# GOTHIC SPACE AND FEMALE OPPRESSION: ANGELA CARTER'S "THE LADY OF THE HOUSE OF LOVE "AS A CASE IN POINT

Dr. Wiem Krifa, PhD
ORCID #: 0000-0002-5841-2740
English Department
Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Sousse
Tunisia

## ABSTRACT

In her short story "The lady of the House of Love", Angela Carter experiments with feminist postmodern gothic literature and foregrounds the importance of space and time in imprisoning the female body. The writer contrasts the space and time within the constraints of the vampire's palace with those of the cyclist's external free world. The vampire symbolizes the submissive female who is ensnared by the ghostly presence of her patriarchal ancestors within the confines of the patriarchal chivalric space and time. Carter's feminist postmodern storytelling aims to defy the patriarchal spatial and temporal frames by providing the lady of the house of love with a possibility of survival beyond the time and space of her ancestral gothic palace. During the daylight, the vampire sleeps, whereas at night, she awakes to chase her human masculine preys with whom she makes love before killing and eating them. Within the limits of patriarchal setting, the vampire's role is limited to sexuality and denied any human emotions until the arrival of the new man who succeeds to stir her emotions and revives her human instincts. The dreary atmosphere of the castle with its gothic architecture have not hindered the new man, together with the vampire, from challenging and deconstructing the traditional patriarchal order. The roles space and time play in achieving female liberty are significant. The vampire's death within her ancestral castle promotes her survival outside it, in another space and time, where she blooms after severing with the patriarchal spatial and temporal setting.

**Keywords:** *Feminist postmodernism- Gothicism- deconstruction- patriarchy- space and time-vampirism.*

## INTRODUCTION

In her short story "The Lady of The House of Love", the British writer Angela Carter experiments with Gothic romance[9] from a feminist postmodern perspective. This particular story is far different from Carter's

[15] "As a genre, gothic fiction was first established with the publication of Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto in 1764. Characterized by a dark, foreboding atmosphere and outlandish, sometimes grotesque, characters and events, gothic fiction has flourished and branched off into many different subgenres in the centuries since its creation. While Walpole introduced what would later become the definitive tropes of the genre (creepy castles, cursed families, gloomy atmosphere), it was not until Ann Radcliffe's A Sicilian Romance in 1970 that gothic romance began to develop as its own legitimate subgenre. Radcliffe kept many of the same tropes established by Walpole's work, such

other stories taking into consideration the coexistence of realism[10] and Gothicism, vampiric age and contemporary one. The story's multidimensional themes which draw from the traditional canonical literature to the postmodern one are enticing and stress the story's postmodern tendency. The fact of referring to the literary heritage whether implicitly or explicitly seeking its deconstruction from a feminist scope is itself a premier in Carter's writings. Vampirism goes back to ancient myth, old European

folklore with such historical characters as Vlad Tepes[11] and the Countess Elizabeth Ba'throry[12] before being reintroduced in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* [13] ( Sceats 2001, 107 ). This is to reveal the bygone historical roots of the vampiric tradition before its transmission in literature. To trace back the birth of this literary tradition, one cannot skip the scholars' inspiration with the above-mentioned historical figures who are reflected whether implicitly or explicitly in their gothic writings.

---

as isolated settings with semi-supernatural phenomena; however, her novels featured female protagonists battling through terrifying ordeals while struggling to be with their true loves. This concept is what ultimately separates gothic romance from its cousin, gothic horror".
(Pagan, 2018, *A Brief History of Gothic Horror)*

[16] In literature, realism is the portrayal of life with fidelity. It is thus not concened with idealization, with rendering things as beautiful when they are not, or in any way presenting them in any guise as they are not, as a rule, is realism concerned with presenitng the supranormol or transcendental. […] One may suppose that most writers have been concerned with reality (and therefore with some attempt at some form of realism). Much of the world's literature can be accounted realistic […] even when it is very stylized.
(Cuddon, 1998, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 729).

[17] "Vlad the Impaler, in full Vlad iii Dracula or Romanian Vlad iii Draculea, also called Vlad iii or Romanian Vlad Tepes (born 1431, Sighisoara, Transylvania [now in Romania] died 1476, north of present-day Bucharest, Romania), voivode (military governor, or prince) of Walachia (1448;1456-1462;1476) whose cruel methods of punishing his enemies gained noptoriety in 15th -century Europe. It often has been thought that Stoker based the title character of Dracula on Vlad. Though Stoker's notes for the novel do include mentions of "Dracula", […] Some scholars have speculated that Stoker's conversations with a noted historian, Hermann Bamburger, may have provided him with information on Vlad's violent nature, though there is no concrete evidence to support that theory" (Pallardy, 2022, *Britannica*).

[18]"Elizabeth Báthory, Hungarian form Báthory Erzsébet, (born August 7, 1560, Nyírbátor, Hungary—died August 21, 1614, Castle Čachtice, Čachtice, Hungary [now in Slovakia]), Hungarian countess who purportedly tortured and murdered hundreds of young women in the 16th and 17th centuries. Báthory was born into prominent Protestant nobility in Hungary. Her family controlled Transylvania, and her uncle, Stephen Báthory, was king of Poland. She was raised at the family castle in Ecséd, Hungary. In 1575 she married Count Ferencz Nádasdy, a member of another powerful Hungarian family, and subsequently moved to Castle Čachtice, a wedding gift from the Nádasdy family. From 1585 to 1595, Báthory bore four children. After Nádasdy's death in 1604, rumours of Báthory's cruelty began to surface. Though previous accounts of the murder of peasant women had apparently been ignored, the claims in 1609 that she had slain women from noble families attracted attention. Her cousin, György Thurzó, count palatine of Hungary, was ordered by Matthias, then king of Hungary, to investigate. The count palatine determined, after taking depositions from people living in the area surrounding her estate, that Báthory had tortured and killed more than 600 girls with the assistance of her servants. On December 30, 1609, Báthory and her servants were arrested. The servants were put on trial in 1611, and three were executed. Although never tried, Báthory was confined to her chambers at Castle Čachtice. She remained there until she died" (Pallardy, 2021, *Britannica*).

[19]"Dracula, Gothic novel by Bram Stoker, published in 1897, that was the most popular literary work derived from vampire legends and became the basis for an entire genre of literature and film.

Many writers, added to Carter, have embarked on a parodic study and rewriting of Stoker's Dracula, such as Anne Rice[14] in her books *Interview With The Vampire* (1976) and *The Vampire Lestat* ( 1985). Most of these writings have attempted to parodically reshape the female vampiric image as conveyed by Stoker.This literary tradition has been transfered from one era to another. Postmodern writers, by their turns, have embarked on a neo exploration of gothic writing that deconstructs the old tenets on which the whole tradition was based. To reveal the victimization of the females and to seek to empower them are among Carter's perquisites while experiencing gothic romance. Adopting different literary approaches enables the writer to depict reality via unrealistic means. Carter's "The Lady of The House of Love" differs from the realist fiction and conveys the writer's choice to evade realism purposefuly. As she avers (2006, 132-34):

> Im interested then in a fiction that takes full cognizance of its status as non- being- that is, a fiction that remains aware that it is of its nature, which is a different nature than human, tactile immediacy. I really do believe that a fiction absolutely self-conscious of itself as a different form of human experience than reality (that is, not a logbook of events) can help to transform reality itself. (Carter 2006,132-34)

Carter seeks other ways of exploring the reality of human beings apart from realism and works to blur the boundaries between the real and the unreal; the self and the other. Reality is not always encapsulated in what is apparent and habitual, rather it extends beyond the visible and the common. She believes in fiction's awareness of its fictitious nature or what is labelled as metafiction from a theoretical postmodern lens, and this fact foregrounds an embedded criticism of the realist literary trend which has claimed its full access to the reality of the characters, settings and even extended to exibit the psychological realm. Carter's gothic writing aims to study the ills of gender relations and to heal them. Gothicism betokens a repressed reality that can be explored psychologically, symbolically and literally. In this context, critic Sarah Sceats avers (2007: 107):

> The enduring appeal of vampires suggests that they act out some unexpressed aspect of our psyche or that vampirism resonates in some irresistible way with unacknowledged social processes. Vampires represent what we both fear and desire; they evoke a marginal world of darkness, secrecy, vulnerability, excess, and horror. Whatever they are, it is positively Other. (2007, 107)

Vampires stand for the dark side of the private individual human psyches as well as the social obscurities and marginalization which are suppressed and repressed, though still threatening to be reemerged. They symbolize the different other who is excluded from the self and marginalized from mainstream society. The deconstruction of such binaries within Carter's text is a substantial task in her feminist parodic writing of vampirism as well as in her performative radio play Vampirella[15].

---

[20] Author Anne Rice hailed from New Orleans, Louisiana. She gained notoriety as a writer of erotica and vampire novels. Her most popular book, *Interview with the Vampire*, was published in 1976 and later made into a movie of the same name, starring Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt. Rice rediscovered her Catholic faith in 1998 and wrote several books that reflected that her interest in religion, including *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt* (2005) and *Angel Time* (2009). In 2010, Rice said that she was no longer a Christian. Her most recent works are *The Wolf Gift* (2012) and *The Wolves of Midwinter* (2013)", (Lohnes, 2021, Britannica).

[15]Vampirella was originally written as a radio play in 1976 and later rewritten as the short story 'The Lady in the House of Love'. The piece employs the Carter strategy of taking a narrative with which we are familiar, in this case that of the voracious vampire and the virginal object of desire and reimagining it from a different viewpoint. Here the vampire is female and the virgin is a gormless young Englishman, on the eve of the First World War.

All of these symbolic aspects co-work to convey Carter's feminist agenda which revolves mainly around foregrounding the female oppression within the patriarchal gothic space. Carter's parodic rewriting of vampirism aims to unveil philosophical, psychological and gendered concealed truths. The vampire countess is ensnared within her ancestral horrific castle and controlled by her patriarchal ancestors. Her confinement has never been a personal choice but she is rather forced to perform the role of the bloody vampire. Though she dreams of emancipation by gaining humanity, her gothic setting and the traditional haunting masculine power hinder her and dash her dreams. Her resurrection is achieved finally by the young soldier who liberates her, even though through her symbolic death as a submissive female. Similar to various writers, Carter is inspired by Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and its adaptations.

> Stoker's creation became a towering presence in popular culture […] Although he did not invent the genre, his Dracula became the template for all vampires thereafter. (Canavan, 2017: 24)

Carter's intertextual reliance is conscipuous at the level of names, notably the vampire's father: Nosferatu which refers to a German version of *Dracula*. As with any piece of gothic literature, symbolism[16] overwhelms the story to pave the way for the postmodern reader's interpretations. The vampire stands for the traditional submissive female who is haunted by the spirits of her irrational ancestors who embody the patriarchal system, whereas the soldier, with his bicycle, epitomizes the contemporary new man who believes in science, rationality and gender equality. The first part of this presentation will study the female suffocation and imprisonment within the limits of the spatial and temporal traditional patriarchal ideology symbolized by the gothic presence of Nosforatu in his mysterious castle and his tight control over his manipulated daughter. The second part will shed light on the Soldier's role: the representative of the rational new man who will deconstruct the patriarchal space and time by recuperating the vampire's humanity. Being accustomed to her gothic male imprisonment, the vampire yearns to be human, though she finds it unbearable to be so. Her experience of humanity precipitates her death as the obedient vampiric daughter of Nosferatu, which yields her rebirth as an emancipated flower: the emblem of the free woman. Carter aspires to deconstruct the image of the exploited vampire woman by killing her character, then metamorphosing her into a rose.

## I- THE VAMPIRE'S SPATIAL and TEMPORAL IMPRISONMENT WITHIN NOSFERATU'S PATRIARCHAL WORLD

In "The lady of The House of Love", Carter includes various gothic characteristics, notably at the levels of the setting and characters. The choice of the spatial setting: a medieval castle in Romania is very telling. The architecture and the detailed horrific description are typically gothic. In her article: *Gothic Anxieties:*

---

The work is replete with Carter's wicked humour, keen sense of gender politics and her awareness of the potency of ancient stories in the here and now. It plays with time and place, cultural stereotypes and the question of agency.
The cast (with one exception) first performed this work as a live reading at Malthouse Theatre in December 2011, under the direction of Hallie Shellam. (ABC, 2022, Vampirella by Angela Carter.)

[22]Symbolism: "The word symbol derives from the Greek verb symballein, 'to throw together', and its noun symbolon, 'mark', 'emblem', 'token' or 'sign'. It is an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or 'stands for' something else. As Coleridge put it, a symbol 'is characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual'. A symbol differs from an allegorical sign in that it has a real existence, whereas an allegorical sign is arbitrary". (Cuddon, 1998, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 884- 85).

*Struggling with a Definition,* Suzanne Rintoul (2005: 705) delineates the aspects of gothic setting. She writes:

> The Gothic usually takes the place (at least some of the time) in antiquated space; this space holds some manner of secret important to plot and character development; this space is haunted by blurred boundaries between the natural and the super natural. (2005: 705)

The mentioned gothic elements are heavily present in "The Lady of the House of Love". Carter tightly links the gothic space and time with the patriarchal order. This is to show the irrationality and the old dogmatic beliefs of patriarchal dominated societies. Through the detailed description of the castle and the ancestors' mistreatment of the female vampire, the writer draws parallel to the male abuse of women in male governed spaces, during the bygone ages. The vampire's setting stands for the male archaic space and time which is superseded by the rational contemporary world symbolized by the young soldier. What is appealing as far as Carter's writing of this particular story is concerned is her use of postmodern literary techniques, woven in a gothic narrative for the sake of deconstructing the patriarchal space and time.

> The castle is mostly given over to ghostly occupants […] Closely barred shutters and heavy velvet curtains keep out every leak of natural light. […] this room is never more than faintly illuminated by a heavily shaded lamp on the mantelpiece and dark red figured wallpaper is obscurely, distressingly patterned by the rain that drives in through the neglected roof and leaves. […] The unlit chandelier is so heavy with dust the individual prisms no longer shapes; industrious spiders have woven canopies in the corners of this ornate and rotting place. (Carter, 2006: 108)

Similar to the conventional gothic traditions, the castle where the vampire dwells are a dismal gloomy space which lacks illumination and spreads terror. Its darkness is reminiscent of the the dark ages which lack knowledge and enlightment. The space is depicted as a rotten dusty one, full of cobwebs which provokes terror and disgust, with every single furniture seems to be weary, suggesting its old-fashioned nature and uselessness. The writer pays special attention to the depiction of the isolated castle and its ancient gothic architecture to exemplify the patriarchal order which has no place in the modern and the postmodern worlds. The spatial setting extends to convey the dark ideologies surrounding the place. This mixture of long-established gothic tradition with feminist postmodern intentions is meant to debunk binarism[17]. Carter deploys traditional literary genres to deconstruct them from within and show their perpetual role in incarcerating women and supporting the patriarchal system that has long tormented females and suppressed their subjectivity.

Although she struggles to free herself from her inhuman nature, the vampire is destined to her gothic role of killing males and feeding on their flesh. Her castle is supervised by her male ancestors who haunt her as a way of control and domination. Even in their death, the males of the castle still hang- out as demonic spirits to suffocate the passive countess and to remind her of her inescapable vampiric doom. Despite her patriarchal male prison, the vampire succeeds to pay herself tribute. Being supervised by her patriarchal

[23]Binarism: "This term refers to the linguistic division which governs the human communicative system. The human language is full of binary oppositions, used to convey our realities such as man/woman, nature/culture, white/black, day/ night. Binarism is the backbone of structuralist linguistic. Binarism is essential for deconstruction. Derrida argues that the opposed binary oppositions are inherently unequal, because one item is privileged over the second, whereby they create a hierarchy. Thus, deconstruction helps to debunk the hierarchal relationship between the two units, by exposing their equality and mutuality. Feminists are interested in deconstructing the principle of binarism, since women are usually relegated to the second part".
(Adermahr et.al, 2000, A Glossary of Feminist Theory, 21).

ancestors to perform her bloody task has not hindered her from taking revenge by feeding on males as an insurrectionary act, instead of her long- cherished little rabbits. Carter plans to deconstruct the male haunted gothic space by empowering the victimized vampire and enabling her to take revenge from the patriarchal system. Although she still foregrounds the same ambivalent image of female vampire as it is originated with the vampire in *Dracula*, Carter alters the vampiric destiny, altogether, by resurrecting her vampire into a rose. Similar to her predecessors, Carter stresses the vampire'strong sexual desire, though she ironically hints to her failure to hunt her sexual preys and eating them instead of satiating her hunger.

> [The canonical vampiric writing] weaves a complex interconnection between the ideas of vampirism and sexual activity […] 'The vampire responded to desire like a shark to blood'. (Hollinger, 1980: 13)

Carter sarcastically highlights the vampire's desire to make intercourse with her male vistors; nonetheless she fails due to her urgent need to feed on their flesh, under the control of her patriarchal father figure: Nosferatu.

> Wearing an antique bridal gown, the beautiful queen of the vampires sits all alone in her dark, high house under the eyes of the portraits of her demented and atrocious ancestors, each of whom, through her, projects a baleful posthumous existence; she counts out the Tarot cards, carelessly construing a constellation of possibilities as if the random fall of the cards on the red plush tablecloth before her could precipitate her from her chill, shuttered room into a country of perpetual summer and obliterate the perennial sadness of a girl who is both death and the maiden.( Carter 2006, 107)

The omnipresence of patriarchal ascendancy and its tight relation to the irrational world is clear enough to the reader. The writer aligns the masculine control of the vampire with the supernatural and illogical happenings for the sake of debunking its validity. The fact of wearing her mother's bridal gown connotes her entrapment within the category of the traditional passive females who cannot escape the patriarchal space and time. Nonetheless, the vampire does not cease to hope for emancipation by gaining her humanity. The victimized countess is doomed to darkness and deprived from daylight which she eagerly looks for. The darkness of her life and her castle epitomize the dimness and obscurity of the patriarchal tenets that prevail on her setting. She is a blend of the old traditional dominated female from the exterior and the new revolutionary woman from the interior. In these deserted gothic space and time, the vampire finds solace in her Tarot cards which she keeps shuffling, untiresome, hoping to face a different fate from the one she is forced into. Carter insists on the vampire's heterogeneous nature, being both "death and the maiden" as a way of the deconstruction of binarism.

> The deconstruction of such antitheses is an impotant activity in [Carter]'s text and a driving force in her parody of the conventional treatment of the vampire. (Hollinger 1980, 14)

She represents the marginalized other, always oppressed and forgotten at the bottom of the human consciousness, though threatens to insurrect no matter when. The vampire spends her tormented life with her caged lark in her room which shares her prison and destiny and which stands as a symbol for its' owner's deprivation of freedom. Both lament their lives in darkness and feel intensely their inability to enjoy the natural outside life.

> Can a bird sing only the song it knows or can it learn a new song?' She draws her long, sharp fingernail across the bars of the cage in which her pet lark sings, stiking a plangent twang like that of the plucked heartstrings of a woman of metal. Her hair falls like tears. (Carter 2006: 108)

The countess identifies with her caged lark and wonders if they, together, can have a different life from the one imposed on them. Carter deploys the lonely lark as a metaphor for the lonely and unique daughter of the vampire Nosforatu in the isolated castle, whose voice, like the lark, is suffocated due to her imprisonment. The presence of the lark is very symbolic and offers a parallel plot to the countess. The story forgrounds a double plot[18], unveiling two victimized characters; the vampire and her lark. Both creatures aspire for freedom and escape from Nosforatu's sunless world. Even the crone who is supposed to take care of the countess is dumb and makes sure to deprive her from the daylight. The countess ends by being silenced due to the lack of human communication. The silence of the females is quiet telling and epitomizes the absence of the female right of self- expression within the gothic patriarchal space. Still within this totally exasperating male atmosphere and setting, the countess clings to her tarot cards as the unique hope to offer her a different fate. Carter's writing of "The Lady of the House of Love" is a mosaic mixture of postmodern and canonical literature that implicitly conveys the writer's feminist postmodern agenda.

> While Bram Stoker's nineteeth-century treatment of vampirism suggests a horror of sexually-empowered women and Anne Rice's recent "Vampire Chronicles" focus more centrally on (male) desire, Angela Carter's writing carves out an oblique territory, using vampiric tropes to examine gendered behavior and heterosexual power relations. Carter plays with vampirism as a way of exploring the murky recesses of the contemporary psyche, foregrounding what is habitually covert, taboo, or suppressed […] Indeed, she resists the separation of realism and fantasy. The inhabitants of our imagination, she insists, are part of our lives and need to be taken seriously. And this includes the incubus/succubus, shape-changing, all-desiring, helplessly predatory fantastic and metaphorical vampire. (Sceats 2007, 108-9)

Carter's treatment of vampirism differs greatly from the pillars of this literary trend, in that she aims to condemn the patriarchal role in subduing females and repressing their desires within male-dominated spaces, similar to Nausferatu's castle. The writer defies the strict divison between realism and fantasy by designing a heroine who combines both life and death and challenges gender categories by bearing female and male traits. Carter unveils the taboos and dig deep beneath the unconscious that has been buried to save the apparent organized status quo. She starts from the theoretical goal of the deconstruction of binarism and applies it on the divided binary pairs, to end by unburying the previously excluded taboos and psychological dilemmas, embodied by the fantastic vampire character, who scuffles to trespass the boundaries of the fantastic and attain the real world. Carter's choice of the vampiric tradition is a feminist postmodern one seeking to criticize patriarchal injustice towards women and stir the concealed natural human truths behind the mask of gender supremacy. The vampire stands for the self and the other, the female and male, life and death, the past and the present.

> [Vampires] can be of either sex and any sexual orientation. Their ambiguity is manifest, their essence contradictory: they confuse the roles of victim and predator. Combining dependence and rapaciousness, the vampire is an embodied oxymoron. (Sceats 2007: 107-8)

The vampire epitomizes women in general who are considered as corrupting gothic figures in males' writings while reshaped in Carter's story as a natural human being, exhibiting vice and virtue equally. Carter

[24]A subplot makes part of a literary work whether a play or fiction and it presents a parallel plot to the main plot. By way of example, most Shalespeare's plays exhibit a double plot added to the main one.

shows that even males can be vampires, contrary to the patriarchal gothic narratives which emphasize the female predatory role.

The setting of the vampire takes back the postmodern reader to medieval times, to explore the irrational fears and supernatural happenings of gothic literature, only that it is ironically linked to the patriarchal oppression of women by way of comparison. The vampire plays two contradictory roles: she is forced to play the villain and the victim as the same time to reveal her heterogenous nature. Throughout the story, she expresses her disgust and forced duty to feed on the male passengers, who are invited to her desolate castle.

> But She is a woman, she must have men. If you stop too long beside the giggling fountain, you will be led by the hand to the countess's larder. […] She sinks her teeth into the neck where an artery throbs with fear; she will drop the deflated skin from which she has extracted all the nourishment with a small cry of both pain and disgust. And it is the same with the shepherd boys and gipsy lads. (Carter 2006, 110-11)

Her vampiric role is imposed on her by her male ancestors and the crone who constantly dominate her fragile presence and seek to limit her female freedom, by confining her in a coffin that stands for her deadly existence. Carter's depiction of the vampire's sexual desire is typically ironic of the previous male vampiric writings, which emphasize the vampire's sexual atrocity. Her predatory role is painful rather than pleasurable which reveals the patriarchal tight grip on her physical as well as psychological realms. What the writer intends to achieve is the reversal of the conventions of the vampiric writings. Carter's vampire is as innocent as any human being, only that forced to perform an imposed vampiric role.

> Victorian vampirism provided a powerful vehicle for the expression of anxieties about unbridled sexuality (especially women's). […] The emotional vampire seeks out and feeds off an (often willing) victim in a furious and fruitless attempt to make someone fill the emotional or spiritual vacuum in his or her being. The vampire is entirely dependent: s/he an only exist in relation to the victim/host; the overwhelming desire is for oneness, figured in the fleeting act of incorporation of the other. (Sceats 2007: 108)

The fear from women's "unbridled sexuality" has been communicated through the Victorian vampire who is depicted as an atrocious vicious sexual female, dealt with in males'writings and threatening the masculine existence. Nosferatu's daughter fails to sexually exploit her guests and obeys, instead, her biological needs to feed on them in order to survive. Carter's analysis tends to be more logical and scientific while debunking the blemished image of the Victorian female vampire. What the writer does is to bring down to earth the vampiric female image by making it more realistic than the original imaginary and injust one. Carter presents a feminist postmodern characterization of the vampire that contradicts the patriarchal vampiric writing heritage.

The writer's insistence that her vampire "is both death and the maiden" highlights her inner female struggle being caught between contradictory worlds: the real lively world and the deadly gothic one. The choice of males as preys is symbolic for Carter's deconstruction of traditional maleness by reversing the gender roles and depicting males as the vampire's victims, though not sexually as it has been considered the norm in male writings. Eventhough, the story lends itself to a gothic reading, taking into consideration the presence of the gothic setting, the characters of the villain and the victim, we cannot deny its conspicuous feminist postmodern tendency. Carter's aim through the study of the gothic time and space is to show the patriarchal oppression of women and to correct the patriarchal gothic accounts about them.

> On moonless nights, her keeper lets her out into the garden. This garden, an exceedingly sombre place, bears a strong resemblance to a burial ground and all the roses her dead mother planted have

> grown up into a huge, spiked wall that incarcerates her in the castle of her inheritance. (Carter 2006, 109-10)

The vampire is ensnared not only by the ghosts of her male ancestors but also by the traditional model of the passive woman represented by her mother's traditions and her crone's tight control. Even the flowers planted by her mother contribute to her suffocation and jail. The plants help in her keeping entangled within the patriarchal castle by growing fast and shunning sunshine. The entire of them, patriarchal system, nature and traditional females conspire to force the countess into a life of darkness and irrationality. The correlation of the gothic palace with male atrocity is meant to reveal the irrational dogmatic beliefs of a whole system of patriarchy that has so long dehumanized women. The Vampire and her pet lark are treated equally as prisoners within the masculine gothic cage. The effects of her imprisonment are so severe to the extent that she projects her inner psyche on the lark and enjoys its caged condition.

> Sometimes the lark sings, but more often remains a sullen mound of drab feathers. Sometimes the Countess will wake it for a brief cadenza by strumming the bars of its cage; she likes to hear it announce how it cannot escape. (Carter 2006: 108)

Her only real companion is the lark since it shares with her all her conditions and mainly her horrific prison. Carter writes the lark's story as a subplot that reflects the vampire's main story and sufferings, apart from being her own symbol. Similar to the lark, the vampire is encaged within her father's gothic castle and deprived of her female freedom. Another important detail to be mentioned is that both of them will be released by the rational soldier who represents the new man.

## II- The ARRIVAL OF THE NEW MAN: THE BRITISH SOLDIER AS THE VAMPIRE'S SAVING PRINCE

In contradistinction to this patriarchal gothic world which is characterized by irrationality, superstition, and female torture, we come to discover the rational contemporary world of the new man, the young soldier, who like the prince of Sleeping Beauty[19], comes to rescue the beautiful countess by recuperating her humanity. The narrative unfolds both the rational and the irrational worlds with some instances of intersection as a way of binary deconstruction. For the first time in her miserable life, the countess' cards herald a love fate for her which asserts the story's gothic romantic genre.

> A single kiss woke up the sleeping Beauty in the Wood. The waxen fingers of the Countess, fingers of a holy image, turn up the card called Les Amoureux. Never, never before… never before has the countess cast herself a fate involving love […] the lovely cartoromancer has, this time, the first time, dealt herself a hand of love and death. Be he alive or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread. (Carter 2006: 112)

The world of rationality and gothic irrationality seem to overlap when the Countess' cards predict the arrival of the English soldier: the representative of rationality. The Countess has always been a victim of her male ancestors who inflict their will on her frail character and, therefore, keep her devoid of emotions. She is

[19]The fairytale of Sleeping Beauty is written by The French writer Charles Perrault and reexplored and rewritten by various feminist postmodern writers such as Angela Carter in many of her writings whether implicitly or explicitly. Carter's rewriting of fairytales aims to deconstruct the patriarchal image of females as submissive and dominated by males.

designed by her father Nosferatu as the female predator who pertains to gothic vampirism and whose destiny is restrained to killing human males rather than loving them. The fact of discovering a future love relationship shocks the vampire who is deprived from human feelings and real life, though she is eager to trespass the gothic world into the rational authentic one. To study it from another perspective, we can interpret it as a metafictional instance [20] in which the writer is conscious and acknowledges the end of gothic irrationality, while heralds the age of rational thinking and the end of patriarchal space and time. The vampire has never felt love only when the soldier visits her and leads her to break the chains of traditions crippling her weak, in between life and death existence. This is to show that one prominent goal of the writer is to achieve gender equality rather than to opt for an antagonistic relationship between males and females.

> One hot, ripe summer in the pubescent years of the present century, a young officer in the British army, blond, blue-eyed, heavy muscled, visiting friends in Vienna, decided to spend the remainder of his Furlough exploring the little-known uplands of Romania […] ' on two wheels in the land of the vampires'.[…] This being, rooted in change and time, is about to collide with the timeless Gothic eternity of the vampires. (Carter 2006, 111-12)

The description of the solider is very symbolic and connotes his contemporary rational belonging. In opposition to the countess' world, his time and space are enlightened by the summer daylight and the scientific advancements. Coming from a developed country to explore the land of the vampires, he makes recourse to his wit and rational thinking to disentangle the mysterious atmosphere of the place and finds scientific explanation for the vampire's state of mind. His physical description, too, implies his stoicism and heroic nature as the postmodern new man who saves the vampire from her patriarchal trap. The contradistinction between the males who are haunting the castle and the English soldier typifies the difference between the patriarchal male and the new man.

> Although so young, he is also rational. He has chosen the most rational mode of transport in the world for his trip […] To ride a bicycle is itself some protection against superstitious fears, since the bicycle is the product of pure reason applied to motion. Geography at the service of man! (Carter 2006: 112)

The bicycle stands for the soldier's rational reasoning and his modern origin. Besides, the writer emphasizes the bicycle's protection against fear which overwhelms Nosferatu's castle.

> The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown. (Lovecraft, 2018: 12)

[20]Metafiction: "Metafiction is a style of prose narrative in which attention is directed to the process of fictive composition. The most obvious example of a metafictive work is a novel about a novelist writing a novel, with the protagonist sharing the name of the creator and each book having the same title. Such an approach defies both the tradition of the novel itself, which for over two hundred years has insisted that the form be a representative account of doings in the world, and aesthetic theory, dominant since first expounded late in the eighteenth century by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, that the reader of such work will participate in a willing suspension of disbelief. The very term "novel" derives from the Italian word for "new," and after initial experiments by eighteenth-century English novelists involving formats such as letters (Samuel Richardson) and direct authorial comment (Laurence Sterne), a mainstream developed in which the role of writers both in Britain and in the United States was to make their novels reflect, in an illusionistic manner, the persons, places, and things of a recognizable time and place". (Klinkowitz, 2022, Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature).

Against this particular fear, the English soldier is immune and heads bravely to liberate the vampire. The fact of being stuck between two coexisting worlds is an important characteristic of gothic literature. Kirkland (2012: 106) writes in his *Gothic Videogames, Survival Horror, and the Silent Hill Series:*

> Being a preoccupation with two co-existing worlds: one the familiar external world of light, the other an unfamiliar internal world of darkness [is a substantial feature of Gothicism]. (2012, 106)

This can be applied on Carter's "The Lady of The House of Love", with both characters being caught between two opposite worlds: the rational and irrational ones, though the former triumphs. The writer's innovation at this level is displayed through ruining the irrational gothic world and resurrecting the vampire into a vivid flower.

Being dragged by the dumb crone to the deserted castle as a prey for the vampire, the soldier feels almost regret for accepting the invitation, especially when she takes away his bicycle: his rational weapon against the superstitious world of the Countess.

> He felt a certain involuntary sinking of the heart to see his beautiful two-wheeled symbol of rationality vanish into the dark entrails of the mansion, to, no doubt, some damp outhouse where they would not oil it or check its tyres. (Carter, 2006: 114)

The English rational soldier cannot bear the loss of the symbol of his rationality and feels the heavy suffocating gothic atmosphere of the place. This implies the new man's rejection of the patriarchal sphere. His shock is intense vis à vis the state of the house, the "cobwebs, [the] worm-eaten beams, [and the] crumbling plaster" (Carter 2006, 115). These gothic characteristics are strange and unconceivable in his real developed world. Hence, he looks to scientifically and rationally interpret these intangible events without resorting to any supernatural explanation. Upon meeting the countess, the soldier is surprised by her physiognomy, unnatural beauty and for having "a whore's mouth" and never a vampiric one.

> He went forward to pick up her cards for her from a carpet that, he saw to his surprise, was part rotten away […] He retrieved the cards and shuffled them carelessly together. […] What a grisly picture of a capering skeleton! He covered it up with a happier one- of two young lovers, smiling at one another, and put her toys back into a hand so tender. (Carter, 2006: 117)

The soldier's playing with the cards as a symbol of the irrational world is very ironic as a postmodern attempt to deconstruct binarism. Carter exhibits the coexistence of rationality and irrationality in the human life. People can have irrational moments though living in a rational world. The presence of the young cyclist in the gothic space and time is in itself an instance of the coexistence of both worlds and the deconstruction of binary opposites. The feminist postmodern deconstruction of metanarratives[21] is embedded within the gothic romantic writing and works to distinguish Carter's gothic story from the canonical gothic tradition. As it is the case with many literary traditions, Carter reworks the gothic style for the sake of revealing the role it plays in enhancing female oppression and patriarchal dominance. The Countess' lack of sight communicates her inability to see real life due to her male ancestors' usurping of her female sight. This is

[27]Metanarratives: "In literary criticism a metanarrative, according to Hawthorn, can be 'either a narrative which talks about other, embedded narratives, or a narrative which refers to itself and its own narrative procedures' […] Related to the concepts of metalanguage- 'a language about a language'- and metafiction- literally, fiction about fiction- metannaratives have played an important role in feminist critiques of patriarchal discursive systems. For example, the rewriting of fairy tales by feminist writers such as Angela Carter". (Adermahr et.al, 2000, A Glossary of Feminist Theory, 161).

a recurrent intertextual motif in Carter's texts, referring to Hoffman's *The Sand Man*.[22] The countess is compared to the automaton Olympia whose eyes were stolen by the male character: The Sand Man. Carter draws heavily on the patriarchal oppression of women by controlling their psychological and physical worlds.

> Her blind spectacles gave him his handsome face back to himself twice over: if he presented himself to her naked face, he would dazzle her like the sun she is forbidden to look at because it would shrivel her up at once, poor night bird, poor butcher bird. (Carter, 2006: 119)

The fact of putting on glasses implies her lack of sight and failure to control her life. The glasses, also, symbolize the patriarchal gloomy life perspective which the vampire has unconsciously internalized. The soldier is compared to the sun whose light dazzles the countess, who is accustomed to the darkness of her castle. At this level, the countess is no longer compared to the bird, since she becomes the caged bird itself which wakes up only during the night to feed herself by hunting her male visitors. The English soldier proves to be a different male who looks for scientific explanation for the girl's psychological disturbance and diagnoses her with "nervous hysteria" rather than believing in her vampire nature or gothic ancestors.

> We shall take her to Zurich, to a clinic; she will be treated for nervous hysteria. Then to an eye specialist, for her photophobia, and to a dentist to put her teeth into better shape. (Carter, 2006: 123-4)

His rational spirit expels superstition and the supernatural ideas and, instead, he thinks of tangible solutions to save the girl from her prison. This contrast between the logical enlightened cyclist and the gothic vampire is stressed by Carter, to reveal the fakeness and the irrationality of the patriarchal gothic space and time. Upon breaking her glasses, the countess casts aside her gothic nature and sets up her human recuperation process. She no longer views life through her ancestors 'lens, rather she comes across her long-awaited humanity.

> When she kneels to try to gather the fragments of glass together, a sharp silver pierces deeply into the pad of her thumb; […] She has never seen her own blood before, not her own blood. It exercises upon her an awed fascination. […] He puts his mouth to the wound. He will kiss it better for her. (Carter, 2006: 122- 23)

Seeing her own blood, the soldier kisses her wound for her and, thus, brings back her humanity. Through a postmodern deconstructive writing, rational and irrational events are intermingled to bring forth the vampire's salvation. Unfortunately for her, she cannot support her newly emancipated female being for too long and dies as a gothic male -dominated vampire, only to acquire a new life as a metamorphosed rose. The Vampire's metamorphosis into a rose following her death, can be studied as her resurrection in a better rational world, after her liberation from the patriarchal gothic space and time. Feeling her humanity, she addresses the soldier as follows:

> How can [I] bear the pain of becoming human? I will vanish in the morning light; I was only an invention of darkness. And I leave you as a souvenir the dark, fanged rose I plucked from between my thighs, like a flower laid on a grave. (Carter, 2006: 123-24)

[22]The Sand Man: Carter's influence by the German writer Hoffmann is apparent through the endorsement of the puppetry element and lack of sight motif. The beauty of the vampire is more artificial than natural similar to puppets. In Hoffmann's work, the sandman deprives people mainly females from their sight and garners eyes by way of sexual ascendency. Hence the vampire's lack of sight is a sign of patriarchal dominance over her.

The vampire's self-awareness of her imaginary creation and fake gothic nature can be studied as Carter's metafictional writing to remind her postmodern reader of the irrationality of gothicism as well as the artificial dark nature of patriarchal space and time which should be deconstructed similarly to the metaphorical burial of the vampire in her grave. Still the rose represents the vampire's rebirth as a new woman symbolized to by the token of the fragrant flourishing rose. Taking the rose with him, the soldier heads to Bucharest leaving the Romanian setting far behind him. To his surprise, the rose hasn't withered rather it burgeons and grows immensely, symbolizing the countess' resurrection and acquisition of her female emancipation following her death as a male dominated vampire.

> The heavy fragrance of […] roses drifted down the stone corridor of the barracks to greet him, and his spartan quarters brimmed with the reeling odour of a glowing, velvet, monstrous flower whose petals has regained all their former bloom. (Carter, 2006: 124-25)

The rose personifies the countess who blossoms as a new woman in the contemporary rational world, at variance with her previous gothic male setting. Time and space play a substantial role in the problematic study of the gender question. The gothic confined, space in the former eras, stands as a female prison when women are tortured and ruined by the male figures. In Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love", the vampire is examined as a case in point. The patriarchal horrific castle of Nosferatu and the antique time of the vampires bridle the countess and deprive her from having a free real human life. Through a combination of postmodern literary techniques, neatly woven within the gothic narrative, Carter contrasts the gothic space and time of the vampire with the contemporary setting embodied by the English soldier, to convey her feminist postmodern patriarchal deconstruction. The latter arrives as the vampire's savior who deconstructs her illusive patriarchal world and resurrects her as a new woman in his modern world, where only gender equality and rationality reign.

## CONCLUSION

This article has studied the importance of time and space in shaping gender relations and foregrounding the status of women. The first part has depicted the position of the female vampire within the ancestral patriarchal palace. The female frustration is conveyed through the vampire's unwillingness to play to role of the predator. The whole gothic spatial and temporal setting in Romania is meant to symbolize the bygone patriarchal realm where women used to be dominated and controlled by males. Carter's resort to gothic narrative aims to debunk the image of woman as displayed in the masculine gothic writing and to reveal the true nature of the female vampire, who is misjudged and sigmatized as a sexually- aggressing creature. The writer's experiment with Gothic literature differs from the canonic use through her reversal of the vampiric roles and her study of the vampire as a human being far from being the gothic creature, as anchored within the phallocentric writings. The second part of this article has studied the role played by the rational English sodier who stands for Carter's typical example of the new man. The contrast between the rational enlightened world and the gothic vampiric one entails a conflict in terms of precepts and beliefs. The soldier; the representative of the new man deconstructs the old patriarchal world with its ideological realm referred to by the Castle of Nosferatu. The new man succeeds to kill the traditional passive woman vampire while resurrecting her as a flower: the emblem of the new woman. Carter's feminist postmodern gothic writing is a successful feminist attempt to unearth the blemished portrait of the female vampire by revealing the inner innocent nature of vampires, who regardless their settings, prove to be mere patriarchal- created images of women to keep them under male tight control. The emergence of the brave soldier heralds a new gender relation based on love and equality rather than gender conflicts and male/female hierarichal postions. Carter's insistence on love as a healing power for the vampire is a very innovative initiative, since love rescues her from Nosferatu's patriarchal world, only to procure her with a new life as the new woman in a more rational and just world.

**REFERENCES**


ABC. *Vampirella by Angela Carter* . Accessed 20 juin 2022. https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/airplay/airplay-17th-june/4068462

Andermahr, S, et.al. *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*. New York: Arnold, 2000.

Biography.com Editors. "Anne Rice Biography". *The Biography*.com website. https://www. Biography. Com/ writer/anne-rice. Accessed 20 juin 2022.

Canavan, T. (2017). "Bram Stoker's Dracula". *Books Ireland*, 375, 24-25. http: www.jstor.org/stable/ 90014497.

Carter, A. (2006). *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories.* London: Vintage.

Carter, A. (1975). "Notes on the Gothic Mode". *The Iowa Rewiew*, 6(3/4), 132-134. http:// www. Jstor.org/stable/20158464

Cuddon, J. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin Books, 1998.

Hollinger, V. (1989). "The Vampire and The Alien: Variations on the Outsider (Le vampire et l'étranger: variations sur le motif de l'autre)". *Science Fiction Studies*, 16 (2), 145-160. http://www.jstor. org/stable/4239931

Kirkland, E. (2012). "Gothic Videogames, survival horror, and the silent Hill series". *Gothic Studies, 14 (2),* 106+. http://link. gale.com/apps/doc/A373678178/LitRC? u=anon 59d8107&sid=googleScholar&xid=5c716413

Klinkowitz, J. "Metafiction". *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*. 26. Oxford University Press. Date of access 20 Jun. 2022, https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-546

Lohnes, Kate. "Dracula". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Dracula-novel. Accessed 20 June 2022.

Lovecraft, H.P. (2018). "weird Tales: H.P. Lovecraft on The Literature of Fear". *Lapham's Quaterly*: *Water*, 5 (3).

Pagan, A. (2018). "*A Brief History of Gothic Horror*". The New York Public Library, 2022.

Pallardy, Richard. "Vlad the Impaler". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2022. https://www. Britannica. com/biography/Vlad-the-Impaler. Accessed 20 June 2022.

Pallardy, Richard. "Elizabeth Báthory". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Elizabeth-Bathory. Accessed 20 June 2022.

Rintoul, S. (2005). "Gothic Anxieties: Struggling with a Definition". *Eighteeth Century Fiction* 17, no. 4 (2005): 701-709. doi:10.1353/ecf. 2005. 0006.

Sceats, S. (2001). "Oral Sex: Vampiric Transgression and the Writing of Angela Carter". *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature,* 20(1), 107-121. http://doi.org/10.2307/464470