Chapter 17

The Vampire in the Void: A Logotherapeutic Reading of Le Fanu's Carmilla

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Abstract

This chapter provides an extended logotherapeutic analysis of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's (1814–1873) *Carmilla* (1872), a foundational Gothic novella that has long been read through lenses of sexuality, gender, and the supernatural. By bringing Viktor Emil Frankl's (1905-1997) Logotherapy into dialogue with the text, this study reconsiders the novella not merely as a work of Gothic horror but as a narrative shaped by nineteenth-century crises of faith, identity, and meaning. Without a doubt, every human being encounters innumerable trials and tribulations throughout life. Pain, death, and guilt are the three most striking of these, which Frankl collected under the heading The Tragic Triad. Such events create an inner void in the individual's mind and soul, which manifests as depression, aggression, and addiction—what Frankl refers to as The Pathological Triad—if they are not processed healthily through Frankl's Triad of Pathways: creative, experiential, or attitudinal. This chapter suggests that Carmilla's vampirism is a psychological expression of this inner void, rather than a supernatural characteristic, in line with the nineteenth-century global crises of faith and identity, particularly with respect to the incapacity to face the trials of the era. Ultimately, this study examines Carmilla (1872) through the lenses of the Tragic and Pathological Triads, demonstrating that what initially appears as an uncontrolled appetite and terror is, in fact, the breakdown of human freedom and the manifestation of spiritual deprivation when the pursuit of meaning fails.

Introduction

The nineteenth century was a pivotal period in both science and literature, marked by significant advances in the fields of neurology, psychology, and moral philosophy. During this period, the human mind began to be re-

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examined from various perspectives within literary circles, and the nature of 'evil' attracted considerable attention and discussion. As a result, a new literary genre emerged in which evil was depicted as a necessary element and villains were given the status of protagonists. Gothic literature evolved from a mere horror genre into "a textual 'symptom' of anxiety" that discovered the underexplored existential and psychological issues of the human mind (Townshend, 2019, p. viii). Long before psychology was recognized as a formal study, J. Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–1873) was notable for his profound understanding of how the human mind functions and for his ability to convert these concerns into fiction. His ongoing preoccupation with mental disintegration and the variability of perception is seen in his three-volume collection *In a Glass Darkly* (1872). The title, which was taken from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, refers to the ambiguity surrounding truth and the boundaries of human comprehension (Gin, 2013). Here, the 'glass' is a metaphorical mirror, reflecting human mind's darkest sides. Le Fanu reinterprets it through this illustration to show the reality that self-awareness is never complete or stable. It is, rather, ambiguous and limited, flickering on a cloudy or dark surface. Presented as case studies by the metaphysician Dr. Martin Hesselius, the five stories in *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) blend factual observation with theoretical investigation to become early psychological examinations of moral and spiritual breakdowns. Le Fanu's interest in mental turmoil stems from both personal tragedy and intellectual curiosity. The remorse, helplessness, and fear of death that his wife's prolonged illness and spiritual decline placed in him are evident in his later writings. Because of these personal difficulties, he became preoccupied with themes of guilt, mortality, and inner collapse. Le Fanu made Gothic horror a profoundly contemplative meditation on the instability of perception and the burdens of the human soul by fusing artistic intuition with personal suffering, transforming the genre from an area of external fear into an investigation of internal consciousness.

In this broader framework, Le Fanu's most psychologically complicated story in *In A Glass Darkly* (1872) is *Carmilla*. According to Kathleen Costello-Sullivan (2013), it can be regarded as "the overlooked older sister" of Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), with its focus on the characters' inner worlds and psychological complexity, which distinguishes it from the subsequent, more sensational vampire stories (p. xvii). It is set in a remote Styrian castle in Austria, an ironic location that would later become the birthplace of major schools of psychotherapy. Laura, the sheltered young narrator of the story, lives in an isolated castle where she has grown up without the companionship of her peers. For this reason, the moment Carmilla arrives at

the neighbourhood through dubious coincidences, Laura clings to her like a branch in solitude. Regrettably, she devotes all her delicate feelings to this stranger after a long deprivation and emotional hunger, only to discover in time that her beloved companion is, indeed, a vampire. Laura's relationship with that mysterious woman leads to a plethora of conflicting emotions in her soul, such as love, horror, dependence, attraction, and terror. It is precisely the most enduring and critical vitality of Le Fanu's novella, as it draws a powerful connection with nineteenth-century Europe. Similarly, with its exotic setting alongside its spiritual catastrophe in the background, Victorian Europe also oscillates between connection and rupture through its "domestication and internalization to explore the dark recesses of the human– and, thus, the national– psyche" (Davison, 2009, p. 220). It is a fact that this oscillation still resonates with today's existential struggles, and through its themes of loneliness, repression, and the desire for connection, one could easily feel the timeless journey of meaning in the hidden chambers of history. Therefore, *Carmilla* (1872) compels its readers and scholars to reevaluate its reverberations through different theoretical frameworks.

Likewise, the philosophical and historical background of Le Fanu's novella is connected to the broader Victorian struggle to restore equilibrium between faith and the rapid advancement of modern science, as well as the emerging tensions surrounding gender roles and the redefinition of femininity in an age dominated by rationalism. To begin with, people of that century were frequently confused in a world that seemed to be losing its sense of wonder due to a rising skepticism about traditional religion and an increased reliance on empirical reasoning. At that very point, Gothic literature emerged as an equalizer in response to scientific rationalism. The ethereal and the mysterious could still find means of expression in its imaginative context. For instance, while Laura's father embodies the Enlightenment ideal of reason with his firm principles of natural science, Carmilla serves as the irrational dimension that defies such order. Throughout the story, the reader senses the fact that science fails to explain the spiritual, emotional, and metaphysical aspects of the mysterious woman. What Le Fanu illustrates in the novella is the limitations of materialism and the human's need for a higher dimension. In the end, the novella becomes a mirror image of its time as well as all times. In other words, it is an ordered chaos in which supernatural and natural forces coexist and influence each other. Additionally, the novella became the representative of the 'feminine contagion' through the collision of the magical and the logical. As Miles (2020) observes,

> […] the fear underlying the porous self—the fear of once more finding oneself vulnerable to the contagion of superstition that re-

> enchants and re-animates the world—is resolutely gendered as feminine, not just in its putative audience, but in the subject suffering the 'contagion', a word that nicely catches the abjection at work in the Enlightenment construction of 'superstition'" (p. 438).

In this context, Le Fanu's novella not only dramatizes the clash between modern science and faith but also subverts the strict gender hierarchies of the Victorian era. According to Hogle (2020), the late nineteenth century witnessed "the desire for the post-Enlightenment' New Woman' to emerge," and this caused a form of cultural anxiety about female agency and recognition (p. 82). Therefore, the Gothic image became an indirect site of voicing the repressed female agency. Similarly, Carmilla's alluring yet transgressive dual role destabilizes the patriarchal ideal of female passivity and domesticity. Her defiance against reason, control, and moral order allegorizes the fear of society of the women who stand for categorization and discrimination. In the end, Carmilla's conflict between the spiritual and the material, as well as the subversion of Victorian gender roles, alludes to the same existential dilemma that Viktor E. Frankl would later postulate, emphasizing the human capacity to find meaning even amid suffering, societal constraints, and existential conflict.

Logotherapy was founded as the third Viennese School of Psychotherapy in the mid-twentieth century by Frankl. Due to the limitations and basic psychologism that Freud and Adler's theories offer, he presented a more holistic perspective for the interpretation of human's primary motivation in the face of life's predicaments, "to clarify the difference between meaningful and meaningless suffering, and to analyze suffering in the life of an individual regarding his capacity for experiencing meaningful suffering" (Frankl, 1953, p. 13). It is based on the idea of will to meaning, proposed as a response to timeless existential challenges that every individual encounters in life. To attain the meaning of life, one can benefit from *The Triad of Pathways*, which encompasses creative, experiential, and attitudinal aspects of life. To illustrate, the creative pathway focuses on one's endeavours for personal contribution to society, the experiential pathway prioritizes the relationships with the divine, the loved ones, or beauty, and *the attitudinal pathway* centres on one's positive reaction towards life's unavoidable difficulties. In Frankl's hierarchy of values, suffering holds a superior position to both creative and experiential values, for it is through pain that the human being is most profoundly tested and granted the ultimate opportunity for transcendence (Costello, 2015). For Frankl (2006), it is an "ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death" (p. 64). However, through *The Triad of Pathways*, people can turn their tragedies into triumphs and be guided on a meaningful

and purposeful journey through life. All in all, Logotherapy is not merely a type of clinical psychology, but also a philosophical anthropology that offers guidance on developing and prospering as a community in the face of various predicaments of existence. For this reason, Gothic conflict, fear, and moral disintegration can be examined through Logotherapy to draw conclusions and valuable lessons for future generations.

The characters in Le Fanu's novella embody the human condition that Viktor Frankl identified as *The Tragic Triad*. It is humans' inevitable and numerous encounters with pain, guilt, and death throughout life. According to Frankl, these encounters both define the tragic aspect of existence and have the capacity to transform. He asserts that "the undeniable transitoriness of life … really applies only to the possibilities to fulfil a meaning, the opportunities to create, to experience, and to suffer meaningfully. Once such possibilities have been actualized, they are no longer transitory" (Frankl, 1985, p. 117). Resilience is developed via pain, and guilt may reveal one's moral compass. The awareness of death, however, is the most potent of all since it emphasizes the value of life. When individuals avoid confronting the tragic events of life and miss the opportunity to get the most out of them, as Frankl warns, depression, aggression, and addiction arise from this inactive reaction. It is called *the Pathological Triad*, and Carmilla masterfully epitomizes this tragic end with all its consequences after succumbing to the evil's influence. Although at first sight, the hardships of life seem impossible to manage, and circumstances can make the situation harsh, taking initiative and facing them bravely, like appreciating the beauty of the ocean with its waves and storms, alongside its liveliness and depth, results in one's elevation of their psychological and mental well-being. Since "responsibility grows … with the uniqueness of the person and the singularity of the situation. Uniqueness and singularity … are fundamental components of the meaning of human life (Frankl, 1986, p. 62). In that regard, the reader witnesses the failure of this appreciation in Carmilla's case, and the novella becomes the very tool of psychotherapy itself. Therefore, this study aims to analyze Le Fanu's Carmilla in relation to Frankl's Tragic and Pathological Triads, examining the nineteenth-century Gothic imagination while exploring the underlying reasons for its failure to find meaning in life.

Although Le Fanu's novella has been extensively examined through postcolonial, feminist, queer, psychoanalytic, and sociological frameworks, its existential dimension has remained largely underexplored. Few studies have focused on the novella's existential crisis at its core, and most have reflected upon its gender, postcolonial, or psychosocial aspects. What is more, a logotherapeutic analysis, which could be illuminating for further

insights into Gothic society, has not been attempted before. Gothic focal figure of vampire becomes an imaginative laboratory of Frankl's Tragic and Pathological Triads, and this reinterpretation suggests new insights into the novella's analysis. In that regard, Carmilla's vampirism becomes not only a supernatural phenomenon but also a symbol of the existential emptiness with the loss of purpose and transcendence. Her insatiable hunger represents the spiritual void of the Victorian era, when the human capacity to create, relate, and react positively is wasted. As a result, if the pursuit fails, the emptiness of *The Tragic Triad* remains unfulfilled through *The Triad of Pathways*, and inevitably, *The Pathological Triad* occurs as a tragic end. In conclusion, the fragmentation, repression, and futile engagement with the human mind's limitations in the Gothic atmosphere are masterfully portrayed in Le Fanu's novella. Through the lens of Logotherapy, it can be understood in a more comprehensive and humanistic light.

Carmilla and the Collapse of Meaning: The Tragic and Pathological Triads in Le Fanu's Gothic Imagination

When scrutinized through Logotherapy, Carmilla's horror could be regarded as a psychological portrait of meaninglessness. Viktor Frankl's assertion that *The Tragic Triad*, namely pain, guilt and death, is an inevitable but potentially redemptive reality, invites the reader to understand Le Fanu's vampire not as a predator but as a subject unable to turn her tragedy into transcendence, because "human existence is always directed toward something that is not itself" (Frankl, 2004, p. 4). Carmilla's recurring languor, her refusal to confess, and her continuous exposure to death dramatize the paralysis of the human soul when it refuses to give meaning to suffering. In this context, her wanderings at night reflect the psychological process by which contemporary humans ritualize pain into repetition to avoid facing it. She does not resemble the traditional Gothic monsters who search for compensation or redemption to free themselves from the "existential vacuum" that Frankl (2011) coins (p. 70). She is literally the embodiment of this vacuum with her futile striving for survival. As a result, this futility makes her a representative of Victorian society as well as of nihilistic postmodern humanity.

Long before Carmilla's teeth ever contact human flesh, her tragedy starts. Not only does her body change when she is transformed into a vampire, but her ability to find true meaning also crumbles:

> "There occurred that night what has confused the picture, and made its colours faint. I was all but assassinated in my bed, wounded here," she touched her breast, "and never was the same since."

> "Were you near dying?"
>
> "Yes, very—a cruel love—strange love, that would have taken my life. Love will have its sacrifices. No sacrifice without blood" (Le Fanu, 1872/2013, p. 45).

The fundamental trauma that moulds her life is captured in this confession: abuse disguised as closeness, destruction disguised as love. Considering Viktor Frankl's view, Carmilla's first suffering marks the start of her tragic triad, which refers to pain as an inevitable part of life. Carmilla, however, gives in to her anguish, in contrast to Frankl's patients who turn it into purpose. Her suffering becomes the cause of her pathological fixation rather than a means of personal development. What started out as a victim's wound becomes the aggressor's curse. According to Frankl's *attitudinal pathway*, "meaning rests on the attitude the patient chooses toward suffering" (Frankl, 2014, p. 80). Obviously, without the ability to give meaning to her suffering, Carmilla descends into the pathological realm of aggression.

If her pain marks the beginning of *The Tragic Triad*, her guilt initiates *The Pathological Triad*. The model for all her subsequent relationships is likewise established by Carmilla's transformation scene. Frankl's conception of the defiant power of the human spirit is perversely reversed by the unidentified lover who transforms her into a vampire. Carmilla's assailant forces misery upon her and destroys her agency, depriving her of the possibility of choice. This is a "cruel love" that exploits and abuses rather than relates or bonds; it imitates love and feeds upon addiction (Le Fanu, 1872/2013, p. 45). However, instead of turning her unavoidable suffering into an achievement, from that very moment, Carmilla chooses to reexperience the same trauma with her victims and start a new vicious cycle with each one. In this context, Frankl (2020) suggests, "true suffering of an authentic fate is an achievement, and, indeed, is the highest possible achievement" (p. 26). Yet, although it is possible for her to stand against this cycle, she fails to endure. Still, her "wild heart bleeds" with the heart of her victim: "Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness … I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty." (Le Fanu, 1872/2013, s. 29). This confession epitomizes what Frankl would call *The Pathological Triad*: guilt transforms into aggression and addiction. Carmilla's consciousness of her cruelty is intertwined with her addiction to blood and affiliation. Guilt, here, functions not as a moral compass but as a self-destructive drive that could be satisfied neither with blood nor with love, an echo of an existential vacuum.

Finally, her confrontation with death, or rather her denial of it, completes the triadic fall. Carmilla's pain is more of an existential suffering and struggles rather than physical or psychological distress when she is repeatedly described as "languid", "faint", and "incapable of exertion" (Le Fanu, 1872, p. 41). In other words, as Frankl (1986) puts it, noögenic neurosis arises out of the feeling of her meaninglessness and void, which is her primary source of pain. Carmilla's soul is surrounded by this existential vacuum, and her existence unfolds as a continuous languor—depression. These symptoms are not merely Gothic settings in the novella, but also a reflection of the threshold between life and death. Her languor is her existential exhaustion, namely, it is the result of denying transcendence and finality, depriving her of the ability to die or give meaning to life. Carmilla's desire for love "to death" is a distorted image of her need for the divine, leaving her body suspended in this world and her soul suspended in the other (Le Fanu, 1872, p. 44). In conclusion, Carmilla's overall mood is the representation of the Victorian individual in the Gothic melancholic atmosphere, with the absence of meaning and the spiritual languor.

This pathological repetition extends beyond Carmilla herself, infecting those who attempt to preserve or possess her. The Moravian nobleman who hides Carmilla's body further dramatizes the distortion. He epitomizes the pathological transformation of love into an obsession. The nobleman deepens Carmilla's tragedy by preserving her body rather than freeing her spirit; his denial of death perpetuates further deaths across generations. Carmilla's assertion that "love will have its sacrifices" embodies this very denial, and it is grotesquely reflected in the novella as the striving for cherishing love by killing the loved ones. The nobleman's remorseful letter that shows Carmilla's coffin is another example of guilt resembling Carmilla's. Both characters are captured in the same existential impasse. They maintain the distortion since they cannot face the painful truth of death. In Frankl's view, both exemplify the failure of attitudinal values with the pathological illusion of controlling the harsh circumstances around them rather than benefiting from them to turn their tragedies into triumphs.

When Carmilla reemerges centuries later in the household of General Spielsdorf and his daughter Bertha, the cycle begins anew. Her predation disguises itself as affection, and her emotional hunger manifests in letters trembling with both tenderness and aggression. Spielsdorf's final letter, mourning his lost daughter—"I have lost my beautiful daughter—for as such I adored her … in the peace of innocence, and in the glorious hope of a blessed futurity."—encapsulates the tragic fusion of love and death that defines Carmilla's existence (Le Fanu, 1872/2013, p. 11). Through Frankl's

lens, this recurrence is not mere horror, but the dramatization of humanity's recurring failure to find meaning in pain—a timeless descent from tragedy into pathology. "The fiend who betrayed our infatuated hospitality has done it all" (Le Fanu, 1872/2013, p. 11). At this point, the reader witnesses the externalization of Carmilla's inner decay. Her longing for connection and her desire to destroy become inseparable. She no longer distinguishes between closeness and consumption, between tenderness and aggression. "The striving to find a meaning in life is a primary motivational force in man" (Frankl et al., 2010, p. 77). In this sense, Carmilla's vampirism is not rebellion but the perversion of this striving, and it leads to damaging and neurotic results. In Carmilla's case, the result is an aggressive, insatiable hunger instead of spiritual purpose.

When the town is plagued by unexplained deaths in the following scenes, Carmilla's inner turmoil is further exposed by her abhorrence of a passing funeral. She angrily interrupts Laura as she joins the mourners at a peasant girl's burial and starts to sing the hymn: "Don't you perceive how discordant that is? … your forms wound me, and I hate funerals. What a fuss! Why you must die—everyone must die; and all are happier when they do" (Le Fanu, 1872/2013, p. 31). Her denial of death is her deep hatred of being neither alive nor dead, namely, her existence. Her disruption of the funeral mirrors the burial she perpetually resists—her own. Her inability to confront death prevents her from completing the human cycle of life and death, which Frankl identifies as the very process through which meaning is born. Carmilla's pain has no such horizon, despite Frankl's claim that struggles cease to be suffering at the time they find meaning (Zalli, 2024). She turns suffering into aggression and death into addiction, and she is cut off from both the divine and human orders. Ultimately, her resistance to death is not an affirmation of life but its negation—an endless struggle to escape limitation, which paradoxically imprisons her in a static state of despair. The ultimate rejection of meaning, the will to emptiness that characterizes Frankl's existential vacuum, is her fight against death—against finitude itself.

The most obvious reverberations of Carmilla's tragedy could be witnessed in her last and the most complicated relationship, with Laura. Their first meeting long before they meet in person, realizes in Laura's 'so-called' blurred dream of affection and horror. As a child, she awakes to see "a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of the bed" and feels "as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment" (Le Fanu, 1872, p. 7). This initial vision, suspended between tenderness and violence, plants the seed of an emotional paradox that will later define her relationship with Carmilla. Through Frankl's framework, this scene already dramatizes the

human tendency to turn pain into repetition rather than meaning—it marks the beginning of *The Tragic Triad* through unacknowledged suffering. The hollow and the warmth in the bed symbolize the persistence of unprocessed trauma, a metaphor for the lingering emotional vacuum that will later consume both Carmilla and Laura. Years later, Laura identifies Carmilla as the same face that had tormented her nightmares as a child when she first arrives: "I saw the very face which had visited me in my childhood at night … It was pretty, even beautiful; and when I first beheld it, wore the same melancholy expression" (Le Fanu, 1872/2013, p. 23). They interact in the realm of the uncanny through this spectral déjà vu, as though Carmilla is stuck in a cycle of reenacting her unresolved tragedy. As Kyrpyta (2020) argues, "the text's uncanniness is primarily expressed in terms of its unsettling deployment of a version of doubling … in which Carmilla is Laura's doppelgänger." Nevertheless, Carmilla momentarily rediscovers some purpose with Laura. She has an authentic, even delicate desire for emotional reciprocity: "Dearest, your little heart is wounded … my wild heart bleeds with yours" (Le Fanu, 1872/2013, p. 29). On the other hand, her love becomes annihilating to both herself and others because it is unable to express itself within moral or temporal boundaries. According to Frankl's experiential pathway, love that transcends oneself and points toward another is the source of meaning. However, Carmilla's love is self-referential, reflecting her own void.

Carmilla's romanticization of death as union, "You must come with me, loving me, to death; or else hate me and still come with me, and hating me through death and after," is the pinnacle of the pathology (Le Fanu, 1872/2013, p. 44). This scene is the embodiment of her "unconscious desire to appropriate her lover for herself and bring her into her realm of death" (Oki, 2022, p. 19). In this case, death is an eternalization of possession rather than a destination—love without release, pain without redemption. Carmilla's desire to merge affection and destruction reflects her inability to perceive love as a creative or transcendent act. In Frankl's terms, genuine love should point beyond the self, affirming the value of the beloved as an end. Carmilla, however, transforms love into a means of self-preservation, reducing it to a mechanism for maintaining her own existence within the void. This is the most extreme misrepresentation of *The Tragic Triad* proposed by Frankl. Carmilla converts suffering into fixation instead of meaning; she recycles shame into compulsion instead of moral duty; and she turns death into a continuation of violation instead of acceptance of finitude. In this sense, the longing for union is inseparable from the craving for domination in Carmilla, which reflects a perversion of Frankl's experiential pathway.

The cause of her tragedy is not only the unavoidable vampirism but also her conscious choice of the traumatic cycle, both for herself and her victims, instead of approximating the moral or the spiritual. Pain has turned into depression, guilt into aggression, and death into addiction—each tragic element has degenerated into its pathological equivalent.

Her death, or more accurately, her ultimate demise, highlights Carmilla's cyclical nature of her tragedy rather than a resolution to her crisis. The community could exhume and stake her body after discovering the note written by the Moldavian nobleman confessing his long-standing transgression. In a way, Carmilla herself was never able to accomplish the delayed moral repair that this deed accomplishes. Although it fails to restore personal salvation, it reestablishes the traditional order. Carmilla was trapped in a lifelong state of pathology because she refused to deal with suffering, rebelled against remorse, and avoided dying. Even in the face of unavoidable suffering, one retains the freedom to choose one's attitude (Bulut & Sarı, 2020). In this sense, Carmilla's damnation is not the result of her transformation alone but of her refusal to find a moral stance within it. She could have chosen the path of meaning instead of the path of destruction. As seen in later reinterpretations of vampirism—such as the Cullen family in the *Twilight* saga—immortality itself does not necessitate moral decay; it can also be turned into creativity, love, and contribution to humanity. Every suffering, as Frankl insists, contains the potential for transformation. Carmilla's failure to actualize this potential turns her tragedy into pathology, whereas her story may inspire future studies that examine the possibility of a 'logotherapeutic vampire'—a being who transcends suffering rather than perpetuates it.

Carmilla's story ultimately functions as a Gothic parable of Logotherapy in reverse. Carmilla dies by denying her pain, whereas Frankl's patients find purpose in accepting it. Carmilla's guilt turns into depression, aggression, and addiction, in contrast to Frankl's idea of guilt, which demands accountability and rejuvenation. Carmilla's immortality makes all experience barren, in contrast to Frankl's view of death as the borderline that gives life urgency. Her life takes place in what Frankl referred to as the *existential vacuum*, which is exaggerated to the paranormal; her existence is reduced to "mere sustenance for her blood-thirsty standards of living", a hollow routine that replaces meaning with survival (Altun, 2025, p. 93). The impossibility of meaning is the vampire's affliction, not just her bloodlust. Her only hope would have been death—the essential threshold that allows meaning to be resurrected. Carmilla's captivation to immortality epitomizes Frankl's warning that when *will to meaning* is retarded, then, *will to nothingness*

takes the stage. For this reason, one could argue that Le Fanu's novella is among Gothic literature's most eerie depictions of the entwined tragic and pathological triads. Beneath this horror lies a stark realization: Pain, guilt, and death are among the human experiences not to avoid and flee from but to accept, embrace, and get the most of them to reach one's self-awareness. Carmilla's denial of these is the signal of her existential sorrow as well as a lack of morality. She is the dark twin of Frankl's survivor, the one who loses meaning due to immortality rather than the one who finds meaning in suffering. She ultimately demonstrates that to deny death is to deny life itself, and how love, devoid of transcendence, turns into the most vicious kind of hunger. Thus, through the inverted lens of Logotherapy, Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) reveals that the horror of meaninglessness surpasses even the horror of death itself.

Conclusion

Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) could be considered both a Gothic horror story and a modern psychological analysis of meaninglessness when scrutinized through the lens of Viktor E. Frankl's Logotherapy. It masterfully portrays the moral decay, repression, and the indispensable longing for meaning of the Victorian era, which is in complete line with the fact that the moment humanity escapes its tragedies rather than facing and challenging them, and as Frankl put it, experiences the existential vacuum, it is ultimately dragged into tragedy. In Carmilla's case, escapism is merely a temporary solution; her tragedy ends tragically since it is not bravely welcomed. If she had confronted it with Frankl's 'responsibleness' and courage, every tragic event she endured, whether it was pain, guilt or death, could have been transformed into life-changing experiences. Unfortunately, the failure to attain the meaning of life led to a pathological result, and Carmilla necessarily faced depression, aggression, and addiction. Through her tragic death, she epitomizes the unavailing effort out of the timeless struggle of humans' desperate need for meaning in times of tragedy. However, she is more than just a villain; she is the victim of moral and spiritual deprivation. Instead of contribution, connection, and creation, she prefers consumption and represents exhaustion. Her existence is characterized by an absolute *will to nothingness*, a state where her consciousness of eternal life paradoxically renders all moments meaningless and fleeting. She cannot engage with the unique possibilities of the present because she has no sense of finitude. This self-consumption that resulted from Carmilla's denial of her tragic triad is an existential horror transcending the physical terror of the traditional vampire myth. In conclusion, lost in touch with Frankl's creative, experiential,

and attitudinal pathways, Carmilla could be deemed as a precursor of the contemporary existential problems of the postmodern human with her insatiable hunger, constant languor and hopelessness.

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