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Group Discussion: Lee's "Dionea"

Changes to the gothic:

Vernon Lee represents these changes to the gothic.

Protagonists achieve unhealthy and destructive empathy with the ghosts that haunt them.

Lee rejects the resurrection of the dead; instead it's a critic of the ghost story genre. She said ghost stories are too simple

proposes that the "current" trend in ghost stories rationalized away inexplicable phenomenon.

Lee's stories were genuine hauntings

Haunting resulted from external stimulus that acts upon the imagination.

For instance, landscape or a work of art.

The haunting in Lee's stories prompt simultaneously disturbing and desirable sensations.

I propose that these hauntings represent a return to the sublime.

Key Words and Gothic Elements:

The characters focus on a fascination with the past

Often written from the male narrator's point of view

The boundary between real and imaginary often dissolves in Lee's stories

Supernatural

Female fatale

Venus/Aphrodite is beautiful, seductive and dangerous.

Page 80 "But Dionea... the lady Venus

p. 81 "I'm sorry to say... a dreadful thorn... terrace over the sea... back to the sea."

"Dionea, instead of skill, had the prettiest face...

Dionea lies stretched out full length in the sun.. with much the same odd gesture as they"

Doesn't exhibit any human emotions

She's indifferent, otherworldly

Awe inspiring,

No human connections

Not passionate

p. 99-100 "Dione's fairytales are an adaptation..."

how does she know them? "who knows?"

He generally only does male statues

He couldn't capture her beauty or her soul (does she have one?)

Uncanny

"I told him... that if he did not leave me alone, heaven would send him an accident"

The only people she talks to are children and pigeons

She talks to another young lady about giving her a love potion.

Trope in modern horror movies.

They say little kids, babies and dogs are the ones that can see and communicate with the dead. They are not swayed by science. Also, they are not seduced by her.

The kids did put out the horn fingers and shout "witch witch witch"

Pigeons

"Dione

Ghostly seduction:

Dionea is seductive, mysterious

having a supernatural force upon the land (

seduces/enchants the sculptor

“Dionea’s strange influence... fear of the young witch,” (p.86)

Dionea:

p. 104 “of Dionea I can tell you nothing certain we speak of her as little as we can. Some say they have seen her, on stormy nights, wandering among the cliffs; but a sailor-boy assures me, by all the holy things, that they day after the burning of the castle chapel—we never call it anything else—he met at dawn, off the island of Palmaria, beyond the strait of Porto Venere, a Greek boat, with eyes painted on the prow, going full sail to sea, the men singing as she went. And against the mast, a robe of purple and gold about her, and a myrtle-wreath on her head, leaned Dionea, singing words in an unknown tongue, the white pigeons circling around her....”