
The Impact Of Fate And Our Own Decisions On Our Life

Carter's characters in *The Lady of the House of Love (LHL)*, *Wolf-Alice* and *The Werewolf* differentiate between being victims of their own nature and victims of circumstance. These characters that are classified as 'victims' are often portrayed as being unable to help themselves as they cannot escape from their fate or situation, such as the Countess in *The LHL*; however one may argue that certain characters, the child in *The Werewolf* for instance, are initially victims who subvert their role and do save themselves by escaping from this role. The characters in these stories, particularly the women, are often victimised due to the circumstance of their sexuality and societies expectations of them, nevertheless the Countess is a victim of her own nature – her nature as a vampire which entraps her.

Those characters who are victims of their own nature, in other words trapped in their roles due to their inherent make up. The Countess is an example of such a character, as are the Duke from *Wolf-Alice* and the grandmother from *The Werewolf*. All three of the characters are trapped in their states – werewolf and vampire – which are sometimes identified as specifically genetic, the Countess's vampirism being descended from her father, who is too named as a vampire "Nosferatu" alluding to the vampiric film interpretation of Dracula. As a result the Countess becomes the "hereditary commandant of the army of shadows" which in a sense makes her a victim of circumstance as she inherits the isolation and "demented" history after her father's assassination. However, the entire story repeatedly refers to her inability to escape from her vampire nature, symbolized through the caged lark, and her embedded need to kill in order to survive. The repeated references to her isolation and abandonment and the somber connotations to her description "all alone in her dark, high house" and "habitual tormented somnambulism" creates sympathy in the reader for her and highlights her inability to escape from her soulless state. She is unable to fulfill her dream to be human by herself and thus the "young officer" who is pure and possesses the "special quality of virginity" is needed on order for her to escape her haunted nature and be human as she wishes. Similarly, the Duke, too, relies on an external character to save him from his animalistic and haunted nature. It is implied that his nature is to be a "corpse eater" as he is non-human. Wolf-Alice humanizes him at the end of the story, saving him from his own nature. The grandmother however, is unable to save herself due to her werewolf nature and is not saved by anyone else but instead dies a victim of her nature. However, she also dies as a victim of circumstance, a circumstance from which she cannot escape.

One may argue that the grandmother is victimized through her role as a woman, a role from which when she tries to escape – by taking the form of a wolf and subverting her role of a domestic and pure woman – she dies. It is evident that she is unable to help herself as she is

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characterized by Carter as a weak woman “who has been sick” thus suggesting that even though she is a wolf, she is still weak and Little Red has to bring her food and care for her. She is trapped in her role as a domestic grandmother and thus tries to escape through her wolfish side, which in turn entraps her as well in a life destined for persecution. One may also argue that Wolf-Alice, too, is a victim of circumstance as she is trapped in the ‘nature’ of a wolf due to her upbringing and forced to conform to what is considered ‘normal’ by the nuns. She is unable to fully conform to societies expectations of her to “cover up her bold nakedness” and behave in a way expected of a woman as her wolf side has become embedded in her nature by her circumstances. One may contest, however, that she is not helpless as she saves the Duke from his wolfish side and initially did not need anyone to “rescue” her. Therefore, it is evident that there are characters in Carter’s tales who are not victims or helpless at all. The “young officer” in *LHL* may be initially presented as a victim of the Countess, but he survives and saves/defeats her as well as saves himself through love and innocence as “he is more than he knows.” The girl in *The Werewolf* is an independent woman, unafraid of the wolves and conformity and defends herself with her father’s hunting knife and therefore “she prospered” by refusing to become the wolf’s prey/victim.

Therefore, Carter’s characters vary between victims of circumstance and their own nature as well as those who are in fact heroes and survivors. Nevertheless, all of her characters begin as victims in their stories. Even those who are heroes, such as the young officer in the *LHL* and the girl in *The Werewolf*, are initially victims pursued by evils, wolves and vampires, but are able to save themselves, to help themselves and therefore they are undefeated and become heroes. Thus, all of the characters in *The Werewolf*, *LHL* and *Wolf-Alice* are victims of either nature or circumstance, but it is those who are able to help themselves who do not succumb to these roles. However, to a great extent those who are unable to help themselves are largely unable to do so as they are victims of their own nature and cannot break free from it as their nature is an intrinsic part of their existence.

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