

Rabid Bitches and Fanged Whores: Misogynistic Discourses in Nineteenth-Century Tales of the Female Werewolf and the Female Vampire

Charmaine Tanti

University of Malta

Nineteenth-century depictions of female monsters in literature inevitably focused on the powerful sexual female and the conflicting feelings of horror and fascination that she engendered in a society that tried to impose strict paradigms on the meaning of femininity. Tales of female vampires and female werewolves, monsters that, in folklore as well as literature, have shared a close association that has often blurred the lines of distinction between the two, illustrate this preoccupation with the sexual woman, and also a lack of understanding of female issues such as pregnancy, in their misogynistic portrayals of the sexual female as a blood-thirsty monster.

This paper will examine shared characteristics of the nineteenth-century literary female vampire and the female werewolf in the context of the misogynistic discourses within these texts. Making particular reference to, among others, E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'Aurelia', Frederick Marryat's 'The White Wolf of the Hartz Mountains', Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla', Clemence Housman's 'The Were-wolf' and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as well as to the medical and social beliefs of the time, I will endeavour to examine not only the monstrification and bestialisation of the transgressive woman, but also the notion that women's physiology made them intrinsically Other and potentially monstrous and dangerous.

Charmaine Tanti is a doctoral scholar with the Department of English at the University of Malta, and has just completed a thesis that focuses on the notion of moral ambivalence in vampire literature and film. She also has a degree in Theatre Studies and is a full-time educator, teaching drama, dance and languages.