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Evil transgressions and the monstrous female vampire in David Mitchell's *Slade House* (2015)

Abstract

David Mitchell's *Slade House* (2015) provides a contemporary representation of the role of the female villain in Gothic fiction, revealing how her monstrosity is considered frightening in relation to patriarchal society's conception of female characters. Mitchell's female villain is represented through the time-honoured generic Gothic villain – the vampire (in this novel, Norah Grayer). Historically, women in fiction are characterised as victims; however, Barbara Creed's (1993) monstrous-feminine subverts this one-dimensional stereotype by challenging such patriarchal representations of women. I will apply Creed's theory as it relates to the female villain in the novel, while demonstrating the ways in which Norah Grayer surpasses female stereotypes into the realm of evil female villain. In *Slade House,* Norah's embodiment of the monstrous-feminine occurs in her characterisation as a contemporary form of vampire who sexually dominates, and thus terrifies, men. Thus, her role directly subverts Margaret Atwood's notion that "men fear that women will laugh at them, while women fear men will kill them" as she intercepts this binary through her role as vampire/murderer. My discussion will argue the ways in which Norah Grayer transgresses societal limitations, placed on her by seizing power over her victims and ultimately, triumphing in the novel as female villain – filled with evil. Such reconstructions of female identity serve to counteract patriarchal representations of women while acknowledging the need to challenge these oversimplifications in contemporary fiction.

Key words: monstrous-feminine, vampire, evil women, female villain.

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