

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

- ❖ From the first sentence, the story tumbles out through a torrent of words describing the tangible 'presences' of the 'revenants' who haunt the village in 'shadows', 'sound' and 'a sense of unease'. The 'beautiful queen of the vampires' is introduced in one sweeping sentence that describes her 'antique bridal gown'; her 'dark, high house'; the 'baleful posthumous existence' of her 'atrocious ancestors'; her sad and obsessive reading of Tarot cards; her desire to escape and her fatal youth. The narrative continues to make use of this feature, as if the narrator cannot stop embellishing the tale as it is being told.
- ❖ In addition, this tale makes use of the shortened sentences – found in other stories – to create moments of tension or heightened impact of details. The fluidity of the narrative is abruptly shown in *The Lady of the House of Love* by sentences such as 'I will be very gentle' and 'now it is dark', because their brevity is in such stark and ominous contrast to the majority of the text.

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- ❖ Readers with a developed literary background appreciate **Carter** due to her use of allusions to a broad range of literature. To operate at many levels of meaning is the sign of a skilful writer, and by embedding eclectic cultural knowledge into her stories, **Carter** courts literary recognition.
- ❖ It can be argued that this is the least attractive feature of her writing, not only because her self-conscious attempts at virtuosity are often unsuccessful, but also because – ironically – her work can seem tainted with cultural elitism. It is still a feature that has contributed to her posthumous popularity as a writer for study.
- ❖ The effect on writers of multiple layers of intertextuality can be arbitrary, and at times **Carter** can be self-indulgent in moments where she is striving to convey sensations of desire and rapture. *The Erl-King* presents a number of hyperbolic passages addressing the ‘profane mysteries’ of desire and its effects: the description of the Erl-King’s embrace ‘made of water’ is lessened by the sentence that ends ‘the stream I have become’.