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DAPHNE DU MAURIER AND GOTHIC SIGNATURES:

Rebecca as vamp(ire)

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Gothic fiction over the last two hundred years has given us characters such as Dracula and Frankenstein's monster who have passed into popular culture and taken on an almost mythic dimension (Day 1985: 3). *Rebecca*, Daphne du Maurier's most famous novel, has given us one such character. This essay will attempt to retrieve Rebecca's textual Gothic ancestry and relate it to a discussion of the destabilising nature of her absent/present body and its status as ghostly yet corporeal trace. In particular, it will explore the significance of signature as bodily trace in relation to the writing identities of both Rebecca and her creator, Daphne du Maurier.

In what is still probably the most memorable representation of *Rebecca* (published in 1938), Hitchcock's film (made in 1940) retains the novel's Gothic emphasis. However, Alison Light's influential reading of the novel has resulted in an argument centred on the class dynamics of the text; this sees the narrator's bourgeois feminine subjectivity as both inflected and threatened by that of a wayward, aristocratic Rebecca who enjoys a freedom of self-expression and lifestyle denied the timid second wife of Maxim de Winter (Light 1984). Whilst providing some invaluable insights, this reading has necessitated a fairly free, and sometimes inaccurate, portrayal of the social class of both Rebecca and her creator.¹ In fact, Rebecca's social class is not entirely clear from the novel. Indeed, Michelle A. Massé, in speculating that Rebecca was married for her money, opens up the possibility that her marriage to Maximilian de Winter combined his aristocratic status with her *nouveau riche* wealth and was thus a marriage of expediency for both parties (as she points out, 'Manderley's splendor is very

recent' (Massé 1992: 181)). Nor is it accurate to describe du Maurier herself as 'aristocratic': her father's title came with a knighthood earned in 1922 and her own title of 'Lady Browning' derived from her marriage to Major 'Boy' Browning. Moreover, such an approach tends to shift du Maurier's novel out of the Gothic paradigm: for example, relating the writing of *Rebecca* to the rise of the love-story during the inter-war period, Light describes the novel as 'a thriller or murder story ... as well as a love-story' (Light 1991: 163). A subsidiary effect of such categorisations has been to define Rebecca as a vamp or a *femme fatale*; indeed Light refers to du Maurier as finding 'her scarlet woman irresistible' (Light 1991: 157).

Yet the term '*femme fatale*' is not simply a sign of aristocratic femininity; there are racial and gendered positions embedded in the term which are brought to light when we examine the close but distinct etymological and cultural relationship between the words '*femme fatale*', 'vamp' and 'vampire'. The first phrase, imported from the French in 1912, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, linguistically 'otherises' a particular type of woman as a source of threat. The *femme fatale* has, of course, a long cultural history which goes back to Jezebel, Salome and Cleopatra, but she does not become prominent in art and literature until the late nineteenth century when she emerges, according to Mary Ann Doane, as a response to an industrialised and rapidly changing society in which women were resisting Victorian models of femininity (Doane 1991: 1–2). She is associated, according to Doane, with distinct characteristics. She is never really what she seems to be; her rather morbid sexuality connects her beauty with barrenness, lack of production, death and obliteration; because her power situates the *femme fatale* as evil, she is invariably punished or killed (often by a man); finally, she is often associated with a sexually ambiguous identity, in so far as she is frequently linked with androgyny, bisexuality and/or lesbianism. Rebecca manifests all of these characteristics. She is not what she seems to be: the outward conformity of the sophisticated chatelaine figure, adored by the Cornish community, hides a secret self who behaves differently in London and within the privacy of her boat house. Her beauty is certainly associated with barrenness and death. She is indeed perceived as evil by Maxim and is punished accordingly by him. Finally, her sexual identity is ambiguous; the text makes it clear that she has committed adultery but also hints that she and Mrs Danvers have been lesbian lovers. More broadly, she destabilises current notions of gender: seen

through Mrs Danvers's eyes, Rebecca signifies both femininity and masculinity. On the one hand, the housekeeper emphasises her beauty, sensuality and femininity by endowing her fine clothes with a metonymic significance. On the other hand, she stresses Rebecca's power and masculinity: what she loved in Rebecca, it seems, was her strength, her courage and her 'spirit', which she associates with masculinity: 'She ought to have been a boy, I often told her that' (du Maurier [1938] 1992: 253). At the level of plot, then, Rebecca is presented, it would seem, as a classic *femme fatale* figure.

The discourses of film and literature invariably use the phrase '*femme fatale*' interchangeably with the word 'vamp'.² Yet 'vamp' is defined by the OED as a Jezebel figure who is deliberately destructive, whereas the *femme fatale* is often perceived as having 'power despite herself' (Doane 1991: 2). A few critics, however, do perceive this distinction. Pierre Leprohon, for example, in his book *The Italian Cinema*, suggests that the *femme fatale* and the vamp are quite different, the latter being connected with a conscious desire to destroy: she is, he argues, 'deliberately devastating, the woman who lives off her victims' misfortunes, a kind of vampire'. In contrast, 'the fate of the *femme fatale* is often as dreadful as that of her lovers, and this makes her even more appealing' (cited in Doane 1991: 127). Interestingly, the OED suggests that the word 'vamp' (first used in this sense in 1918 and quite distinct from 'vamp' on a piano, which has a different etymology) does indeed derive from the word 'vampire'. This slippage between the words 'vampire' and 'vamp' is attributed by several critics to a *fin-de-siècle* anxiety concerning the shifting status of women. For example, Bram Dijkstra has noted that '[b]y 1900 the vampire had come to represent woman as the personification of everything negative that linked sex, ownership, and money' (Dijkstra 1986: 351); according to Alexandra Warwick, the changing representation of the female vampire in late nineteenth-century texts reflected a growing anxiety about the 'masculinisation' of women in their transition from angels of the hearth to 'wandering' New Women (Warwick 1995: 202–20).³ The actual threats embodied in real women, then, resulted in the female vampire being culturally transmuted into the vamp; by the early twentieth century the sinister polyvalency of the former had become translated into the sexual threat of the latter. The corporeal code of the vamp is, of course, immediately recognisable: invariably her direct gaze emanates from a slender, nubile body; she usually has dark hair, either in abundance or cut very short,

so that it sits like a cap on her head; above all, her presence is strongly erotic. Lulu, in G.W. Pabst's famous 1929 film *Pandora's Box*, played by Louise Brooks, was portrayed in just such a way. Du Maurier's Rebecca, when she is made visible in film or television adaptations, is often rendered as the classic vamp.⁴ We are not claiming that this is a misrepresentation: du Maurier's famous novel, set in the mid-twenties according to its author (du Maurier [1981] 1993: 10), certainly draws on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century constructions of the independent and sexually active woman as vamp. Yet the corporeal charisma so important in portrayals of the 'vamp' is communicated in the novel only through traces of Rebecca's body and the things connected with her: her scent, her clothes, the rhododendrons, her signature, her script. In du Maurier's text, it is, paradoxically, the very *absence* of Rebecca that is used to denote so powerfully the *presence* of adult female sexuality. Rebecca, then, is *ghost* as well as vamp. Du Maurier's work is, after all, a Gothic novel, not a *film noir*; the threatening woman is 'otherised' not only through physical difference, but also through the supernatural. Not surprisingly, then, we find du Maurier subtly drawing on the vampiric tradition in her creation of Rebecca and this, we suggest, contributes much to the evocation of the uncanny in the novel. However, we shall argue that the cultural slippages between the terms 'vamp', 'vampire' and '*femme fatale*' are reflected not only in the unstable status of Rebecca's body but also by Maurier's construction of a writing persona which, in flight from the feminine and the corporeal, embraces the masculine and the disembodied.

Like those of the vampiric body, the status and whereabouts of Rebecca's corpse are problematic. When her boat is raised and a body is found in it, doubt is cast upon the identity of the body in the crypt. Rebecca's body – to use Tania Modleski's words – 'becomes the site of a bizarre fort/da game'⁵ (Modleski 1988: 49). What Anne Williams describes as 'that intensely Gothic phenomenon, the sight of a worm-eaten corpse' (Williams 1995: 73), is denied the reader: instead, various characters present us with vivid but different narratives of watery disintegration. So Rebecca's corpse is 'absent' for much of the novel yet remains insistently and disturbingly present in the imaginations of these characters – just as her absent body remains insistently 'alive' for the narrator, whose continual association of Rebecca with the blood-red rhododendrons and headily scented azaleas of the Manderley estate evokes a charismatic female sexual presence for both

herself and the reader. Yet the narrator's final thoughts on Rebecca's body link it not with water, but with dust:

Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust. It seemed to me that Rebecca had no reality any more. She had crumbled away when they had found her on the cabin floor. It was not Rebecca who was lying in the crypt, it was dust. Only dust. (du Maurier [1938] 1992: 334)

Thus Rebecca's 'second' burial (which seeks literally to encrypt her ungovernable force) is associated with the end of Dracula, whose body crumbles to dust at the moment of death: 'It was like a miracle, but before our very eyes, and almost in the drawing of a breath, the whole body crumbled into dust and passed from our sight' (Stoker [1897] 1993: 484). The apparent finality of Rebecca's burial, however, is undercut by an earlier incident in which the narrator thought she had 'finally' destroyed Rebecca's writing (the inscription in the book of poems), only to find it resurfacing again and again at Manderley. The 'dust' that is Rebecca's body is no more final than the 'feathers of dust' of the burned fly-leaf or the ash scattered by the 'salt wind' of the novel's final line. Like the vampire, Rebecca seems able to reconstitute herself endlessly and, like the vampire, her corporeal status is unstable: she is neither visibly a body nor visibly a corpse.

Rebecca is also associated throughout the novel with several characteristics which, according to Ernest Jones, traditionally denote the vampiric body: facial pallor, plentiful hair and voracious sexual appetite (Jones [1991] 1992: 409). And like the vampire, she has to be 'killed' more than once: the plot's excessive, triple killing of Rebecca (she was shot; she had cancer; she drowned) echoes the folk belief that vampires must be 'killed' three times. Although Rebecca lacks the requisite fangs and only metaphorically sucks men dry, she can none the less be placed within Christopher Frayling's second category of vampires, that of the Fatal Woman who, according to Frayling, 'altered the whole direction of the vampire tale' from the mid-nineteenth century onwards: 'sexually aware, and sexually dominant ... attractive and repellent at the same time', she is clearly symptomatic of a cultural anxiety concerning adult female sexuality (Frayling [1991] 1992: 68, 71–2). Seen in this light, Rebecca's literary lineage includes Prosper Mérimée's *Carmen*, Poe's *Berenice*, Gautier's *Clarimonde* and Le Fanu's *Countess Carmilla* – not forgetting, of course, Charlotte Brontë's *Bertha Mason*, described in Chapter 25 of *Jane Eyre* as 'the foul German spectre – the *Vampyre*'. Rebecca may,

then, be read not only as vamp but also as vampire: she is a clear descendant of the female demon lover who transmuted into the female vampire in mid- to late Victorian Gothic texts and into the vamp in twentieth-century cinema.

Like all vampire figures, Rebecca is associated with a transgressive, polymorphous sexuality. She is also, like all vampire figures, a figure of abjection. Recent critics of the Gothic have used Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* ([1980] 1982) to explore how representations of the abject in certain texts relate to certain discourses and cultural values at a particular historical moment.⁶ Kristeva's concept of the abject thereby becomes a concept which enables them to define how shared constructions of 'otherness' are predicated upon shared cultural values at specific times: by this logic, you may know a culture by what it 'throws off' or 'abjects'. But the figure of abjection in a Gothic text may, of course, be presented as simultaneously repellent and charismatic, thus allowing the reader to indulge in a transgressive redefinition of 'self'. This 'other' is also invariably the focus of more than one cultural anxiety and may therefore act as a vehicle of abjection in several ways. It is not surprising, then, to find that the sexual threat represented by Rebecca as 'vamp' is further inflected by the text's association of her with vampirism and 'Jewishness'. Rebecca was supposedly based on Jan Ricardo who was engaged to Major 'Boy' Browning before his marriage to du Maurier; she was a 'dark-haired, rather exotic young woman, beautiful but highly-strung', according to Margaret Forster (Forster 1993: 91). However, du Maurier's presentation of Maxim's first wife as a dangerous and beautiful dark-haired woman with an Hebraic name might well have been unconsciously influenced by the air of anti-semitism prevalent in Europe during the 1930s. In this context, it is perhaps worth noting that David Selznick, the producer of Hitchcock's film version of *Rebecca*, is reputed to have had misgivings about the film's title, commenting that it would not do 'unless it was made for the Palestine market' (Shallcross [1991] 1993: 69–70). As both Ken Gelder and Judith Halberstam have noted, the nineteenth-century vampire was often portrayed as having Jewish characteristics – the physical appearance, the often perverse desires and the unrooted, wandering nature of 'the Jew' (as then constructed) all being projected onto the vampire (Gelder 1994: 13–17; Halberstam 1995a: 86–106). Indeed, Judith Halberstam argues that 'the nineteenth-century discourse of anti-Semitism and the myth of the vampire share a kind of Gothic

economy in their ability to condense many monstrous traits into one body' (Halberstam 1995a: 88). Many anxieties are written on the body of Rebecca, including that of the woman author whose social identity is transgressively inflected by her writing identity.

For it is Rebecca's signature and handwriting which constitute the metonymic representation of her body throughout the text, indelibly inscribing her presence. Certainly the semiotic of her script complicates our perception of her function in the novel. On the one hand, her writing – as we see it, for example, in the loving dedication to her writing – as we see it, for example, in the loving dedication to 'Max' and in the contents of the morning-room desk – is proof of her ability, during her life, to play an allotted role within the realm of 'everyday legality' and to masquerade effectively as a country-house hostess. Rebecca's writing initially appears to tell the tale of an ideal wife, loving towards her husband and the perfect hostess for his elegant country mansion. However, the script itself, which continually interrupts into the text, tells a different story, since it is also associated with a masculine strength and an indelible authority; as such it indicates a wayward, wilful quality that runs counter to Maxim's idea of the good wife. Moreover, it is sharply differentiated from that of the narrator who describes her own handwriting as 'cramped and unformed' (du Maurier [1938] 1992: 93) with all the intimations of immaturity and social inhibition that this suggests. This narrator connects Rebecca's 'curious', 'sloping' or 'slanting' script with a vibrant vitality: 'How alive her writing though, how full of force' (62). Always Rebecca's handwriting suggests supreme confidence and knowledge. In particular, the capital letter 'R', embroidered on the handkerchief the narrator finds in Rebecca's mackintosh and on Rebecca's night-dress case, takes on a runic force which derives from its powerful visual impact and its refusal to be destroyed. In this novel Rebecca surfaces most clearly through her signature, which uncannily inscribes the body's presence despite its absence through death. Above all, it is her autonomous energy, implicit in Rebecca's handwriting, which impresses itself on both the narrator and the reader. Thus, there is a duality in Rebecca's script, which seems to tell one story but which gives the lie to it in the actual appearance of the writing itself. The activity of writing is thereby seen to be implicated in the production of sexual subjectivity.

Yet, despite her accentuated difference from Rebecca, it is the timid and nameless young second wife who has been transformed into the older, wiser narrator of Rebecca's story. She has become

empowered to do this, however, only by modifying her perception of Rebecca as 'other' and assimilating her autonomy. Her initial attempts to exorcise Rebecca's presence, through, for example, burning the fly-leaf in Maxim's book which contains her signature, are doomed to failure. Instead, what we see in the novel is a gradual identification between the narrator and Rebecca, quite literally enacted in the Manderley Ball scene when the narrator's appearance as Maxim's ancestress, Caroline de Winter, seems to raise Rebecca from the dead (even Maxim's sister, sensible Beatrice, says 'You stood there on the dead stairs, and for one ghastly moment I thought ...' (225). Indeed, we learn at the beginning of the novel that the (now older) narrator *has* finally acquired the confidence for which she envied Rebecca as a young woman: 'and confidence is a quality I prize, although it has come to me a little late in the day' (13). The conclusion must be that only with Rebecca 'really' dead can she write Rebecca's story, although it is only *through* Rebecca that she can write. Significantly, then, in the final dream of a novel haunted by disturbing dreams the narrator finds herself writing *as* Rebecca:

I was writing letters in the morning-room. I was sending out invitations. I wrote them all myself with a thick black pen. But when I looked down to see what I had written it was not my small square handwriting at all, it was long, and slanting, with curious pointed strokes. I pushed the cards away from the blotter and hid them. I got up and went to the looking-glass. A face stared back at me that was not my own. It was very pale, very lovely, framed in a cloud of dark hair. The eyes narrowed and smiled. The lips parted. The face in the glass stared back at me and laughed. And I saw then that she was sitting on a chair before the dressing-table in her bedroom and Maxim was brushing her hair. He held her hair in his hands, and as he brushed it he wound it slowly into a thick rope. It twisted like a snake, and he took hold of it with both hands and smiled at Rebecca and put it round his neck.

'No', I screamed. 'No. no ...'. (395-6)

Whereas the firing of Manderley reminds us of the burning of Thornfield and of a work which finally eliminates the 'other' woman, this dream perpetuates the psychic disruption which Rebecca signifies. Although the narrator harbours a distrust and fear of Rebecca's sexuality, communicated by the snake image,⁷ the dream also reveals her unconscious identification *with* it. For much of the novel she has consciously wished to be the model wife and hostess she believed Rebecca to have been; yet the mirror image of the dream signals a fur-

ther desire for identification with Rebecca's sexual and *textual* charisma.

This is because Rebecca, despite – or because of – her corporeal absence, embodies a dynamic multivalent alterity for the nameless narrator: she is adulteress, lesbian, bisexual, vampire, Jew. The fact that Rebecca's body shows traces of both Jewishness and vampirism indicates the essentially Gothic quality of the novel; for in the Gothic text perverse sexuality, as Judith Halberstam (citing Sander Gilman) notes, is inevitably 'ascribed to the sexuality of the Other' (Halberstam 1995: 68). In assimilating both psychological and corporeal aspects of Rebecca, the narrator implicitly rejects the social categorisations which separate the 'bad' from the 'good' woman. Furthermore, in absorbing the 'disembodied spirit' of Maxim's first wife, the more, in absorbing the 'disembodied spirit' of Maxim's first wife, the more, in absorbing to embody aspects of Rebecca's power and self-confidence. Above all, she writes, and with the maturity and adult sexual identity implied by Rebecca's 'bold, slanting hand' rather than with the childish ingenuousness of her former self. Her signature and her text are thus haunted by that of another.

However, that phrase we have just used, 'disembodied spirit', is taken not from the novel, but from letters written by du Maurier in the 1940s. Here we wish to link the issue of Rebecca's signature and corporeal identity *within* the text with that of du Maurier as author of the text. As Margaret Forster's biography has revealed, Daphne du Maurier seemed to follow the lifestyle expected of women of her class, yet such conformity hid several unconventional relationships and a complex and conflicted sense of identity (Forster 1993). Furthermore, in spite of living an apparently happy life as wife, mother and successful novelist, du Maurier experienced a great deal of anxiety and ambivalence concerning her identity as a woman writer. For much of the time she felt that part of herself was a 'disembodied spirit', a phrase she uses in two separate letters to Ellen Doubleday, wife of her American publisher, Nelson Doubleday. She uses it first in a letter dated December 1947, which is written in a parodic fairy-tale manner, to describe what we would now call a sense of split subjectivity:

And then the boy realised he had to grow up and not be a boy any longer, so he turned into a girl, and not an unattractive one at that, and the boy was locked in a box forever. D. du M. wrote her books, and had young men, and later a husband, and children, and a lover, and life was sometimes lovely and sometimes rather sad, but when she found Menabilly and lived in it alone, she opened up the box sometimes and let the phan-

tom, who was neither girl nor boy but disembodied spirit, dance in the evening when there was no one to see. (Forster 1993: 222)

In a letter written to Ellen almost a year later in September 1948, reflecting on her husband's reliance on her money-earning capacity as a best-selling novelist, she uses the phrase in a slightly different way:

I mean, really, women should not have careers. It's people like me who have careers who really have bitched up the old relationship between men and women. Women ought to be soft and gentle and dependent. Disembodied spirits like myself are all *wrong*. (Forster 1993: 235)

In the first letter, she describes a masculine dimension of her being which, while 'locked' away, undergoes a metamorphosis into the 'disembodied spirit' which is androgynous and suggestive (to her) of a more authentic 'self'. Such a creative spirit, associated as it is in this letter with her life at Menabilly, is intrinsic to her life as a writer. However, the second letter suggests that while acknowledging her career as that of author, she felt ill at ease as a successful *woman* writer in the wider world; this is confirmed by another letter to Ellen Doubleday written in October 1948, in which she confesses to seeing her work as having given her a 'masculine approach to life' (Forster 1993: 232). Later, having become intrigued by the work of Jung and Adler during the winter of 1954, she explains her 'disembodied' self by reference to Jung's vocabulary of duality and identifies her writing persona as having sprung from a repressed 'No. 2' masculine side. In a letter to her seventeen-year-old daughter in the same year she explains, 'When I get madly boyish No. 2 is in charge, and then, after a bit, the situation is reversed ... No. 2 can come to the surface and be helpful ... he certainly has a lot to do with my writing' (Forster 1993: 276). Thus du Maurier came to perceive her *writing* identity as masculine. While such a 'disembodied spirit' was containable, while it could be put back in the box, it could do no harm; when, however, du Maurier perceived it as taking over – when she referred to *herself* as the 'disembodied spirit' – then she believed it to be socially destructive. Arguably, it was this anxiety concerning the 'Other' contained within the 'self' which gave Jung's work particular resonance for her. Du Maurier's creation of Rebecca as the narrator's transgressive double can also be seen, then, as a manifestation of an anxiety concerning writing, identity and gender.⁸

Interestingly, Forster's biography and Oriel Malet's *Letters from*

Menabilly (1993) provide evidence that in letters to friends du Maurier identified, at different points in her life, with both Rebecca and the narrator. For example, in a letter to Maureen Baker-Munton, written in 1957, du Maurier comments: 'I wrote as the second Mrs. de W. twenty-one years ago, with Rebecca a symbol of Jan. It could also be that ... I – in Moper's dark mind – can be the symbol of Rebecca. The cottage on the beach could be my hut. Rebecca's lovers could be my narrators' (Forster 1993: 424). In these letters quoted by Forster, the narrator tends to be linked with du Maurier's social, 'feminine' identity and Rebecca with her creative writing persona, that 'No. 2' masculine 'self'. As we have established, this sense of the writing self as masculine 'Other' can be seen in the inscription of Rebecca's 'masculine' energy through 'those curious, sloping letters' that continually surface in du Maurier's most famous novel, a text in which the transgressions of the 'Other' are both written on the body and embodied in the writing process itself. Du Maurier's letters suggest that, as she grew older, she moved towards seeing identity as something multi-form and fissured, rather than unitary and coherent. Arguably, the writing process itself provided du Maurier with a way of manipulating such multiplicity and of harnessing the potentially destructive aspect of the 'Other' – as it does for the narrator of *Rebecca*. Rebecca's death within the plot suggests the containment of transgressive desire but her 'disembodied spirit', with all its divergent energies, continues to inform the writing process. We suggest, then, that Rebecca's power to haunt the modern imagination has much to do with her textual and cultural lineage. In creating her, du Maurier drew both on the Gothic tradition and on a broad cultural anxiety concerning the changing status of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For du Maurier, that anxiety was further inflected by the association of the writing woman with a transgressive female identity and this, too, finds expression in her most famous novel. Such anxieties manifest themselves in the way Rebecca's character dissolves some important boundary lines. Neither visibly a body nor visibly a corpse, she upsets the line between life and death; between eros and thanatos; between absence and presence; and between the two stereotypes – that of the asexual virgin-mother and that of the prostitute-vamp – which Andreas Huyssen sees as sustaining 'the myth of the dualistic nature of woman' (Huyssen 1986: 73). Rebecca also disrupts the dividing lines which separate the *femme fatale* from the vamp and the vamp from the female vampire.

This instability of meaning is emphasised by the Gothic nature of Rebecca's body. In addition, the suspended 'R' of her name and the quasi-illegible 'M' in her engagement diary, by constituting a semiotic of fragmentation and incompleteness within the text, indicate metonymically the mysterious uncertainty of her absence/presence. The materiality of Rebecca's signature further signals an anxiety concerning the relation between writing, autonomy and sexual identity. This can be seen as a textual trace of du Maurier's own anxiety about the relation between the 'sexed' body and the cultural construction of authorial identity as 'masculine'. There are, as Elizabeth Grosz has noted:

ways in which the sexuality and corporeality of the subject leave their traces or marks on the texts produced ... The signature not only signs the text by a mark of authorial propriety, but also signs the subject as the product of writing itself, of textuality. (Grosz 1995: 23)

Just as du Maurier's use of the phrase 'disembodied spirit' in her letters indicates a bodily unease in occupying the authorial position, so Rebecca's uneasy status as both too fleshly (vamp) and too uncanny (vampire) reflects a cultural ambivalence towards the sexually expressive and autonomous woman. Such anxieties are condensed in the way that Rebecca's signature haunts the text; in this sense, writing itself is Gothic.

Notes

- 1 Even more recent essays on *Rebecca* continue to be heavily influenced by Light's approach. See, for example, Janet Harbord 1996.
- 2 See, for example, Linda Ruth Williams's use of the terms as interchangeable (Williams 1993: 53, 56).
- 3 In this connection, see also Rebecca Stott 1992, especially Chapter 3 on *Dracula*.
- 4 The Carleton Television adaptation of the novel, shown in January 1997, portrayed Rebecca in this way, for example.
- 5 Modleski uses this phrase to describe the manner in which representations are played out on the narrator's body, but it is just as appropriate to describe the absence/presence of Rebecca's (dead) body.
- 6 For example, Gelder 1994 and Halberstam 1995 relate Gothic presentations of the abject to cultural constructions of 'Jewishness' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whilst Warwick 1995 explores it in relation to the changing status of women during that period. See also Jerrold E. Hogle (1996) for an example of how textual representations of the abject reflect anxiety concerning changing class structures in early twentieth-century France.

- 7 The snake image is often associated with female vampires as in, for instance, Tieck's *Wake Not the Dead*, Coleridge's *Christabel*, Baudelaire's *Les Métamorphoses du Vampire* and (obliquely) Keats's *Lamia*.
- 8 For a fuller exploration of the connection between writing, identity, gender and du Maurier's use of the Gothic genre, see Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik 1998.

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