but in many of today's vampires.

In Britain, the emergence of the vampire in literature ran parallel to the rise of Gothic fiction. Both vampire and gothic fiction seemed to tie in seamlessly with each other. Gothic fiction is everything which provokes fear; fear of the unknown, fear of the forbidden, fear of "the Other", and fear of the supernatural. Nineteenth-century vampire literature such as John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), Sheridan le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816) are examples of literary works that both include vampire and Gothic elements. Considering the characteristics of nineteenth-century vampire fiction that are prominent in these texts, it can be stated that there are several elements overlapping with the Gothic genre. Like vampire stories, Gothic fiction has an emphasis "on portraying the terrifying" and "a prominent use of the supernatural" It often depicts themes such as haunted castles, "heroines preyed on by unspeakable terrors", and ghosts and monsters (Punter 1).

The story which proved fundamental for establishing the Gothic subgenre was Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), in which he attempted to combine the mysterious folklore of the vampire and the Romantic or Satanic notion of the *homme fatal* (Nelson 121). Vampires also quickly became established in the newly-emerged Victorian ghost stories. They "helped to create a new supernatural imaginary that claimed territory outside a specifically Christian context while reinforcing...the Gothick ambience of malignant evil" (Nelson 121). Many novelists tried their hand at the vampire fiction, and each tried to adhere to the exotic and Gothic setting. For example, Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) was initially set in Ireland, but was later changed to a region commonly associated with vampires, Styria, as to adhere to his publisher's wishes (Nelson 121).

The literary works discussed in this thesis are some of the most well known texts within the Gothic genre. Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816) and Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) all contain distinct elements of the Gothic, such as the use of the supernatural, the inclusion of fear-evoking monsters, mystery, "the preference for sublimity

over didacticism" (Geary 19), antiquated and distant settings, and a focus on the "darker aspects of the psyche" (Geary 19). While the notion of the Sublime was not a new phenomenon in the nineteenth, it is known to have several literary uses and definitions. Audrey Tinkham explains that Romantic writers emphasised and utilised only certain aspects of sublimity. "Romantic writers [focussed] on the notion that certain aspects of the sublime style (grandeur of thought together with intensity of passion) are dependent upon a nobility of soul or character" (Tinkham). This aspect of the Sublime is well represented in the texts by Polidori, Le Fanu, and Coleridge as the three human victims portrayed in these texts exhibit a sense of moral sublime, ranging from swearing an oath in *The Vampyre* to profound, passionate and blinding human emotional bonds in *Carmilla* and *Christabel*. The elaborate themes and reflective exploration of the psyche illustrate the complexity and interweaving of both the Gothic fiction, vampire fiction, and the texts by Polidori, Coleridge, and Le Fanu.

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to examine the three main vampire protagonists and their psychological relationships with their human victims in the texts by John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816). The methodology used to answer the research question will be to research the texts as a whole, and close-reading will be used to analyse relevant passages. The passages will be chosen by going through all three texts thoroughly, and meticulously selecting excerpts that pertain to the theme and effect of vampire-human relationships. Due to the limited amount of space available, strict selection of the excerpts will have to be made, and examples that only briefly touch upon the theme will have to be disregarded.

The thesis will be divided into three chapters. Chapters one, two, and three will respectively analyse the three texts by Polidori, Le Fanu, and Coleridge. The chapters will contain, apart from a short introduction on characteristics, three other sections relevant to the theme of vampire-human bonds. The second section will analyse characteristic Gothic elements that have helped shape the relationship between vampire and human, such as the Byronic vampire, the notion of good versus evil, Gothic doubling, and symbiosis. The third section will provide an analysis of text, meaning that this segment will concern a general analysis of the vampire and human protagonists' traits, such as their power, their vulnerabilities, and the traits characteristic for vampires. The last section will analyse the development of the vampire and victim relationship in detail.

Chapter 1 *The Vampyre* (1819)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) through close-reading and an analysis of passages from the text which relate to the central research question. The chapter is divided into four main parts, starting with an introduction which consists of a short explanation of the Byronic vampire and why this is relevant to the text. The following part will focus on the Gothic elements found in the text, as this is crucial for the interpretation of nineteenth-century vampire fiction. The third section of this chapter focuses on the overall analysis of the main characters through close-reading. The final section will explain the psychological development of the relationship between the two main characters: the vampire and its human victim. All combined, these four parts will provide an answer to the research question, namely: How are the psychological development and effect of the relationship between the vampire Lord Ruthven and victim Mr Aubrey represented in Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819).

In 1819, John William Polidori wrote his innovative short work of prose fiction *The Vampyre*, in which he changed the folkloristic image of the well-known bloodsucking monster by correlating it with the moody yet glamorous and aristocratic character invented by Lord Byron (Bainbridge 21). *The Vampyre* (1819), a first-person narrative, tells the story of human protagonist Mr Aubrey who is in constant close proximity to a vampire named Lord Ruthven. Shortly after meeting Lord Ruthven, Mr Aubrey remarks upon the vampire's extraordinary appeal and social status, emphasising his fascination with the man's mysterious and aristocratic behaviour. Simon Bainbridge aptly describes this as Lord Ruthven's "irresistible powers of seductions" (21). At one point, after the story describes Lord Ruthven's pursuit of Mr Aubrey's sister, the narrator asks himself:

Who could resist his power? His tongue had dangers and toils to recount—could speak of himself as of an individual having no sympathy with any being on the crowded earth, save with her to whom he addressed himself;—could tell how, since he knew her, his existence, had begun to seem worthy of preservation, if it were merely that he might listen to her soothing accents;—in fine, he knew so well how to use the serpent's art, or such was the will of fate, that he gained her affections. (Polidori 17)

According to Simon Bainbridge, Lord Ruthven's "irresistibility" (21) is the result of his "mastery of the rhetoric of Byronic poetics" (21). Lord Ruthven's success and "power" come from the use of language ("his tongue") and especially from the ability to utilise the "two most distinctive features of Byron's writing" (21): a thrilling narrative containing a romance and "sympathy-evoking self-presentation" (21). In the case of *The Vampyre*, the appeal of Lord Ruthven is the fact that he offers Miss Aubrey a seemingly "empowering role" (21) in which he presents her as the only figure capable of "saving him from his fallen and dissolute state" (21).

1.2 Main Gothic elements in *The Vampyre*

According to Patricia Skarda, Polidori's short story is not at all innovative, but "remarkable for its echoes [rather] than for its originality" (250). Skarda claims that Polidori was heavily influenced by Byron's work when he wrote *The Vampyre* (1819) somewhere between 17 June 1816, when Byron read a comparable story to his guests at his villa, and 1 April 1819, the date of the *The Vampyre's* first publication (250). Skarda goes on to state that the story of Lord Ruthven is so similar to Byron's work that it "unquestionably draws on Byron's characterization[s]" (250), hence the term "Byronic vampire" associated with Polidori's *The Vampyre*.

This consequently means that Polidori adhered to the same genre as Byron, especially with the inclusion of a dark theme such as vampires. In the Romantic period, the era in which Lord Byron began to write, an affiliated genre which became highly popular emerged; the Gothic. "The cursed hero, endowed with diabolical powers" (McGinley 73), captivated many readers of that time. Some of the specific elements of the Gothic genre, among them the "Gothic villain" (73), are generic aspects from which the prototypical vampire literature would emerge. Byron's incorporation of this villain sparked the creation of the Byronic Hero, and thus the Byronic vampire presented in Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819): Lord Ruthven, a highly seductive, narcissistic and manipulative aristocratic vampire "with a desire to control" (McGinley 73).

Ernest Jones states that the theme of the vampire, which is a typically Gothic theme, is linked to the idea of a "beyond" (qtd. in Morrill 2), a faraway mystical land of endless opportunities. This can be seen in *The Vampyre* (1819) when the wealthy orphan Aubrey, blinded by his naïve fascination, accompanies Lord Ruthven, who is repeatedly deemed a monster (Davidson 173), on a long trip. Furthermore, "Aubrey occupies the place in Gothic fiction normally filled by a heroine" (Bainbridge 27). Like Catherine Morland in Jane

Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, Polidori presents Aubrey as "lacking a mature or realistic understanding of the world...and having cultivated more his imagination than his judgment" (27). Aubrey's inclination to remain in a imaginary world that is free of harsh reality, can be seen in his relationship with Ianthe. The text mentions how Aubrey began to attach himself "more and more to Ianthe" (11) because of her "innocence" (11), which contrasted with "all the affected virtues" (11) of all the other women. Another example of Aubrey's lack of maturity and his tendency to shield himself from reality is the scene where he finds the lifeless body of Ianthe. Upon seeing her corpse he "shut[s] his eyes" (12), "hoping that it was but a vision arising from his disturbed imagination" (12). Moreover, Aubrey's passivity in regards to Lord Ruthven is revealed after the death of Ianthe, after which Aubrey suddenly realises that Ianthe's warnings about vampires were true. Instead of facing reality or confronting Ruthven, Aubrey is seized with a "most violent fever" (12) during which calls upon Lord Ruthven and "curse[s] him as her destroyer" (12) instead of facing his demons personally.

The root of Aubrey's naivety lies in his upbringing. As he lost his parents at a very young age, Aubrey was left under the care of guardians, who had no interest in raising him and focused solely on his fortune. As a result of his sheltered upbringing, Aubrey created this "romantic feeling of honour and candour" (Polidori 7). Although Aubrey is aware of the rumours surrounding Lord Ruthven, he initially disregards these, as he is completely blinded by his fascination for the vampire. Throughout *The Vampyre*, Aubrey can be seen displaying feminine aspects that can be linked to this fascination. Moreover, the text shows that it is similar to the fascination with Ruthven exhibited by the ladies. Both Aubrey and the high society women disregard the warning signs and rumours and both are beguiled by Ruthven's "winning tongue" (7). However, there are several aspects in which Aubrey differs from the women in text. Firstly, Aubrey appears to be more observing rather than pursuing Ruthven. In the text it is frequently mentioned how Aubrey "watched him" (Polidori 8) due to his intense desire to form "an idea of the character of a man entirely absorbed in himself" (8). Ruthven's stoic personality only seems to increase Aubrey's interest. Aubrey then mentions the act of "studying Lord Ruthven's character" (8). This implies that the basis of Aubrey's interest in Ruthven is a critical review of his character and his motives. The women, on the other hand, appear to be less modest or critical in their pursuit of Ruthven. Polidori uses the words "female hunters" (7) to refer to the women interested in Ruthven. Moreover, these female hunters seem to have no interest in Ruthven's character. The text describes how the "form and outline" (7) of Ruthven's "beautiful" (7) face sparked the female hunters desire to "win his

attentions" (7). Perhaps it is due to this impressionable nature that Lord Ruthven appears to prefer female victims. Yet he also victimises Aubrey, possibly due to this exact naïve, curious and feminine character. It is not until it is too late that Aubrey realises the dangers of Lord Ruthven. Aubrey watched Lord Ruthven closely, allowing his imagination to run wild.

He [Aubrey] watched him [Ruthven]; [...] [and] allowing his imagination to picture everything that flattered its propensity to extravagant ideas, he soon formed this object into the hero of a romance, and determined to observe the offspring of his fancy, rather than the person before him. (Polidori 8)

With this excerpt Polidori emphasises that the "fascination" and "glamour" (Bainbridge 27) of the Byronic hero, and thus the Byronic vampire, are just as much an effect of the "imaginative projection" (27) of those who view him as such, as well as any of those qualities inherent to the heroic character himself (27). As such, the story stresses the importance of the imaginative.

The fear of life and death is a crucial theme in both Gothic and vampire fiction, as the vampire is feared due to his propensity to take human lives. In the text these themes can be seen when Aubrey not only steps into the unknown, but also into darkness as he witnesses the murder of Ianthe. Initially Aubrey's trust in Ruthven is unrelenting, and after Ianthe warns him about vampire lore, he is still reluctant to accept subconscious feelings about Ruthven's possible supernatural nature. However, after he becomes aware of the vampire's true nature, the tone in the text changes. From that moment on he refers to Lord Ruthven as a "monster" (Polidori 16), and he enters a fearful relationship with the creature. This sensation is deepened by the fact that Aubrey is confined by an oath, which prevents him from revealing the vampire's secret identity and supernatural powers. Although Aubrey has a strong desire to save his sister, he knows he is fighting a losing battle. Other examples in the text of this symbolical confinement can be found during the night in which Ianthe was murdered. During his research on horse, Aubrey did not perceive that "day-light would soon end" (Polidori 11) and he finds himself in the dark, when suddenly his horse is spooked, perhaps by the presence of a lurking evil, and he is carried by the horse through the "entangled forest" (11). This forest may signify the increasingly intensifying and confining relationship between Aubrey and the vampire, as the scene following the entangled forest is that in which Ianthe is murdered. During this moment Aubrey both witnesses and fears the vampire for the first time. Thus, the

Gothic genre, which emerged during this era, can be seen in many different aspects and scenes throughout Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) era.

1.3 Analysis of the text: The psychological vampire

A central aspect of the nineteenth-century Romantic vampire is the close unions formed between the vampire and its victim. After the shift brought on by the Romantic era and the influence of the Byronic vampire, there was no longer an emphasis on the vampire as a blood-sucking monster. Instead, the new vampire was charming, intimate, aristocratic and above all psychological. During this period, the authors felt that "real vampirism" (Melton xxxi) involved the loss of "psychic energy" (xxxii), by which the vampire quite literally drained its victims of his or her life force. Thus, the focus on the physical act of bloodsucking became less prominent.

Aubrey, an orphan "left with an only sister in the possession of great wealth" (Polidori 7), arrives in London where he soon starts to mingle with the high society. Polidori describes Aubrey as someone who has cultivated more his "imagination" than his "judgement" (7). He is a young, handsome man who cherishes nineteenth-century romantic feelings of "honour and candour", traits that would ultimately result in his demise. As an impressionable young lad, Aubrey is immediately fascinated, almost infatuated, with Lord Ruthven, although he is aware of the rumours that surround the man. Lord Ruthven is seen as a peculiar man with a "reputation of a winning tongue" (7), and later on his guardians warn Aubrey in a letter to stay clear of Ruthven. According to the guardians, Ruthven's character was "dreadfully vicious" (9) and in the possession of "irresistible powers of seduction" (9), possibly because people's increased fascination with Lord Ruthven had been witnessed and questioned by some. Polidori does not elaborate on this in the text. However, since Ruthven's identity was not yet revealed, except later on to Aubrey bound by the oath, one can speculate that these warnings were based on rumours.

To emphasise Aubrey's interest, Polidori continually emphasises both profound and more superficial attractive traits of Lord Ruthven. He describes Lord Ruthven's mysterious "peculiarities" (7), with a face "which never gained a warmer tint" (7), which is a classic vampire characteristic that remained popular over the years. Lord Ruthven is also said to possess the "dead grey eye" (7), which would fixate upon his victim's face and with which he was able to "pierce through to the inward workings of the heart" (7), together with the "reputations of a winning tongue" (7). All these characteristics, similar to the traits possessed

by the Byronic Hero, contribute to Lord Ruthven's irresistibility, not only to Aubrey but to others in his surrounding as well.

Interestingly, there are notable differences between gender and power relations regarding the vampire's irresistibility. Early on in the text, Polidori describes the "apparent caution" (7) and the previously mentioned "winning tongue" with which Ruthven approaches women, while Aubrey is initially attracted to Ruthven's stoic and mysterious character. This winning tongue proves to be the desired technique for deceiving Ms Aubrey, as it was "the pretence of great affection for the brother and interest in his fate" (17) that gradually "won the ear of Miss Aubrey" (17). Aubrey remarks: "Who could resist his power? His tongue had dangers and toils to recount. [H]e knew so well how to use the serpent's art, or such was the will of fate, that he gained her affections" (17). Not only does Lord Ruthven's grasp on the characters of the two sexes differ, their reaction to the vampire can be seen to vary as well. While Aubrey's psychological drain was arduous and their relationship appeared to be more profound over time, Ms Aubrey instantly swoons over the vampire and is eager to share her happiness about her engagement with Lord Ruthven. Aubrey, on the other hand, seems to keep his excitement to himself. He closely observes the vampire and has a strong desire to know more about him, but he exhibits none of the overly excited female fascination. This is implied in the text by a description of his studious character. It is mentioned how Aubrey is attached to "the romance of the solitary hours" (Polidori 8), and that, after stepping into the world of reality, "there was no foundation in real life for any of that congeries of pleasing pictures and descriptions contained in those volumes, from which he had formed his study" (8). This passage implies an introverted character, one that is not familiar with a life outside his studies. The feminine excitement could perhaps be linked to Lord Ruthven's remark on women. At the end of the text he mentions the "frail" (Polidori 18) nature of women. By frail Polidori could have meant the inability to resist the vampire's seduction, and this could explain why the two women were killed almost instantly, while Aubrey succumbed to an arduous psychological drain which involved none of the vampire's direct physical contact.

An aspect of the Byronic vampire that plays a major role in the nineteenth-century vampire is class. Many well-known vampires come from either rich or royal heritage, and are destined to maintain that lifestyle. Vampires such as Lord Ruthven, Geraldine or Carmilla come from privileged backgrounds and can be seen preying on victims of the same class. Carol Senf argues that in the case of the nineteenth-century aristocratic vampire, class suggests a "power of the past over the present" (43), which reinforces the idea of Polidori's aristocratic vampire. Senf's quote emphasises the idea of the old vampire's perverse appeal

over his living victim. This power enables a vampire to do what he pleases. This is exemplified in Polidori's Lord Ruthven. Typical of the nineteenth century and the Byronic vampire, Lord Ruthven's class comes with a social position and respect, which grants him, together with his vampire guile, a certain power over his victims. This guile, the piercing eye that penetrates the heart, and the diabolical tongue, enable the nineteenth-century vampire to achieve his goal to lure his victim in. His high class status then enables him to specifically beguile upper class victims, and thus maintain his power and success.

The reason why vampirism became inherently linked to aristocracy is not entirely clear. However, it can be seen to have a major influence on a vampire's relationship with its victim. Firstly, because it creates a sense of the Other. As class was strictly divided and mingling with the lower classes was not a favourable thing to do, the upper class formed exclusive circles. This is shown in the text when Lord Ruthven and Aubrey travel to several different extravagant locations, all of these include upper-class drawing-rooms or gatherings. Aubrey observes how Lord Ruthven, who in fact struggles financially (Polidori 8), socialises with the high society. Secondly, having his name associated with the upper class probably also meant a greater and more far-reaching influence as Ruthven was a well-known and admired character. In the text it is remarked that his "peculiarities" (Polidori 7) "caused him to be invited to every house" (7) and that "all wished to see him" (7). Those that were already familiar with Ruthven were pleased to have something "in their presence capable of engaging their attention" (7) Lastly, while linked to the notion of the Other, exclusivity creates the sense of belonging together. This is especially important for Aubrey, who is orphan and thus lacks secure class background. While his parents left him a fortune, he lacks the upbringing that allows him to join the exclusivity of the upper class. In a sense he becomes thus the Other. In Lord Ruthven he finds a sense of belonging and the ability to become part of an exclusive group of influential people by visiting, for example, "drawing-rooms" (Polidori 7). In the nineteenth century, an occupant's drawing room often referred to a spare and luxuriously-decorated room meant to show status. It is also especially designed to provide more privacy for your guests.

1.4 Development of the relationship

As mentioned earlier, Aubrey has been said to possess more imagination than judgement. He has a warped sense of reality, confusing "the dreams of poets with the realities of life" (Skarda 251) and he naively deems "poverty to be picturesque and virtue to be universal" (251). While

Lord Ruthven poses himself as a wealthy aristocrat, he is in fact struggling financially (Polidori 8), which is a fact Aubrey ignores entirely. It is briefly mentioned in the text, yet is completely overruled by Aubrey's desire to gain information regarding Ruthven. Whether Aubrey's views on poverty stem from a sheltered upbringing by wealthy parents or the fact that he became an orphan quite early, does not become clear. Aubrey's views and character immediately make of him an ideal victim. Fascinated by the narcissistic, aloof character of a man "entirely absorbed by himself" (Polidori 8), Aubrey turns Lord Ruthven "into the hero of romance" (8), by which the voids created due to Ruthven's aloofness, tickle Aubrey's imaginative fancy. As if under a spell, Aubrey decides to relinquish his "dreams" (8) and go on a Grand Tour with Ruthven to learn more about his characters and his "peculiarities" (7). Interestingly, Patricia Skarda claims that the tale of *The Vampyre* (1819) is a retelling of Polidori's life, in which Aubrey stands for, and Lord Ruthven reflects his struggling relationship with Byron. However, in the text, Polidori rewrites real life events and portrays himself as an equal, while in reality he was hired by Byron to join him on his travels. Another resemblance is that both Aubrey and Polidori died young. Aubrey, drained of his life force, is unable to stop Ruthven, while Polidori was essentially drained of his life force as well before he committed suicide as a result of depression and debt at the age of 25 (Skarda 250-265). Whether these claims are true is unclear, but the similarities are striking. Also, they might explain both the relationship between Aubrey and Ruthven and the Gothic feeling of dread that is present in the text.

The element of psychological drain that persists throughout *The Vampyre* (1819) is an important component of both the nineteenth-century vampire and the relationship between Aubrey and Ruthven. It is a slowly, but gradually intensifying process of psychological parasitism, in which the victim, Aubrey, initially feels great admiration for the vampiric predatory. As the bond grows more profound, the victim starts to carefully question the mysterious nature of the vampire. However, at that stage the parasitic vampire has full control over his victim. This can be seen in the text where Aubrey's guardians warn him about Lord Ruthven and his act of shaming several women. Upon reading this letter Aubrey decides to distance himself from Ruthven "whose character had not yet shown a single bright point on which to rest the eye" (Polidori 9). Instead, Aubrey does the opposite and tries to justify his behaviour by insisting that he has to "watch [Lord Ruthven] more closely" (9) and to "let no slight circumstances pass by unnoticed". This means that, especially while in close range of Ruthven, he is still under the vampire's spell and that the psychological drain thus continues. Soon after, to secure his psychological and parasitic grasp, Lord Ruthven forces Aubrey to

swear the earlier-mentioned oath and by the time Aubrey actively attempts to warn his sister, Lord Ruthven's grasp reaches its final stage.

Though Aubrey, with naïve curiosity and a foolish "high romantic feeling" (Polidori 8) falls for Lord Ruthven's guile, he is not the first one to fall victim to Ruthven. The vampire first manages to seduce and murder the only two women in the text that are "unaffected by crowded drawing-rooms and stifling balls" (Polidori 10), meaning that these two women were not of high class, but commoners. Aubrey describes Ianthe, a common peasant girl, as the embodiment of "innocence, youth, and beauty" (10). The depiction of Ianthe as a commoner is emphasised in the text, which is possibly due to Aubrey's attraction to Ianthe through his status as an orphan. This means that his lack of a secure background, like Ianthe, enables him to form a deeper connection with the girl. However, it is mentioned that while Aubrey is an "orphan" (Polidori 7), he is at the same time "in the possession of great wealth"(7). The fact that he is "handsome, frank, and rich" (7) allows him to enter "the gay circles" (7) where "many mothers surrounded him" (7) in an attempt to introduce their daughters to him. The inclusion of the lower classes also emphasises class distinction and a sense of "Us versus Them"; the upper class and the lower class. Also, as a common peasant girl, Ianthe's death would most likely be unnoticed. The other female character in the text whose motivations are not dependent on class or upper-class etiquette is Aubrey's sister. According to the text Miss Aubrey possesses a "melancholy charm...which did not seem to arise from misfortune, but from some feeling within" (15). Her blue eyes never seemed to light up as to "to indicate a soul conscious of a brighter realm" (15). Simon Bainbridge explains that in *The Vampyre* (1819), Polidori uses a specific "trope of vampirism to figure the perceived threat of the Byronic text to its readers" (22), a threat in which women are especially vulnerable (24). Unable to resist his "serpent's art" (Polidori 17), the women assume a role which at first seems empowering but consequently turns them into victims (Bainbridge 23). It is especially Miss Aubrey, the one whose soul is conscious of a brighter realm, who proves to be vulnerable to Ruthven's rhetoric.

In *The Vampyre* (1819) there are several aspects that create this ongoing sense of dread and danger. The first aspect relies on the notion of dramatic irony, in which the audience or the reader is more knowledgeable than the text's character. Lord Ruthven is immediately introduced to the reader in a passage in which nothing of Ruthven's identity is revealed. This technique creates an atmosphere of mystery, curiosity, danger, and unease as the reader is likely to interpret this mystery as a bad omen. Polidori describes this mystery character as one who possesses "peculiarities" (7), "a winning tongue" (7), and with a "deadly hue of his face"

(7). Polidori then immediately introduces Aubrey as a romantic and naïve boy with an unstable upbringing. The reader witnesses Aubrey's naïve attempts of getting closer to the vampire, the lurking danger of it, and the moment Lord Ruthven's grasp tightens around Aubrey. In a sense the reader witnesses the psychological decline of Aubrey, and the fact that the reader is aware of Ruthven's identity and intentions creates a strong feeling of both dread and danger. Although Aubrey does not fulfil the stereotypical role of the Gothic damsel in distress, his role generates a heightened sense of threat. Instantaneously introduced as an orphan, Polidori presents Aubrey as an innocent young boy who gave up his dream in order to gain information regarding Lord Ruthven. The boy is completely unaware and blinded by his obsession for Ruthven. By stepping into the role of an atypical male version of the damsel in distress, a feeling of sympathy is created. Naturally, this sympathy felt by the reader increases the overall sense of dismay when faced with danger.

By the time Aubrey has started to suspect Lord Ruthven of "something supernatural" (9), after continually trying to break Ruthven's mystery, it is too late. Through letters his guardians warned him about the "evil power resident in his companion" (9). They insisted that he should immediately leave Lord Ruthven as he was thought to be "dreadfully vicious" (9) and possessed "irresistible powers of seduction" (9), which had already influenced Aubrey to a great extent. Upon his resolution to leave Ruthven's company, Aubrey decides to further investigate him closely. In a conversation with Ianthe regarding vampires, his fears become reality and he starts to believe in the "supernatural Power of Lord Ruthven" (11). Unfortunately, the bond with the vampire has been formed, and after Aubrey swears an oath not to mention the fact that Ruthven is in fact deceased, his fate has been sealed. The oath sworn by Aubrey is of great importance to the text. In the first half of the nineteenth century the words "remember your oath" spoken by Lord Ruthven, has "absolute binding power" (Auerbach 14) to honourable men like Aubrey. This oath, which is meant to conceal Ruthven's vampiric tendencies, relies on aspects other than power, namely, honour and reciprocity (Auerbach 14-15). "[T]he oath signifies instead of a bond between companions that is shared and chose, one far from the... mesmeric coercion we associate with vampires today... the origin of their intensity was a friendship that never occurred" (14). This means that with the intensity with which Ruthven seduced Aubrey, he never stood a chance nor did he have a choice, as it was never Ruthven's intention to form a mutual and pleasant bond. Ruthven has but one goal and that is to stay alive and youthful. A goal which he has to achieve by seducing and murdering innocent and naïve humans.

Chapter 2 *Christabel* (1816)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816) through close-reading and passage analyses from the poem in relation to the Gothic genre and the central research question. The chapter is divided into four main parts, starting with an introduction which consists of a brief explanation of the Origin of Evil and the poem's major theme of good versus evil. The following part will focus on the Gothic elements found in the text, as this is crucial for the interpretation of nineteenth-century vampire texts. The third section of this chapter focuses mainly on the question whether the vampire protagonist Geraldine should be considered a vampire. This will be done through inclusion of claims from various scholars and by examples from the text. The final section will explain the psychological development of the relationship between the two main character; the vampire and its human victim. All combined, these four parts will provide an answer to main research question, namely: How are the psychological development and effect of the relationship between the vampire Geraldine and victim Christabel represented in Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816).

It is not entirely clear when Samuel Taylor Coleridge began writing the poem that would later be known as *Christabel* (1816). The first part was reputedly written in 1797, after which he visited Germany in an attempt to escape the pressures of English society. It was not until two years later that Coleridge would continue *Christabel* (Watters 74). According to Reginald Watters, Coleridge finished the second, and last, part of the poem in 1800, but the poem remained unfinished. Although several people, such as Walter Scott and Byron, showed interest in the poem and read the manuscript, it would remain unpublished until 1816 (74). Coleridge intended three additional parts, but these were never completed.

Watters claims that, with *Christabel*, Coleridge attempted to adhere to an accepted literary genre of a Gothic horror tale. Aside from the numerous Gothic elements found in the poem, many of Coleridge's poems written between 1795 and 1798, among which is *Christabel* (1816), contain the profound "concern with the nature of Evil" (Watters 62). In 1796, Coleridge made an entry into his notebook stating his desire to write "The Origin of Evil, an Epic Poem". Shortly after, Coleridge passionately discussed his ideas with Charles Lamb, who, through conversations with Coleridge, remembered "The Origin of Evil" as a fruitful subject for a long poem (Ulmer 376-407). Ulmer speculates that Coleridge never wrote the poem because *The Ancient Mariner* (1798) already dealt with the epic theme, Ulmer

claims that it is, in fact, *Christabel* (1816) which "embodies Coleridge's long-considered poem on the origin of evil" (376). Ulmer elaborates on this idea, stating that "[i]n fact, *Christabel* dramatizes Coleridge's Unitarian understanding of Original Sin as a state of guiltless corruption, an innate and mysterious ambivalence of the moral will"(377).

As Ulmer asserts, *Christabel* (1816) deals with the conflict between good and evil. On the one hand there is Geraldine, who can be seen as representing evil, and on the other hand Christabel, the epitome of innocence and a grieving, motherless child. Ulmer then suggests that the poem represents a bond between Original Sin and man's control over his own human will, which is symbolised by the merging of the two characters; Geraldine and Christabel. This will be discussed in further detail below.

2.2 Main Gothic elements in *Christabel* (1816)

Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816) not only adheres to the classic Gothic elements, but also shifts them, such as the convention of contrast between good and evil. This tradition has previously been clearly defined within the Gothic genre, which can be seen in work by Anne Radcliffe. Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), for example, all adhere to the typical plotline of the Female Gothic: "the protagonist is a heroine who is imprisoned in a Gothic building, such as a castle or ruin, by a ruthless villain who often attempts to kill or rape his victim and steals her inherited properties" (De Ridder 29). However, Coleridge's poem subverts this classic tradition of the damsel in distress and thus also the tradition of good versus evil. As we saw, William Ulmer explained that the majority of the readings of *Christabel* presume that she herself "personifies moral innocence" (378). He admits that this is a reasonable assumption as *Christabel* appears "well-intentioned, virginal, and naïve" (378), which are traits that are typically linked to innocence and possessing a virtuous character. However, scholars such as Ellen Brinks and Andrew M. Cooper refute the idea of *Christabel* as the stereotypical Gothic damsel in distress. "While the typical heroine of the gothic is innocent, curious, and guided by providence, *Christabel's* attempt at piety and innocence" (Brinks 177) are presented to the reader as "derivative or merely feigned" (177). Both Ulmer's and Brinks' point of views raise some interesting questions and there might be some truth to both statements considering Gothic doubling, which is, according to Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, the invitation "to read [a novel's] protagonists as aspects of each other, a strategy of doubling which emphasises the boundaries of the self" (qtd. in Sara Wasson 74). On the surface it seems as if *Christabel* is the

epitome of innocence and piety. By contrast Geraldine appears to personify evil. In the poem, Christabel's pious and vulnerable nature is mentioned almost instantly. The narrator pleads: "Jesu, Maria, shield her well!" (Coleridge 54). Later on Christabel is described as "[s]o fair, so innocent, so mild" (624), while Geraldine is referred to as a "snake" (571). Shrouded in mystery, it remains unclear what Geraldine's intentions are and whether she is a benevolent spirit or malicious spectre. Christabel, on the other hand, is naturally presumed by most readings to embody "moral innocence" (Ulmer 378). "Christabel suffers innocently, like Christ" (Ulmer 378). Her innocence can be seen in Coleridge's almost angelic description of her appearance and beauty:

"There she sees a damsel bright,
 Drest in a silken robe of white,
 That shadowy in the moonlight shone;
 The neck that made the white robe wan,
 Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
 Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
 And wildly glittered here and there
 The gems entangled in her hair" (58-65).

However, there appears to be a second, more complex layer, possibly based on the earlier mentioned Original Sin. This can be seen in the text where Geraldine at first appears as a victim and a damsel in need of help. She says that "[f]ive warrior seized me yestermorn" (Coleridge 81) and, after Christabel offers her help her, she feigns her weakness. "The Lady sank, belike through pain...over the threshold of the gate: Then the lady rose again" (129-134). This means that she deceives the victim. She asks Christabel to "[h]ave pity on my sore distress, I scarce can speak for weariness" (73-74). In an attempt to dramatise her situation she claims: "Five warriors seized me yestermorn, Me, even me, a maid forlorn" (81-82). Beneath the surface a complex layer of deceit is hidden. This can be seen when the surface layer slowly vanishes, and the vampire shows its true nature and intentions. This initial transformation is symbolised by Geraldine's undressing. "Behold! Her Bosom and half her side, are lean and old and foul of hue. A sight to dream of, not to tell" (52-54). However, Christabel's senses appear to be ambiguous, as it is unclear whether she actually sees Geraldine's true nature or whether she confuses dreaming with sight. The poem makes it clear, however, that there might be danger lurking. "In the touch of this bosom there worketh a

spell" (267). Towards the end of the poem, Geraldine's true nature appears to surface, as Christabel remarks how she again "saw that bosom old, Again she felt that bosom cold" (457-458), after which Geraldine produces a "hissing" (459) sound and suddenly vanishes.

Christabel possesses a similar double layer and duality between good and evil within the poem. While Brinks and Cooper refute the idea of Christabel as the stereotypical damsel in distress, they also label her behaviour as "feigned" (Brinks 177). However, Christabel's behaviour should not be labelled as feigned as it is part of the intricate and innate nature of Original Sin, and thus, in the case of Christabel, the behaviour that later unavoidably surfaces is part of a hidden layer she is initially unaware of. As we saw earlier, Christabel summons Jesus and Maria to shield her from the cold. Christabel's use of prayer in an attempt to guard her against evil, reoccurs towards the end of the first part. In the text Geraldine, perhaps mockingly, remarks that "[a]ll they who live in the upper sky, Do love you, holy Christabel" (Coleridge 227-228). She continues: "Even I in my degree will try, Fair maidens, to requite you well" (231-232), meaning that the physical act following these sentences, is Geraldine's attempt to repay Christabel for taking care of her. Although Christabel agrees to the act, she has "many thoughts [that] moved to and fro" (240). Upon taking Christabel in her arms, Geraldine remarks that there is a "spell" (267) present in Christabel, but that she still possesses the "power" (272) to fight this spell. That night Christabel "fearfully" (293) dreams, which might be an indication that she is still under the spell of the vampire. However, the text then states that Christabel "[w]ho [is] praying always" (322), also "prays in her sleep" (322). This passage, therefore, indicates that Christabel's behaviour is not feigned, but that she struggles with contrasting feelings between good and evil. The text also shows that in an attempt to end the struggle, Christabel fights the vampire's seduction with the use of religion. Thus, while Christabel is initially presented as a classical damsel in distress, she as well subverts the classic Gothic convention of good and evil by surrendering to her sinful side. This supports the claim of Original Sin and willpower, and that no human is essentially free of sin. In the poem it can be seen how Christabel surrenders herself to Geraldine's sin, as she agrees to the creature's physical affections by saying: "So let it be!" (Coleridge 235). However, after the act it is described how the pious Christabel, who always prays (Coleridge 322), has ambiguous feelings. This ambiguity can be seen when Christabel cries "[l]arge tears [that] leave the lashes bright! And oft the while she seems to smile" (316-317). As such, Christabel's guilty sin is presented as the ambiguity of moral sin; the struggle between moral code and the innate sinful nature of humankind.

David Punter also points out that their relationship resembles more of a symbiosis than an opposition, and that Christabel thus cannot represent the innocent damsel in distress. Andrew Cooper adds to Brinks' claim by stating that Geraldine only provides "the opportunity for sinning, but [that] she is not the embodiment of evil" (qtd. in Attar 55). The notion of symbiosis is a crucial aspect within the poem, especially considering the earlier mentioned Gothic doubling. Both Christabel and Geraldine can be seen struggling with a sense of inner duality, and Brinks' claim that Geraldine is a mere tool for sinning instead of representing the embodiment of evil, adds to the claim of Gothic doubles. The notion of symbiosis then proposes the interesting idea that the two characters grow towards one another and complete each other, meaning that good and evil, and sin versus morality align. The text describes a trance-like state, where Geraldine "[g]athers herself from out her trance" (Coleridge 312) after their initial sexual encounter. This trance implies a profound bond which transcends sexual attraction, in which two characters come together as one.

Another common theme within the Gothic genre is a fear of the unknown; a fear of the Other. David Punter aptly describes that he sees *Christabel* (1816) as a poem about "sleeping and waking, about the problems surrounding the ego's continually deferred acceptance of the presence of the hidden Other of the unconscious" (220). Characters such as Sir Leoline, who represents a lion, act according to a "straight clear line of tradition" (220) and all that is already known, while it is Christabel and Geraldine "who are left to explore together the realm of the specular Other, representing in themselves the dangerous possibility of symbiosis" (220). The poem and the two main characters are shrouded in mystery and with the menacing sequence of negatives and a sense of foreboding, the poem's mood is set. Sir Leoline's dog, "the toothless mastiff bitch" (Coleridge 7) can be seen to represent the guard dog that protects against the supernatural omens. Toothless as she is, she is unable to protect against supernatural evil effectively, but warns the reader for the unknown danger ahead by letting out an "angry moan" (Coleridge 148). Yet, *Christabel* (1816) does not encourage the reader to discover the "source of the disturbance" (Punter 220). Instead, Christabel wonders "what can ail the Mastiff bitch" (Coleridge 153). Due to this element of the unknown, and keeping Punter's statement about the "possibility of symbiosis" (220) in mind, it can be stated that there is an ambiguity in the text regarding the Other. It can, therefore, be argued that in the text both Geraldine and Christabel represent the Other.

2.3 Analysis of the text

The classic definition of a vampire is an undead creature that rises from its grave, creeps through the night, and drinks the blood of the living to prevent itself from deteriorating. As we have seen in the previous chapter, this definition no longer applies to the nineteenth-century Romantic vampire. During this period authors stressed the psychological aspect of vampirism. Considering both definitions this raises the question as to where Geraldine fits in. Most scholars, such as Joseph Melton, James Twitchell, and Joan Gordon, agree that Geraldine has to be considered a vampire. However, Derwent Coleridge claims that Geraldine was never intended to be a "witch or goblin, or malignant being of any kind, but a spirit, executing her appointed task with the best goodwill" (qtd. in Beer 79). Although there is never any mention of vampires directly, it is now generally accepted that "vampirism was the intended theme of *Christabel*" (Melton 136). Besides, there is simply too much evidence of vampirism in *Christabel* (1816) to ignore (Twitchell 41). Apart from the undeniable evidence of vampire elements such as the midnight hour, the mention of the full moon, "the spectral appearance of Geraldine" (Twitchell 41), the significance of Christabel's touch, the necessity of Christabel's invitation to the castle, as vampires cannot cross a threshold uninvited, her reluctance to pray, the old growling Mastiff bitch, and Geraldine's fainting when she spots the carved cherub on the ceiling (Twitchell 41), which all indicate a vampire nature.

In Joseph Melton's *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead*, Arthur Nethercot argues "that the essential vampiric nature of the Lady Geraldine, who was 'rescued' after being left in the woods by her kidnappers" (136), was revealed by investigating her characteristics. Firstly, throughout the poem Geraldine is portrayed as a richly clothed woman bathing in the moonlight, unlike Christabel who is represented as an innocent and naïve victim "who needed to be shielded from the forces of evil (Melton 136). According to Melton, the act of moonlight bathing signified the element of nineteenth-century idea of reviving a vampire (136). Secondly, as soon as Geraldine approaches the castle door, she faints. Christabel helps her to cross the threshold, after which Geraldine quickly recovers. It is a common occurrence that vampires initially have to be formally invited into a human's house (Melton 136). Lastly, when Geraldine walks past the old Mastiff bitch, the dog let out an "angry moan" (Coleridge 148), as it is commonly believed that animals are able to sense vampires (Melton 136) and other malignant beings. Thus, there are many markers indicating that Geraldine might in fact be considered a vampire.

2.4 Development of the relationship

In the section on the Gothic elements it could be seen that Gothic elements such as doubling play a major role in establishing the vampire-human relationship. This section will elaborate further on this matter and will look at how this shift in Gothic conventions has shaped the development of the relationship between Geraldine and Christabel.

This raises the question in what ways the relationship between the vampire and his victim can be described. Firstly, it is through the relationship between Geraldine and Christabel that we can see the Gothic expression of doubling. In the previous section it was mentioned that the notion of symbiosis was based on doubling as, through the subversion of the Gothic tradition, the characters struggled with an inner sense of duality and moral ambiguity. As a result the distinct lines between good and evil began to fade and characters that were first assumed to represent the role of good, can now be seen to represent neither good or evil. They become one due to the symbiosis and as such the distinct roles fade. Moreover, as this unity can still be considered a vampire-victim relationship, the victim is in a sense infected by the vampire's grasp and its attempts to form a unity. This is signified by the earlier mentioned "trance" (Coleridge 312) and possibly also by the duality of emotions that surface in Christabel, which is shown when she both appears to cry and laugh simultaneously (316-317).

This infection can be applied on three different levels. The first level involves spiritual corruption. This can be found in the scene where Christabel discovers a helpless, yet beautiful, young woman near the "huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree" (35). Geraldine takes on the role of a victim, explaining that she has been placed here by her kidnappers. Compassionate as she is Christabel immediately offers to help. Watching from above, however, the spirit of Christabel's deceased mother attempts to stop the demonic union from happening, to which Geraldine replies: "Off, woman, off! This hour is mine!" (211). As we saw earlier, Christabel utilises religion to guard herself against evil. Due to the spiritual corruption caused by Geraldine, there is no longer any divine intervention. Moreover, this spiritual corruption also relates to the earlier mentioned Original Sin, because, as asserted by Harold Bloom, by "denying that virtue is inherent or innate" (176) it is acknowledged as "produced" (176). Acknowledging Christabel's religion as a construct proves to be crucial for explaining her corruption by the vampire and her problems with contrasting duality.

Throughout the poem there are numerous brief mentions of religion. The prayer beneath the oak tree (Coleridge 36), the mentioning of Jesus and Maria (54), the fact that Christabel prays in her sleep (322), and the mentioning of church bells (352), which can be

seen to signify the echoes of religion. The various religious echoes mentioned in the text are then contrasted with a spiritual corruption similar to corruption of Adam and Eve. In the text Geraldine and Christabel are seen tasting the forbidden fruit as they lay with each other. "And lay down by the maiden's side! And in her arms the maid she took" (Coleridge 262-263). Robert Asch adds that the fact the passage also involves "Lesbianism" (202) increases the corruption, as "lesbianism itself [already] [is] a symbol of spiritual perversion and evil" (202). Thus, Geraldine corrupts Christabel's spirituality by leading her into temptation, and with no hope for redemption. Moreover, the corruption of the vampire is facilitated by the fact that religion appears to be a construct, rather than an innate virtue.

The second level involves physical corruption. After the effect of religion has been subdued, and thus a decline in moral will has been perceived by the vampire, the creature will attempt to establish a physical and sexual relationship with its victim. Christabel, who is to a great extent infected by the vampire's powers, enters a trance-like state in which she completely surrenders to the vampire's seduction. As the stages progress, so does the grasp of the vampire on its victim. Christabel seems as if spellbound by the mysterious young woman. Christabel remarks how she "was the most beautiful to see" (224-225). Soon, Christabel succumbs to Geraldine's seduction and sexuality. In an almost dream or trance-like state, in which identities are exchanged (Brinks 15), the two women bond physically. After they enjoyed a bottle of wine together, Christabel undresses at Geraldine's suggestion, after which Geraldine partially disrobes. Interestingly, in lines which would later on be deleted from the published version of the poem, it was remarked that Geraldine's appearance was "lean and old and foul of hue" (qtd. in Melton 136). This implies a vampire who has not had a drink in a long time and is thus literally drained of blood. After this seductive scene, Christabel enters the earlier-mentioned trance-like mood.

Yet, Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
 Ah! What a stricken look was hers!
 Deep from within she seems half-way
 To lift some weight with sick assay,
 And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
 Then suddenly as one defied
 Collects herself in scorn and pride,
 And lay down by the maiden's side!
 And in her arms the maiden she took (255-263)

To indicate the supernatural atmosphere of the scene, the narrator of the poem remarks how the events affected the night birds.

O Geraldine! One hour was thine -
 Thou'st had thy will By tairn and rill.
 The night-birds all that hour were still.
 But now they are jubilant anew,
 From the cliff and tower, tu-whooh! Tu-whooh! (305-309)

Surprisingly, Geraldine awakens completely refreshed and her old, lean, and foul body appears "rejuvenated" (Melton 137). After the physical act, Christabel is aware of the sin she has committed and starts praying, which suggests that the vampiric ritual has not yet been completed. Christabel is still aware of her thoughts and her morals, yet is also utterly infatuated with Geraldine.

Level three involves the psychological conquering of the human mind in an attempt to drain the last of its life essence. Sadly, *Christabel* (1816) was never finished and there can only be speculation regarding the further development of the relationship. The morning after the act, Christabel is still spellbound, and while she initially has no recollections of the previous night, she is suddenly tormented by visions of their sexual encounter. Christabel's visions are of Geraldine's bosom "old" (Coleridge 457) and "cold" (458). "With eyes upraised, as one that prayed" (462), Christabel hopes for some spiritual guidance. Still under the influence of the spell, her father wonders what "ails" (470) his daughter, but Christabel "had no power to tell" (473), for "so mighty was the spell" (474). However, after Geraldine put a spell on Sir Leoline as well, Christabel seems to be successfully fighting against the vampire's spell, and as result begins to see the vampire's true form. "A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy; And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head, Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye, And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread" (583-586). In an attempt to find her true self again, and to eliminate the psychological corruption, Christabel "[p]aused awhile, and inly prayed (614), after the "trance was o'er" (613). The fact that Christabel was able to break the spell suggests that the psychological corruption by the vampire was never fully achieved.

The second way in which the relationship between Geraldine and Christabel can be described is motherly. When envisioning the feeding of a vampire, the roles of victim versus predator, and seduced versus seducer are often seen. A less common view on vampire

relationships is that of Madonna and child (Gordon 45). Joan Gordon wonders whether the vampire's lust for blood is an extension of a "more natural desire for sustenance" (45) and if the never-ending search for victims really is "a search for mother and family" (45). Gordon believes that aside from being a poem charged with seduction and sexuality, *Christabel* (1816) is also "a tale of parental abandonment" (45). The mother role fulfilled by Geraldine is a defining factor with regard to the establishment of the relationship. The theme of motherly loss can be seen early on in the poem when the reader is aware of the mother spirit protecting Christabel against danger. Also, the scene where Christabel mentions her mother's death to Geraldine saying that "[s]he died the hour that I was born" (Coleridge 197). This sense of loss is emphasised due to the frequent mentioning in the beginning of the poem as well as Geraldine's hateful nature towards the mother's spirit. By not tolerating the competition for mother roles it can be stated that Geraldine visits Christabel with the sole purpose of becoming a mother figure and consequently taking over Christabel's life. After all, the figure of the mother is the epitome of trust and unconditional love; traits a psychological vampire could certainly use to its own advantage. After the physical act it can be noted in the poem that it says they were "[a]s a mother with her child" (301). This implies that the physical act was not purely sexual, but also involved comforting and the exchange of mother-child love in an attempt deepen the vampire-human relationship. Christabel's weakness against Geraldine is probably increased by the lack of a mother figure. Perhaps this event also took place to put pious and innocent Christabel's mind to rest and put her more at ease in order for the vampire to complete the physical stage. Interestingly, in part two of *Christabel* (1816), Geraldine becomes the "companion/lover" (Twitchell 41) to Sir Leoline, thus becoming quite literally "a surrogate or "stepmother" (41) to Christabel. This creates additional opportunities for the vampire to take over more aspect of its victim's life.

Another aspect that allows Geraldine to take control over Christabel is the fact that they are both female. Julie Carlson asserts that "[g]endering...surrender was a major topic in 'Christabel'" (213), which leads to the human protagonist's "coming-to-sexuality" (213). To begin with, both Geraldine and Christabel are portrayed as particularly attractive and there are numerous mentions throughout the poem that celebrate the beauty of these women. Christabel is portrayed as a "lovely lady" (Coleridge 23), with "ringlet curl[s]" (46), and with eyes "so blue" (215). Geraldine, with her "silken robe of white" (59), is described as a "damsel bright" (58) and "tall" (393). Robbie Goh also describes Geraldine of having a "sexually-charged body" (288), with which she managed to lure Christabel into her bed. Geraldine's seduction can be considered especially straightforward as she asks Christabel to "now unrobe" (233)

herself. Christabel agrees, but is torn morally. "Sure, I have sinned!" (Coleridge 381) "so many thoughts moved to and fro" (239), and attraction - "Nay, fairer yet! And yet more fair!" (374). Thus, Geraldine's success appears to lie in the fact that she is a female who utilises her beauty, friendship, and motherly instincts to strengthen the bond with her victim.

Chapter 3 *Carmilla* (1872)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse Joseph Thomas Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) through close reading and passage analyses from the text in relation to the research question. This chapter is divided into four main parts and will start with a short introduction that consists of a brief elaboration on human nature. The next section will focus on the Gothic elements found in the text. The third part of this chapter focuses on the overall analysis of the main characters through close-reading. Lastly, the final section will explain the psychological development of the relationship between the vampire and the human. All combined, these four parts will provide an answer to research question, namely: How are the psychological development and effect of the relationship between the vampire Carmilla and victim Laura represented in Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872).

"The Prince of Silence" he was called (Veeder 197). The Irish writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873) is, except among horror story experts, not very well-known today. However, Le Fanu was a highly successful author during the Victorian era (197). One of his greatest tales, *Carmilla* (1872), "possesses the complexity and power...of other Victorian gothic masterpieces" (197) similar to *Carmilla* (1872). Kathleen Costello-Sullivan believes that Le Fanu's vampire tale is in many ways "the overlooked older sister of Bram Stoker's later and more acclaimed work *Dracula* (xvii). Despite its "acknowledged influence" (xvii) on Stoker's *Dracula* and its recognition as "the first really successful vampire story" (qtd. in Costello-Sullivan xvii), *Carmilla* is occasionally disregarded as a "minor work" (xvii). Costello-Sullivan believes this might be due to Le Fanu's reputation as a "comparatively minor writer" (xvii), the fact that he is "pigeon-holed as a representative of the sensational/gothic subgenres" (xvii), or simply because Stoker's vampire novel adhered more to what the audiences typically seek in vampire fiction.

In the prologue of *Carmilla* (1872), Le Fanu introduces the theme of human nature, after which he mysteriously refers to "our dual existence, and its intermediate" (1). Neither in the prologue or anywhere else in *Carmilla* (1872) does Le Fanu provide the reader with an explanation regarding this "dual existence". Veeder explains that "[c]hallenging the readers to define the expression ourselves, *Carmilla* (1872) offers a rich range of pleasures because

different readers will draw from it different definitions of the dualism" (197). Whether this is true will be investigated in the following section.

3.2 Main Gothic elements in *Carmilla* (1872)

The previous chapter mentioned a Gothic phenomenon called doubling, which refers to the inner duality of a character. In this previously clearly-defined tradition the character finds himself struggling with ambiguous feelings that were unknown to him before. Typically this duality centres on the polarity of good versus evil. Adhering to the Gothic genre, *Carmilla* (1872) presents the reader with two types of doubling. The first, and more apparent, instance of doubling is the role of the vampire protagonist Carmilla as she positions herself as Laura's "doppelgänger" (Ecke 65-68) in an attempt to conceal her vicious intentions. This mirroring allows the vampire merge with the character and as such grow closer with the victim. In the text this is mentioned when Laura tells Carmilla about her nightmares, which, unknown to Laura, are caused by the vampire. In an attempt to trivialise the matter, Carmilla abruptly begins telling a similar story. Although feeling ridiculed at first, Laura soon feels reassured by the vampire's beguiling smile (Le Fanu 16-17).

On a more subconscious level Carmilla's attacks are equally effective. As her human victim Laura puts it herself, "The precautions of nervous people are infectious, and persons of a like temperament are pretty sure, after a time, to imitate them" (Le Fanu 34). Put differently, Laura herself executes the majority of the doubling work, identifying with the vampire so profoundly that her individuality slowly begins to dissolve. In one of Laura's terrifying dreams caused by Carmilla, her mother warns her to "beware of the assassin" (Le Fanu 40), after which she sees Carmilla standing "near the foot of [her] bed, in her white nightdress, bathed, from her chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood" (40). Instead of identifying the perpetrator, she draws the illogical conclusion that the blood belongs to Carmilla, believing she is being murdered that very moment. Laura's display of irrational behaviour is not completely a result of her own flawed character. After all, she is under the spell of a vampire and her behaviour is as such the result of vampiric torment. In particular, by taking advantage of the suppressed sexual desires of the seemingly pious Laura the doubling begins to intensify. The human finds herself struggling with ambiguous feelings that were unknown to her before. This can be seen in the text when Laura experiences both a mixture of "pleasurable...excitement" (Le Fanu 21) and a sense "of fear and disgust" (21) towards the vampire Carmilla. Like Coleridge, Le Fanu is also known shift the convention of contrast

between good and evil in *Carmilla* (1872). In the case of *Carmilla* (1872), sweet damsel Laura can be seen mirroring the vampiric villain.

In order for the doubling, and thus the shift in good and evil, to be successful, the protagonists of the text are preferably contrasting characters. In *Carmilla* (1872) the characters are not what they appear on the surface even if it may seem so. The two characters that are expected to be positioned in the text as opposites, initially appear as equals. In this role the vulnerability and beauty of the young women are emphasised. Through the first-person narrative the reader experiences Laura's naïve image of Carmilla up close. Although the reader is aware of the Gothic conventions and thus the lurking evil, Laura is not. Robert Curti explains that Laura Karnstein, the human protagonist, is pictured by Le Fanu "as the typical Victorian damsel-in-distress" (131). Carmilla describes Laura as "a beautiful young lady with golden hair and large blue eyes (Le Fanu 17). Due to her misinformed interpretation of Carmilla's sexual desires, one could also think of Laura as chaste. She describes Carmilla's sexual attempts to reduce proximity between them as "mysterious moods" (21).

Throughout the text, Laura's pious nature is reiterated. On several occasions she can be seen praying or asking someone else to pray. For instance, after the carriage crash, Carmilla's mother explains that she has to leave her daughter behind for three months. Upon hearing this, Laura begs her father, hoping the mysterious, young lady will stay with them. "Oh! Papa, pray ask her to let her stay with us -- it would be so delightful. Do, pray" (11). Laura also seems to be concerned about the pious nature of her friend Carmilla. She remarks: "I often wondered whether our pretty guest ever said her prayers. I certainly had never seen her upon her knees. In the morning she never came down until long after our family prayers were over, and at night she never left the drawing room to attend our brief evening prayers in the hall" (34). Considering the examples above Laura appears to position herself as the virtuous and stable half of the two characters. The following paragraphs will present examples of Le Fanu shifting the classic Gothic convention of good and evil.

Like in *Christabel* (1816), Carmilla initially presents herself as the damsel in distress. By presenting his contrasting character in such a way, Le Fanu immediately shifts the convention for both female protagonists as they are positioned in the text to represent good. In the initial scene where Carmilla first makes her entry, both Laura and the audience are fooled by Carmilla's feigned display of vulnerability. After the carriage crash, she can be heard asking herself, "[w]ho was ever being so born to calamity" (10), emphasising the fact that she is a victim of the situation. Additionally, Carmilla is described as "the prettiest creature" (14) they have ever seen, and with a voice so "sweet" (14), implying a sweet nature. Laura is

instantly fooled by her beautiful and seemingly pure appearance. Moreover, Laura's seeming loneliness (Le Fanu 15) appears to greatly propel her fondness of Carmilla. Cleverly, Carmilla takes advantage of this weakness and says that "it does seem as if we were destined...to be friends. I wonder whether you feel as strangely drawn towards me as I do to you" (18). She then adds that she has "never had a friend" (18). Carmilla's mention of the word "friend" is of great importance for the establishment of her relationship with Laura as it enables her to break through the last of Laura's protective shield in order to reach the vulnerable human core.

As the doubling progresses, Laura attempts to fight the vampiric spell with logic. Although Carmilla appears to be the epitome of a kind-hearted, loving woman, there is a layer of deceit hidden beneath the surface. This can be seen in the text when Laura voices her mixed feelings regarding Carmilla's advances.

Now the truth is, I felt rather unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger. I did feel, as she said, "drawn towards her," but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging (18)

Laura is still unaware that she is under the spell of a vampire, and tries to reason her ambiguous feelings. In the excerpt Laura voices what appears to be her fighting against the doubling. As Carmilla, serving as a "photographic negative of Laura" (qtd. in Smith 99), draws closer to her victim, Laura exhibits similar behaviour. In the text she remarks that, "after Carmilla became devoted to [her] more than ever...[she] felt [herself] a changed girl" (Le Fanu 38). As a result of the characters drawing closer to one another the lines between good and evil begin to fade.

In the nineteenth-century vampire began to pose an additional: sexual corruption. Robert Tracy explains that there was a shift in the Gothic genre between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, which would indicate "a reordering of the categories of fear" (qtd. in Grenfell 154). He continues to say that, unlike the eighteenth-century Gothic fiction in which ghost were a common theme, the characters in the nineteenth-century Gothic fiction "represent at once a physical, a supernatural or spiritual, and a sexual menace" (qtd. in Grenfell 154). In the text, the vampire Carmilla is described as being increasingly audacious in regard to her sexual advances towards her human victim Laura. Initially, Carmilla presents herself as Laura's friend. Soon, feelings of a platonic nature transform to feelings of endearment as the Carmilla progresses to tighten her grasp on Laura. Upon heading to bed,

Carmilla whispers, as she "held [Laura] close in her pretty arms for a moment: "Good night darling, it is very hard to part with you" (18). The increasingly intensifying affections appear to constrict Laura at first, as she remarks how she "used to wish to extricate" (21) herself. However, Laura admits being "charmed with [Carmilla]" (19). She does, however, not realise that this charm should be taken quite literally. At one point she remarks that her "energies seemed to fail [her]" (21), as a result of the Carmilla's spell. The Vampire's threat lies in its sly nature, after which the creature slowly progresses towards its goal.

Like the vampire-human relationship in *Christabel* (1816), the relationship between Carmilla and Laura appears to be based on the notion of symbiosis, which is a major theme within the text. Both characters can be seen struggling with a sense of inner duality. As Carmilla's advances intensify, Laura's attraction increases to the point of irresistibility. As a result of the earlier-mentioned doubling, a symbiosis between the women emerges, and lines begin to fade, drawing the two women closer to one another. Personalities dissolve, the contrast between good and evil weakens, and after the human surrenders to her parasitic friend, the symbiosis is complete. Carmilla murmurs to Laura, "If your heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours" (Le Fanu 20) and "trust me with all your loving spirit" (21). After the completion of the symbiosis, Laura surrenders herself to the vampire's dark and sexual side as a result of the fading of lines. "[Carmilla's] soft cheek was glowing against mine. 'Darling, darling,' [Carmilla] murmured, 'I live in you; and you would die for me, I love you so'" (Le Fanu 30). In this passage, Carmilla seems to imply possession and a mutual indestructible bond between the two characters. Ultimately, the character roles are subverted as the vampire, who initially appears good-willed, then changes to the villain, and in the end is neither of those. The same thing happens to Laura. First, she positions herself as the epitome of innocence, then gradually gives into her temptations, but not fully as Carmilla is not longer considered purely evil and can be seen merging with Laura's virtuous side.

3.3 Analysis of the text

Unlike the traditional vampire from the eastern-European folklore, which essentially resembled a monstrous undead, the nineteenth-century vampire was often able to "conceal its true identity and go about in society" (Spatola 28), which can be seen in vampires such as Carmilla. They imitate the lives of humans, and this "deceptive appearance" (28) is what makes them both successful and a threat to people.

According to Helen Stoddart, "Laura... finds herself following the same apparent, nocturnal precautions as her friend and sometime vampire, Carmilla", and that there is "rationale behind these measures which might substantiate them" (19). Laura admits her foolish behaviour when she says that "dreams...and their persons make their exits and their entrances as they please, and laugh at locksmiths" (34). As a result of the vampiric spell she is under, Laura begins to display illogical behaviour, and thus voluntarily "speeds up...her own victimization" (19). Unaware of the dangers, Laura's infected mind is convinced Carmilla needs to be shield from menace, and is determined to put up the very protections which will lead to Carmilla's ultimate purpose.

"The first [vampire] occurrence in [Laura's] existence, which produced a terrible impression upon [her] mind" (Le Fanu 4), was when she was no older than six years old. That night, she received a visit from a young and beautiful woman, who smiled at her and caressed her hair. Later on she would remark how the encounter with the spectre puzzled her, as she felt a mixture of both "repulsion" (18) and desirability. Laura continues to say that "[i]n this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging" (18). Here, Laura admits being unable to resist the vampire's seduction and deceit, however, she believes it's the genuine interest in Carmilla that beguiles her.

After Carmilla re-enters Laura's life several years later, the situation is, according to Lee Hyun-Jung, described differently. On a literal level, "the vampire's proximity to Laura...would end her mortal existence rather than begin it" (28). More importantly, Laura's relationship to the seductive vampire "increasingly unsettles her self-certainty" (28). To protect her own identity, Carmilla deceives and ridicules Laura by openly doubting the childhood occurrence years earlier, although Laura almost instantly recognises the face of the "beautiful" (16) girl with the "melancholy expression" (16). Instead, Carmilla invents a similar "dream" of her own, in which she claims to be a six year-old child, lost in a dark room, staring at a fully-grown Laura. According to Hyun-Jung, "this declaration shakes Laura's confidence in the details of the encounter" (28). Due to the conversations with Carmilla she begins to regard the occurrence as a dream, while she initially insisted it being real despite of what her governesses told her. Also, Carmilla's invented version of the occurrence makes "reciprocal" (28) what had hitherto been perceived as one-sided. Laura does not realise the grasp Carmilla has on her, and that the devastating effect this will have on her will almost end her life.

3.4 Development of the relationship

"Carmilla is the climax and the end of a dream of an intimacy so compelling only vampires could embody it" (Auerbach 53). In this quote Auerbach aptly describes Carmilla's power over Laura, and who uses both physical and psychological seduction to achieve her goal. Although Carmilla is generally known to be one of the first female vampires to sexually seduce her victim, she chooses a woman as her victim, and as a result their relationship is initially solely psychological. Carmilla poses herself as a helpless and weak young lady after she and her mother crash their carriage. Laura is immediately fascinated by her. She remarks how "[t]here was something in this lady's air and appearance so distinguished and even imposing, and in her manner so engaging, as to impress one, quite apart from the dignity of her equipage, with a conviction that she was a person of consequence" (Le Fanu 12). This implies that Carmilla comes from a prosperous background. This intrigues Laura and creates an instant bond, as she did not like to "trouble [her] head about peasants" (23).

According to Nethercot, Carmilla exercises "both repulsion and attraction on the reader as well as on Laura" (36). Laura immediately confesses to the reader that she is drawn to Carmilla, yet at the same time feels "something of repulsion" (Le Fanu 18). She attempts to justify this ambiguity of emotions by stating that "[y]oung people like, and even love, on impulse" (18) and that "[she] was flattered by the evident, though as yet undeserved, fondness she showed [her]. [she] liked the confidence with which she at once received [her]. She was determined that we should be very near friends" (18). Through these confessions it becomes clear that Carmilla made Laura feel loved and accepted, besides the fact that she was also curious and physically attracted to Carmilla. But this chiefly emotional bond soon changes as Carmilla's affections and "physical fondlings become excessive" (Nethercot 36). They are "like ardour of a lover" (21), after which Carmilla whispers to her: "you *shall* be mine, you and I are one for ever" (21). Mistakenly, Laura most likely assumes the role of a close friendship or perhaps lovers, not realising she is just another vampire victim.

The development of the vampire-human relationship and the literary device called dramatic irony, in which the reader is more knowledgeable than the character, is strengthened by the use of the first-person perspective. Besides being known for creating an instant bond between character and reader, the first-person narrative also allows the character to be the specific voice in the story. In the case of *Carmilla* (1872) this means that the reader personally witnesses Laura's developing relationship with the vampire, and due to the ability to experience Laura's rollercoaster of emotions, the reader is ultimately drawn into the story. As a result the establishment and development of the relationship between Carmilla and Laura is

intensified. Combined with the first-person narrative, dramatic irony even further intensifies this development. Readers that recognise the abundance of Gothic elements found in the text, are aware of the lurking danger and the existence of the vampire. The closeness created by the first-person narrative then evokes feelings of angst and worry in the reader as they are unable to warn the narrator. Throughout the text, Carmilla gives little hints towards her true identity. During the scene in which they discuss the deaths of the young peasant girls, assumedly caused by Carmilla, she tells Laura that she as well has been sick in the past. "I suffered from this very illness" (Le Fanu 27), she explains. When Laura attempts to continue the conversation, Carmilla says, "I dare say, let us talk no more of it" (27). Laura's naïve and spellbound mind completely misses the danger in such situations. Another example of how dramatic irony and the first-person narrative emphasise the vampire-human relationship is when Laura's remarks upon Carmilla's "mysterious moods" (Le Fanu 21). Early on in the vampire-human relationship, the reader witnesses Laura's doubts and mixed feelings up close. She says, "In these mysterious moods I did not like her. I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable...mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. I had no distinct thoughts about her while such scenes lasted, but I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence. This I know is paradox, but I can make no other attempt to explain the feeling" (21). Considering the examples above it can be stated that the first-person narrative is crucial intensifying and emphasising the establishment and the development of the relationship between Carmilla and Laura.

Conclusion

This conclusion will compare the texts by John William Polidori, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Sheridan Le Fanu with regards to the establishment and development of the vampire-human relationship in order to answer the research question of this thesis. First, a comparison will be made of the main gothic elements found and analysed from the texts. The reason is that the majority of these Gothic aspects play a major role in both the establishment and development of vampire-human relationship. Second, a comparison of the vampire's and victim's gender will be given, as the variations in the relationships are possibly brought about by the differences in gender. This section will then elaborate on the different stages of corruption created by the female vampires Geraldine and Carmilla.

Gothic elements such as the notion of good versus evil, Gothic doubling, and symbiosis, all very prevalent in the three texts by Polidori, Coleridge, and Le Fanu the Gothic genre, play a major role in both the establishment and development of the vampire-human bonds. The character of Lord Ruthven adheres to the Gothic genre in being the embodiment of the Byronic vampire. The cursed hero with diabolical powers captivates the young Mr Aubrey, who is said to occupy a place in the Gothic fiction usually filled by a damsel in distress. These clearly defined and contrasting roles strengthen the parasitic influence of the vampire. However, the relationship between Ruthven and Aubrey remains rather distant as opposed to the relationships of the female vampires and their female victims. In both *Christabel* (1816) and *Carmilla* (1872) Gothic doubling, the subversion of good versus evil, and the creation of symbiosis play a crucial role regarding the vampire's ability to create a successful bond with their victim. By mirroring their victim, the vampires prey on the human struggle to reconcile conflicting inner forces. Both Carmilla and Geraldine can be seen presenting themselves as good-willed friends to the vulnerable, lonely, and grieving victims. As the relationships progress, so does the doubling. Carmilla, for example, acts as a negative photograph of Laura, feeding on the previously-concealed behaviours and desires that result from the doubling. As this doubling progresses, the female vampires and their female victims reach the point of symbiosis, the ultimate union between vampire and human, in which the lines between good and evil begin to fade. Vampire and human begin to merge, the parasitic process is complete, and the human will suffer fatally due to the loss of life force.

As we have seen, Lord Ruthven adheres to the definition of the nineteenth-century vampires, and thus drains the life energy from his victim, however, there is no spiritual or physical corruption present in the text. There is also no subversion of Gothic tradition

regarding good and evil, and there is no symbiosis present between Lord Ruthven and Mr Aubrey. Even though Mr Aubrey is clearly spellbound by the vampire, there is no close or intimate relationship. The vampire simply utilises the human in order to achieve his goal. In the texts by Coleridge and Le Fanu, however, an intricate and carefully-planned development of the relationship can be witnessed. After the initial success of contacting their victim, the female vampires typically follow a set path of different types of corruption.

The first level of corruption involves the spirituality of their victims. Christabel can be seen having a Guardian spirit watching over her shoulder, while Laura performs numerous prayers throughout the text, wondering about the religious dedication of her vampire friend. The spiritual corruption commends in *Christabel* when Geraldine banishes the motherly spirit. During moments of shame, Christabel resorts to prayer in an attempt to cleanse herself. In *Carmilla*, the vampire's horses in the very first scene are spooked by the sight of a large cross standing on the side of the road. In both cases, religion appears to be a construct rather than an innate characteristic. This is especially seen in *Carmilla* as Laura was taught by a priest how to pray after the traumatic event.

The second level of corruption involves the preying of the victim's sexuality. Both human victims are presented as beautifully innocent and pious beings. However, both ladies ultimately surrender to their female vampires. Laura is at first repulsed by her vampire's aggressive affections, yet she admits being beyond attracted to Carmilla. Christabel's guilt regarding her sexual encounter is signified by her praying. Both human victims describe their vampires as incredibly attractive, which is in both cases intensified by spell casting. Interestingly, in both cases the female victim is a motherless child. This position weakens them as the vampires are seen to take on the role of a mother in order to tighten their grasp on their victims. Perhaps, the female victims are more susceptible to the motherly love and trust of the vampires as opposed to Mr Aubrey. While Mr Aubrey in Polidori's *The Vampyre* appears to be under a spell as well, there is no physical corruption.

The last level of corruption involves the victim's psychological state of mind. As mentioned, the female vampires are taking on the role as mothers. Not only is this seen in the physical aspect, but in the psychological aspect as well. They take on this role to come in close proximity of their victim, as their girls appear to be specifically chosen because of their lack of having a mother. In all three cases of vampires, however, deceit is used in achieving their goal. Whether this has to do with keeping their identity secret or putting a spell on their victims. In the case of the female vampires it can be seen that, due to the subversion of good

and evil, and their deep psychological bonds with their humans, they begin to form a unity or symbiosis as the parasitic undertaking progresses.

The previous sections showed the influence of Gothic elements, such as the contrast between good and the evil and the shift of it, Gothic doubling, symbiosis, and gender, in regards to the establishment and development of the vampire-human relationship. Analysis of these elements has shown how crucial they were for the creation of the psychological vampire, a vampire that is very different from its predecessors. Both the Byronic vampire and the female vampire were a new phenomenon during the nineteenth century and shaped the way in which we view vampires today. Naturally, they also influenced the way in which vampires and humans formed unions. The previously lurking monstrosity was transformed into a striking and egocentric male character, who is very aware of his seductive power over humans. Combined with elements from the Gothic genre this led to clearly defined parasitic relationship of contrasting characters in which development and psychological drain are emphasised. In the case of the female vampires this meant a subversion of the role between good and evil, the psychological struggle of conflicting emotions, the doubling of the characters which ultimately led to symbiosis. The female approach, combined with the Gothic elements, resulted in a more carefully executed plan that relied heavily on the emotions and grief of their female victims. Although the approaches of the three vampires appear to differ, they all share the same goal: draining the life essence from their human victims.

The abovementioned findings show that more research is needed to answer the questions on gender raised during the process of writing this thesis. Utilising both *Carmilla* and *Christabel* proved to be an excellent decision as both texts fit together seamlessly in regards to the gender of the vampire protagonist, the gender of their victims, and the method of choosing for establishing and maintaining a relationship with their human victims. However, the fact that these vampires both belong to the female gender is of great significance to the vampire-human relationship. Unfortunately, I was unable to include this part of the research due to the limited scope of this thesis. In my opinion, a well-developed and more in-depth research on feminism in nineteenth-century Gothic fiction and nineteenth-century fiction is needed to explain the differences between genders found while researching this subject.

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