revived 2015
established 1997
FOLIO
A Students'
Journal

SPECIAL ISSUE
9 (22) 2023

Binary Oppositions in 18th- and 19th-Century British Literature and Culture

Editors' Note 1

Daniela Grecu (Ghiţulescu)
Real and Ideal in *Gulliver's Travels* Comics 2

Katarzyna Boch
Does Gothic Have a Gender?
Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the Transgression of Gender Boundaries 13

Aleksandra Sobczak
Challenging Gender-Related Binary Oppositions
in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* 24

Raquel Carvajal-Ariza
Love Triangles and the Binary Literary Context
of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* 35

Debadrita Saha
Reading George Gissing's *The Odd Women*
as a Critique of the Upper-Class "New Woman"
through the Lens of Victorian Education 49

Sara Bonk
50 Shades of a Woman: The Multifaceted Role of Medea
in Ancient Athenian and Victorian Dramatic Literature 61

Gema Cantos Fernández
Ecofeminist Parallelisms in Henry Rider Haggard's
She and *King Solomon's Mines* 74

Patrycja Rogala
Binary Oppositions in Robert Louis Stevenson's
The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886)
and Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly* (1990) 87

Jacqueline Victoria Woroniec
Through the Burtonland, and What Alice Found There:
A Transformative Journey Through the Worlds in Tim Burton's
Alice in Wonderland (2010) 97

Warsaw Literary Meetings Rising Stars 1 articles 109

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the special issue of *Folio. A Students' Journal* which brings to you some of the papers submitted for the second Warsaw Literary Meetings Rising Stars event, lovingly named "Baby WLM" by its organisers, which took place in November 2022. WLM is a series of one-day interdisciplinary workshops for young scholars – PGRs, PhD students, and ECRs – organised by the From Queen Anne to Queen Victoria research group (you may learn more about the meetings here).

We are very grateful to all our contributors as well as all presenters and guests that attended the meeting for making it a space for scholars and literature enthusiasts from all over the world (India, Poland, Romania, Spain, the United Kingdom) to meet, talk, and exchange ideas. Thank you, again.

This issue is guest edited by Dr Maria Szafrańska-Chmielarz, an alumnus of our Institute, a participant of WLM RS 1, and a co-organiser of WLM RS 2. The papers, all adhering to the theme of Binary Oppositions in 18th- and 19th- Century British Literature and Culture, offer fascinating insights and observations into works that often seem known and familiar, yet prove to hold more than meets the eye.

As always, enjoy reading!

Lucyna Krawczyk-Żywko
Maria Szafrańska-Chmielarz

Real and Ideal in *Gulliver's Travels* Comics

Daniela Grecu (Ghițulescu)
University of Bucharest

Abstract: The opposition real- ideal is nowhere better be seen than in Swift's best-known novel where he could express his real ideas in a veiled way, without saying them directly, thus challenging the reader to think more deeply. The purpose of this article is to highlight this opposition real-ideal and how Jonathan Swift used it in his very complex book, *Gulliver's Travels*, and how it was illustrated by the comics adaptors. The fact that the author used the concept perfectly shows the multiple interpretations of his book, comments and opinions. The fact that Swift is a master of concealment, emphasizing the truth by stating the opposite and clarifying personal opinions under the guise of fantastic stories, completely independent of the reality of his society, no longer needs to be demonstrated, but only highlighted with clear examples and concept associations.

Keywords: graphic novel, intentionality, stranger, the Other

Gulliver's Travels, or, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, First a Surgeon, and then a Captain of Several Ships* appeared in 1726 as a satire on social discrepancies, flawed politics, pseudo-professionals, financial oligarchy and forms of political organization. The form of the work was chosen by the author in accordance with the popularity of travel diaries and works presenting the adventures of explorers (Seidel 83).

At the same time, due to the fantastical elements used by Swift, the book is assimilated by the public as a children's book, with fantastical lands, giants, 'Lilliputians', strange inventions and talking horses. Viewed only in this way, Swift's satire, fascinating in itself, does not transcend the frivolity of the *sensu stricto* reading. The satirical elements and ironies of the author are ignored by the audience under the auspices of the use of the fantastic, and this aspect can suppress their subtextual implications.

Most of the satirical elements used by Swift are linguistic in nature. This artistic method used by the author, particularly fascinating in a linguistic-pragmatic analysis, requires a specialized reading, or at least a reading centred on the analysis

of the local colour effect of the original text, as well as a particular attention to the portrayals. In terms of language games and lexical constructions, Swift creates an entire lexicon based on literary creativity and uses etymological elements to encode ironies of eighteenth-century English Enlightenment politics. The most interesting aspects related to this work of Swift, beyond the literary, but also linguistic analysis, are to be found in the satire and utopia formulated by Swift.

Under the auspices of socio-cultural analysis, both entities become interesting from a comparative perspective, due to the impact, but also the imminent connection between the fictional universe and the real world. Swift's work, through several ingenious methods, manages to satirize most of the social customs, political orientations, and 'enlightenment' movements of English society.

The four imaginary journeys of the main character in the four countries from the four different islands, in Lilliput, the land of the dwarves, in Brobdingnag, the land of the giants, in Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbdubdrib, Luggnagg and Japan, the land of scholars, and in the Land of the wise Houyhnhnms, emphasize the concept of *otherness*, of *the other*, seen as

> [a] true community, but observed through the distorted filter of the imaginary. What we perceive is his image, and this image – like any image – is both part of reality and fiction. Sliding from the concrete to the imaginary, it is subjected to an operation of simplification and amplification, reaching, at the limit, the caricature or the symbol. His banality is denied; it must be full of meaning, for what use would another be to us who has nothing special to say? (Boia 117)

Gulliver wilfully distances himself socially and morally from every new society he encounters on his travels. In fact, "the true Other is only a pretext or an alibi to disguise his true intention. At this point, the study of the imaginary is about to make a significant change in perspective" (Boia 118). Thus, in describing the motive for the war between Lilliput and Blefuscu, Gulliver emphasizes the irrelevant and easy motive that led to endless warfare, using the metaphor of the Flattened Heads to emphasize the fake motives for disputes in his contemporary society, as Swift himself said (Swift 60).

The occasion of these imaginary journeys is perfect for telling and portraying the world as the author saw it, with the flaws of contemporary society ridiculed by hyperbolized presentation or by denying them, as well as their own opinions about

politics, history or life in general.[1] The author does nothing but present himself to the reader with some "subjective attitudes presented objectively and which, in the light of historical truth, can only appear to us as just attitudes towards the tragic realities of the social life of England" (Levitchi 11).

All the characters described by the author in his travels are different from human society: some physically, such as the dwarves of Lilliput and the giants of Brobdingnag, others in thought and behaviour, such as the scholars of Laputa or the wise horses of Houyhnhnm. These differences, intentionally placed by the author, help him to highlight what he intends, namely to satirize the society in which he lives, its faults and its members, all these things artistically wrapped in an envelope of fantastic adventures.

Thus, the invented fantastic characters are not at all far from the author's contemporaries, because *a naked* savage, "is, of course, closer to a properly dressed contemporary man than we would be tempted to conclude by appearances" (Boia 121). These characters are intentionally placed in an isolated space, such as that of the island, precisely because they, the islands, were considered "separate worlds", equal "somewhat to the great island inhabited by our humanity" (Boia 136–137), where different societies and creatures could live, or where the author could project his dreams and desires.

Every society newly encountered in Gulliver's adventures considered itself the best, having the noblest interests and holding absolute justice. The way the little emperor of Lilliput calls himself, "the delight and fear of the universe …; monarch of all monarchs …; which only if he shakes his head makes the kings of the earth tremble on their knees; pleasant as spring, soothing as summer, fruitful as autumn, terrible as winter" (Swift 55) contrasts sharply with its dimensions, but fits perfectly with the idea that every power is considered central, unique, the most important in the universe, as Boia stated (122). The impression of absolute superiority of their societies that these leaders have, of exclusive justice, make them consider themselves the only ones entitled to hold the truth and "to approach prehistoric man, time travel was no longer necessary; space travel was enough" (Boia 125).

Traveling with Gulliver on his adventures in the fantasy islands, we actually accompany Jonathan Swift in a story of the society in which he lives, transfigured and satirized at every step and with every strange character in which he incarnates,

[1] The struggle between the two political parties, Whig and Tory, is well known at the time. Swift adheres to the conceptions of the Whig party, but disappointed by his incorrect practices, he moves to the Tory in 1710. All his grievances, frustrations and reproaches are veiledly captured in the characteristics made of his characters.

because the author is nobody other than *The Other* "projected into a solitary hero, in search of his identity during the exotic adventure" (Boia 14).

Otherness, as a mechanism in literature, allows the author to hide in various forms, to express his most unusual dreams and boldest projects, to be able to express himself freely, but at the same time veiled (Boia 136–137), and this is exactly what Jonathan Swift does in his imaginary travel diary. Reading the text carefully, we can understand the true opinions and appreciations of the author and we can see the contemporary society through his eyes and mentality, *The Other* being only "a pretext or an alibi that hides the game of imagination" (Boia 118).

In his first travels, the author seeks to overcome the condition of the fallen and corrupt contemporary man. Finding himself in Lilliput, Gulliver tells us in a simple style, in detail, about their social, political system, about their education, laws and morals before and after they were corrupted by their weaknesses. They could acquire high offices by dancing on a tightrope or favours and distinctions by jumping over sticks and crawling under them. Their laws and principles were once as fair as possible: once upon a time only competence doubled by morality brought high positions and compliance with the laws attracted favours and was rewarded.

In foreign policy they were unforgiving, being involved in a fierce war with a neighbouring kingdom, Blefuscu, on the grounds that it had interfered in the internal disputes of the Lilliputians. The little men were divided into two camps by an insurmountable controversy: should the eggs be broken, according to the old custom, at the flatter end or, according to the recently established one, at the sharper end?

The graphical novel emphasizes the author's dismay at hearing the silly reasons that triggered a perpetual war between the two countries. In fact, the size of the dwarfs is directly related to the smallness of their ideas, the minimal and narrow way of thinking, but also to the smallness of their souls. Thus, the author emphasizes an undesirable reality, but which he recognizes in his peers. By attributing this reality to a people so different from his own, Swift wants to emphasize precisely the fact that he would like the proportion to be respected, and with the increase in size, he would like the thoughts, ideas and feelings of his peers to grow directly proportionally.

The reasons for the hostilities of the Lilliputians with the neighbouring kingdom, which seem to us puerile and without any meaning, make a mockery of the reasons that started the rivalries between England and Ireland, for example, or between England and France. These were lost in the mists of time and had consumed so many humans live and resources that they were probably incomprehensible to the author, a giant among his contemporaries.

The panels' placement on the page is suggestive of the idea of unusual, childish and illogical work conveyed by the text. Thus, the three frames are placed on the background frame that emphasizes the fact that the author finds the reasons for the war ridiculous, as well as his own intervention in the country's affairs. The irregular outline of the panels that capture the information and details presented to the guest symbolizes the attempt to inoculate beliefs that do not belong to them, as well as the instillation of a desired intentional behaviour. Gulliver's face that occupies all the attention on the page deliberately shows intrigue, misunderstanding, disapproval (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 *Călătoriile lui Gulliver* (13)

The second trip, to Brobdingnag, represents the author's meeting with a different kind of people, huge ones, and their greatness also reflected on their soul and their way of thinking. This kingdom was governed by moral principles, not only on paper but also in practice, although the people were not perfect: the farmer had exposed him all over the country to make money and had exploited him to such an extent that he would lose his life if the family the royal family would not have been interested in him.

In the discussions with the king of this country, he tells him about the world and the country from which he came and receives in return the monarch's fair but scathing observations, in which, as a reader, I glimpsed a replica of the writer in the

first part of the book. If that was a synthesis of the faults of his countrymen, the trip to Brobdingnag reveals the reverse, how things should be. The author tells the king how things are in his country and, although he tries to present things in the most pleasant way possible, the wise king concludes: "I can only conclude that most of your fellows are the most dangerous sort of foul little vermin that nature has ever allowed crawl on the face of the earth" (Dubey and Chowdhary 33).

Gulliver is intrigued and disappointed by the fact that the king refuses to learn the secret of gunpowder, an invention that would have helped him become absolute master, while the king is amazed that such small people are governed by such evil ideas and actions. The idea is strictly outlined in the comics' page where the respective panel is clearly delimited by the rest by a clear, white closure (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 *Călătoriile lui Gulliver* (33)

The third trip to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbdubdrib, Luggnagg and Japan makes us speechless and laugh a lot. In Laputa we are in the realm of a royal court located on a flying island, whose distinguished inhabitants are only interested in endless mathematical problems, speculations, meditations and musical notes. They were completely dedicated to science and music, but lacking in vigour, practical spirit and true emotions: they praise the beauty of a woman or any other animal by painting it with rhombuses, circles, parallelograms, ellipses and other geometrical

figures, or by words from the field of musical art. Their wives despise them, feeling neglected, and the subjects on earth, from Lagado, the capital of the Balnibarbi country, listen to them with difficulty and fear (the movements of the island could cover the sun or a shower of boulders could be sent from the floating island that to destroy the rebels).

However, something from here was transmitted in a strange way and corrupted the society of Balnibarbi. Some "earthpeople" were allowed to visit the floating island, Laputa, from where they returned eager to change the world and reinvent the wheel. Thus, the houses had to be built starting from the roof to the foundation, sun rays would have been extracted from the cucumbers, the spiders would have taken over the mission of the silkworms, managing to produce ready coloured threads if they ate coloured flies, and the ice would have turned into gun powder.

Another experience that calms Gulliver's thoughts on the supposed advantages of immortality is the encounter with the Luggnaggians. Among them, the struldbrugs, meaning the immortals, live indefinitely. Those people were forced by some kind of rare disease to live forever, but by no means young and happy, but old, mindless, bitter, in a word, repulsive. As everything is turned upside down, the doctor passes through some adventures before reaching this country, and he makes a short stop at Glubbdubdrib (as far as he could interpret this word for us, it means the Island of Wizards or Magicians).

In the third part, the writer actually reveals his vision of the ideas of the time, with which he argues and confesses his conviction in the superiority of the achievements of the ancient world over those of modern authors. The graphic novel accentuates the author's amazement at so many new and abnormal things praised and extolled by their passionate inventors and illustrates the key elements through realistic, heavily pencilled panels. The author's disappointment when he finds that all the history he thought great and laudable is just a series of deceivers and fake people is exposed by the authors through a panel on a full page in which he gathers personalities of history seated in front of them as in a judgement. Imaginary, the author denies his history and condemns its main actors for the vile acts they did and for the heroic acts he thought they did. The scene of the trial is captured from above, as in a courtroom, where the defendants gather in a corner, like a group of criminals who protect each other in the face of accusations (Fig 3).

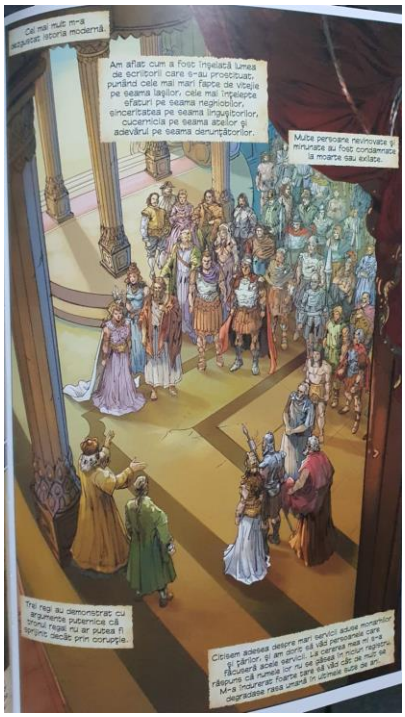

Fig. 3 *Călătoriile lui Gulliver* (47)

In the latter, however, in the land of the wise horses, the author uses satire to reverse roles and puts man in the role of animal, and animals become rational beings. Yahoois are the repulsive animals in which it is easy for us to recognize people, but to whom the author expresses indirectly but clearly the contempt for "such hideous monster … to which I have so much disgust" (my translation; 51). The resemblance is not a coincidence, as Swift himself, through the words of the wise horses, tells us that these animal beings are offspring of two abandoned Europeans on the island. Beneath their hideous appearance, the perverted character and wickedness of these beings are hidden.

The fourth part completely overturns any prediction that could be made about the end of this book. Is man the most gifted being on earth, the one who, as he claims, is guided by reason and virtue? Because these are, in the writer's view, the attributes of a superior being.

Opposite them, the author depicts the wise horses that symbolize the ideal of human morality. He describes them to have a natural inclination toward virtue and cannot even get an idea of what evil means to a rational creature, their principle of life is to cultivate reason and to be entirely guided by it. When Gulliver proposes to the wise horses to come to his country and civilize society, the author recognizes the intentional satire by the desire to shame society, to make it recognize its flaws.

However, Swift suggested that perfect society does not exist, even the civilized society of wise horses has its shortcomings, as they judge everything in terms of rationality and completely ignore love, which they do not even show to their children.

Gulliver's identification with these beings he considers superior can be seen when he returns home, when he can no longer bear the smell, the company or the touch of his family. He spends his time in the stable with horses, which symbolizes his break with his society. This unusual behaviour of Gulliver is the way in which the author draws our attention to the two types of societies: the corrupt real society and the utopian ideal one. In fact, none is perfect, and society should choose a third, which is if not ideal, at least acceptable.

The difference between people and wise horses, as well as the striking similarity between people and yahoos, are evident in the illustrations of the graphic novel, which tries, through the specific techniques, to draw attention to what is obvious, but strongly denied by the author: people are yahoos who lack wise horses to be able to make the difference and to be able to self-evaluate correctly. In the absence of intelligent beings, people consider themselves to be the best, as it actually results from all the travels that Gulliver goes through. In fact, this is the true message conveyed by the novel: the subtle difference, pencilled under cover, so that those who can understand that what we think is correct, good and just, is in fact totally the opposite. And that we have to look carefully at ourselves to be able to become what we think we are (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 *Călătoriile lui Gulliver* (60)

An intensively discussed hypothesis about *Gulliver's Travels* was that of utopia, considering that all the lands visited by Lemuel are utopias (Argent 7). This interpretation becomes the object of a literary-political conflict, because the political interpretation of utopia differs fundamentally from the interpretation literary.

In a literary perspective, the theory of literature regulates the existence of some writings, literary works that present utopian societies or fantastic spaces, but in the spectrum of literary fiction, even in the theoretical norm of literature, there are several incongruities. Thus, from a literary perspective, almost any work that presents a fantasy society can be analysed under the auspices of utopia. This generates an aesthetic and rhetorical problem in literary analysis.

Starting from the premise that literature is fiction and that, although it can influence society and man, literature does not present a reality, it does not impose something real, nor does it take the place of a sociological or political study. Thus, literature presupposes a fantastic artistic imaginary, which in itself is not rational, is not based on real elements, and has no direct correspondence in the real world. Instead, social and political sciences are based on social reality, the elements of community and the world as the real object of study (Davidson 3). The distinction is made through the intrinsic qualities of the two fields: literature is fantastic, imagined, while society, politics and man are real (Davidson 4). In literary studies, utopia comes under the understanding of the impossible, the artistic imaginary and, even if it presents imaginary societies, does not mean that it sums up or wants to impose a reality. From a literary point of view, these elements fall under the aesthetic analysis of the work.

In social and political studies, utopia appears as literature connected with ideology, as the description of a possible society and political system generating ideologies. Over time, the two possibilities of interpreting utopia, although connected, have generated theoretical problems at the academic level, due to an impossibility to determine exactly the literary influence of a utopia or dystopia in relation to the political reality of an era.

Gulliver's Travels, although it is part of the canon of English literature, being interpreted from a literary perspective, it is also a text studied by sociologists or political science specialists. In this work, the themes studied under the influence of utopian thinking are the community, the individual, the family and the form of government (Argent 39), each journey offering the possibility of a utopian analysis. In time, Gulliver's most contrary journey was considered to be that of the 'Land of Horses', a utopian society based on a perfectly rational organization of the world.

This journey, considered by many specialists as a representation of a utopian society, (Argent 192) is analysed in this way.

The author's intention is to satirize human nature and to present a process of dehumanization of the character, who no longer recognizes human life as his own. The adventure in 'Horseland' is a satire on the stratified English society and the differences between the elitism of the upper class and the instinctual of the plebs. However, from a political perspective this journey is a utopia.

The fundamental problem of this type of analysis is found in the discrepancy and at the same time the relationship between the fantastic account of some events, of a fantastic world, and the meaning of a real society, in politics and in everyday life. This approach causes an ethical as well as a theoretical conflict, also generating a problem, in my view, of artistic authority in opposition to the interpretation and authority of the lecturer.

Works Cited

Argent, Joseph, E. *No More Existence Than the Inhabitants of Utopia: Utopian Satire in Gulliver's Travel*. Greensboro: University of North Carolina, 1995.

Boia, Lucian. *Pentru o Istorie a Imaginarului*. Trad. Tatiana Mochi. București: Humanitas, 2000.

Davidson, Joe. "Looking Laterally: The Literary Utopia and the Task of Critical Social Theory". *Current Sociology*, November 2020. doi.org/10.1177/001139212096975.

Dubey, Divya and Eman Chowdhary. *Călătoriile lui Gulliver*. Jonathan Swift. Roman grafic. București: HAC!BD SRL, 2017.

Levițchi, Leon D. Prefață. la *Călătoriile lui Gulliver; Povestea Unui Poloboc și Alte Satire*. București: Univers, 1985.

Seidel, Michael. *Gulliver's Travels and the Contracts of Fiction*, *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Swift, Jonathan. *Călătoriile lui Gulliver; Povestea Unui Poloboc și Alte Satire*. București: Univers, 1985.

Does Gothic Have a Gender? Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the Transgression of Gender Boundaries

Katarzyna Boch
University of Warsaw

Abstract: The distinction between Male and Female Gothic, based on the set of opposing conventions allegedly used by male and female writers, has recently started to become questioned. Its problematic nature is revealed in the examination of one of the most famous examples of Gothic literature – Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The novel, despite being written by a woman, uses tools associated with the Male Gothic tradition and yet, effectively conveys the crucial aspects of feminine experience. In order to reveal Shelley's departure from the conventional treatment of gender as a binary construct, I analyse the representation of the relations between womanhood and monstrosity, the images of femininity and the cross-gender portrayal of male characters. I aim to demonstrate that the transgressive quality of Shelley's approach to gender highlights the oversimplification of the division between Male and Female Gothic and successfully challenges its presumptions.

Keywords: Female Gothic, feminism, *Frankenstein*, Male Gothic, Mary Shelley, monstrosity, otherness

When Ellen Moers introduced the "Female Gothic" as a literary category in her most influential work *Literary Women* (1976), the authoresses of Gothic fiction finally received proper scholarly attention. Although Moers treats the Female Gothic very broadly defining it as "the work that the women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (90), the attitude towards this sub-genre became clearly limited over time. What started to be associated with the Female Gothic was the set of conventions emerging from Ann Radcliffe's novels, especially *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), which included an entrapped female protagonist, rationalisation of the supernatural and reliance on terror rather than horror. According to Radcliffe's distinction made in her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" (1826), the former "expands the soul and awakens the

faculties to a high degree of life," while the latter "freezes and nearly annihilates them" (150). This contrast relies on the implicitness of fear; namely, terror brings the possibility of something terrifying to happen while horror results from the direct encounter with the fear-inducing event. In this regard, Radcliffe's work became contrasted with Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), whose explicit violence and unexplained supernatural events made it a preliminary example of the Male Gothic. Such a juxtaposition only enhanced the conventional, binary-based attitude towards gender. For this reason, as Catherine Spooner suggests, Female Gothic novels started to be viewed as stories about persecuted heroines fleeing from the patriarchal world embodied by the domestic surrounding and an oppressive male figure (135). This perception of the Female Gothic put the feminist aspect of the novels into question, which included accusations of the heroines' passivity and staged victimhood. However, the adequacy of Male/Female Gothic division becomes seriously challenged when considering one of the most famous Gothic novels written by a woman – Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

The story takes place primarily in the public sphere; it is dominated by male characters and told in their voices, which makes it reflective of Male rather than Female Gothic tradition. Nevertheless, under the guise of patriarchal narrative, *Frankenstein* efficiently depicts fears, pressures, and challenges faced by women frequently marginalised in male-centred discourses. Thus, although female characters in *Frankenstein* exist merely in the background, their shared experience is conveyed metaphorically and underlies the major events in the novel. Consequently, the Male Gothic tradition, although presumably reflective of masculine nature and men's reality, allows for an effective portrayal of women's experience. In *Frankenstein*, its traces emerge from the analogy that can be drawn between monstrosity and womanhood. The experience of Victor's creature, defined by rejection, stigmatisation, and otherness, mirrors the experience of women discriminated against in patriarchal society. I will further explore this parallel in the analysis of the portrayal of women, marked not only by their significant absence but also by their not immediately apparent empowerment. Then, I will examine Shelley's use of cross-gender representation, demonstrating her awareness of constructiveness and fluidity of gender. All these aspects indicate that *Frankenstein*, despite reflecting the Male Gothic conventions, not only allows for a depiction of feminine experience but also challenges the binary approach to gender emerging from the Male/Female Gothic distinction.

Womanhood and Otherness

In her ground-breaking work *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues that masculinity is established as a universal norm, to which women are made to adjust. According to de Beauvoir, such notable imbalance of power between the sexes pushes women to the periphery of social life: "She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other" (26). Since women are frequently expected to defy their subjectivity in order to assume subservient roles or embody sexual objects, many of those who attempt to exert more influence and break with the image of traditional femininity, encounter obstacles in achieving their goals. However, a strong resistance towards their actions demonstrates that by questioning the patriarchal order, they threaten it, which allows them to gain agency. Consequently, in patriarchal discourses, women who actively resist traditional gender roles risk being demonised and labelled as "madwomen," "witches," or "sluts." The depreciation and rejection of the Other in order to suppress their latent power establishes a connection between the situation of women and Victor Frankenstein's monster.

What is immediately striking as regards the creature is the reaction it produces in the people he encounters. For example, he experiences strong repulsion from Victor soon after his birth but he also induces fear and aggression when Felix DeLacey finds the monster conversing with his blind father. Although such negative reactions are predominantly linked with the monster's appearance, Frankenstein's initial premise was to create a man of exceptional beauty. In the end, the composition of carefully selected parts produced, according to Victor, the most horrifying effect and made him declare his entire endeavour to be a "catastrophe" (Shelley 50). Thus, the creature's identity becomes based on the characterisation assigned to him by Frankenstein – the monster learns that he is ugly, repulsive, and unwelcome. From the very beginning, the creature is deprived of the possibility to explore and form his own sense of self as he immediately becomes proclaimed as the Other. Similar experience is shared by women who, since their childhood, learn about cultural standards imposed on their sex as well as rules and limitations of the patriarchal world into which they are born. In consequence, women become culturally and socially conditioned to take the positions of Others.

Interestingly, the mere concept of "otherness" proves to be a construct in itself. Men are assigned their prerogative to establish their as well as women's social identities predominantly on the basis of the advantage given to them by the patriarchy. Similarly, Victor, who as a creator, is in the position of power, uses his

dominance to suppress his creature's agency and sense of self. Just like the monster learns about his ugliness and, following the association of goodness with beauty, his evil nature, women learn about their limitations and incapability. However, when put into question, such imposed identities prove inadequate. The monster is outstandingly clever as he learns to use language merely by reading books and observing lessons given by Felix DeLacey to his foreign lover, Safie. His physical endurance allows him to survive under severe weather conditions and, most importantly, he is empathetic and benevolent towards other beings, especially when helping DeLacey family. These qualities contribute to the creature's enormous potential, which is not fulfilled due to stigmatisation and rejection he faces. Moreover, Victor's anxiety about being outgrown by his own creation is not supported by the monster's intentions since what the creature actually strives for is acceptance.

Victor's fear becomes exposed when the creature, driven by loneliness, asks for a female companion. At first, Frankenstein reluctantly agrees but, then, realises that, as a consequence, his creature will gain too much power. Indeed, the possibility of reproduction would allow the monster to exist more independently from Victor, establish a new line and, most importantly, take the role of a creator himself. Victor's anxiety about the future of humankind threatened by the "race of devils" is, in fact, a disguised fear about his own superior position. By tearing away the female companion whom he already started creating, Frankenstein displays his power, which he does not intend to share with the monster. Such a violent reaction as well as his emotionally distant attitude towards his creature lead to the question whether it is him or the creature that could be described as monstrous. Even though the creature commits numerous murders, his deeds are a direct result of the stigmatisation and rejection that he constantly experiences from the people he encounters. Moreover, since the creature is made to regard himself as repulsive and evil, his subsequent crimes serve as realisations of self-fulfilling prophecy. Cynthia Pon finds traces of monstrosity also in Victor's usurpation of female reproductive power to bring a new life into the world by himself. She argues that the effect of such a transgression leads to the monstrous outcome, especially since the creature is meant to be well-proportioned and flawless, and embody a universal human-being. She mentions Holocaust, genocides and discrimination that marked the twentieth century as examples of disastrous consequences of such an approach (38). Similar homogenisation is imposed on women who are expected to follow a dictated femininity ideal, which makes them sacrifice some part of their diverse identities to win social approval.

Images of Femininity

The womanhood ideal that dominated the eighteenth and the nineteenth century was associated with such values as domesticity, chastity, modesty, and obedience. Women were raised to become dutiful daughters, sisters, and wives, who renounced their own needs in order to serve others, while being treated as inferior to men as regards both their physical and intellectual capacities. In *Frankenstein*, Elizabeth Lavenza, the most prominent female character, dies as a result of the sacrifice made to fulfil the role assigned to her according to the patriarchal standards. Lacking agency in her relationship with Victor and passively waiting for his attention, Elizabeth is killed by the monster on her wedding night, which enables her demise to be read on a metaphorical level as a death of her subjectivity and self-fulfilment. This aspect of feminine experience is very effectively conveyed in the patriarchal reality of *Frankenstein* created using the Male Gothic conventions. Indeed, the image of women who, by succumbing to the pressure of expectations associated with their sex, almost disappear in the male-centred narrative is highly conspicuous. However, as Shelley's narrative demonstrates, approaching the ideal of femininity leaves women silent, unnoticed, and, most importantly, unable to survive. In consequence, the death of angelic woman might be also read as a call to finally obliterate this ideal.

Elizabeth is adopted by the Frankenstein family and turned into Victor's closest companion, eventually destined to become his wife. Even though in the novel she is introduced as a child, right from the beginning she becomes defined by her appearance and suitability for matrimony. She is described as an almost unearthly creature, "a being heaven-sent, and bearing a celestial stamp in all her features" (Shelley 26). In other words, Elizabeth's beauty and delicacy make her perfect material for a wife who will be submissive, obedient, and impressionable. Combining the angelic appearance with a quiet and gentle disposition, Elizabeth embodied the femininity ideal subsequently described by Coventry Patmore in his poem "The Angel in the House" (1854). In the vision of femininity praised by Patmore, an ideal woman should treat her husband's desires above her own ("Man must be pleased; but him to please / Is woman's pleasure" [74]) and submit to him as to save her from her innate weakness ("He is her lord, for he can take / Hold of her faint heart with his hand" [119]). However, pursuing this standard was inevitably connected with objectivisation – Elizabeth is presented to Victor as a gift, which he can handle according to his whims. In Victor's description of Elizabeth, he deprives her of humanity treating her more like his property than a person: "I . . . looked upon Elizabeth as mine – mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed upon her I received as made to a possession of my own" (Shelley 27). What is also remarkable

in Victor's description is that he does not intend to engage emotionally in his relationship with Elizabeth whatsoever; he perceives his future bride merely in terms of her usefulness and manageability. Indeed, the domestic ideal, which defines women's main responsibilities as being pleasant and useful to men, encourages such an instrumental approach. Consequently, Elizabeth is made to fulfil the roles of sister, mother, and ultimately lover for Victor, so that her entire identity becomes defined in relation to him.

What is also particularly telling as regards the "angel in the house" ideal is Elizabeth's death. She is killed by the monster in his vengeful act against Victor, who reneged on a promise of making a female companion for his creature. The threat which the monster subsequently issues, "I will be with you on your wedding night," haunts Victor on the day of his wedding; however, he fails to interpret it properly treating the menace as directed against himself and not against both him and his bride. Consequently, obsessed with the fear for his own life, Victor leaves Elizabeth alone, which the monster uses to take his revenge. Considering the circumstances of the murder, Elizabeth's death has a wider figurative meaning – being killed at the wedding night might indicate a metaphorical death of women, who, by entering into matrimony, lose their legal subjectivity. The unequal status of spouses was described by William Blackstone in his treatise, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765): "[b]y marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband" (430). Consequently, women were deprived of the possibility to take any legal actions without joining their husbands as defendants or plaintiffs. For this reason, marriage, which was to provide women with protection, led to the end of their already limited independence in the legal field.

Moreover, Elizabeth's death might be considered a metaphorical assassination of the "angel in the house" ideal, which significantly restrained women as individuals. In fact, Elizabeth's life was vastly different from Victor's merely because of her sex. While she took care of the Frankenstein family after Caroline's death, Victor used his opportunity for traveling and studying. Moreover, he supported a subservient role that Elizabeth was expected to take as a woman by claiming that "[n]ever was she so enchanting as at this time, when she recalled the sunshine of her smiles and spent them upon us. She forgot even her own regret in her endeavours to make us forget" (Shelley 37). Therefore, even though he never treated her as a priority and made her wait for his return while he engaged in his scientific pursuits, she patiently endured her loneliness and persevered by his side. Her life, sacrificed to serving others with disregard for her own needs, ended as a result of

Victor's neglect and self-absorption. Thus, Elizabeth's death emphasises a necessity to abandon the ideal of femininity that makes women overlooked, dependent, and unappreciated.

Since a great majority of women in *Frankenstein* embody the delicate and passive femininity ideal, the traces of female empowerment might not seem very straightforward. However, there is one character whose threatening power is overtly acknowledged by Victor, namely, the female counterpart of the monster, whom he violently destroys before completing her creation. Although in his initial agreement to the monster's request for a companion, Victor is driven by a sense of responsibility, he eventually finds himself incapable of satisfying his creature's demand. The reason for Victor's reluctance stems from his realisation that by creating a woman, he might produce a rival, who would become a greater threat to his superior position than the male creature. The source of the female monster's influence is connected to her sexuality and the possibility to bring new life into the world. Such a biological capacity, intrinsic to the female sex, provokes in Victor anxiety resulting from his own transgressive attempt to usurp the totality of reproductive powers. Yet another fear that strikes Victor is the probability that the female monster will free herself from the influence of not only the male monster but also his own. The manner in which Victor enumerates his arguments against creating a woman is marked by evident exaggeration. He fears that the female creature might be "ten thousand times more malignant than her mate" and, completely lacking in any moral compass, "delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness." Interestingly, the actual reason for Victor's evident demonisation of the female creature lies in his concern about her being "a thinking and reasoning animal" who will reject the rules already established by men (Shelley170). Therefore, what he truly fears is bringing into existence another Eve – a woman who will become disobedient and pose a threat to his authority as the creator.

Interestingly, Pon approaches the destruction of the female monster from a different perspective. She argues that the fact that female creature does not come into existence is empowering simply because otherwise a female would be made according to the fully masculine vision outlined by both Victor and the male monster. Indeed, the latter has a specific image of a woman already in mind when voicing his request: "[m]y companion will be of the same nature as myself, and will be content with the same fare" (Shelley147). According to Pon, the monster does not desire an equal but rather a derivative of himself who would reflect him in the same way as the male creature was to reflect Victor (43). Thus, the reluctance of men shaped by patriarchal mindset to share their influence and depart from treating women in terms of their utility indicates the vast potential of women and their capacity to hold power.

The prevention of the female monster, a sexual being able to make her own decisions, from entering the deeply patriarchal reality shows that its structures, although well-established, must be carefully protected as they might become very easily questioned. Indeed, when Victor decides on breaking his promise, he does not merely discontinue working on the female monster but tears her body to pieces in front of his creature's eyes. Such a display of violence reveals Victor's desperate fear of losing control over his creations and discovering the scope of their influence gained through greater independence. His reaction most explicitly shows how seriously could the female monster threaten the power relations established within the patriarchal order.

However, there is one female character who is able to survive within the patriarchal reality of *Frankenstein* and still exert her influence although her presence might not seem immediately obvious – Mother Nature. From the very beginning, Nature is presented in the opposition to Victor, who with his scientific endeavour violates the natural process of procreation while underestimating the inviolability of biological rights. By "pursu[ing] nature in her hiding places," Victor attempts to steal her creative powers, which, from the very beginning, appears repugnant and gruesome, as he describes his horror when "dabbl[ing] among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortur[ing] the living animal to animate the lifeless clay (Shelley47). Moreover, the fact that Victor disregards women's role in biological reproduction reinforces the seriousness of his violation not only because nature is culturally represented as a woman but specifically as a mother. Indeed, significantly referred to as "she" throughout the novel, Nature strongly reacts to his transgression by bringing illnesses on him when he is working on both male and female monsters. Anne Mellor perceives it as the main source of Victor's failure to bring to life a new race (1:00:27–1:01:25). He mentions suffering from fever and anxiety, which were even more unusual to him since, so far, he has never experienced significant health problems. The reason behind the deterioration of his health becomes especially clear when Victor himself reveals his negligence of nature in favour of his transgressive undertaking: "[w]inter, spring, and summer, passed away during my labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves — sights which before always yielded me supreme delight, so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation" (Shelley 49). Therefore, the biological reaction of Victor's body demonstrates that there are some natural forces, which can significantly impact his physical and psychological well-being remaining beyond his control. Mellor mentions the ongoing presence of dark atmospheric phenomena, such as lightning, thunder, or rain as another reminder of the powerful impact of Nature. She claims that these anomalies do not merely contribute to the mysteriousness of the Gothic setting but also serve as the signs of

Mother Nature's pursuing Victor in his transgressive experiment (1:01:51–1:02:32). Thus, the haunting presence of Mother Nature might be seen as a constant warning against encroaching her scope of power.

Gender Transgressions

The implicit transfer of influence to female characters manifests Shelley's transgressive approach to gender. Since women's impact becomes acknowledged, they are able to move from the associations with the subservient or domestic roles (the feminine) towards the positions of power (the masculine). However, as Marjean D. Purinton suggests, gender transgressions in *Frankenstein* similarly relate to male characters whose implied femininity serves as a tool to depict homoerotic desire between women. She does not treat this notion as based on sexual yearnings but rather "a relationship in which two women's strongest emotions and affections are directed toward each other," or, more generally, "a range of woman-identified experience" (63–64n4). Therefore, the cross-gender representation, which relies on exposing conventionally feminine features hidden beneath masculinity, moves *Frankenstein* towards the Female Gothic tradition. Since, even if women are removed from the main events, male characters, by figuratively transmitting the feminine experience, place it exactly in the centre. Such a lack of clear boundaries separating the representatives of both sexes in terms of their features, assigned spheres or shared experiences emphasises the constructiveness of gender, which, subsequently, exposes the factitious division between Male and Female Gothic.

Purinton notes traces of feminine homoerotic desire mostly in relation to Victor's relationships with his male friends. One of them is Henry Clerval, Victor's closest friend from Geneva, whom he portrays as "a being formed in the 'very poetry of nature'" with "form so divinely wrought, and beaming with beauty" (Shelley159–160). Such an image is not only indicative of Victor's homoerotic affection but also highly reminiscent of the angelic femininity ideal. Moreover, Henry's interests in romance, chivalry, and heroic poetry constitute socially determined education of women in the eighteenth- and nineteenth century (Purinton56). His share in the feminine experience relates also to being refused to go to university by his father who wanted Henry to become his partner in business as a tradesman. Similar obstacles – denial to pursue education and necessity to adhere to the will of masculine authority – were also faced by numerous women who had to suppress their ambitions in order to submit to the patriarchal order. Thus, the feminine surfacing the masculine revealed by the prism of homoerotic desire is a manifestation of, as

Purinton puts it, "the disguise and censorship women were compelled to endure" (62).

Interestingly, Victor's attachment to Henry appears stronger and more intimate than to Elizabeth. In the letter she writes to Victor, Elizabeth expresses her concerns about the strength or even the object of his feelings: "… as brother and sister often entertain a lively affection towards each other without desiring a more intimate union, may not such also be our case? Tell me, dearest Victor. Answer me, I conjure you by our mutual happiness, with simple truth—Do you not love another?" (Shelley194). Elizabeth's doubts seem justified especially considering that it is with Henry that Victor travels and spends the majority of his time, and it is over Henry's death that he grieves most deeply. When he sees Henry's body, he grasps for breath and throws himself on the corpse in anguish. In contrast, when he hears Elizabeth's scream when she is being attacked by the monster, he acts as if paralysed and does not respond immediately. Only after he hears her scream for the second time, is he able to rush to rescue her but arrives too late. At the sight of her body, Victor faints, but his reaction seems to be triggered by the shock at the monster's attacking Elizabeth instead of him, and does not result directly from the despair caused by her loss. Consequently, Henry, with his angelic and feminine disposition, serves as a mirror character for Elizabeth, being the object of Frankenstein's deep and genuine affection, which Victor was unable to develop for Elizabeth.

The artificial nature of gender becomes apparent in Shelley's representation of women who transgress the masculine sphere of influence and men who display womanly features and share the feminine experience. This treatment of gender emphasises the difficulty to qualify *Frankenstein* according to the sex-related Gothic division. The Male Gothic conventions, presumably focused on men and their sensibility, allow for the depiction of the patriarchal perspective; however, its application in *Frankenstein* serves to expose the oppressive impact of patriarchy on women. Even though the marginalisation of female characters is particularly notable, their implicitly exerted power perseveres and their shared becomes effectively conveyed by means of the male characters. This transgressive depiction of the feminine perspective questions the mere notion of gender as well as specific roles and standards related to it. As a Gothic novel written by a woman that depicts a highly patriarchal and male-dominated reality lined with feminine experience, *Frankenstein* escapes a simple classification. The complexity with which Shelley approaches gender provokes the question of which of the criteria – the author's biological sex, the women's role in the depicted world, or the inclusion of gendered point of view (either implicit or explicit) – shall be treated as key in assigning Male or Female Gothic label. As *Frankenstein* demonstrates, the conventions attributed to

the male writers of the Gothic still allow for presenting a feminine perspective of not only marginalised others but also threateningly powerful female figures. Thus, the mere existence of literary tropes and conventions assigned exclusively to either sex appears highly questionable and in need of re-evaluation.

Works Cited

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books, 2010.

Blackstone, William. *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, edited by David Lemmings, Oxford UP, 2016.

Mellor, Anne K. "Mothering Monsters: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *YouTube,* 15 Jan. 2019. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rd-eKRRQzcQ. Accessed 1 Nov. 2022.

Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976.

Patmore, Coventry. "The Angel in the House." 1854. *Project Gutenberg*, 10 Aug. 2014, gutenberg.org/files/4099/4099-h/4099-h.htm#page27. Accessed 1 Nov. 2022.

Pon, Cynthia. "'Passages' in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: Toward a Feminist Figure of Humanity?" *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2, Modern Language Studies, 2000, pp. 33–50. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3195378. Accessed 1 Nov. 2021.

Purinton, Marjean D. "Ideological Revision: Cross-Gender Characterization in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *CEA Critic*, vol. 56, no. 1, The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993, pp. 53–64, www.jstor.org/stable/26393693. Accessed 1 Nov. 2022.

Radcliffe, Ann. "On the Supernatural in Poetry." *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1826, pp. 145–152.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Penguin Books, 2012.

Spooner, Catherine. "Unsettling Feminism: The Savagery of Gothic." *The Gothic and Theory: An Edinburgh Companion*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle and Robert Miles, Edinburgh UP, 2019, pp. 129–146. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvggx38r.10. Accessed 1 Nov. 2022.

Challenging Gender-Related Binary Oppositions in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*

Aleksandra Sobczak
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

Abstract: Having its roots in Structuralist theory, the concept of binary oppositions has been widely applied in literary analysis. As Jonathan Culler puts it in his *Structuralist Poetics*, "when two things are set in an opposition to one another, the reader is forced to explore qualitative similarities and differences to make a connection so as to derive meaning from this disjunction" (1975: 17–18). In the case of the male/female distinction, the notion of binary opposition may be applied to the analysis of gender stereotypes appearing in literary works. This paper aims to determine how Charlotte Brontë challenges in *Jane Eyre* the Victorian, gender-related binary oppositions privileging men. Brontë does this by creating the heroine who, in the course of the story, is transformed from a victimised child into a strong-willed woman, reluctant to be subservient to a man and struggling to be in control of her own life. The genre convention of the *bildungsroman* entails Jane's psychological growth: the protagonist becomes powerful and independent. This paper shows how the initial male-female opposition is inverted in favour of Jane. By analysing the ways in which the binaries are upset, the paper demonstrates how an underprivileged victim is transformed into a powerful heroine.

Keywords: *Bildungsroman,* binary oppositions, *Jane Eyre,* male/female

At the beginning of the Victorian era, women's rights were frequently remarkably limited. Females were usually considered properties of their fathers to be then passed under their husbands' rule. Throughout their lives, they were strongly dependent on men and, consequently, unprivileged in many spheres of life. In Victorian England, there was a common conviction that "[m]en possessed the capacity for reason, action, aggression, independence, and self-interest. Women inhabited a separate, private sphere, one suitable for the so-called inherent qualities of femininity: emotion, passivity, submission, dependence, and selflessness" (Kent 30).

The belief in women's inferiority to men was widespread and it found its reflection in literature. In Victorian novels, female characters were usually victimized and reduced to the role of the so-called *Angel in the House*. They occupied the private sphere while completing household chores and fulfilling the role of a wife and mother. The ubiquitous gender inequalities can be looked at in terms of binary oppositions which are present in literary works from that time. For instance, in master/servant, rich/poor or independent/dependent binaries, the first one is typically associated with favoured masculinity, whereas the latter with fragile femininity.

Against this background, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* appears to have been created contrary to the prevailing belief in females' inferiority to males. The author adopts the convention of *Bildungsroman* and depicts the protagonist's coming-of-age. The eponymous female character in the process of her maturation challenges the above-mentioned binaries to her favour and eventually becomes free and independent. Even though initially she is an unprivileged orphan, she is gradually transformed into a powerful heroine.

Master/servant dichotomy

Jane Eyre's struggle to upset the master/servant opposition is noticeable throughout the novel. The first example of her trying to challenge this dichotomy is visible in her relationship with the Reeds, i.e., her foster family. Even though there are blood ties between Jane and them, she is treated as an outcast or even less than a servant in their mansion, Gateshead Hall, where her presence is unwanted. The Reeds constantly remind Jane that due to the fact that she is a poor orphan, she is the inferior one. She is referred to as "a dependent":

> You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama's expense. Now, I'll teach you to rummage my bookshelves: for they ARE mine; all the house belongs to me or will do in a few years. (Brontë 6)

However, Jane Eyre has never agreed to accept the Reeds superiority. Her cousin, John Reed is actually the first man whom she openly opposes. Jane does not accept that she should be obedient to him just because of her orphanhood and lower wealth.

In fact, in Jane's eyes, he is just a schoolboy, four years older than she is, so there is no reason why she should obey him:

> 'For shame! for shame!' cried the lady's-maid. 'What shocking conduct, Miss Eyre, to strike a young gentleman, your benefactress's son! Your young master.'
> 'Master! How is he my master? Am I a servant?'
> 'No; you are less than a servant, for you do nothing for your keep. There, sit down, and think over your wickedness.' (Brontë 7)

After she fights John Reed back in self-defence, Jane is sent away to the so-called red room – the 'haunted' chamber where her uncle passed away. Nevertheless, she does not regret her outburst. Instead, she feels that she was treated unjustly: "I dared commit no fault: I strove to fulfil every duty; and I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking, from morning to noon, and from noon to night" (Brontë 10).

During the next phase of Jane's maturation, she has to challenge the master/servant distinction in her relationship with Mr. Brocklehurst, the supervisor of the Lowood school to which she has been sent by her aunt Reed. Even though he considers himself to be a God's servant, he also takes the position of the master while trying to cultivate humility in the pupils:

> Humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood; I, therefore, direct that especial care shall be bestowed on its cultivation amongst them. I have studied how best to mortify in them the worldly sentiment of pride; and, only the other day, I had a pleasing proof of my success. (Brontë 27)

Mr. Brocklehurst turns out to be profoundly hypocritical: while he makes Lowood pupils humble, he also arrays his own daughters in expensive silks to underline their sense of superiority. When it comes to his attitude to Jane, he is extremely prejudiced against her as he believes everything Mrs. Reeds told him about Jane when he visited Gateshead Hall:

> Mr. Brocklehurst, I believe I intimated in the letter which I wrote to you three weeks ago, that this little girl has not quite the character and disposition I could wish: should you admit her into Lowood school, I should be glad if the superintendent and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her, and, above all, to guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit. I mention this

> in your hearing, Jane, that you may not attempt to impose on Mr. Brocklehurst. (Brontë 26–27)

During one of his visits at Lowood, he reveals personal animosity towards Jane by announcing in front of other students that she is a deceitful person. In order to discipline her, Mr. Brocklehurst makes Jane stand on a stool while encouraging other pupils to avoid her company. Yet, Jane does not let herself be defeated. She accepts her unjust punishment with dignity: "It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit. I mastered the rising hysteria, lifted up my head, and took a firm stand on the stool" (Brontë 57).

The most important master figure on Jane's path to maturity is Mr. Rochester – the owner of Thornfield Hall where Jane is employed as a governess. However, contrary to John Reed or Mr. Brocklehurst, he does not take advantage of his privileged position. Even though Mr. Rochester is Jane's employer, as he orders to recruit her to teach young Adèle - his alleged illegitimate daughter, he does not tyrannize her. Instead, he tries to treat her with some respect: "'Go into the library - I mean, if you please. - (Excuse my tone of command; I am used to say, 'Do this,' and it is done: I cannot alter my customary habits for one new inmate.)" (Brontë 108). As Debra Teachman puts it, "[f]or a man like Mr. Rochester, who is not used to restriction or argument from those dependent on him, a woman like Jane Eyre is an enigma" (11). In other words, Mr. Rochester is not used to dealing with women similar to Jane, who fulfils her daily duties as Adèle's governess, but, at the same time, does not struggle to endear herself to her master at all cost. Later on, when they are finally engaged and Mr. Rochester sings a romantic song for Jane as a proof of his deep feelings towards her, she seems to be unaffected by his courtship which extremely perplexes Mr. Rochester. He is astonished by her reluctance because he believes that such a romantic dalliance should impress any woman:

> 'Would I forgive him for the selfish idea, and prove my pardon by a reconciling kiss?' 'No: I would rather be excused.' Here I heard myself apostrophised as a 'hard little thing;' and it was added, 'any other woman would have been melted to marrow at hearing such stanzas crooned in her praise.' (Brontë 241)

Moreover, even though Mr. Rochester tries to treat Jane as an equal, the difference in terms of power relations between them is visible in the way he addresses her. He usually chooses expressions such as: "my little friend" (Brontë 179) or "one little English girl" (Brontë 237). These phrases are rather patronizing, highlighting Mr.

Rochester's more authoritative position. Jane appears not to be glad to be addressed in such a way. She does not want to be treated like a child or objectified. For instance, when Mr. Rochester compares Jane to a bird, she is even infuriated: "'I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you'" (Brontë 223).

Interestingly, when Jane finally agrees to marry Mr. Rochester, he seems to abandon the idea of treating her as an equal partner. Instead, he tries to impose his will on Jane even in trivial situations such as shopping. For instance, he struggles to persuade her to buy expensive clothes and accessories. It is totally unlike Jane who is accustomed to wearing simple garments. At some point, she feels as if she had been a slave in his seraglio. To highlight her feelings, Jane compares him to a sultan:

> He smiled; and I thought his smile was such as a sultan might, in a blissful and fond moment, bestow on a slave his gold and gems had enriched: I crushed his hand, which was ever hunting mine, vigorously, and thrust it back to him red with the passionate pressure. (Brontë 237)

Yet, Jane again tries to challenge the master/servant opposition, as she threatens that unless he changes his attitude towards her, she will marry him while wearing one of her plain dresses which she has owned since her stay at Lowood. He finds her threat amusing and does not take it seriously. However, when he teasingly makes another Eastern allusion, as Jane calls it, she again strongly objects his authoritarian behaviour, highlighting the fact that she does not feel as a dependent one in their union:

> 'I'll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio,' I said; 'so don't consider me an equivalent for one. If you have a fancy for anything in that line, away with you, sir, to the bazaars of Stamboul without delay, and lay out in extensive slave-purchases some of that spare cash you seem at a loss to spend satisfactorily here.' (Brontë 237)

In the relationship with Mr. Rochester, not only does Jane try to challenge the master/servant dichotomy but also that concerning independence/dependence relations which are strongly connected with each other. When it turns out that Mr. Rochester is already married, she refuses to be his "English Céline Varens". In other words, Jane does not want to be another meaningless lover and decides to leave him immediately, even though it means going into the unknown:

> A mile off, beyond the fields, lay a road which stretched in the contrary direction to Millcote; a road I had never travelled, but often noticed, and wondered where it led: thither I bent my steps. No reflection was to be allowed now: not one glance was to be cast back; not even one forward. Not one thought was to be given either to the past or the future. The first was a page so heavenly sweet—so deadly sad—that to read one line of it would dissolve my courage and break down my energy. The last was an awful blank: something like the world when the deluge was gone by. (Brontë 283)

The paths of Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester are finally reunited at the end of the novel, and she decides to become his wife. This time, however, she is not in the position of the dependent one. She has already inherited money from her paternal uncle, Mr. Eyre of Madeira, so she is no longer poor. Moreover, Mr. Rochester is blind and mutilated after he was injured in the fire set by his previous wife - Bertha Mason, so he is not superior in terms of power anymore. Consequently, when Jane agrees to marry him, their union is equal indeed as he does not seem to overpower her in any aspect: … I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress.' (Brontë 385)

Rich/poor dichotomy

The opposition of rich/poor is strictly related with the ones of master/servant and the independent/dependent because being wealthy in the Victorian Era meant being superior. It goes without saying that at that time, economic independence was reserved mostly to men. As Teachman puts it, in Victorian England "the law of primogeniture held the greatest influence over who owned what and who was entitled to inherit it" (157). The primogeniture consisted in the rules that the eldest son in the family was entitled to inherit all of his father's properties and belongings. The law did not take women into consideration.

Interestingly, Mr. Eyre of Madeira, Jane's paternal uncle, decided to bequeath his fortune to Jane. It was highly unusual, as he did have a male offspring – St. John Rivers. However, due to his conflict with St. John's father, he chose to disqualify him and his sisters from the inheritance, passing his wealth to Jane:

> [Mr. Eyre of Madeira] was my mother's brother. My father and he quarrelled long ago. It was by his advice that my father risked most of his property in the speculation that ruined him. Mutual recrimination passed between them: they parted in anger, and were never reconciled. My uncle engaged afterwards in more prosperous undertakings … He was never married, and

> had no near kindred but ourselves and one other person, not more closely related than we. My father always cherished the idea that he would atone for his error by leaving his possessions to us; that letter informs us that he has bequeathed every penny to the other relation. (Brontë 316)

In the novel, the rich/poor opposition is visible from the outset. During Jane's childhood, she is treated as inferior by the Reeds due to her lower financial status. The members of the Reeds family presume that Jane's paternal relatives are poor and of low origin, even though they have never had a chance to meet them: "I asked Aunt Reed once, and she said possibly I might have some poor, low relations called Eyre, but she knew nothing about them" (Brontë 18).

From the very beginning of her life, Jane is judged through the prism of her financial situation. Since she is poor, she is despised by the Reeds and other inhabitants of Gateshead Hall:

> And you ought not to think yourself on an equality with the Misses Reed and Master Reed, because Missis kindly allows you to be brought up with them. They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none: it is your place to be humble, and to try to make yourself agreeable to them. (Brontë 8)

When Jane moves to Lowood, she is continuously reminded of her low financial status as well. When Helen Burns, her first true friend, explains the name of the school to Jane, she highlights the fact that it is a place for poor orphans, who are at mercy of wealthy people:

> 'It is partly a charity-school: you and I, and all the rest of us, are charity-children. … [A]ll the girls here have lost either one or both parents, and this is called an institution for educating orphans. … We pay, or our friends pay, fifteen pounds a year for each.'
> 'Then why do they call us charity-children?'
> 'Because fifteen pounds is not enough for board and teaching, and the deficiency is supplied by subscription [made by] [d]ifferent benevolent-minded ladies and gentlemen in this neighbourhood and in London.' (Brontë 41–42)

The financial gap between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester is also apparent and strictly related to the master/servant dichotomy. Yet, Jane does not feel inferior to him just

because she has no money. Even though she is not wealthy, she considers herself to be an equal human being with the same rights to have deep feelings:

> Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton? – a machine without feelings? and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you, – and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. (Brontë 223)

When Jane finally inherits money from her uncle, she reaches economic independence. Yet, she decides to share the fortune with the Rivers family, as she believes that having loving relatives is a better blessing for her than being extremely wealthy: "Twenty thousand pounds shared equally, would be five thousand each, – enough and to spare: justice would be done, – mutual happiness secured. Now the wealth did not weigh on me: now it was not a mere bequest of coin, – it was a legacy of life, hope, enjoyment" (Brontë 341).

Male/Female sensitivity

Another dichotomy which may be found within *Jane Eyre* is the one connected with the male/female sensitivity. From a traditional point of view, women are regarded as more vulnerable and emotional, whereas men are perceived as more reserved and sensible in revealing their emotions. Yet, in Victorian England women had to be very careful in showing what they actually felt. For Teachman, "[c]ivilized society in *Jane Eyre* is the place in which women are not free to express their feelings and experience their desires without risking being declared mad" (21).

In the novel, the images of nature highlight the women's sensitive side. As Teachman puts it, nature imposes that female "will have the same feelings, dreams, and needs for activity that men have" (21). Taking Jane into consideration, images of nature, especially the moon, appear within the narrative every time she "experiences more emotion than a respectable Victorian woman should" (Teachman 21). The moon emerges in the novel for the first time when Jane is locked in the red room. When dusk falls, she becomes more emotional and also terrified at the thought of her uncle's ghost:

> Shaking my hair from my eyes, I lifted my head and tried to look boldly round the dark room; at this moment a light gleamed on the wall. Was it, I asked myself, a ray from the moon penetrating some aperture in the blind? No; moonlight was still, and this stirred; while I gazed, it glided up to the ceiling and quivered over my head. I can now conjecture readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern carried by someone across the lawn: but then, prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. (Brontë 12)

The moon also announces the change which is about to take place in Jane's life. For instance, lunar imagery signals her leaving Thornfield. "The maternal moon" advises Jane to abandon the place (Gilbert and Gubar 363). While watching the moon, Jane imagines that she can hear it talking: "'My daughter, flee temptation.'/'Mother, I will'" (Brontë 282). Influenced by the moon, Jane becomes convinced to leave Mr. Rochester behind and not to become his mistress.

Except for the moonlight, other natural forces accompany Jane in her emotional moments. To exemplify, when Mr. Rochester proposes to her, thunder and lightning interrupt the event. According to Teachman, "her joy is as overwhelming as the storm itself, but the storm is also destructive: lightning strikes the large chestnut tree, causing it to split in two" (22). For Teachman, the divided tree may symbolize Mr. Rochester's feelings towards Jane – on the one hand, he loves her and wishes to marry her and, on the other, he is already married to another woman (22). Moreover, it may also be interpreted as a warning for Jane that she should be careful when it comes to their marriage.

Contrary to women, men at that time were allowed to experience strong emotions without the risk of being declared mad. For instance, when Jane leaves Mr. Rochester, he is thought to become savage but in a handsome way:

> The governess had run away two months before; and for all Mr. Rochester sought her as if she had been the most precious thing he had in the world, he never could hear a word of her; and he grew savage – quite savage on his disappointment: he never was a wild man, but he got dangerous after he lost her. He would be alone, too. He sent Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper, away to her friends at a distance; but he did it handsomely, for he settled an annuity on her for life: and she deserved it – she was a very good woman. Miss Adele, a ward he had, was put to school. He broke off acquaintance with all the gentry, and shut himself up like a hermit at the Hall. (Brontë 378)

Interestingly, Mr. Rochester is not blamed for becoming a bitter loner. Instead, people who used to be his acquaintances blame Jane for the change of his character: "I knew him from a boy, you see: and for my part, I have often wished that Miss Eyre had been sunk in the sea before she came to Thornfield Hall" (Brontë 379).

Conclusions

Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë's Bildungsroman, narrates the protagonist's journey to maturation which results in her becoming free and independent. As Howells puts it: "it shows the emergence of a personality from childhood to adulthood with all the crises and reassessments that that entails" (161). Yet, Jane's coming-of-age is not achieved without great effort - it requires challenging several obstacles presented in the novel in terms of binary oppositions in order to become strong and autonomous. The oppositions introduced within the analysis interpermeate one another in various aspects. For instance, the male/female dichotomy is inseparable from the master/servant and the independent/dependent binary oppositions. In the initial stage, the divisions seem to be clear-cut and apparent but gradually, they become blurred and even inverted in favour of Jane. In other words, the analysis proves that the female protagonist upsets the primary dichotomies to her advantage over the course of her development. Consequently, binary oppositions cannot be strictly applied to Jane because she constantly questions them with her actions. The attempt to define Jane with the use of such a closed division confirms that she does not fit typical classifications. As a result of her quest, she is transformed from an unprivileged victim into a powerful heroine who may be considered equal to male characters from the novel.

Interestingly, the great popularity of *Jane Eyre* is prevailing up to this day. It is considered to be such an intriguing and multidimensional novel that there have been many attempts to rewrite it from various perspectives. Consequently, there are many outstanding literary works such as Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* which rely on upsetting binary oppositions established within the source text.

Works Cited

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992.

Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic, The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2000.

Howells, Coral Ann. *Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction.* London and Atlantic Highlands, The Athlone Press, 1978.

Kent, Susan Kingsley. *Sex and Suffrage in Britain 1860-1914.* London, Princeton University Press, 1987.

Teachman, Debra. *Understanding Jane Eyre: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents.* Westport, Greenwood Press, 2001.

Love Triangles and the Binary Literary Context of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*

Raquel Carvajal-Ariza
University of Málaga

Abstract: *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are two of the world's greatest love stories. Apart from having been written by two sisters and published in the same year (1847), the two novels have the peculiarity that their famous love stories are constructed on love triangles. Despite their relevance, love triangles have consistently remained understudied in Brontë studies. Katherine Bubel has only recently analysed the "triangle of desire" in *Jane Eyre*, arguing that Jane Eyre must pass through the "deep waters" of relinquishing Mr. Rochester and experience a resurrection into the "presence" of the God-like St. John Rivers before she can make her choice of romantic partner (307). In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine Earnshaw faces a similar conundrum, as she decides to be with Heathcliff only after she has married Edgar Linton. This paper explores how love triangles are central to both novels because, by presenting their characters with two distinct romantic choices, the Brontë sisters address the binary literary context of the early-Victorian period. Notably, these romantic triangles reflect the in-betweener status of the Brontë sisters between the Gothic and the Domestic novel genres, allowing Charlotte and Emily Brontë to develop their unique literary style.

Keywords: binary oppositions, the Brontës, domestic novel, Gothic novel, *Jane Eyre*, love triangles, *Wuthering Heights*

> "Here are two people sadly *in need of a third* to thaw the ice between them; and you are the very one we should both of us choose."
>
> Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (emphasis added)

With those words Catherine Earnshaw Linton introduces her childhood friend Heathcliff to her sister-in-law Isabella in *Wuthering Heights*. Soon after its publication, *Wuthering Heights* (1847) became one of the most acclaimed and confusing novels of the early-Victorian period. Nonetheless, readers were already engaged with another of the greatest Victorian novels: *Jane Eyre*, published two months earlier by Emily Brontë's older sister, Charlotte. In fact, it was Charlotte's novel on its eponymous heroine that initiated the legion of admirers of the three Brontë sisters/authoresses. Most importantly, *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* occupy the canon of literary history as among the world's greatest love stories (Stoneman, "Brontë Myth" 231). The passionate relationships of these novels have struck scholars and readers all these 175 years, producing a vast number of analyses, revisions, and adaptations. Yet, the public has kept overlooking one peculiarity that gives these novels their compelling force.

Wuthering Heights ends with a striking image: Mr. Lockwood contemplating the graves of the protagonists of the love story of his landlord. Remarkably, he looks at *three* graves, not two. Meanwhile, Jane Eyre begins the last chapter of her story recounting her wedding with Edward Rochester. Surprisingly, she ends her narration of with the words of St. John Rivers, the man she rejected to be with Rochester. These endings leave the reader with a significant fact: the legendary love stories of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are based on love triangles. The only main study on the issue, Katharine Bubel's analysis of *Middlemarch* and *Jane Eyre*, situates the triangle of desire as a universal pattern of the mystery of human relations conveyed in the medium of the novel (296). She continues arguing that Jane Eyre must pass through the "deep waters" of relinquishing Rochester and experience a resurrection into the "presence" of the God-like St. John Rivers before she can choose a romantic partner (307). Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights* Catherine Earnshaw realises that she wants to be with Heathcliff only after she married Edgar Linton. Hence, love triangles imply a dichotomy: the characters of both novels stand in the middle between two possible lovers. Following Bubel, this process of pondering about their two partners is what helps these characters solve their dilemma; and so, escape their triangles. Like their characters, the Brontë sisters lived in the middle of two eras.

The 1840s in Britain were marked by the transition between the Romantic period and the new reign under Queen Victoria. Crucially, the two eras produced significantly distinct literary forms. First, the Romantic period promoted the rise of the Gothic novel. Following Stephen Arata et al., the Gothic novel is a genre of prose fiction of a dark kind with an extravagant, excessive form and whose action and language regularly cross conventional boundaries (117–118). Within this genre, I differentiate two Gothic traditions: the Female Gothic and the male Gothic. By

"Female Gothic" I refer to the more specific genre of Gothic novels written by women like Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) as well as female Gothic characters. Conversely, by "male Gothic" I mean male-authored Gothic texts and male characters in Gothic stories. Meanwhile, the development of Victorian realism in the 1850s brought the expansion of the Domestic novel. According to Nancy Armstrong, the Domestic novel is a genre of realist prose fiction that emerged in the mid-eighteenth century which focuses on personal stories, especially of women, which elaborate on the courtship procedures ensuring marriage and a happy domestic life, all played out in a domestic framework (29, 38). This paper examines the key love triangles of *Jane Eyre* (*JE*) and *Wuthering Heights* (*WH*) to explore how they are central to their plots because they allow Charlotte and Emily Brontë to engage with the literary context where produced their celebrated works. I aim to show that just as their characters ponder about their romantic relationships, the Brontë sisters must negotiate the two overlapping traditions of the early-Victorian era, allowing them to develop their original literary style.

The Brontë sisters lived in a peculiar time of British literature: the mid-1840s. Even though Queen Victoria had already been several years on the throne, William Wordsworth became the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom. Therefore, despite Charlotte and Emily wrote their novels within the newer Victorian readership, their literary background was essentially Romantic. As Linda Peterson accounts, Patrick Brontë fostered in his children a love for literature by furnishing them with the latest news and literary trends (5). This means that the Brontë siblings were familiarised with early-nineteenth century history and literature since an early age. Indeed, much recent Brontë scholarship is dedicated to the study their juvenilia, which featured characters inspired in late-eighteenth-century figures like Napoleon I and the first Duke of Wellington. In this context, *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* reflect the inbetweener status of their authors within the Romantic and Victorian eras, and within their corresponding literary trends. Robyn Warhol comments on her analysis of doubleness in *Jane Eyre* that "whereas critics have argued that a tension exists in these novels between realism and Gothic romance, I will argue that the two genres … serv[e] to double each other at crucial moments in both narratives" (857–858). In fact, *Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights* feature love triangles as central to their plots because they signify the Brontës' exploration of these two genres and literary eras.

The characters involved in the triangles symbolise the dichotomy between the two genres. One of the earliest prominent studies on *Wuthering Heights* is David Cecil's *Early Victorian Novelists* (1935), in which he claimed the merits of Emily Brontë's novel. Cecil argued that *Wuthering Heights* was settled on the cosmic principles of "storm" and "calm", identifying the characters of Wuthering Heights

as children of storm and the characters of Thrushcross Grange as children of calm (Peterson, *Wuthering Heights* 296–297). In his view, the characters have fulfilment with people of their natural affinity, such as Heathcliff and Catherine's mutual love; while the novel's conflict emerges because the stormy characters of the Heights wrongfully unite themselves with the calm people of the Grange, as Catherine does by marrying Edgar (297). This distinction goes further, exemplifying the contrast between the Gothic and Domestic characters in the novel. The *stormy* characters of Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff and Catherine, represent the Gothic side of their triangles. The label of "storm" invokes the proto-Romantic German movement *Sturm und Drang*, which set the basis for the development of British Romanticism. Indeed, both characters are linked with the founding principle of both the Gothic and Romantic aesthetics: the sublime. This concept, as theorised by Edmund Burke in 1757, is the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling, produced by whatever is in any sort terrible (33–34). Since his arrival Heathcliff breeds this feeling in the Heights, where he is met with rejection and even spits from Catherine (*WH* 32). Heathcliff encapsulates all the four privations that Burke (58) lists as being terrible; and Darkness, the most sublime of all, is Heathcliff's key feature, including his physiognomy. Moreover, his strong character makes him a menace to the house. Burke argues that "on account of their unmanageable fierceness, the idea of a wolf is not despicable … thus, we are affected by strength, which is *natural* power" (55). This, added to Mr. Earnshaw's affection to Heathcliff, makes Hindley Earnshaw consider Heathcliff an "usurper" (*WH* 33) of his rightful position. To prevent it, Hindley resorts to violence, which is one of the sensations that rush upon the mind when confronting terror, following Burke (53). This adds more fuel to the fire, for Heathcliff becomes violent towards Hindley and everyone else that limits him. However, the character most marked by violence in the novel is Catherine, being both a producer and a product of it. Significantly, Catherine asks her father to gift her a whip, an instrument to exert violence and control. Sandra Gilbert comments that Catherine gets her whip "figuratively – in the form of a 'gypsy brat'", i.e., Heathcliff (137). Nelly Dean accounts that "at fifteen [Catherine] was the queen of the country-side, she had no peer: and she did turn a haughty, headstrong creature!" (*WH* 58). Catherine has no peer despite her attachment to Heathcliff, suggesting that he is rather her subordinate. When they embrace, Catherine seizes Heathcliff by the hair to keep him down (140); that is, kneeling at her feet. Nonetheless, this violence reverts to her when she losses hold of her power. After Heathcliff's leave, Catherine enters a marriage which keeps her away from Heathcliff, her home and the moors. This is so detrimental to her "unruly nature" (59) that Catherine becomes delirious about her former life.

In contrast, Cecil's label of "calm" alludes to the values of reason, manners and duty that emerged in the Victorian era in reaction to Romanticism. This is represented by Edgar and Isabella Linton, the Domestic characters of their triangles. From the start, Edgar is a magistrate, a profession that requires abidance to law and order. Crucially, Edgar is conscious about maintaining a proper composure, even in the most dramatic situations. Nelly remarks that "Edgar did not mean to entertain … any high flights of passion" in the heated argument at Thrushcross Grange in chapter 11. Not even in his bereavement Edgar resorts to crying, weeping or praying. Instead, he devotes himself more entirely to his books; an attitude that conforms to early-Victorian views of gentlemanliness. Tara MacDonald accounts that self-help and the related notion of self-improvement were rising in Victorian society as the aspirational model for men, consolidated by the author of *Self-Help* (1859), Samuel Smiles (487). The Brontës knew this well, for their own father was a heroic example of this ideal (Birch 232). Isabella too follows the early-Victorian expectations of her gender and status. Her impulsive marriage to Heathcliff indicates that she is concerned with "the only adult professions acceptable for women at the time, marriage and motherhood" (Senf 377), professions she wants to take even with Edgar's disapproval and her social degradation. Additionally, her choice for Heathcliff is motivated by the latest literary fashions among young women, like literary annuals. Following Linda Peterson, annuals were lavishly illustrated books which contained fiction and verse that presumed a feminine interest in love and courtship, whether thwarted or fulfilled ("The Brontës" 153). Isabella is so naïvely influenced by these ideals that even Heathcliff is aware that she "picture[d] in [him] a hero of a romance" (*WH* 133) and uses that in his advantage.

These contrasts between Gothic and Domestic characters are similarly reproduced in *Jane Eyre*. In Charlotte's novel, Edward Rochester and Bertha Mason are the Gothic characters of their triangles. Critics have acknowledged that the character of Rochester is based on the Byronic hero, like others who have called Heathcliff a "quintessential" Byronic hero (e.g., Robinson 73–74). Indeed, of all the Romantic poets, Byron loomed largest in the Brontës' literary pantheon, as Sarah J. Lodge remarks (146). Although Patsy Stoneman does not consider Rochester a "Romantic" hero like Heathcliff (117), Rochester follows the Romantic sublime as well. Rochester's physicality is defined by darkness, for Jane accounts that he has a dark face, black hair, and dark eyes (*JE* 111, 117, 282). His figure is called "athletic" (117), the same adjective Nelly uses to describe Heathcliff's (*WH* 84). More clearly, Rochester also possesses a fierce nature. Jane is struck by the roughness and abruptness of his character, to which Mrs. Fairfax argues that "it is his nature – and we can none of us help our nature; and … he has painful thoughts, … to harass him,

and make his spirits unequal" (*JE* 124). Heathcliff is just as tormented, as he tells Nelly (*WH* 288). Nevertheless, Bertha is the most vivid Gothic character in the novel, for she epitomises all the sublime characteristics that define Heathcliff and Catherine. Again, we find in Bertha a character with a dark physiognomy and an uneasy past.[2] Crucially, Bertha has that natural power that Burke outlined, as she is tall and strong enough to surpass Rochester. In fact, she is referred in animalistic terms; deemed a wild, growling figure whether beast or human being one could not tell (*JE* 284). This depiction mimics both Catherine's description of Heathcliff as "a wolfish man" (*WH* 90) and Isabella's opinion that he is not a man, but a brute monster (152). And, like Catherine, Bertha is counteracted with repression. Rochester keeps Bertha constantly locked up and invigilated by Grace Poole, damaging her mental health. Everyone in novel justifies Bertha's treatment because of her insanity. However, the extent of Bertha's madness has been largely debated in feminist criticism, being the general view among critics that Bertha is not mentally ill, but rather she is made mad through her ill-treatment.

On the other sides of the love triangles in the novel are the Domestic characters of St. John Rivers and Jane Eyre. To situate Rivers as a devoted priest makes sense for early Victorian standards, since the church was the most socially regarded profession for a gentleman, alongside the law (Edgar Linton's profession). Like Edgar, Rivers fulfils the ideal of *self-help*. He is aware that "God has given us … the power to make our own fate; … we need but to seek another nourishment for the mind" (*JE* 352), and with such resolution he takes up the mission. Rivers's career has also great resonances with the exemplary life of Patrick Brontë. Rivers is appointed to a humble moorland parish, a place not much different from the Haworth Parsonage. There Rivers sets up a rural school for poor children, as did Mr. Brontë in his native Ireland. But Rivers is even more dutiful than Edgar and Mr. Brontë. He is "an absolutist for duty" (Rylance 160), willing to sacrifice his love for Rosamond Oliver to be a proper missionary. Jane does not take such extremes, but she is still self-aware of her place in the world. Her professions, a governess and a schoolmistress, were the most frequent occupations for middle-class working women, as Elizabeth Langland notes (303). So were for the Brontë sisters, who worked in these positions with bitter results. Jane endures the hardships of these occupations because it is her duty to provide for herself, as Rivers discusses with her (*JE* 339). Most importantly, Jane is conscious of her behaviour. She continuously alludes to the rationality and fairness of her actions, as she does when she shares her inheritance (376), and when obeying Rochester's orders (211). In fact, she notes that

[2] Hillary Newman remarks that all the Brontë sisters use physiognomy to describe characters, especially Charlotte (199).

"women are supposed to be very calm generally" (107); being "calm" both a word that appears consistently throughout her narration and one of Cecil's principles.

Thus, the love triangles in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* offer their characters two possible outcomes: one Gothic, and one Domestic. In the case of Charlotte and Emily Brontë, they use the novels to make their choice of a genre. On the surface, they favour the Domestic genre. Lyn Pykett argues that "*Wuthering Heights* traces the emergence of the characteristic form of Victorian fiction – the Domestic novel in realist mode" (96). Criticism has found several instances of Domestic novels in both works. One is *Jane Eyre*'s and *Wuthering Heights*'s realistic tone and register, produced by first-person narrators. No one can better tell Jane Eyre's story than Jane's older self, following Warhol (861). Similarly, Nelly Dean has first-hand access to the events of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Although Emily's framing of the story through Nelly and later Mr. Lockwood may reduce the reliability of the story, both narrators allude to literal citations and exact details, then aiming to a truthful account. Another evidence is the Brontës' use of sub-genres of realism. Amy Robinson dedicates her analysis to discuss *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* as examples of *Bildungsroman*, since they trace the life journey of Jane and Catherine from childhood into their adult homes. Likewise, my research supervisor, Dr. Remedios Martín-Lorenzo, pointed out to me the *novel of manners*. As it is common in this genre, the characters of both novels are identified with houses, which anticipate their owners' behaviour. For example, Heathcliff and Catherine represent the Gothic/storm, as I argued; not coincidentally, their home is called "Wuthering Heights", a name that describes "the atmospheric tumult to which [the house] is exposed in *stormy* weather" (*WH* 2, emphasis added).

Indeed, both novels have a strong consciousness about the home and domesticity. For a start, they portray the ideal Victorian lifestyle. Marianne Thormählen comments that "in the early nineteenth century, the idea of the loving home as a sacred temple where virtue was cultivated, security guaranteed, and warm affection kept inmates emotionally strong and pure became extraordinarily powerful" ("Marriage" 311). Jane's life at Moor House follows Thormählen's idea clearly as she is very happy with her cousins, who provide her shelter, books, and engaging conversation. In fact, Jane begins chapter 30 asserting that "the more I knew of the inmates of Moor House, the better I liked them. In a few days I had so far recovered my health that I could sit up all day" (*JE* 340). In *Wuthering Heights*, this is portrayed in Thrushcross Grange. The first time the Lintons appear in the novel is when Heathcliff and Catherine secretly peep at the Grange. Despite his dislike for everything Linton, Heathcliff still remarks that the house is "a splendid place" (*WH* 41). It is so for Catherine too, since she gets so attracted to the Linton lifestyle that

she ends up becoming a Linton. Moreover, all the key moments concerning the characters' relationships happen inside domestic spaces. Bertha is discovered inside Thornfield Hall, in plain sight of its inhabitants. In like manner, Catherine's deadly faint occurs upon Heathcliff's forbidden visit to the Grange, being Nelly and other servants present. The final couples also reunite at a conjugal home: Jane and Rochester in Ferndean Manor, and Catherine and Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights – although as ghosts.

Just as their relationships are framed within domesticity, the characters of both novels are concerned of class and property as in Domestic novels. Class and property are the reason Catherine refuses to marry Heathcliff, as it would degrade her socially and economically. That is the same reason why she chooses Edgar: "he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman in the neighbourhood" (*WH* 69). Heathcliff knows this; and thus, his vendetta against the Earnshaws and the Lintons consists in depriving them of their money and the two houses. In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester and Bertha's marriage is grounded on economic interests, being arranged by Rochester's father to gain a £30,000 dowry. Furthermore, Jane and Rochester's courtship gets complicated because their relationship implies a class-clash. Jane represses her attraction for Rochester, as Jill Matus notes, owing to her fear that he is to marry Blanche Ingram, who equals Rochester's high status (111). A similar idea is behind Rivers's marriage proposal. To him, Jane should marry him because both belong to the same social class and possess the character to work in the mission. The fact that they are first cousins also favours Rivers, for marriage between cousins was common in the Victorian era to keep all property together within the family.

Most clearly, the novels conclude with these values of domesticity and property. Despite their initial separation, Jane and Rochester end up married in Ferndean, fulfilling the Victorian ideal of matrimonial bliss. Jane speaks of her married life as "hold[ing] [her]self supremely blest – blest beyond what language can express" (*JE* 438) for she can help Rochester in his daily affairs and engage in mutual conversation with him. Moreover, she takes up motherhood, as it was expected of women upon marriage. Although Jane mentions only her "first-born," Victorian couples between requited partners often resulted in large families. Indeed, Maria Branwell gave birth to six children during her nine-year-long marriage, although only three of them survived to become literary geniuses. Meanwhile, *Wuthering Heights* ends with Heathcliff. His death promotes Hareton's restoration as the "primordial patriarch" (Gilbert 155) of both the Earnshaw lineage and Wuthering Heights. Simultaneously, Cathy is freed of all ties to her forced marriage, granting her access to reclaim Thrushcross Grange. Consequently, the marriage of Hareton and Cathy is the most sensible conclusion for both Nelly and Victorian

readers. Their marriage insures them both economic prosperity and domestic success, as it unites the two houses under a promising respectable position after Hareton becomes educated through Cathy. As Kate Flint asserts, "Hareton and the younger Catherine's relationship is a triumph of civilised norms, of domesticity" (177).

Despite Charlotte and Emily Brontë's attempt of conferring their novels a Domestic setting and realistic tone, the Gothic genre is what gives them their dynamism and force. Pykett points out that "in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Gothic was a genre particularly identified with women writers" (90). For the Brontës it was so, too, as their novels are essentially constructed on Gothic plots. *Jane Eyre* is based on the Female Gothic, popularised by eighteenth-century female authors like Ann Radcliffe. Radcliffe's *romances* were different from the usual supernatural story because, Nicole A. Diederich explains, Radcliffe situated Gothic horror in the everyday, writing stories of explained supernatural (par. 4). They are mostly featured by strong heroines, which manage to overturn the male villain that maintains them trapped in exotic, creepy houses of Italy and France. Jane Eyre is an English *Radcliffean* heroine. Thornfield Hall is an intimidating and gloomy setting, as Jane describes that "a very chill and vault-like air pervaded the stairs and gallery, suggesting cheerless ideas of space and solitude … everything appeared very stately and imposing to me" (*JE* 96–97). Although Jane enters Thornfield by herself, she is initially uncomfortable with her new employer since Rochester is abrupt and moody. Furthermore, the fact that she must be subject to Rochester's orders suggests the submission to which Radcliffe's heroines are forced by their villains. Most crucially, Jane is strong-willed enough to leave Thornfield and Rochester, returning to him only when she has achieved an equal status with him. *Jane Eyre* features many other Gothic tropes associated with female characters. The trope of the heroine is not only Radcliffean; however, Radcliffe gave her heroines equal power as men. Nonetheless, it is Bertha who is constructed from the most recurrent feminine Gothic trope in the nineteenth century: the madwoman. Janis McLarren Caldwell points out 'moral madness' and hysteria as two idiosyncratically Victorian concepts of psychiatry ("Mental health" 346–347); the latter being specifically treated in women. She also argues that the Brontës were familiarised with medical matters, since Patrick Brontë studied the key medical manuals of the time at home (Caldwell, "Physical health" 337–338, "Mental health" 345). Other Gothic tropes come from folklore. Rochester calls Jane "witch" and "sorceress" four times in the novel (*JE* 145, 263, 273) to explain her behaviour and she is accused of having "bewitched" him another three (119, 253, 415). Bertha is named "a vampyre" (276), a fitting description as earlier in the novel she bites her own brother and sucks his blood. Rochester himself is also

inspired in folktale: as Robinson notes, "Brontë most obviously likens Rochester … to 'Bluebeard' and 'Beauty and the Beast,'" as he locks Bertha up in a hidden room in Thornfield away from everyone (73).

All these Gothic plots and tropes are also at the basis of *Wuthering Heights*, although Emily gives another *turn to the screw*. Gilbert has largely discussed the poetics of *Wuthering Heights,* arguing that Emily reverses Milton's cosmogony of Heaven and Hell (133). But Emily's reversal of tropes and genres is more powerful, for she reworks the Female Gothic into a Male Gothic in her novel. Instead of Radcliffe, the plot of *Wuthering Heights* seems based on Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the first Gothic novel in English. Heathcliff is linked with Walpole's novel even before the beginning of *Wuthering Heights*. Pykett remarks that the novel is set on a date (1801) that is fictional but familiar to Victorian readers (89). There is a more crucial date, though. Considering the time references given in the novel, modern versions of the text include a genealogical tree of its characters to help the reader distinguish the two Earnshaw and Linton generations. They set Heathcliff to have been born in 1764, which is the exact year that Walpole's novel was published. Indeed, the protagonists of the two novels are two fierce *usurpers*: Manfred of the throne of Otranto, and Heathcliff of the Heights. Manfred plots to marry the princess of the neighbouring kingdom; she princess is called Isabella, just as the *princess* of Thrushcross Grange that Heathcliff marries. Likewise, both Isabellas are mistreated by their husbands, and end up fleeing from them. Similarly, the two novels conclude with the marriages of the two rightful heirs, Theodore and Hareton, who restore their properties after the removal of the usurpers. Apart from Walpole, *Wuthering Heights* features plenty of male Gothic tropes. The Gothic has been a hugely debated topic in Brontë studies, especially regarding Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship. These analyses suggest that Heathcliff encompasses all the key male Gothic figures of Western culture. Critics have pointed out the outcast (Robinson, 74); the devil/Faust (Thormählen, "The Lunatic" 192–193); the vampire (Krishnan); Frankenstein's creature (Gilbert 152); and even the addict (Goodlett). Still, they have missed an evident one: the werewolf. Catherine directly calls Heathcliff "a fierce, … *wolfish* man" (*WH* 90, my emphasis), perhaps because he growls at people throughout the novel. In fact, Heathcliff suffers a transformation; but instead of a full moon, Catherine causes it. On their final embrace, Nelly remarks that "he gnashed at me, and foamed like a mad dog … I did not feel as I were in the company of a creature of my own species" (*WH* 141). His transformation completes after Catherine's death, as Nelly recounts that "lifting up his eyes, [he] howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast" (148). And, by looking at the way he treats everyone afterwards, he remains transformed. Even Heathcliff himself recognises it:

"You know, I was wild after [Cathy] died" (256). Therefore, the Gothic provides a rich basis for the plots of both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*.

Furthermore, Gothic elements are present at the key moments of the characters' love relationships. As aforementioned, darkness was a crucial trope for the Romantic movement and the Gothic. Remarkably, dark nights signal the first meetings of the characters involved in the triangles, as in Jane's and Heathcliff's arrivals to Moor House and Wuthering Heights; Jane and Rochester's first conversation at Thornfield; and Catherine's incident at Thrushcross Grange. Nonetheless, there is a more crucial Gothic element present in their relationships. Newman situates weather imagery as a common feature to all the Brontë sisters (196). Inclement weather is frequent in both novels, being the most Gothic of all. Significantly, both sisters use the trope of the thunderstorm to anticipate the climactic moment of the Jane-Rochester and Catherine-Heathcliff relationships: their separation. Notably, in both novels a tree is broken down during these storms (*JE* 250, *WH* 75), working as a physical metaphor. Other important moments happen around supernatural phenomena. Jane's first-ever encounter with Rochester is marked by Jane's vision of the mythical Gytrash. Later, Jane decides to return to Rochester after hearing voices in the wind; an apparition as preternatural as Catherine's first appearance in *Wuthering Heights*. Overall, although *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* were written within the Domestic novel trend, the Brontë sisters are reluctant to leave out the Gothic to infuse their novels with heightened action. Thus, both novels elaborate plots of courtship and domesticity, but framed within the Gothic. In doing so, Charlotte and Emily create a narrative style of their own: a third genre that is neither Gothic nor Domestic, just *Brontë*.

A love triangle usually implies a binary dilemma: two people contend for the love of the same person, who must choose one romantic partner. For the Brontë sisters, love triangles become a narrative formula to negotiate their inbetweener status between the Romantic and the Victorian eras. By presenting the characters of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* within love triangles, Charlotte and Emily Brontë address the dualities of the literary context where they wrote their acclaimed works.

The characters involved in the triangles symbolise the two novelistic genres that were coexisting in Britain in the 1840s: the Gothic and the Domestic. *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* emerged within the new Victorian readership, which promoted the Domestic novel. However, the Brontë sisters were also conscious of the potential of the Gothic to create the passionate romantic plots of their novels. Hence, instead of choosing between one genre or the other, Charlotte and Emily Brontë developed their own literary style: a new mode that blends the best of both genres. Thus, by escaping this dichotomy, the Brontës challenge literary scripts in

their very novels that seemingly endorse them, as MacDonald concludes (498). Most importantly, my analysis raises up the research on love triangles in Brontë studies. Indeed, the Brontës were *three* sisters: Charlotte, Emily, and Anne, each forming a side of a *triangle* of an enduring literary legacy.

Works Cited

Arata, Stephen, et al., editors. *A Companion to the English Novel.* Wiley-Blackwell, 2015. *Wiley Online Library*, doi.org/10.1002/9781118607251.

Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford UP, 1989.

Birch, Dinah. "Education." *The Brontës in Context*, edited by Marianne Thormählen, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 232–239. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bibliotecauma-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1057464.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*, edited by Margaret Smith, introduction by Juliette Atkinson, Oxford UP, 2019.

Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*, edited by Ian Jack, introduction by Helen Small, Oxford UP, 2009.

Bubel, Katharine. "Transcending the Triangle of Desire: Eros and the "Fulfillment of Love" in *Middlemarch* and *Jane Eyre*." *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature*, Vol. 60, No. 4, 2008, pp. 295–308. *ProQuest*, proquest.com/scholarly-journals/transcending-triangle-desire-eros-fulfillment/docview/194957886/se-2?accountid=14568.

Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, edited with an introduction and notes by Paul Guyer, Oxford UP, 2015.

Caldwell, Janis McLarren. "Mental Health." *The Brontës in Context*, edited by Marianne Thormählen, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 344–351. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bibliotecauma-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1057464

---. "Physical Health." *The Brontës in Context*, edited by Marianne Thormählen, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 335–343. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bibliotecauma-ebooks/detail.action?docID= 1057464

Diederich, Nicole A. "Gothic Doppelgängers and Discourse: Examining the Doubling Practice of (Re)marriage in *Jane Eyre*." *Nineteenth-Century*

Gender Studies, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2010, ncgsjournal.com/issue63/PDFs/diederich.pdf. PDF download.

Flint, Kate. "Women Writers, Women's Issues." *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës,* edited by Heather Glen, Cambridge UP, 2002, pp. 170–191.

Gilbert, Sandra. "Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell." Wuthering Heights*: A New Casebook*, edited by Patsy Stoneman, Macmillan, 1993, pp. 131–160.

Goodlett, Debra. "Love and Addiction in *Wuthering Heights*." *The Midwest Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 1996, pp. 316–326. *ProQuest*, proquest.com/docview/195697951?accountid=14568.

Hoeveler, Diane Long, and Deborah Denenholz Morse, editors. *A Companion to the Brontës*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2016. *Wiley Online Library*, doi.org/10.1002/9781118405543.

Krishnan, Lakshmi. ""Why am I so changed?": Vampiric Selves and Gothic Doubleness in *Wuthering Heights*." *Journal of Dracula Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 5, 2007, pp. 39–51. *EBSCOhost*, research.library.kutztown.edu/dracula-studies/vol9/iss1/5.

Langland, Elizabeth. "Careers for Middle-Class Women." *The Brontës in Context*, edited by Marianne Thormählen, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 303–310. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bibliotecauma-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1057464.

Lodge, Sarah J. "Literary Influences on the Brontës." *The Brontës in Context*, edited by Marianne Thormählen, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 143–150. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bibliotecauma-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1057464.

MacDonald, Tara. "Class and Gender in the Brontë Novels." *A Companion to the Brontës*, edited by Diane Long Hoeveler and Deborah Denenholz Morse, Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, pp. 485–499. *Wiley Online Library*, doi.org/10.1002/9781118405543.

Matus, Jill. "'Strong Family Likeness': *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*." *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës,* edited by Heather Glen, Cambridge UP, 2002, pp. 99–121.

Newman, Hillary. "Some Common Features in the Brontë Sisters' Novels." *Brontë Studies: The Journal of the Brontë Society*, Vol. 44, No. 2, 2019, pp. 186–203. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi.org/10.1080/14748932.2019.1567166.

Peterson, Linda. H. "The Brontës' way into print." *The Brontës in Context*, edited by Marianne Thormählen, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 151–158. *ProQuest*

Ebook Central, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bibliotecauma-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1057464

---, editor. *Wuthering Heights: Complete, Authoritative Text with Biographical and Historical Contexts, Critical History, and Essays from Five Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1992.

Pykett, Lyn. "Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*: Gothic Plot and Domestic Fiction." Wuthering Heights*: A New Casebook*, edited by Patsy Stoneman, Macmillan, 1993, pp. 86–99.

Robinson, Amy J. "Journeying Home: *Jane Eyre* and Catherine Earnshaw's Coming-of-Age Stories." *A Companion to the Brontës*, edited by Diane Long Hoeveler and Deborah Denenholz Morse, Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, pp. 65–77. *Wiley Online Library*, doi.org/10.1002/9781118405543.

Rylance, Rick. "'Getting on': Ideology, Personality and The Brontë Characters." *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës,* edited by Heather Glen, Cambridge UP, 2002, pp. 148–169.

Senf, Carol A. "Physical and Mental Health in the Brontës' Lives and Works." *A Companion to the Brontës*, edited by Diane Long Hoeveler and Deborah Denenholz Morse, Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, pp. 369–383. *Wiley Online Library*, doi.org/10.1002/9781118405543.

Stoneman, Patsy. "The Brontë Myth." *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës,* edited by Heather Glen, Cambridge UP, 2002, pp. 214–241.

---. "Rochester and Heathcliff as Romantic Heroes." *Brontë Studies: The Journal of the Brontë Society*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2011, pp. 111–118. *Taylor & Francis Online*, doi.org/10.1179/147489310X12868722453744.

Thormählen, Marianne. "The Lunatic and the Devil's Disciple: The 'Lovers' in *Wuthering Heights*." *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 190, 1997, pp. 183–197. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/518669.

---. "Marriage and Family Life." *The Brontës in Context*, edited by Marianne Thormählen, Cambridge UP, 2012, 311–317. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bibliotecauma-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1057464.

Warhol, Robyn R. "Double Gender, Double Genre in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500 – 1900*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 1996, pp. 857–875. *JSTOR*, doi.org/10.2307/450979.

Reading George Gissing's *The Odd Women* as a Critique of The Upper-Class "New Woman" Through the Lens of Victorian Education

Debadrita Saha
Brainware University

Abstract: Victorian literature depicted a romanticised version of the "New Woman" aberrant from reality, without highlighting how these women's ascribed social status had significantly contributed to their empowerment. Against this backdrop, George Gissing's novel, *The Odd Women* stands as a notable exception for accentuating the social disparity between the 'respectable' and the working classes, and the emergence of "New Woman" as a singularly genteel, upper-class phenomenon. Gissing, who advocated egalitarian dispensation of education across gender and class, illuminated the prejudice of the upper-class, educated, 'respectable' "New Woman" against her impoverished, uneducated working-class counterparts through Mary Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn, who administer a school for training middle-class unmarried women in shorthand. The novel exposes how the dearth of resources can adversely impact holistic education and cause a tendency towards sentimentalism over rationale, ultimately thwarting the autonomy of the working-class women aspiring to be the "New Woman", like Virginia Madden. Hence, the paper will explore Gissing's satirical portraiture of the "New Woman" 's less optimistic facet, through an analysis of the novel's socio-economic context, as well as close textual research, and biographical criticism.

Keywords: capital, class, education, independence, feminism, "New Woman"

George Gissing sets the tone of his novel apart from the rest of the fin-de-siècle "New Woman" fiction not only in the title but from the very onset of the events, through the words of Rhoda Nunn: "So many *odd* women- no making a pair with them. The pessimists call them lost, useless, futile lives" (Gissing, *Odd Women* 44). The "New Women" of Gissing's time preferred free union, or a romantic partnership without the legal certification, which would uphold the sacred values of love and companionship, not economic and social compulsions. Such liberating views about

life were met with scathing mockery and, as Rhoda confirms, they were termed "odd" – i.e., strange, eccentric, worthless – but the optimistic support was not completely eradicated, as she herself takes pride in her status as an "odd woman" – one who is a part of the "great reserve" and can offer to train it for the world's work (Gissing, *Odd Women* 44). Hence, the aforementioned quote gives the readers a realistic portrayal of the "New Woman" in contemporary society, equally balanced in its merits and demerits.

However, it would be misleading to make the assumption that Gissing attempts to champion the spirit of the "New Woman" as the harbinger of a universally democratic emancipation of women. On the contrary, a few pages after Rhoda's claim, we get a completely different picture from the optimism with which Rhoda paints the "odd women" of her time. Her inspiring words on self-sustenance and independent existence have no effect on Monica Madden, who encourages a prospective suitor much oppressive, and older than her, Edmund Widdowson, in utmost desperation to escape the perils of being an "odd woman", the fate of her sisters – "older, sadder, perpetually struggling to supplement that dividend from the precious capital – and merely that they might keep alive" (Gissing, *Odd Women* 38).

The portrait of the unmarried Victorian woman that Gissing paints in the aforementioned lines is a stark departure from the emancipated women one finds in George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893), or in Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895) – none of the protagonists- the independent Vivie Warren who vows to independently eke out a living by working as an accountant, or Herminia Barton who takes the revolutionary decision to refute the institution of marriage as oppressive and have a child out of wedlock, both of whom lead comfortable lives economically, and are highly educated. Technically, they are "odd women" who do not live up to the ideals of conventional womanhood, yet, they are not the odd women that Gissing so painstakingly describes and tries to enlighten the readers about. The differentiating factor here is class.

Hence, the primary concern of this paper will be to assert that Gissing tried to chart an alternative path for the New Woman of his time in the novel *The Odd Women*, one that did not blatantly dismiss class and financial discrimination among the members of the oppressed sex, but acknowledged them, and aimed at the egalitarian dispensation of education as the first step towards the universal liberation of women. Gissing paints each of his female protagonists with sympathy, highlighting their plight without chastisement. Through close textual reading, and the use of supporting material from the novelist's biography, and particularly his letters, this paper will try to establish that Gissing actually tried to strip off the facade of privilege that clouded the judgements and adulations of the "New Women" of his

time, and advocated a more diverse attempt towards emancipation, one that did not restrict itself to upper and middle-class women of means, but extended to the working class women devoid of basic amenities as well.

This section is dedicated to the assessment of previous scholarly works on George Gissing's *The Odd Women* concerning the correlation of class and education in his novel. The earliest signed reviews of the text date back to 1896, by Annie Nathan Meyer in *The Bookman,* acknowledging the merit of Gissing's work for focussing the light upon some essential questions as regards workers' oppression, demand for equal distribution of wages, the need for better vocational training of working-class women and the debate surrounding marriage as a means of securing financial sustenance. Meyer analyses Rhoda's characterisation as a stubborn, unfeminine, unsexed Victorian woman but does not delve into the factors which led to such character development, nor does she examine the class privileges that accord Rhoda the position to take on the role of a Victorian man. Similar views are represented in an anonymous review from 1893 (*Pall Mall Gazette*). Despite being a cursory analysis of the novel, this particular article addresses Gissing's all-comprehensive treatment of the "New Woman", and how women's diverse social positions complicate their destinies to different degrees. Unlike the previous reviews, the focus is not on any particular character and her representation as the Odd or a "New Woman", but the review assesses Gissing's female characters as various facets of the ever-expanding debate on a woman's role in the society (*Pall Mall Gazette* 219).

Lisa Shapiro Sanders' article, "The Failures of the Romance: Boredom, Class, and Desire in George Gissing's *The Odd Women* and W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*", can be perceived as a critique of the working conditions of the factories and the shops of Victorian times, similar to Monica Madden's employer's workplace. Sanders paints a correlation between the working-class woman's sexual desire and her employment opportunities, emphasising solely upon the ways in which a girl like Monica was thwarted from living a better life by her surroundings, namely that of the departmental store, where she laboured amidst inhuman conditions. Sanders does not, however, examine Monica as a potential "New Woman", or the underlying social circumstances that cause her failure to become one. Furthermore, the essay focuses on the conditions of labour production, disregarding the hypocrisy of the upper and upper-middle classes which deliberately perpetuate such disparities for their self-interests. Patricia Comitni in "A Feminist Fantasy: Conflicting Ideologies in *The Odd Women*", recognises the multiple aspects of the class struggle that Gissing depicts as plaguing the "Odd women". However, she thinks that the alternatives to the oddness which are provided by

Gissing are on a superficial level, one that "does not produce solutions to these historical problems, but rather distantiates, critiques, and puts into dialogue the feminist ideologies present in Victorian society" (Comitni 530). Comitni overlooks the fact that Gissing did not aim to provide any panacea for the "oddness", instead, he critiques the existing class hierarchy and socio-economic disparities which cause the "oddness" in these women. His focus is on a faithful portrayal of the flaws in the "New Woman", as well as in the patriarchal society which denounces women's agency of any kind. The onus is upon the reader to find the solution.

Karen Chase first identifies that George Gissing can be neither labelled a proto-feminist nor a misogynist by judging from his earlier body of works. Chase points out that Gissing provides some alternative prospects for his contemporaneous Victorian women, which could "reflect changes in the condition of the women at the end of the nineteenth century" (Chase 231). They also briefly mention how Gissing's novel is a scathing attack on his fellow novelists who tended to portray a romanticised version of Victorian society, instead of a realistic one. The limitation of her research, however, is that it concentrates upon Rhoda Nunn's characterisation and not on the other characters as well, and the title indicates that she perceives Rhoda as the heroine of the novel.

The present paper will follow the path charted by Karen Chase, building upon the questions she examined in her essay with respect to Rhoda Nunn's characterisation and the New Woman genre. However, it will also analyse the characterisation of the other "Odd Women" in the novel, with special emphasis on Victorian education which occupies a major thematic scope in Gissing's novel. It will delve further into the question that Gissing raised in his novel – how a woman's social standing affects the quality of education she receives and, thereby, her destiny. To view *The Odd Women* as a satirical exposure of the "New Woman" tradition of novels, it is necessary to analyse the social context in which Gissing sets his novel, as this affects and shapes the lives of all the primary female characters in the narrative.

The social position of women as disadvantaged members of society cannot simply be attributed to only their biological or sexual orientations, but also to their lineage and the strata of the community they inhabit. Despite being situated in the context of the United States of America in the late twentieth century, the feminist theorist bell hooks' comment aptly brings out the discrimination that exists among white women, due to class differences: "There is much evidence substantiating the reality that race and class identity create differences in qualities of life, social status and lifestyle over the common experience women share – differences which are rarely transcended" (hooks 4).

While race is not a deciding factor in analysing *The Odd Women* or any other Victorian "New Woman"" novel solely centred on White women, the class factor that hooks speaks about inevitably takes the centre stage when one ponders upon the question of Monica's inability to adapt to the life endorsed by Rhoda and Mary, or of Bella Royston being shunned by Rhoda despite all her merits and qualifications to be a "New Woman". It also decides the fate of the Madden sisters – who are perhaps as "odd" as Mary Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn in terms of marriage prospects, but otherwise, live very dissimilar lives. The novel is replete with such jarring disparities even among the members of the oppressed sex, establishing the fact that gender is not the sole cause of their oppression, but also, class and the consequent educational and financial status – all are the main ingredients in the potion which comprises the varying degrees of misery that each "Odd Woman" of Gissing's novel has to face, and none of them are living the liberated, revolutionary lives of the fin-de-siècle "New Woman". In Gissing's novel, the "odd women" are plagued by their own personal misfortunes so much that they are unable to realise the goal of women's emancipation. Rhoda might be an independent, educated "New Woman", but she cannot set an exemplar for Monica or Bella, who either reject her mode of schooling or drop out for worldly pursuits, precisely because Rhoda's viewpoint is myopic enough not to grasp the socio-economic disparities that hinder women from realising their potential, especially education, for the extent of education a person receives is inextricably linked to their social connections. Neither does Dr. Madden have a prudent outlook on life, for his blatant negligence of his family's socio-economic situation led his daughters to ultimate ruin. His stubborn refusal to emancipate his daughters by providing them with vocational education renders them completely destitute without a guardian to advise them after their father's demise. Deprived of the means of self-sufficiency which they could have otherwise achieved by proper tutelage, they succumb to poverty and untimely death and misery.

"Love–love–love; a sickening sameness of vulgarity. What is more vulgar than the ideal of novelists? They won't represent the actual world; it would be too dull for their readers. In real life, how many men and women *fall in love?*" (Gissing, *Odd Women* 67–68; original emphasis). Rhoda Nunn's embittered outburst concerning the ideal of romantic love and marriage as preached by her contemporary fiction writers is a scathing attack on the "New Woman" genre of literature, which emphasised compatibility between the partners as the ideal for any marriage, or free union. Some of the notable "New Women" of the fin-de-siècle Victorian fiction, like Lyndall in *The Story of an African Farm* and Herminia Barton in *The Woman Who Did*, advocated a union that was based on harmony and mutual love and not purely on economic advantage. Sue Bridehead from *Jude the Obscure*, for instance, leaves

her husband to live in a free union with Jude, whom she truly loves and has children with. Sue is the epitome of the fictional "New Woman" who will consummate a cohabitation only if both partners share mutual love and respect. However, Gissing cynically turns the "New Woman" form on its head, accentuating the disparity between ideal unions and real life for, in reality, women were forced into unhappy marriages solely to avoid the fate of spinsterhood and poverty. In *The Odd Women*, Gissing also demonstrates how the New Woman's class and education empowered her to make revolutionary decisions. Gissing's contemporaries who wrote about "New Women", centred their fiction on genteel, well-educated women who could afford to charter independent pathways in adulthood with a conventionally respectable occupation as a teacher, writer, activist or reformer. As Ellen Wiley notes, the phrase "New Woman" marks the emancipation of mostly middle-class and upper-middle-class women and their venture into the public sphere from the private or the domestic sphere (Wiley 1). Carroll Smith Rosenberg also underlines the social status of the New Women of the 1870s and 1880s, saying that they hailed from bourgeoisie families which could afford to send their women to colleges and equip them with higher education necessary for occupations like teaching, social reforms, health expertise, literature and writing, art and medicine (Smith Rosenberg 160-178). Hence, when Rhoda rails against the fictional idealisation of love in novels, her jibe is also directed against the privileged status of the women who can afford to fall in love without considering the socio-economic repercussions.

In fact, the Madden family's situation in *The Odd Women* bears testimony to the words of Rhoda, who acts as the mouthpiece of the novelist to some extent. In a letter to his friend Eduard Bertz, dated June 2, 1893, Gissing vents his frustration regarding the poor intellectual faculty of contemporary women and stresses how education is necessary to achieve equality among the sexes. He writes: "My demand for female 'equality' simply means I am convinced that there will be no social peace until women are trained very much as men are." (Gissing, *Letters V* 113) A few lines later, he asserts that such a miserable state of things can be traced to the "lack of education, in all senses of the word" (Gissing, *Letters* V, 113). Indeed, it is the lack of formal education that brings misery upon the six Madden sisters after the death of the head of the family, Dr. Elkanah Madden. The women of the house are not trained to ensure their own financial security or to increase their income beyond their inheritance but are only cultivated on a diet of literature, as the doctor claims that "women, old or young, should never have to think about money" (Gissing, *Odd Women* 6). He views women as the "Angel in the House" of the Victorian era, who ought to occupy themselves only with domestic matters, and not finances – typically the domain of the male, and the public sphere. Yet, the tragic irony is that, due to his

inertia concerning practical affairs and lack of planning for his daughters' futures, Dr. Madden's untimely death leaves his children no other choice but to succumb to the fate he despised the most: "the sight of those poor homes where wife and children are obliged to talk from morning to night of how the sorry earnings shall be laid out" (Gissing, *Odd Women* 6). He himself was not suited for rigorous employment and it was only a humanitarian interest in the nobility of a doctor's profession that attracted him. True to his disposition, he reared his children in a manner that made them better equipped for domestic careers than self-sufficient employment in public spheres. When he reads "The Lotus Eaters" to his children, he affects them into a trance-like state which prevents them from noticing the dwindling state of their finances and the impending peril on the eve of their father's demise. Gissing quotes a stanza from the poem ending with the lines, "What is it that will last? All things are taken from us----", perhaps a case of situational irony, for these lines forebode the predicament that is to befall the Madden sisters that very day – they are to become destitute in every sense (*Odd Women* 9).

The narrator informs the readers that the Madden sisters did not benefit from formal schooling administered by the Elementary Education Act of 1870, nor did they enrol in college. The doctor had given them a literary education that was far from professional, rather intellectual. Hence, Alice's preferred books dealt with the subjects of poetry, popular history, and novels – subjects generally studied by women who became governesses of middle-class children. Virginia, in contrast, showed her zeal for pursuing a single subject with dedication; however, her preferred subjects did not provide much of a profitable advantage either. Here, Gissing critiques the facade of high Victorian culture that prevented women from receiving the education they deserved, or, the education that could provide them with a vocation for earning income. As the narrator mentions, Dr. Madden visualised a future in the teaching profession and marriage for his daughters as the ideal, but his inability to make adequate provisions deprives them of the bare minimum resources necessary for sustenance. These single women, forced into spinsterhood, except for Monica, are portrayed by Gissing as a deliberate foil to the romanticised "New Woman" heroine of his age, who was self-sufficient primarily due to the formal education she received. While the other "New Woman" characters in contemporary Victorian novels, Alice and Virginia are constantly living from hand-to-mouth because they have not been prepared for profitable employment, and the only occupations that suit their genteel, domestic upbringing are teaching and being a lady's companion – professions that come with a meagre income barely enough for survival. Furthermore, Dr. Madden's conscious aversion to educating women on financial matters makes his daughters especially inept at money management, and it is only

after the practical suggestion made by the independent and self-sufficient Rhoda Nunn that, towards the end of the novel, they invest their inheritance in a venture that increases their income and also suits their intellectual temperament.

The author also touches upon a much-neglected aspect of Victorian society with regard to the Madden family, which is a direct consequence of a person's class and financial means, i.e. health. Gissing specifically mentions how the lack of nutrition prevents Alice and Virginia from pursuing their education and it is hinted that Virginia could have improved her knowledge and attained a level of intellectualism the narrator wished to witness in women, had she received the right kind of nourishment that provides more than just bare sustenance. The vivid description of Virginia's addiction to alcohol, or the deplorable condition of the shop-girls who work with Monica, and suffer from varicose veins due to the unhealthy circumstances of their lodgings, indicates Gissing connecting the question of health to the equally pertinent questions of class strata and education. He specifically mentions the correlation between nutrition and income in a sentence by Alice: "If it came to the very worst, our food need not cost more than sixpence a day – three and sixpence a week" (Gissing, *Odd Women* 19). The novel has frequent descriptions of the lower-middle class and working-class women's diet, hinting at the poor nutritional value of the viands, and its effect on these women's physical appearances. The Madden sisters, Alice and Virginia, mostly survive on a diet of dry bread, cheese and water and suffer from headaches, faintness, and varicose veins- all of which ultimately lead to loss of employment. Perhaps the omniscient narrator, and thereby the author, is trying to emphasise the materialistic society's peculiar condition which itself creates situations utterly ruining for its members and sets unattainable standards, but takes no pains to uplift them when they fail to live up to the standards set, but simply marginalises and ostracises them till they cease to exist. A glance at Gissing's biography will show that his sympathetic and realistic portrayal of impoverished women stems from his personal experience, as he had once revealed to his brother Algernon in a letter written in 1879 about how he was striving to find innovative yet cheap and digestible recipes for sustenance (Gissing, *Letters* I, 156). His example of boiling split lentils with water and soda resonates with Alice and Virginia's diet of plain rice.

It is the lack of nutrition and miserable working conditions that drive Monica to make a mercenary marriage. Gissing attempts to evoke sympathy for Monica, repeatedly underscoring her helplessness, the wretched conditions in which she was brought up, and her desperate yearning for a better, humane life. The readers are compelled to pity Monica's naïveté, and her sadness at her sisters' conditions, which makes her readily accept Widdowson's offer of marriage. The horrors of working-

class spinsterhood are something she wants to avoid, and she thinks it would be better if the miserable girls had never been born. Indeed, Gissing gives a vivid portrayal of Alice and Virginia's miseries, one that makes even the champion for singlehood – Rhoda – shudder. In fact, when Rhoda disapproves of Monica's decision to marry, the omniscient narrator informs us that Rhoda did not take into account the suffering of impoverished mediocre pupils and that Monica was too feeble to live up to the extremely high and excruciating standards set for her students by Rhoda, who could not accept failure (Gissing, *Odd Women* 43). Monica's lack of formal education and her inability to support herself sufficiently without the assistance of Widdowson is also what puts her at a disadvantageous position when he tries to control her within a Ruskinian marriage, where the husband is more of a master/teacher than a lovable companion, teaching his wife to practise her womanly duties and to stay confined within the four walls of the home. Despite advocating for women's rights, and arguing that "love needs freedom, if it is to remain love in truth", like the New Women of her time, who would prefer free union over marriage – to acknowledge the importance of love, and mutual respect in a conjugal or sexual relationship – Monica is unable to be a New Woman because her circumstances don't permit her to break the shackles, defy the authority of Widdowson, and charter an independent future for herself (Gissing, *Odd Women* 184). Even when they are estranged, she has to survive on his allowance and before dying, from pregnancy-related complications, she pitifully yearns for his forgiveness.

However, the women who are able to reject marriage and live independently are not the idealised "New Women" either. Rhoda Nunn deviates from her contemporary "New Women" of fiction and reality. She strongly advocates against marriage, and is contemptuous of any single woman who submits to matrimony, thinking that they have "vanished". While there is merit in her argument, considering how a woman virtually ceased to exist in the eyes of the Victorian law after marriage (with her property and every other right bequeathed to the husband, who became her guardian), Rhoda does not consider the reasons why one might desire to opt for marriage. In fact, Rhoda's arguments anticipate Betty Friedan's in *The Feminine Mystique*, where Friedan urges all upper and upper-middle-class, educated white women to quit being housewives and to seek out an independent career for themselves, for "the very condition of being a housewife can create a sense of emptiness, non-existence, nothingness in women" (Friedan 293). Rhoda too, rebels against the drudgery of domestic life, where a woman's usefulness is limited to cooking and rocking cradles (Gissing, *Odd Women* 44). She strongly believes that there will be no emancipation unless "women have revolted against marriage" (117). Ironically, she is deeply insulted when Everard Barfoot offers her free union instead

of marriage and she assumes he does not find her respectable or worthy of a legal conjugal union. Her contradictory responses show that despite her avowed radicalism, she is still steeped in conventional notions, and cannot actually defy them. Rhoda Nunn's tragedy is that she advocates a Puritanical form of life with sublimated sexuality as an ideal for a woman but she herself cannot repress her own desires when it comes to making a choice.

Gissing does not pit Mary Barfoot's moderate feminism as the ideal against Rhoda's radical feminism. Both Mary and Rhoda have a one-dimensional perspective on women's plight based on their own social status and lived experiences. In the chapter "First Principles", Mary professes that "girls", or young women need not be burdened by "domestic duties", for, once reforms are made for female education, to become vocational rather than training purely for conventional duties of hospitality and domesticity, women would not be withering away for prospective suitors or indulging in "disagreeable drudgery" of the chores at home, but find a purpose, a serious pursuit in life (Gissing, *Odd Women* 112). What she does not encompass, or rather, who, are the working-class women who will be forced to take up these chores when the upper-class and middle-class educated women pursue their employment. As bell hooks contends, despite the reality of the "specific problems" of leisurely white housewives, it was not as urgent as the "political concerns of masses of women" (hooks 2). In fact, neither does Mary consider opportunities for uplifting the blue-collar women, nor does she consider the political rights of women like the Suffragette movement which advocated for women's right to elect their own representatives to the parliament. Rita Mae Brown, in her essay "The Last Straw", rightly opines:

> Class involves your behavior, your basic assumptions about life. Your experience (determined by your class) validates those assumptions, how you are taught to behave, what you expect from yourself and from others, your concept of a future, how you understand problems and solve them, how you think, feel, act. (Brown qtd. in hooks 3)

Brown's observation is relevant in this section for it highlights how Mary and Rhoda's approach to the Women Question and women's emancipation is significantly influenced by their upper-middle-class upbringing. Both women openly assert that they are content to educate and emancipate only middle-class women, and they are not inclined to uplift the working classes simply because they believe the working-class culture is wholly different, one they do not wish to learn. A marked disdain for the impoverished, not the fallen-from-grace middle classes, is evident in

Mary's voice when she asserts her lack of interest in the "uneducated classes"'. She refers to the working classes, and evidently, her idea of hierarchy depends upon the type of education prevalent in a class stratum. Similar views are expressed by Rhoda Nunn who wants to refrain from "meddling" with uneducated folks. Despite Mrs Smallbrook, the recipient of such assertions imploring them to uplift the working classes by citing the ideal of the abolishment of all discriminatory class privileges, Rhoda and Mary are too accustomed to their social position to relinquish it and to devote themselves to the universal emancipation of women irrespective of class and education.

Gissing's novel thus satirically underscores how the New Women of his time, especially in fiction, could be cited as cultural role models only to those who had the privilege to access those social markers of emancipation. Alan Dale has observed, "Gissing was himself attached to a notion of culture, but also bitterly aware of how social status, education, and wealth constrained the quest for it" (Dale 272). Perhaps it is this embittered experience that caused him to question the adulated "New Women" in fiction and real life being so dissimilar, and so limited in their number. The aim to realistically portray the life of single women of England and not to show them as romanticised heroines empowered by their lovers, or achieving temporary bliss in exotic settings, had made him set his novel in nineteenth-century London, which was bleak and unhealthy for women, with immense pollution. None of his single women, not even the "New Women", find true love or conjugal bliss. Furthermore, they are constantly plagued by the burning question of money and survival, something that upper-class "New Women" of Gissing's contemporary era did not have to worry about. Perhaps he is the only one who vividly portrays how the lack of finances can hinder a woman's prospects of improving her life by educating herself, and how the class discrimination by other single women of his time was a huge blow to the 'Woman Question', which dealt about with women's rights irrespective of social position.

Works Cited

Chase, Karen. "The Literal Heroine: A Study of Gissing's *The Odd Women*". *Criticism*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1984, pp. 231–244.

Comitini, Patricia. "A Feminist Fantasy: Conflicting Ideologies in *The Odd Women*". *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 27, no. 4, 1995, pp. 529-543. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29533090. Accessed 9 June 2021.

Dale, Peter Allan. “Gissing and Bosanquet: Culture Unhoused”. *Homes and Homelessness in the Victorian Imagination*, edited by Murray Baumgarten and H. M. Daleski. AMS P, 1998, pp. 269–280.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. Dell Publishing, 1973.

Gissing, George. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, *Volume One: 1863–1880,* edited by Paul F. Mattheisen et.al,. Ohio UP, 1990.

---. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Five: 1892–1895,* edited by Paul F. Mattheisen et.al,. Ohio UP, 1994.

---. *The Odd Women*. Edited by Patricia Ingham, Oxford UP, 2000.

hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. South End Press, 1984.

Meyer, Annie Nathan. “Neglected Books: II. Mr. Gissing’s *The Odd Women*”. *The Bookman: An Illustrated Literary Journal*, Dodd, Mead and Company, vol. 3, March–August 1896, pp. 48–50.

“*Pall Mall Gazette,* May 1893”. *Gissing: the Critical Heritage*, edited by Pierre Coustillas and Collin Partridge, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, p. 219. Originally published in *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 1893, p. 4.

Rosenberg, Carroll Smith. “Bourgeoise Discourse and the Progressive Era”. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. Oxford U P, 1986, pp. 176-178.

Sanders, Lisa Shapiro. “The Failures of the Romance: Boredom, Class, and Desire in George Gissing’s *The Odd Women* and W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*”. *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1, Spring 2001, pp. 190-228. *ProjectMuse*, muse.jhu.edu/article/21556/pdf?casa_token=HV5fMMipA_MAAAAA:7q4n-fSCjlIHOhEQ4Y92tdrxkox0f2KVmwuGHS9Rf027-ssLGCcfGSG23eF9e3E9pIDJL-K4Mvc.

Todd, Ellen Wiley. *The “New Woman” Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street*. U of California P, 1993, pp. 1–3.

50 Shades of a Woman: The Multifaceted Role of Medea in Ancient Athenian and Victorian Dramatic Literature

Sara Bonk
Independent Scholar

Abstract: Medea is a complex woman. She can be presented as either a scorned wife or a vengeful woman. A foreigner who has done everything to fit in, or an outcast that refuses to assimilate. A woman trying to find her place in society, or a trailblazer who will carve her own path. No other Greek woman has such a stark contrast in presentation and British poet, Amy Levy, is well aware of this. Taking the well-known Euripides play and remaking it for a modern perspective, Levy breathes new life into Medea for her Victorian audience. By putting in her own experiences as a Jewish woman, Levy makes Medea more relatable in her struggle to navigate a world where she is not seen as an equal to the locals. In this essay, an analysis will be done to investigate how Medea's multifaceted identity critically affects her public image with the Greek locals and how Victorian women came to view her as a champion of women's suffering. A comparison of Levy's and Euripides' Medea will be done to further see how true to the source Levy is as well how both portray this multifaceted woman.

Keywords: 19th century poetry, Ancient Athenian tragedy, ancient heroines, *femme fatale*, Greek mythology, otherness, Victorian dramatic literature

Medea is a woman with numerous titles: wife, mother, princess, foreigner, helper-maiden, sorceress, and finally, murder; all these have been linked with her name over the course of her myth. Medea's story was propelled into notoriety in part to two genres of literature: epic and tragedy. The former was written by Apollonius of Rhodes who retold the story of Jason and the Argonauts in the form of epic poetry. But it is the genre of tragedy that she is most well-known for due to Euripides' groundbreaking play, *Medea*. This play would go on to keep its popularity throughout history, eventually inspiring a new era of writers during the Victorian period. Among those inspired was British poet, Amy Levy. Levy's one act, two scene play — primarily made to be read — attempts to shed a more sympathetic light on

the sorceress. It is with these two different portrayals of Medea that the paper will explore the influences of local culture and time, and how they built on the already multifaceted role of the titular character. Regardless of the different perspectives on Medea's overall persona, she is a woman that is hard to pin down with a single, one-dimensional description; all the while she has, for years, been the figure that marginalized women have felt drawn to for centuries.

Medea's story is not complete without a recap of her myth. A princess of the kingdom of Colchis, Medea was the daughter of Aëetes who in turn was a child of Helios, the Titan of the Sun. Through her divine heritage and work as a priestess of Hecate, Medea is able to perform magical spells. Once Jason and the Argonauts land in Colchis, Medea is overcome with love for Jason, though this could have been due to Jason's divine patrons, Hera and Aphrodite. The enchanted Medea decides to help Jason by giving him salves, potions and instructions on how to go about his three deadly tasks in exchange for an oath of eternal love.

After it has been discovered that Medea has been helping Jason all along, Aëetes sends her brother, Apsyrtus, after the Argo but he is murdered by Medea with his remains being scattered in the water in order to slow down their pursuers. This is where Medea is first linked with the title of murderer. From there, the Argonauts are then adrift at sea until they are finally able to return to Jason's home of Iolkos. But Pelias, the man that sent Jason on his quest for the Golden Fleece, refuses to hand over Jason's throne. Medea's second act of murder is done in a second-hand way as she convinced Pelias's daughters to unknowingly kill him with a demonstration of reviving an old ram in a magical cauldron. It is after this event that Jason and Medea are forced to flee to Corinth. This is the point where Medea's story turns from epic poetry to tragic theatre.

One day, Medea finds out that Jason has decided to take the Corinth princess as a wife, thus reducing the sorceress to the position of a concubine. Creon, the King of Corinth, decides to exile Medea to keep his daughter safe, but he unknowingly allows her to stay an extra day in order to exact her revenge. After a chance meeting with the King of Athens, Aegeus, who guarantees her sanctuary if she can get to Athens, she enacts her plan to murder the Corinthian royalty and hitting Jason where it will hurt the most: the murder of his two sons. It is this one day of action that is the premise of the play that both Euripides and Levy will use for their respective Medeas.

During the period of both Ancient Athens and Victorian England, women were heavily reliant on their husbands and were "expected to be domestic creatures, submissive, peaceful, and instruments rather than the initiators of action" (Barlow 160). The expectations of both groups of women were heavily influenced by the

beliefs of the Pandora and Eve myths in Greek mythology and Christianity respectively. Both of these women were used as reminders for women and gave the clear impression that they are to be subservient to make up for mankind's fall. But in spite of these restrictions, women were still used as objects to project desires onto, especially during the Romantic and later Victorian period. As a result of this one-dimensional portrayal, many women of this period found themselves identifying with these ancient women, with Levy going on to state that "the sufferings of historical women. . . implicitly [equates] fifth-century Athens and Victorian England in ways that undercut the idealized version of Greece (Hurst, "Greek Heroines and the Wrongs of Women" 2). This newfound interest led to an increase in Greek theatre productions at women's colleges to surge. Along with the rising interest in the suffragette movement and an increase in educated women, Greek heroines began to become champions that Victorian women could rally around. This was especially true when the rising need for marriage equality and divorce needed a new tragic Greek heroine to represent the trials of women. This is where Medea comes in. As a scorned wife, she takes action into her own hands and enacts a revenge plot to avenge herself. This drastic action, while horrifying men, gave women a heroine in which they felt they could identify with when it came to unhappiness in their marriages and need for control in their lives.

For Levy, her portrayal of Medea and her interpretation was a mix of a Victorian heroine's aspects with Ancient Greek, and how her foreignness was a factor in her tragedy. By presenting her Medea as a victim of a misogynistic society, she maintains the original play's original premise all the while allowing herself freedom with the material. With the stereotypical woman in mind, trying to match Medea to this is like fitting a square peg into a circle hole: it will not fit no matter what. Even as a young woman in love, she was a force to be reckoned with. After fleeing Colchis, Jason and Medea marry in order to cement their union; however,

> Medea's union with Jason was no conventional Greek marriage, in which the bride's father hands his daughter over to his new son-on-law. Instead, the couple pledged faith to one another as equals, joining hands, and sealed their bond with an oath. (Boedeker, "Euripides' Medea" 95)

This unique union between the two shows that Medea was never considered a conventional bride, nor did she consider herself one either. Her assumption of patriarchal duties demonstrates that "she treats her arrangement with Jason as if it were a pact between two men" and thus takes his betrayal not as scorned woman, but as a man that has been betrayed by a friend (Murnaghan xvi). This is demonstrated

by her action of joining hands to pledge an oath and not as a bride-to-be and greatly shows how Medea considered herself to be on equal standing with her heroic husband.[3] When confronting Jason about his decision to marry Glaukê, Euripides has Medea state that

> It's not some daring noble endeavor
> to look friends in the face after you've wronged them,
> . . . .
> Our oaths mean nothing to you. I can't tell
> if you think those gods have lost their power,
> or imagine that the rules have changed for mortals —
> since you're well aware that you broke a promise.
> (Euripides ll. 469, 470, 492–495)

These statements show that Medea never saw herself as the average Greek wife, but instead a comrade of Jason's that he has now wronged. By bringing up Jason's decision to be present at all and act as if his oaths mean nothing to him, shows Medea the true extent of her role in his life: a foreign trophy that he can take to bed.

While Euripides' Medea is furious over the breaking of her oaths, Levy's Medea is devastated that her love has been taken advantage of. This portrayal of the sorceress presents a more submissive Medea than in the Ancient Athenian play, but despite her change in attitude towards Jason, her accusations are almost similar to the original play. Levy's Medea asks Jason if he has "not forgot/The long years passed in this Corinthian home? / The great love I have borne you through the years?" (Levy 25). Despite that lack of oaths mentioned in Levy's play, she still presents the idea that Medea has been scorned not just by Jason turning his back on her, but also disregarded her love in turn.

Although Levy's Medea is more heartbroken than anything about her love being cast aside, she is still mindful of how Jason's treatment of her has influenced her reputation as a woman. Levy has Medea tell Jason that

> I have poured the sap
> Of all my being, my life's very life,

[3] When it comes to the exact grasping of hands to signify marriage and pacts, "[t]he clasping of right hands that confirmed Medea's marriage to Jason is a gesture typical of the affirmation of bonds between men, for a marriage the man normally grasps the woman's wrist in a gesture of domination" (Foley 75).

Before a thankless godhead; and am grown
No woman, but a monster.
. . . .
Behold me now, your work, a thing of fear.
(Levy 26)

While Levy's Medea does not insinuate as much as Euripides' Medea that she is the reason why Jason is alive and a hero, her comment on how her attempts to help him repeatedly have not only literally sucked her of her life, but also have transformed her into a monster in the eyes of some. The dehumanisation of Medea has come at the cost of her overall happiness and worth as a woman.

This long-standing grief and rage over her lack of recognition as an equal, and a loyal wife and lover moves Medea to the point that she laments her gender. In her now famous speech, "Women of Corinth," Medea laments how women are at the mercy of the men in their lives, in particular, their husbands:

Of all living, breathing, thinking creatures
women are the most absolutely wretched.
First, you have to pay an enormous sum
to buy a husband who, to make things worse,
gets to be the master of your body.
. . . .
Divorce means disgrace
for women, and you can't say no to a husband.
(Euripides 230–234, 236, 237)

By stating that her miseries are recognisable by all women, Medea ensures that she has the support of the women of Corinth regardless of what she plans to do. This speech also showcases that while Medea has been forced into the role of a Greek wife, she refuses to be forced into this role anymore. This refusal is audacious at best, especially given that women during this period had little to no right against their husbands. This resonated with Victorian women who found themselves in a similar position with their own marriages, but Levy took it one step further by making this more of an individual matter for Medea than a shared experience. For Levy's Medea, she is alone in a society that has turned their back on her, thus making her more likely to lash out in grief and rage. In her soliloquy, Medea states that

Ah, Jason, pause
You never knew Medea. You forget
Because so long she bends the knee to you,
She was not born to serfdom.
I have knelt
Too long before you.
(Levy 30)

After years of being demoted to nothing but an emotional, submissive housewife, Medea steps out of this role and back into her old skin of an all-powerful woman. It is through these scenes in both plays that "Medea as an ill-treated female victim. . . adopts traditionally 'feminine' weapons in her self-defense" (Foley 74). This involves her returning to her roots of poisons and potions which she previously used to escape Colchis and kill Pelias. By working on the idea that Glaukê is nothing more than a naive girl and thus a reflection of her younger self, Medea goes about poisoning a dress and tiara disguised as wedding gifts. This action of killing Jason's future bride not only is done out of sexual jealousy but also because Medea "is killing an image of herself . . . [and] evidently wishes that this naive version of herself never existed" (Boedeker, "Becoming Medea" 143, 144). By eradicating this reflection of her younger, more impressionable self, Medea not only feels like she has enacted revenge on the woman that stole her husband from her, but it also became something akin to redemption for the actions that she did to help Jason. This in some ways would cleanse her of the past mistakes that her younger self did.

However, the evolution of her character from a semi-divine princess to a scorned wife, and then a tragic heroine figure is one that not many other women in Greek mythology have done let alone achieved. Her portrayal as a traditional helper-maiden is brought to the audience's attention during the interactions of the former lovers in both plays where Medea becomes "a storyteller, and the tale she recalls of her role in the conquest of the golden fleece deals essentially with the female power to generate male success" (Durham 57). By recounting all that she has done for Jason — helping him yoke the bulls, fight the *spartoi* (the magical fighters that spring from the planted dragon's teeth), and finally helping him get the fleece by drugging the dragon that guards it — Medea claims that Jason would not be the hero that he is without her help. It is a bold move to claim that she is the reason behind Jason's successes, "[b]ut this puts Jason in a strange situation: what great Greek hero ever relied so completely on the help of a mortal woman?" (Boedeker, "Euripides' Medea" 104). Even after calling out his weaknesses and his reliance on her and her

magical powers, Jason maintains the stance that he is the hero, and that she is nothing more than a royal helper-maiden.

Despite her former lover's instance that she did nothing more than help him during his quest, Euripides' Medea, the ever cunning woman that she is, maneuvers the discussion to another topic: that if he were to have her and their sons exiled from Corinth, it would "be a fine shame for the new bridegroom when his own children wander as beggars, together with the woman who saved him. Medea thus frames her whole account of Jason's heroic deeds with her own role as his savior" (Boedeker, "Euripides' Medea" 104). Her stance is that, despite her gender and the expectations that are thrust onto her for it, Medea has done a lot more than just assist Jason, and that she should be given the recognition for it. Sadly though, Medea's marriage is anything but as Levy's Medea goes on to describe her marriage as slavery due to his insistence that she become a typical Greek wife and remain happy with the fact that she is now in Greece. To both Euripides and Levy, Jason only sees Medea as "a temperamental barbarian concubine who must be cast aside for the advantages of a real Greek marriage. . . He cannot hear the heroic language and values she adopts for herself in their first encounter" (Foley 77). Jason gravely underestimates Medea and her role as a hero, but he is not the only one to do so. Creon also fails to identify Medea's schemes, and unknowingly grants her time to enact her revenge. Both of these men's failures to judge correctly perfectly demonstrates that "a woman is able to hold her own in the man's world of rhetoric" as Medea is able to manipulate both men without them even knowing (van Zyl Smit 105). After both of these confrontations, Medea's transformation from a scorned wife to a tragic heroine begins. Both Euripides and Levy's Medea decide that her revenge must be enacted in order to avenge herself and/or her tarnished honor, thus creating her heroic persona. However, one thing that both writers ran into with their plays is the exclusion of women as heroes in their own right.[4] Due to ancient heroic code being misogynistic at its core, "women characters who achieve heroic stature in tragedy necessarily reject their femaleness or participate in its devaluations. [Thus] Medea becomes the central character . . . to illustrate in turn the destructive plight of women" (Durham 55). This showcases the gradual deterioration and eventual death of Medea's feminine persona in order to achieve revenge, while perfectly demonstrating how women are seen as more monstrous and destructive to society

[4] In general, when it comes to the two being linked together, "the heroic code itself oppresses women, both because it traditionally excludes and subordinates them and because it gives priority to public success and honor over survival and the private concerns of love and family" (Foley 79).

the more masculine they become. Thus, the play itself presents a topic that neither the ancient Athenians nor the Victorians would budge on: gender equality.

By taking on characteristics of the heroic code, Medea deems herself worthy of the title of hero even though Corinthian society sees this as a woman stepping outside of her status as a wife. With this disregard for gender expectations, Medea is used by both Euripides and Levy to show just how devastatingly destructive it can be to refuse the plights of a woman, especially a very powerful one. Her violent act goes against all understanding of what a woman is fundamental to the plays, but "Medea, the problematic 'wife' who is also a foreigner in the strict sense, embodies all the dangerous necessities and necessary dangers associated with 'otherness'" and this goes on to further alienate her (Nimis 412). When Jason brings up Medea's foreignness as reason to why he is taking a local princess to wife and demoting his first wife to a concubine brings up another element that is key to the play: the idea of otherness.

When *Medea* was first performed in Athens, the Peloponnesian War just broke out. This resulted in patriotism and suspicion of anyone who was not Athenian by birth: consequently, this heavily affected "Athenian families in which one parent was not Athenian-born, and the children were therefore not citizens" (Boedeker, "Euripides' Medea" 110). With this in mind, it adds context to why Jason wanted a Greek wife: according to Athenian law, his sons with Medea are illegitimate and thus unable to inherit anything from their father. And to add insult to injury for Medea, her children are not considered Greek at all due to her status as a foreigner. One of the factors that immediately set her apart from the locals is her physical appearance. According to Ancient Greeks, Colchis was located on the shores of the Black Sea, and was considered the

> equivalent of the geographical 'Dark Continent' of European imaginary. By locating Medea's origins at the far and shadowy boundary of the Greek world, Medea is perceived as a representative of a mystical and terrifying wilderness, outside of patriarchal Greek culture and 'civilization'. (Olverson 75)

This location on the outermost corners of the known Greek world gives Medea an aura of mystery and danger to those who are not used to seeing her. This ties into her general appearance, but while Euripides never goes into depth about Medea's physical appearance, she tends to be associated with blackness. This association could refer to anything from her mood, her gaze, and finally her heart. However, characterizing Medea with blackness is also done due to the Greeks' perception that

the people who were from Colchis or that part of the world were dark skinned due to their proximity to the sun, and thus their skin would be dark due to being burnt repeatedly.[5]

Whether she is aware of this or not, Levy leans heavily into the idea that Medea's foreignness equates to her appearance being different from the local Greeks. She does this by using the characters of Nikias and Aegeus as a form of perspective for the play. During one of the interactions that the two men have, Medea is described as having "swart skins and purple hair;/ Your black, fierce eyes where the brows meet across" (Levy 23). With this deliberately specific description of Medea, Levy was heavily taking influence from her own minority background, and thus she "endows Medea with the stereotypical features of Jewish women that evoke many racialized Victorian representations" (Villalba-Lázaro 18). Her decision to make Medea Jewish in appearance provided an outlet in which Levy could write about her experiences as an Anglo-Jewish woman. Ostracized by both her Jewish community for not being a married woman, and the British public for being a Jew, Medea was a character that Levy could "project her own inner tensions in trying to assimilate into gentile Victorian society" (Villalba-Lázaro 9). This drive to assimilate and be loved by the locals is a characteristic that Levy incorporated into her Medea interpretation, and just like her own assimilation experience, Levy has Medea feel free when her attempt is lost. Jason's decision to allow Medea to be exiled allows her to evolve into the hero that she was forced to abandon and hide for the sake of her husband's love. For Euripides's Medea, she is presented with a similar need to be accepted by the locals, but hers is more in the way that she needs their approval to push her agenda. As for her portrayal on the stage, it is probable that Medea was presented

> in traditional Greek apparel — that is, as a more-or-less normal woman — until the final scene. It was only then, when she loomed above the stage in her dragon chariot, holding the corpses of her slaughtered sons, that she appeared (perhaps for the first time anywhere) in an oriental costume, which signaled her utter abandonment of Greek mores and her complete alignment with the world of the foreign, the abnormal. (Johnston 8–9)

[5] Fritz Graf went further into detail with this by stating that "[t]he black complexions of the Colchians that Pindar mentions commemorate their old geographical location, for it is the peoples of the Far East and the far West who usually are thought of as black, as 'burned' by the Sun as he rises or sinks" (32).

This portrayal of Medea reappearing in her traditional garb presents her as a woman that was never, in a sense, tamed of her foreignness. This means that Euripides has Medea turn her back on the Greek world and thus civilization because of the treatment that she received from the culture that Jason said she should be proud to be in. By refusing to accept her foreign origins and giving her the recognition that she deserves for her role in the quest for the Golden Fleece, Medea is driven by grief and rage to commit the ultimate act of violence: the murder of her rivals and her own children.

Both plays present the murders as the breaking point of Medea's grief and rage, but present the path to the crimes in very different lights. For one, Euripides has Medea set to murder the royal family of Corinth for their part in taking Jason away from her and her utter humiliation through their decree to exile her; but the act of murdering her children has her so conflicted that she almost does not go through with it. Levy on the other hand, has Medea dead set on her revenge from the moment she concocts the plan. But what remains the same for both portrayals is how she is a woman driven to these desperate measures in order to be taken seriously.

Euripides presents Medea as a woman who is trying to rebuild her heroic character after it was denied numerous times. In her mind, killing her enemies will grant her the heroic title that she knows she deserves, but this also means that she has to kill her own children in order to stay true to the heroic code that binds all heroes. This conflict of emotional interest goes back to how women are normally excluded from the code due to its misogynistic tendencies, but it also demonstrates once again how "Medea cannot be an avenging female hero in a man's world and conventional mother" at the same time (Olverson 80). As torn as she is over whether her heroic title is worth the sacrifice of her children, she is only fully convinced of the murder after a messenger delivers the news that Creon and Glaukê are dead, and that the Corinthians are out for revenge. Upon hearing this, Medea finally declares that "I will kill my sons and leave this land. / I cannot hold back and let those boys/be slaughtered by someone who loves them less" (Euripides ll. 1237–1239). To modern readers this is a horrific decision to make, but for Victorian women in similar situations, it was a relatable one. If Medea had been able successfully get her children out of Corinth without their death (and in some versions of the myth, she tried and failed), then they would likely have grown up in destitution which is the nightmare of every Victorian woman. But, by taking them out in what could be considered a loving manner, then it was perceived as more humane than letting them suffer. In the end, Euripides' Medea has her children's best interest at heart, and "[i]t could be argued that the men bear the moral responsibility for her act" of murdering her children (van Zyl Smit 105). Driven by the constant mistreatment and refusal to treat

her as an equal and hero from the men in her life, she is driven to the point that everything that she does is for self-preservation and what is best for her children. But due to the male-dominant perspective, Medea is never a concerned mother, but instead she is an "abomination, most hateful of women" (Euripides ll. 1323). And while, in some cases, this title is well-deserved on her end for even conceiving the thought of murdering her own children, her myth did not become a lesson for what happens when women are given too much freedom, but instead it is a warning to those who refused to listen.

Medea's fight for her autonomy and the murder of her children is an act that Victorian audiences found themselves not only mesmerized with, but also horrified of. With the destruction of her family, Medea has completely bypassed the expectations that Victorian mothers are upheld to. For Levy's interpretation, Medea has every ounce of her being committed to bringing down Jason at all costs. After the confrontation with Jason, Levy's Medea "can be seen to comply with the Greek masculine heroic ethic" completely by immediately planning her revenge on the citizens of Corinth (Olverson 79). With no conflicting maternal feelings to battle, Levy's Medea goes into her revenge with a clear determination to get back at the people that had wronged her. In this portrayal, "Medea the human being is dead; into her place has stepped the victorious goddess of vengeance" (Eilhard Schlesinger qtd. in Boedeker, "Becoming Medea" 128). Gone is the conflicted woman who struggles with heroism and motherhood, with a divine-like being in her place, but this persona simmers out as soon as Medea steps foot outside of Corinth. Levy portrays her as a little weary of her future, but at the same time opportunistic as she is in control of herself from then on. Her fate is left up to the reader's imagination which in turn could have been done for Victorian women to read and imagine themselves in Medea's shoes. In some ways, this is on par with the ending of Medea's myth as it is never really known where she goes after fleeing Athens and Theseus. She very well could have ridden off into the literal sunset to live out the rest of her life on her terms, and this image of a free woman is both inspiring and mysterious, just like the woman Medea is.

Just like her myth encompasses two different genres of literature, so too is Medea able to inhabit numerous roles throughout her life. Although a product of her time and the periods that she was written into, Medea is a woman that cannot easily be confined within the restrictions placed on women, and for this "[s]he has too much range for real-life occasions; myth gives her the space she needs" (Gellie 19). This space of myth provides not only Medea the room in which to be the individual she cannot be in real life, but also provides a portal in which Ancient Athenian and Victorian women could flee to. These feminine fantasies of individuality and

autonomy are perfect demonstrations of how the plight of women is so powerful, that it could be the destruction of everything a misogynistic society wants to control.

Works Cited

Barlow, Shirley A. "Stereotype and Reversal in Euripides' 'Medea.'" *Greece & Rome*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1989, pp. 158–71. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/643169. Accessed 9 Nov. 2022.

Boedeker, Deborah. "Becoming Medea: Assimilation in Euripides." *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, by James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston, Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 127–48.

---. "Euripides' Medea and the Vanity of ΛΟΓΟΙ." *Classical Philology*, vol. 86, no. 2, 1991, pp. 95–112. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/270231. Accessed 9 Oct. 2022.

Durham, Carolyn A. "Medea: Hero or Heroine?" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1984, pp. 54–59. *JSTOR*, doi.org/10.2307/3346093. Accessed 9 Nov. 2022.

Euripides. *Medea*. Translated by Sheila Murnaghan, Norton Critical Editions, 2018.

Foley, Helene. "Medea's Divided Self." *Classical Antiquity*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1989, pp. 61–85. *JSTOR*, doi.org/10.2307/25010896. Accessed 9 Oct. 2022.

Gellie, George. "The Character of Medea." *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, no. 35, 1988, pp. 15–22. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43646205. Accessed 9 Oct. 2022.

Graf, Fritz. *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, by James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston, Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 21–43.

Hurst, Isobel, "Greek Heroines and the Wrongs of Women." *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics: The Feminine of Homer*, Classical Presences (Oxford, 2006; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Sept. 2007), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199283514.003.0006. Accessed 6 June 2022.

Johnston, Sarah Iles. "Introduction." *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, by Sarah Iles Johnston and James J. Clauss, Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 3–17.

Levy, Amy. *A Minor Poet and Other Verse*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, pp. 19–37.

Murnaghan, Sheila. “Introduction.” *Medea*, by Euripides, Norton Critical Editions, 2018, pp. ix–xxiii.

Nimis, Stephen. “Autochthony, Misogyny, and Harmony: ‘Medea’ 824–845.” *Arethusa*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2007, pp. 397–420. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44578487. Accessed 9 Nov. 2022.

Olverson, T.D. “Amy Levy’s Greek (Anti-) Heroines.” *Women Writers and the Dark Side of Late-Victorian Hellenism*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 54–82.

van Zyl Smit, Betine. “Medea the Feminist.” *Acta Classica*, vol. 45, 2002, pp. 101–122. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24595328. Accessed 9 Oct. 2022.

Villalba-Lázaro, Marta. “Radicalizing the Myth: Amy Levy’s Medea, the (Un) Assimilated Jewish Victorian Woman”. *Women in Judaism: A Multi-disciplinary E-Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2, Feb. 2020, wjudaism.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/wjudaism/article/view/33651. Accessed 31 Aug. 2022.

Ecofeminist Parallelisms in Henry Rider Haggard's *She* and *King Solomon's Mines*

Gema Cantos Fernández
Universidad Complutense

Abstract: As it has been proven by many scholars, subjugating connections with land are interconnected with gender, race and class. Therefore, it was imperative that a new kind of literary analysis that would encompass all these connections emerged; hence, the term ecofeminism was coined by French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne. Since this contemporary analysis arose, many have been looking back at the classics in order to establish a different approach to them, as it can be done with H. R. Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (1886). My dissertation addresses the feminization of the African landscape and its conquest by the white man in both of these novels, as well as the representation of the culture as a masculine element and nature as a feminine one, how this connection develops into the idea that female characters obtain their power from the understanding of nature and how they are divided into two archetypes depending on the male characters' point of view.

Keywords: ecofeminism, feminization, Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines*, *She*

The idea that literature serves as a medium for socio-political matters held significant truth during the Victorian era. This was a time of industrialization and imperialism, as well as a period when vague notions of feminism began to materialize. Rider Haggard's *She* and *King Solomon's Mines* are two powerful literary examples supporting the above statement because, while some scholars suggest that these novels reinforce imperialism, there is also substantial evidence to uphold that they were written as anti-imperialist propaganda.

When analyzing Haggard's novels, a considerable number of scholars do not take into consideration his hesitancy on the subject of British imperialism and therefore consider his works to promote a pro-imperialist message. Though it has been proven that Haggard advocated for the presence of British colonies in South Africa, he also had reservations about the effects that they would have on native

people and their cultures (Stiebel 96). As a way to illustrate this, Professor Akilli tracked down some of Haggard's lectures and observed the following:

> We know for a fact that in an 1887 lecture in Edinburgh, Haggard said "out of barbarism we came, and into barbarism we may, perhaps, one day, relapse" (qtd. in L. R Haggard 53). In this lecture Haggard was denouncing the superiority and absolute fixity of modern British civilization and pointing towards the primitive and nature-oriented life in Africa as fundamental complement to it, which of course was contradictory in its essence to the dominant imperialist discourses of the time. (5)

When pursuing comprehension of the social denouncement that can be found in both novels, it is crucial to be aware of the implications of imperialism for both the "conqueror" and the "conquered". As Lenin argued in his book *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, imperialism should be understood as a power relationship whose repercussions are spawned by the "rivalry among capitalist nations in the age of monopoly capitalism (Lenin quoted in Magdoff 94).

Regarding the literary analysis that is going to be used in this research, it is worthy to note that the first person to use the term "ecofeminism" was the French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974), where she argued in favor of the emergence of new gender relations between men and women and men and nature. She asserted the need for a social revolution to save the planet because only by doing so would a new egalitarian society emerge (Merchant 184). In explanation of her theory, d'Eaubonne reviews the historical background of the relation between ecologism and feminism and argues in favor of the idea that there should be a sole movement ("l'écologie-féminisme") as both movements are fighting against the same institution: the patriarchy. This statement can be substantiated by the fact that the power structure has always been sustained by and composed of men, who have been exploiting women and the earth indifferently. Hence, ecofeminism is a necessary social movement because "environmental issues cannot be intelligently approached without the perspectives of women, the poor, and those who come from other parts of the globe, as well as those of all races and cultural backgrounds" (Starhawk 103).

In relation to this, ecofeminism states a clear interconnection between the domination of nature and the domination of women (which has also been discussed by d'Eaubonne in her book *Ecologie et féminisme,* in which she reviews "the history of domination of women and the Planet from paleolithic times to the 1960s") (Gaard and Murphy 19). This interconnection is commonly divided into two categories:

socio-economic and ideological-cultural (Radford Ruether 91). However, when reading d'Eaubonne's *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, it becomes clear that there is a third level related to history. D'Eaubonne explains this correlation by discussing the role that women used to play in ancient times: they were the gardeners of Earth and, according to her, this link has never been lost. There is also the socio-economic factor mentioned above, which emerges from the fact that women are discouraged from participating in the public sphere in order to keep them dedicated to birthing, child-raising, cooking, and so on. Ensuring women are linked to these more organic duties alienates them from the authoritative culture that is dominated by men (Radford Ruether 91). Finally, the ideological-cultural aspect consists of the social perception that women are closer to nature because they are "more aligned with body, matter, emotions, and the animal world" (Radford Ruether 91).

The embodiment of a cyclical time: Women as life-givers and life-takers

One debatable response to address the frequently proposed yet controversial question of "to what is women's relegation in society owed to?" can be summed up in one word: fear. From ancient times, men have been aware that it is only women who are capable of producing life – and (like men) they also have the power to end it. This encompasses the idea that women's bodies are a representation of cyclical time.

The idea of carrying the power to create life establishes the basis for the association between nature and women. However, through imposing a social paradigm based on patriarchal ideas, men have sought to maintain their position of authority within which they convinced the world they belong to. Unfortunately, the only viable way for them to have maintained this controlling position was through accomplishing the subjugation of women and nature. While linear time is culturally associated with the masculine, cyclical time is associated with the feminine. This idea is further developed in Kristeva's essay, "Women's Time," in which she explains "as for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide it a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* … this measure preserves cycles, gestation, and the eternal return of biological rhythm that is similar to the rhythm of nature" (56).

On one hand, women's biology is mostly based on cycles that encompass the ability to create life: first, women have their monthly menstrual cycle, which denotes that their fertile age is latent; then, usually, comes pregnancy and finally menopause, with which the stage of fertility ends. These stages can be seen as a great cycle that begins with the possibility of producing a human life and ends with the impossibility of doing so due to the natural progress of female physiology. On the other hand, the

social model of cyclical time predominantly arose in ancient and indigenous cultures (Hurley 128), which were later colonized by the white man. In contrast, the current perception of our temporality to be a linear one has been created and settled by the dominant culture based on our impression of history, religion, and technological advances (Kellerman 61).

In *King Solomon's Mines*, the duality of the presence of both the bewitching and the maternal female archetype is presented in a chapter where the Englishmen are invited as guests to observe a traditional ritual of the tribe they encounter (later proceeded by another ritual on the following day). With the first invitation, they are told that the ritual will consist of several women dancing; however, they later discover that this dance is just a smokescreen for a witch hunt. When the time arrives and the rite begins, Gagool, the king's second hand and an old sorceress, starts to dance and encourages the girls who she has trained to chant the song, "What is the lot of man born of woman?" Back comes the answer rolling out from every throat in that vast company: "Death!" (Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* 147). As a part of their tradition, the female dancers identify the soldiers who they think are witches and, consequently, determine their fatal destiny. Hence, these women are in charge of men's mortality as they are the ones who give birth to them but also condemn them to die.

The next day, the Englishmen are told to assist in another ritual of women dancing. Nonetheless, the circumstances are totally different as these dancers aim to stimulate men's sexual passion. (This can be linked to the idea of life in opposition to the deaths caused by the previous dance. A sensual dance from a woman could be associated with a possible next step of sexual intercourse, which can produce a new life.) When combined, both rituals reveal a cycle: women are the agents of men's subjection to ephemerality (Scheick 51), and men are created and destroyed by women.

Moreover, the king makes the Englishmen choose the fairest girl between all the dancers to be sacrificed to their gods (though the Englishmen are unaware of this fact). They select a girl named Foulata, who is the ultimate embodiment of the archetype of the maternal woman as she is the one who these men have expressed to feel most attracted to. As Gagool is the leader of the ritual of death and Foulata represents the ritual of life, they are thus depicted in contrast to one another.

Confused, the Englishmen try to prevent Foulata's sacrifice from happening by threatening the king, but he refuses to let her free. Then, as they had convinced this tribe that they had magic powers and would prove it by "darkening the sun," a scientifically predicted eclipse occurs at that very moment, allowing them to escape

with Foulata. Afterwards, there is a civil war to dethrone the king and help Ignosi claim the throne as it is revealed that he was the rightful heir.

After they win the war, Ignosi desires to show his gratitude to the Englishmen by allowing them to go to the cave in which the treasure of King Solomon is hidden. Since Gagool is the only person who knows the way, she is commanded to assist them. Foulata also joins them because she owes them her life; hence, the group consists of the three Englishmen and the two women. When at one point Gagool betrays them by trying to escape and leaving them trapped inside, Foulata sees herself in a position in which she must sacrifice herself because of Gagool's actions. As Gagool symbolizes men's casualty and Foulata embodies men's continuance, they depict the main parts of the cycle of life. Thus, this event could be analyzed to perceive both of these women as essential pieces of a circular process and, just like the gears that enable a machine to work, the process will stop operating if one of them collapses.

When the men escape the feminized cave without any woman remaining, the restoration of a masculinized realm is suggested because, although women are portrayed as the ones who are in control of men's destinies, men are still capable of subjugating women to achieve their goals. This idea is introduced to the reader in the first chapter when Quatermain states that "there is no woman" (Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* 2) in his story.

When set side by side, both novels present the same narrative structure: a group of Englishmen undertake an expedition to Africa with the clear purpose of finding someone or something related to their family. However, their motivation slowly drifts to the discovery of a secret kept by the civilization they encounter. In *She*, the protagonists come across a society called the Amahagger, which they perceive to be organized as a matriarchy because the social pyramid is based on the idea of animal naturalism that Darwin explained in which the decision of sexual reproduction rests only on the females (Williams and Chrisman 503).

> It then appeared that, in direct opposition to the habits of almost every other savage race in the world, women among the Amahagger are not only upon terms of perfect equality with the men, but are not held to them by any binding ties. Descent is traced only through the line of the mother, and while individuals are as proud of a long and superior female ancestry as we are of our families in Europe, they never pay attention to, or even acknowledge, any man as their father, even when their male parentage is perfectly well known. (Haggard, *She* 98)

The reasoning behind some societies' matriarchal systems is connected to their belief that the person who is capable of giving birth – and therefore continuing with the natural process of life by providing the community with new valuable members – should be the one making the political and social decisions for the community (Peoples and Bailey 259). This idea is similarly represented in *She* when Billali, chief of the Amahagger, states "we worship them, and give them their way, because without them the world could not go on; they are the source of life" (Haggard, *She* 137).

Moreover, Nigerian author Ifi Amadiume observes in her book *Re-Inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture* that J.M McLennan, L.H. Morgan and J. Bachofen, three recognized anthropologists specialized in lineage, matriarchy and marriage "postulated a progression from barbarism and savagery in primitive sexual promiscuity, to matrilineal descent, to matriarchy and mother-right, and, finally, to masculine imperialism in patriarchy, monogamy and the nuclear family" (73). With this statement, it is possible to draw a parallel between history and the possible intentions of Haggard when depicting a matriarchal society; repeating Haggard's words, which were included in the first quotation of this essay: "Out of barbarism we came, and into barbarism we may, perhaps, one day, relapse."

Anthropologists, such as those whose ideas were discussed by Amadiume, believe that barbarism's next step would have been matriarchies, followed by masculine imperialism. Hence, Haggard may have linked his idea of regression into barbarism – the natural condition of humans – to a return to matriarchal societies in order to be saved from imperialism. Additionally, his declaration is supported by his constant emphasis on cyclical temporalities in the narratives. His attention to this idea also interrupts the established linear progress from matriarchy to patriarchy, revealing the powerful appeal of the possibility of a restored female past (Reid 15).

Ayesha (or She-who-must-be-obeyed) is the leader of the Amahagger. When Holly confronts her about her supposed magical abilities, she explains that she has managed to understand the secrets of nature, and this has allowed her to live for thousands of years. These circumstances place Ayesha as an ahistorical character, divorcing her from the idea of linear time. Moreover, though she clarifies that she will die eventually because nothing ever stays the same, she assures that once someone dies, they will come to life again: "Certainly, too, we shall awake, and live again and again shall sleep, and so on and on, through periods, spaces, and times, from eon unto eon, till the world is dead, and the worlds beyond the world are dead…" (Haggard, *She* 226).

Unlike Gagool and Foulata, Ayesha embodies both archetypes at the same time: she can be perceived as a maternal figure who is at the same time bewitching.

Nonetheless, she does not fit into the traditional Victorian stereotype of a motherly woman for, as Murphy points out, she views the creations she mentions that she once produced from a Darwinist point of view, with the characteristic indifference that a scientist would have when observing her failed experiments (45-46): "I bred them so – it hath taken many centuries and much trouble; but at last I have triumphed. Once I succeeded before, but the race was too ugly, so I let it die away; .... Once, too, I reared a race of giants, but after a while Nature would no more of it, and it died away" (Haggard, *She* 185-186). She is capable of breeding races and letting them die, equal to the power that a mother holds: she can choose to let her baby die if she is not content with it. She represents women's capability of breaking the continuum of the cycle of life, but she is able to do it on a larger scale because she is also in possession of nature's secrets. This paints her as a kind of sorceress figure, just like the bewitching woman. Her mention of her failure with these experiments implies violation of the laws of nature, which is only possible due to the fact that nature has allowed her to have so much power.

Furthermore, Ayesha fulfills the role of life-giver not only based on her ability to breed beings but also because she is able to extend the life of whomever she wants by thousands of years. This is narrated during the final chapters of the book when she shows the Englishmen the Fire of Life. According to her, if they bathe in it, they will lengthen their life just as she did. However, when she intends to prove that the fire is safe and painless, she physically starts to regain all the years she has lived and ends up turning into a monkey-like figure. This event holds symbolic value as the natives had nicknamed Holly "baboon." Therefore, in the end, it is stated that the people who symbolize the uncivilized savages are the real baboons. Holly's humiliation by the Amahagger is thus refuted, highlighting the line between the civilized and the uncivilized and proving that white men are the ones who will perdure (Archimedes 122). While the upper-class white male protagonists overcome this event, Ayesha (who is linked to her ancient civilization and the Amahagger) and Job (who is Leo and Holly's servant and belongs to the lower class) perish.

By repeating the process of entering the Fire of Life, Ayesha collapsed the concession that nature granted her. Supposing that, in principle, she could have lived for three thousand years until she died and was born again, mathematically speaking, by undergoing the fire another time, it would have added three thousand more years to her life. If this had worked out, nature's allowance would have provided her with an existence based on linear time rather than cyclical, erasing the idea about women and nature representing cyclical time as, supposedly, if it had worked a second time, it could have worked every time that she desired to prolongate her life, making her an immortal being rather than one who dies and is born again.

Similar to Haggard's presentation of Ayesha, Gagool is depicted as a woman who has lived for hundreds of years: "How old am I, think ye? Your fathers knew me, and their fathers knew me, and their fathers' fathers" (Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* 135). Neither Ayesha nor Gagool are said to be witches or women who are able to perform magic; their powers seem to emanate from nature. The idea of a cyclical time is as well mentioned by Gagool, the same woman who everyone thinks to be immortal. She also reveals that even though she has the ability to live for hundreds of years, she must die too, in order to be reborn: "Listen, all dead things that must live again – again to die!" (Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* 134).

Both of these female characters deny the idea of an infinite linear time (immortality) and put a big emphasis on the fact that every creature who dies shall be born again, as it is the natural process of life. Therefore, as this fact links them even more with nature, they must be overcome and eliminated from the plot by the end.

The masculinized culture in opposition to the feminized nature

Many have tried to rationally explain the second-class citizen label that women have to carry in almost every culture of the world. Usually, the main argument lies within the idea of biological determinism, which, according to the *Oxford Reference Dictionary*, exists on "the stance that males are the naturally dominant sex by virtue of anatomy and genetics or that women are naturally carers by virtue of their reproductive capabilities" ("Biological Determinism"). This definition implies that women are not held in the same social position because they lack something that men have, which makes men superior. As women are believed to be less, they are therefore relegated to the domestic sphere, in which their subordination can be maintained in a more effortless way.

However, when trying to find out other possible explanations for the devaluation of women, American cultural anthropologist Sherry Beth Ortner argues that there is only one way to proceed, which is to consider the idea that "woman is being identified with ... something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself" (72). Even though nature would at first not seem to fit this description, Ortner explains that, generally speaking, civilizations throughout history have evolved by producing devices to control and yield nature (water dams, ovens, windmills, and so on). Thus, the products that have resulted from this process of industrialization are associated with culture or civilization.

As previously explained, women are thought to be closer to nature than men due to their bodily functions related to procreation. A considerable aspect of woman's physiology is aimed to serve the natural process of life instead of serving the woman herself, as can be seen through the example of her breasts. Ortner suggests that women are somehow trapped within this process and are expected not to deviate from it by creating something other than babies. In opposition, as men lack this ability, they are able to create objects that contribute to society's advancement (75).

It could be said that this cultural dichotomy has its roots anchored in the beginning of civilization. As women were relegated to tasks related to motherhood, men were expected to assume the responsibilities of interfamilial relationships, from which they profited via their male-oriented dialogues about religion, politics, culture, and so on.

For the most part, Haggard reflects upon this idea of culture representing the masculine and nature embodying the feminine in *King Solomon's Mines*. In the first chapter, Quatermain is narrating his trip to Cape Town, with which he assures to have seen everything there was to see, "including the botanical gardens, which seem to me likely to confer a great benefit on the country, and the new Houses of Parliament, which I expect will do nothing of the sort" (Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* 4). For the English, their famous Houses of Parliament represent their people as a whole, how they think, and where laws and decisions are made by politicians (in sum, a physical representation of their civilization). Nevertheless, Haggard is declaring that the protagonist considers that a botanical garden will grant a better benefit than the Houses of Parliament will. On that account, there is a pronounced opinion that can be extracted from this excerpt: the glorification of civilization and what it represents has turned out to be harmful for their culture, and one of the main reasons that explain this issue is people's obfuscation with controlling nature instead of sensibly coexisting with it and learning from it.

Following this line of thought, the next step would be to understand Quatermain's suggestion about Africa's feasibility of being more prosperous if the historic predominant order of imperialist countries is not imposed on them. Even if being part of a "civilized" country seems to have its benefits, it also has negative consequences associated with political masculinity, such as the destruction of life via armed conflicts and hunting (Ortner 75). In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir argues that women being perceived as "the other" can be traced to hunter-gatherer societies. This is mainly because they have been characterized by their desire to remain alive in order to support their families and continue with the species. They were, as d'Eaubonne notes, the gardeners of the Earth because they remained in safer places

from which they could gather the fruits that the earth produced, which gave them a feeling of safety. In opposition, men's desire to establish and transmit values – of hunting and killing – eclipsed their natural instinct of survival (Hengehold and Bauer 125).

Quatermain's narration of their journey from the South-African coast of Natal to Durban Point, mentions a city called East-London. He adds that just before arriving in Durban, there is a place which has a special richness to it. When describing it, he mentions, "while now and again a white house, smiling out at the placid sea, puts a finish and gives an air of homeliness to the scene" (Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* 29). The mention of a city in Africa that has been named after the capital of one of the leading imperialist countries manifests as social reflection about colonialism. Moreover, he is also proposing a mental image of a white house (which works as an obvious analogy of a white man that represents the civilized as he no longer lives in a cave) looking at a placid sea, which works as a metaphor for a dominated woman. The scene evokes "homeliness" to him as it perfectly represents the traditional Victorian domestic arrangement: the idealized Angel in the House remains serene due to her imposed obedience while her husband takes delight in being in control, even if he is just an observer.

After having survived the climbing of the mountain (one of Sheba's Breasts), the explorers take a look at the landscape that lies in front of them, and they realize there is a kind of Roman road down the plain. While going down the mountain, the protagonist claims that "every mile we walked the atmosphere grew softer and balmier, and the country before us shone with a yet more luminous beauty. As for the road itself, I never saw such an engineering work…" (Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* 97). Succeeding in their conquest of the breasts (which represent a part of the anatomy of a mysterious and wild woman) paves the way to civilization, displayed by the engineering work of an expanded road. Hence, women's subordination means the continuance of civilization.

When they are approaching the place that is marked on the map to be the hidden spot for Solomon's treasure, the Englishmen encounter three colossal statues; two are male, and one is female:

> The female form, which was nude, was of great though severe beauty, but unfortunately the features were injured by centuries of exposure to the weather. … The two male colossi were, on the contrary, draped, and presented a terrifying cast of features, especially the one to our right, which had the face of a devil. (Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* 239)

The nakedness of the female form suggests a woman who is part of an archaic civilization, placing her in opposition to a modern culture. It is also described to be in a state of decay due to its perpetual display at the mercy of the weather, hinting at the idea that a natural state is meant to eventually collapse. On the contrary, the male colossi outnumber the female and are clothed, representing a more advanced society. However, they are both perceived to be evil. The idea being conveyed here seems to be that cultures must experience development but not through entirely rejecting nature and women or they will endure a downfall into evilness.

With regard to *She*, it is more difficult to find as many examples of passages in which the feminized nature is held in contrast to the masculinized culture because this book revolves around the representation of linear time versus cyclical time (which has already been explained in this essay). However, there is a part where Ayesha is talking about her plans to overthrow Queen Victoria when she arrives in England with the Englishmen. Even though they try to convince her that monarchs are not as they used to be in the past, Ayesha is still convinced to follow her political plan. She mentions that every government has its tyrants who must be destroyed. By the end of the book, Holly assures that if Ayesha had reached England, she would have assumed "absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth ... I was sure that she would speedily make ours the most glorious and prosperous empire that the world has ever seen..." (Haggard, *She* 310). The mere possibility of the reign of such a woman who threatens the Victorian feminine ideal must therefore be eliminated, and Ayesha perishes. She represents the feared idea of the New Woman: one who is lawless with a brighter prospect of choosing her own desires over the social imposition of being a mother and a wife, a woman who holds enormous power because of her wisdom, et cetera.

As she is in control of the secrets of nature, she would also be perceived as a woman who has managed to dominate nature in a more efficient way, in contrast to how Western societies are accustomed to. Hence, she would be defying the status quo of the subjugation of natural elements in order to not be overpowered, instead of obtaining powers from them.

Works Cited

Amadiume, Ifi. *Re-Inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*. Zed Books, 2001.

Akilli, Sinan. "Henry Rider Haggard: An Early Ecocritic?" *Another Vision of Empire. Henry Rider Haggard's Modernity and Legacy*, edited by Anne

Dunan-Page, Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Tessa Whitehouse. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, pp. 5.

Archimedes, Sondra. *Gendered Pathologies: The Female Body and Biomedical Discourse in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel*. Routledge, 2016.

"Biological Determinism". *Oxford Reference*, 2020, oxfordreference.com. Accessed 29 May 2020.

D'Eaubonne, Françoise. *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*. Fenixx Réédition Numérique, 1974.

Gaard, Greta. and Murphy, Patrick. *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Haggard, Henry Rider. *King Solomon's Mines*. Penguin Books, 1994.

Haggard, Henry Rider. *She*. Penguin Books, 2007.

Hengehold, Laura, and Nancy Bauer. *A Companion to Simone De Beauvoir*. John Wiley & Sons, 2017.

Hurley, Teresa. *Mothers and Daughters in Post-Revolutionary Mexican Literature*. Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2003.

Kellerman, Aharon. *Time, Space, and Society: Geographical Societal Perspectives*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2012.

Kristeva, Julia, et al. "Women's Time." *Signs*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1981, pp. 13–35. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3173503. Accessed 25 May 2021.

Magdoff, Harry. *Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present*. New York University Press, 1979.

Merchant, Carolyn. *Radical Ecology: The Search for A Livable World*. Routledge, 1992.

Murphy, Patricia. *Time Is of The Essence: Temporality, Gender, and the New Woman*. SUNY Press, 2001.

Ortner, Sherry B. "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" *Feminist Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1972, pp. 5–31. *JSTOR*, doi.org/10.2307/3177638. Accessed 25 May 2021.

Radford Ruether, Rosemary. *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005.

Reid, Julia. "'*She-who-must-be-obeyed*': Anthropology and Matriarchy in H. Rider Haggard's *She*", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Volume 20, Issue 3, 1 September 2015, pp. 357–374.

Scheick, William. *Ethos of Romance at The Turn of The Century*. University of Texas Press, 1994.

Starhawk. *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery*. Harperone, 1989.

Stiebel, Lindy. *Imagining Africa: Landscape in H. Rider Haggard's African Romances*. Greenwood Press, 2001.

Williams, Patrick, and Chrisman, Laura. *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*. Routledge, 2015.

Binary Oppositions in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly* (1990)

Patrycja Rogala
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

Abstract: How is it possible "that man is not truly one, but truly two"? This issue, raised by Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), especially in the context of good and evil intertwined in each human being, has always invited the reading of the novella in terms of binary oppositions. Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly* (1990), Stevenson's novella's literary rewrite, enriches the interpretation of the original story by highlighting some of its fundamental binary antitheses, as well as by introducing and elaborating on such opposites as private self vs. public self, male vs. female, master vs. servant. This paper proposes an intertextual analysis of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Mary Reilly* with a view to discussing the similarities and differences in how the two works treat the above-mentioned binary oppositions. Importantly, in *Mary Reilly*, the events are recounted by the eponymous maid, a marginal character in the original story who becomes the protagonist-narrator of Martin's text. This change, it seems, not only encourages the readers to reinterpret the host text, but also broadens the contemporary perception of the Victorian era by shedding some new light on its characteristic social dichotomies.

Keywords: binary oppositions, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Mary Reilly*, minor character elaboration, retelling

The concept of binary oppositions has been used to refer to a considerable number of phenomena. To exemplify, *the day* vs. *the night* is a dichotomy in which the daytime is commonly perceived as superior to the time of darkness (Elbow 51). Such an implied privilege of one side over the other exists in most doubles. Although the prospects of escaping the ubiquitous system of dichotomies are poor since "binary thinking seems to be the path of least resistance for the perceptual system, for thinking, and for linguistic structures" (Elbow 53), the tendency to perceive multifaceted reality in terms of dualities should not be pervasive.

The use of complimentary pairs is also broadly applicable to literary analysis. The system of two notions which diametrically oppose each other has been addressed by numerous writers over the course of years, irrespective of the prevailing tendencies of a literary period. In the Old English epic poem, *Beowulf*, the contrast of *up* vs. *down* is an instance of a dichotomy which organises the represented world: human characters live above the ground (the world of good), whereas Grendel and his mother inhabit a cave beneath a mere (the world of evil). William Shakespeare, in turn, deals with *self* vs. *other* in *The Tempest* (1611). The distinction is represented by two characters: Caliban and Prospero, respectively. The former is a native inhabitant of a Mediterranean island, where the latter arrives as a result of a shipwreck. Even though Prospero is the intruder, he enslaves Caliban in the name of civilisation. Mary Shelley depicts the distinction between *human* vs. *monster* in *Frankenstein* (1818). Even though the monster created by Victor Frankenstein strives to merge into society, he becomes a victim of human prejudice, and ultimately fails. Virginia Woolf is yet another author who depicts oppositions in her works. In *Orlando* (1928), she portrays the division into *masculine* vs. *feminine* by creating an eponymous character who changes sex from man to woman. The two sides of Orlando never intermix, which emphasises the differences between the genders. Stacey Halls, a contemporary author, deals with the dichotomies of *power* vs. *powerlessness* in *The Familiars* (2019). The novel depicts seventeenth-century women accused of witchcraft and their fight against oppression and men in power.

Yet another instance of the literary texts which explore the concept of dualities in an exhaustive manner are Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and its reimagination, Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly* (1990). This paper investigates the intertextual dialogue between the source text and its rewrite in terms of similarities and differences in the treatment of selected binary oppositions (cf. Kucała). In particular, an attempt will be made to prove that the reimagination not only elaborates on the dichotomies addressed in the original, but also introduces some new ones, such as *servant* vs. *master*, *male* vs. *female*, and *private self* vs. *public self*.

The most prominent dichotomy in Stevenson's novella, and perhaps the most common type of duality in literature in general, is the one between *good* and *evil*. According to Joanna Kokot, the motif of duality in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is introduced by the title itself as it signals the binary relationship between the two eponymous characters (110). The text depicts this opposition by describing not only the literary figures of Jekyll and Hyde but also by presenting the spaces they inhabit: the city and the houses occupied by the main characters. The space to which a character is assigned, Kokot argues, serves to represent the given character (112).

Throughout the novella, Stevenson forges a close connection between the setting and the split personality of the protagonist of the story: nineteenth-century London is depicted as a vast city inhabited by a mass of faceless citizens, horror-stricken by the prospect of meeting a violent murderer roaming the streets. They are oblivious to the fact that it is precisely the vastness of the space and the anonymity of its citizens that encourages Hyde to commit crimes. Under cover of anonymity, he feels safe enough to merge into the crowd of Londoners and harass them (Dryden 87). Jekyll reveals:

> I was the first that could plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings and spring headlong into *the sea of liberty*. But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it – I did not even exist! (Stevenson 72–73; emphasis added)

Moreover, the elusive appearance of caveman-like Hyde is conducive to his remaining unpunished as no one is able to recognise him, let alone associate him with distinguished-looking Jekyll. The citizens who have seen Hyde have difficulties describing him although they are aware of his unsightliness. For instance, Enfield – a respected gentleman – claims that Hyde "was an extraordinary looking man, and yet I can name nothing out of the way. … And it's not want of the memory; for I declare I can see him this moment" (Stevenson 6). Similarly, Utterson – an upstanding lawyer – is conscious of "an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation" (Stevenson 14). According to Michael Davis, Hyde is "somehow present yet simultaneously absent, and so beyond the scope of mapping or diagnosis in physical terms" (211). With a presence so unmemorable, Hyde gives the impression of being impossible to reach within the confines of the city, in which the faceless crowd conceals him. The dense fog, which seemingly perpetually cloaks London, especially Hyde's hideaway in Soho, also acts in the interest of the murderer (Dryden 90).

Hyde's above-mentioned shelter in London also functions as a symbol indicating his dual personality. Hyde rents rooms in a "dismal quarter of Soho," which underlines his maliciousness (Stevenson 25). Whereas the neighbourhood is described by Utterson as "a district of some city in a nightmare," the interior of the building contrasts its decaying facade (Stevenson 25). The rooms inhabited by Hyde are luxurious, decorated with paintings on the walls. The closet is brim-full of wine, and silver plates are used to serve food. Such contrast between the exterior and the interior of the building serves to highlight the duality between Hyde, whose vile

temper is underscored by the building's dilapidation, and Jekyll, whose goodness is represented by the splendour of his lodging.

Likewise, although Jekyll's house mirrors his social status of a wealthy gentleman and is located in the close proximity of the shops which tempt one "with an air of invitation, like rows of saleswomen," there is a "sinister block of building" blemishing his overall magnificent property (Stevenson 2). Although it is invisible for a mere bystander, the gloomy laboratory is in fact adjacent to the lavish house. Therefore, an element of immoral Hyde is also incorporated in Jekyll's property, which further emphasises the close link between *good* vs. *evil*. Perhaps the most significant symbol indicating the connection between the two elements of this binary opposition is the run-down backdoor to the laboratory which Hyde uses to furtively access Jekyll's home. Moreover, according to Prosser, the two-storey building resembles a face with no eyes and tightly clenched lips, which implies the idea of a house being a vessel in which a soul is contained (118).

Another opposition, *heterosexual* vs. *homosexual*, is explored in one of the interpretations of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. According to Wayne Koestenbaum, Stevenson's own repressed sexual preferences justify this kind of reading (qtd. in Dryden 98). Elaine Showalter argues in the same vein:

By the 1880s, such scholars as Jeffrey Weeks and Richard Dellamora have shown, the Victorian homosexual but active subculture, with its own language, styles, practices, and meeting places. For most middle-class inhabitants of this world, homosexuality represented *a double life*, in which a respectable daytime world, often involving marriage and family, existed alongside a night world of homoeroticism. (qtd. in Dryden 98–99; emphasis added)

The interpretation of the novella presents Hyde as a personification of Jekyll's homosexuality.[6] Jekyll's repressed sexual preferences surface at the moment of the metaphorical birth of Hyde, whose nightly activities represent the unmet sexual urges. Although the respectable doctor is abashed at his impulses and fears the outcome, the desire is stronger than sensibility (Dryden 99). The doubleness presented as ambiguous sexual preference is emphasised by Jekyll when he looks at himself in the mirror. The motif of the mirror has been used in literature for the purpose of revealing a hidden truth to those who look at their own reflection. The truth that Jekyll has never conceived of before is that his homosexuality is not to be

[6] In Great Britain, homosexual acts were illegal for 82 years, from 1885 to 1967. In order to portray the social situation of gay individuals during that time, it is useful to highlight that *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* was first published in 1886, whereas the first of three infamous trials of Oscar Wilde for homosexuality took place merely 9 years later, in 1895.

ignored any longer as it is an integral aspect of his personality, and the more he succumbs to his urges, the more difficult to suppress they are:

> And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. … [A]ll human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil. (Stevenson 71)

When Jekyll sees he image of Hyde instead of his own, he crosses the threshold between *conscious* vs. *unconscious*, and discovers yet another truth: the reflection in the mirror proves that Hyde, the purely evil creature, is an inseparable part of Jekyll. Valerie Martin, the author of *Mary Reilly* (1990), a rewritten version of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, introduced a new central character to Stevenson's classic story. The protagonist-narrator of the retelling is a housemaid who, over the course of the novel, develops a close relationship with her Master, Henry Jekyll. In the source text, there is merely one episode in which the nameless maid is mentioned: "[a]t the sight of Mr Utterson, the housemaid broke into hysterical whimpering … Blank silence followed, no one protesting; only the maid lifted up her voice and wept loudly" (Stevenson 45). The scene gave Martin inspiration for her rewriting focused on the said servant (Bryk 205). A minor character from the host text has been developed into a major one in the guest text. Such a change is also an instance of an opposition between two literary texts.

As the twentieth century witnessed a proliferation of rewritings with plots focused on the characters marginalised in the original stories, the need to develop a theory correspondent to the new field of literary reimaginations arose (Rosen 153). The transformation of a minor character into a major one has been referred to by Jeremy Rosen as a *minor character elaboration genre*.

In *Mary Reilly*, the main binary opposition of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, i.e., *good* vs. *evil*, remains unchanged. It is, however, extended and commented upon by the introduction and depiction of new antitheses, such as *private self* vs. *public self*; *male* vs. *female* as well as *master* vs. *servant*. As the dichotomies overlap and merge into each other, for they all represent the concept of *power* vs. *powerlessness*, it would be unfeasible to discuss them separately.

Both Stevenson and Martin focused on the motif of the house as a means of representing dichotomies present in their stories. Whereas Stevenson's symbolic depiction of Jekyll's house represented the duality between *good* and *evil*, in Martin's literary reimagination it is a metaphor for the dichotomy between *master*

and *servant*. Jekyll, a figure both distant and strict, is an authority among the servants, who remain subordinate to him. They treat him with utmost care by preparing his favourite meals for him when he is in failing health and by ensuring that his property has been taken care of. As Mary claims, "[i]f I chide you, it's only that I worry for your health – we do all of us, when you close yourself up and do without food or sleep for days on end" (Martin 42). In return, Jekyll is indifferent to his domestics; he does not even remember their names (Bryk 210). Mary is entirely devoted to her position as a housemaid and to her Master, since she believes that being a servant is the only job that she is suitable for. She has a sense of being unimportant and unworthy, which is emphasised by the fact that in her journals "she always failed to capitalize the word 'i' and never failed to capitalize the word 'Master'" (Martin 243).

As a housemaid, Mary moves across the house, between the rooms Jekyll occupies and the space below the stairs inhabited by her and her fellow servants (Bryk 209). Although Jekyll is a well-respected scientist, he is rarely shown doing research or conducting experiments. Instead, he passes the time by "perusing books in his library, sipping tea or wine, breakfasting in his bed, reclining on a settee, composing letters or entertaining his guests. Just as often he is portrayed while indulging in fire-gazing" (Bryk 209). At the same time, his servants are involved in tedious tasks which require considerable strength, including scrubbing floors, carrying heavy coals and lighting the fire in the Master's fireplace, cleaning and ironing (Bryk 209). Especially one of the hard-working servants, Annie, "seems to have no life but working and sleeping" as she is always weary (Martin 13). The contrast between the domestics' drudgery to keep Jekyll's house in order and his idleness is striking, which encourages a contemporary reader to examine the hierarchy of the Victorian household and notice that the division between masters and servants was strict.

Mary was not only disadvantaged by her social position but also by her gender (Bryk 211). Stevenson's novella presents a patriarchal world, in which women are merely irrelevant characters subservient to men. In other words, Dryden argues, "[a]s marginalized presences female characters assume only the subordinate roles of servants, prostitutes or hysterical mothers" (101). Although in Martin's literary reimagination Mary is a protagonist-narrator, she does not take advantage of the opportunity to focus the story on herself. On the contrary, she concentrates her narrative on the stronger man, i.e. Jekyll. Mary's character emphasises the mistreatment of women by men throughout the whole story: the novel is focused, as Bryk puts it, on the "power relations, as mediated by class, gender and sexuality" (207).

One of the instances of the misuse of authority by the male character depicted in the story is the violence that Mary experienced from her drunk father, i.e., the imprisonment in a tight space with a rat (Braid 75). The experience traumatised Mary, who is burdened by the mere recollection of the hell she experienced as a child: "'I really am in that blackness where my father left me, with no way out and nothing to do but wait until somehow there's some merciful release and I come to myself again'" (Martin 31). Braid argues in this context that Hyde can be treated as the double of Mary's father, for even his limping is reminiscent of her childhood – her father walked with a limp. What is more, Hyde also endeavours to hunt her and abuse her "in a sexually tainted way," which constitutes yet another example of mistreatment of women by men. In one of the scenes, Hyde bites Mary's arm, which summons up the memory of the unpleasant incident from her childhood (Braid 76).

Since in *Mary Reilly* the protagonist narrates her story, the reader gets a more direct access to her thoughts and reflections. As she ponders upon her fate, the previous masters she worked for and her current employment, she unveils her thoughts concerning the misfortune she suffered:

> Like me, not touched … I felt such a sadness come over me, for though I understand why I cannot be like others and look forward to the future, making plans and provisions for shared life, still it is hard to bear…. All I could see then was blackness and I could feel his hand pressing against my mouth and the sickening weakness that rushed over me. I heard my own heart racing in my ears, his laughter, the sob catching at my throat, and then at my lips I found a taste of blood. (Martin 151–152)

Although Mary declares that she will never get married, the reader does not know the exact reason behind the resolution and may only speculate that it is the result of sexual harassment she endured from her father, Hyde, or both. Although she claims to be "untouched," the word pertains to marriage rather than virginity, as the episode described in the passage resembles rape and implies that she has been assaulted by a man against her will (Braid 76). Thus, in the case of Martin's novel, the binary opposition concerning *male* vs. *female* is analogous to the dichotomy of *oppressor* vs. *oppressed*.

The relationship which may be classified as the binary opposition of *male* vs. *female* is represented by Mary's devotion to her Master, Henry Jekyll. One may infer that because of the mistreatment she suffered from the hands of her father when she was a child, Mary seeks another paternal figure in her life in the form of her Master. Ergo, she is eager to please him and satisfy his desires. Although he is benevolent

towards the housemaid, the attitude towards her is not fatherly: on the contrary, he does not hesitate to imperil her life by sending her to an insalubrious part of Soho (Bryk 214). Although Mary repeatedly highlights that she is fulfilled and she has found "a harness that fit [her] at last" (Martin 151), she also "felt that he hardly saw [her], that [she] was some object to him, useful like his pen or his cheque, such as only exist to serve his will" (Martin 110).

The motif of space is a recurring theme in the analyses of both Stevenson's and Martin's texts. In *Mary Reilly*, the severe constraints imposed on women by Victorian society are emphasised not only by their relationships with men but also by the spaces which they occupy. After Mary had been trapped by her father in a tight closet, every other place she found herself in made her feel limited. While male characters were allowed to move freely across nineteenth-century London, women in Martin's rewriting were forced to stay at home. To exemplify, after Mary's mother dies, her body "is consigned to another closet in a staircase by a greedy landlord who did not want to wait to rent her room" (Braid 77). The only open space where Mary is free to express herself creatively is the garden placed in the yard, where Mr Poole, the supervisor of the servants, allows her to plant flowers. The place has a symbolic meaning as in one of the scenes, Hyde vandalises the plants by stepping on them. Such an action serves to emphasise that as a man, he wields power over her (Braid 77).

In Martin's novel, there is also a division into *private self* vs. *public self*. An insight into Mary's thoughts reveals that she is not only Jekyll's housemaid, but also, in a metaphorical sense, his *lover* (Pennington 207). As described above, Mary is satisfied with her job as a servant in Jekyll's house. She is also contented and privileged as Jekyll's friend, whom he can trust and in whom he can confide: "'[s]o I was happy truly in my place and it did not seem odd to me but natural that Master should take an interest in me and rely upon me to speak plain or keep silent by turns'" (Martin 151). She imagines that there is a deep connection between them, and that in a number of aspects, her Master is similar to her. Mary manages to merge *private self* and *public self*, for even when she realises that she sincerely cares for her Master, she continues to call him "sir," highlighting her inferior position as a servant:

> 'Please, sir' I said, but my voice was small and weak. He stepped close to me and put his arms around me. I rested my cheek against his shirt and closed my eyes. He held me so for a long moment while my heart was breaking and my eyes flooded with tears. I felt his hand across my back and his mouth against my hair. 'You do care for me,' he said. 'My dear girl. How I have

come to trust you as I trust no other.' … 'Please, sir,' I said again. (Martin 226)

Perhaps the most obvious proof of her unequivocal commitment is displayed by the ending of the story, when she realises that her Master and Edward Hyde are the same person: "'[b]ut Master was right, who would believe it? How could one man be two – one kind, gentle, generous, the other with no care but his own pleasure but the suffering of his fellows?'" (Martin 236). The truth about her benefactor does not deter her from clinging to his dead body and once again pledging her devotion to him, both as his servant and friend.

Although *Mary Reilly* is a reimagination of *The Strange of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, it is ought to be first and foremost regarded as its reinterpretation (Bryk 215). The extensions applied by Martin serve not only to re-examine the binary oppositions present in the source text, but also enrich the story by incorporating new, meaningful elements, which cast a new light on the "old" dichotomies. Both novels are open-ended, leaving room for the readers to offer various interpretations of the two literary texts when read separately as well as in connection with each other.

Works Cited

Braid, Barbara. "Victorian Panopticon: Confined Spaces and Imprisonment in Chosen Neo-Victorian Novels." *Exploring Space: Spatial Notions in Cultural, Literary and Language Studies; Volume 1: Space in Cultural and Literary Studies*, edited by Andrzej Ciuk and Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, pp. 74–82.

Bryk, Marta. "The Maidservant in the Attic: Rewriting Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly*." *Women: A Cultural Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2008, pp. 204–216.

Davis, Michael. "Incongruous Compounds: Re-reading *Jekyll and Hyde* and Late-Victorian Psychology." *Journal of Victorian Culture*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2006, pp. 207–225.

Dryden, Linda. "'City of Dreadful Night': Stevenson's Gothic London." *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, pp. 253–264.

Elbow, Peter. "The Uses of Binary Thinking." *Journal of Advanced Composition*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1993, pp. 51–78.

Kokot, Joanna. “Układy przestrzenne i zagadki osobowości. „Niezwykły przypadek doktora Jekylla i pana Hyde’a” Roberta Louisa Stevensona.” *Literatura i Kultura Popularna*, vol. 23, 2017, pp. 109–120.

Kucała, Bożena. *Intertextual Dialogue with the Victorian Past in the Contemporary Novel*. Berlin, Germany: Peter Lang Verlag, 2012.

Martin, Valerie. *Mary Reilly*. London, Abacus, 2004.

Pennington, John. “Textual Doubling and Divided Selves: The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mary Reilly.” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 6, no. 2/3 (22/23), 1994, pp. 203–216.

Prosser, Ashleigh. “‘His bachelor house’: the unhomely home of the *fin de siècle*’s bourgeois bachelor in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.” Journal of Stevenson Studies, vol. 11, no. 6, 2014, pp. 105–126.

Rosen, Jeremy M. “Minor Characters Have Their Day: The Imaginary and Actual Politics of a Contemporary Genre.” *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 139–174.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Seattle, AmazonClassics, 2017.

Through the Burtonland, and What Alice Found There: A Transformative Journey Through the Worlds in Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2010)

Jacqueline Victoria Woroniec
University of Szczecin

Abstract: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871) by Lewis Carroll have inspired many rewritings and adaptations since they were published. One of the adaptations is *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), a movie directed by Tim Burton for Walt Disney Motion Pictures. Using the combined pool of characters from both Carroll's books, Tim Burton and screenwriter Linda Woolverton construct a continuation of Alice's story, now a young woman, grappling with hostile societal norms. Running away from marriage, she finds herself in the Underland, a fantastical place she visited as a child (and having experienced the events as described by Carroll). Her friends have been waiting and need her help in fighting a monster. Burton's Wonderland is no place for a child's play anymore; it is a land in war with despotic power. The Underland becomes a transformative plane for the heroine where she faces the monster. Upon returning to the real world, she makes her own choices and follows her ambitions. This paper will examine how the binary opposition of the real and the fantastic worlds provides a space for the realisation of the Campbellian heroic journey presented in a unique Burtonesque way.

Keywords: Alice in Wonderland, film studies, Gothic studies, hero's journey, Tim Burton

Tim Burton has a long history of cooperation with The Walt Disney Studios. When he was eighteen years old, his drawings and sketches have won him a scholarship to the California Institute of the Arts (also known as CalArts), a college founded by Walt Disney himself and funded by the Disney Studios in hope of finding prospective animators to work at the company. He got his first job at Disney in 1979, working as an animator for *The Fox and the Hound* (Berman, Rich, Stevens 1981) and as a concept artist for *The Black Cauldron* (Berman, Rich 1985). Burton admits that he and Disney "were a bad mix": he could not replicate the cuteness of the Disney

characters, finding them not relatable, and his personal style was too morbid for the Disney world (Salisbury 27). While at Disney, he managed to direct a six-minute stop motion animation *Vincent* (1982), featuring a narration by Vincent Price, and two short live action movies: adaptation of Grimm's *Hansel and Gretel* which was aired only once on Disney Channel, and *Frankenweenie* (1984), featuring Shelley Duvall. None of his creations were deemed successful and Burton departed from the studio.

Burton's career was kickstarted by his work with Warner Bros on *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* (Burton 1985). Since the film's box office success, Burton has directed nineteen movies and produced fourteen feature films, numerous shorts, music videos, and most recently *Wednesday,* a Netflix series based on *The Addams Family* franchise. Although in 1984 Burton was fired from the job of an animator at The Walt Disney Studios, since then he has returned there as a renowned director often with a free rein over his creation. All his movies, not only these distributed by Disney, have a specific mood to them, popularly called "Burtonesque".

Burton's authorial style eludes a clear-cut definition. First, it references motifs and symbols commonly found in the Gothic genre. Although the Gothic is more commonly recognised as a literary genre, Misha Kavka notices that its more recognisable elements are based in visual codes which translate particularly well into a two-dimensional screen utilising the plasticity of the cinematic space (210). She also draws attention to the fact that the Gothic elements were first utilised in the cinema as early as the German Expressionism creative movement. German expressionist cinematographers often portrayed such Gothic motifs and symbols as the double, the spectre, or a castle, and their movies are particularly famous for their specific mise-en-scène. This term encompasses the set design, including actors, backgrounds, and other depicted objects, as well as the mood that they induce subliminally, but in general it remains a difficult to define floating signifier. However, the elements of the German expressionist mise-en-scène - shadow play, extreme camera angles, distorted backgrounds, objects, and actors are all also utilised in each of the Burton's movies.

Does this mean that Burton's cinematography is strictly a Gothic one? Not quite. As Kavka suggests, the exact definition of the Gothic movie genre is almost impossible to formulate. She says, "it may be as much as one can do to say that the Gothic is about fear, localised in the shape of something monstrous which electrifies the collective mind" (Kavka 210). According to the researcher, the Gothic is conveyed not only by the manipulation of space and body, but also by inducing paranoia, i.e., the projection of the self on to the outside world. The Gothic paranoia is caused by the feeling of the uncanny, or "the unfamiliar that is deeply familiar"

(Kavka 210), inducing Lacanian anxiety and doubt of the self. Although the expressionist-like uncanny is often induced in Burton's movies, the Gothic paranoia is alleviated by elements of other generic genres, like musical, comedy, and romance.

Kavka's definition of the Gothic cinema could also be applied to the horror genre, whose tropes can also be found in Burton's movies. His spaces are often populated by monsters: vampires, zombies, sea creatures and rag dolls brought to life; often with graphic characteristics as eyes sewn shut, falling off limbs, or ear-to-ear, fanged smiles. All these can be perceived as the abject, theorised by Julia Kristeva in her 1982 book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. The abject is a threat of blurring the boundaries between the self and the other. As the "utmost of abjection" Kristeva puts forward an example of a corpse as it is "death infecting life" (Kristeva 4), not only by "lack of cleanliness or health", but by "disturb[ing] identity, system, order", "not respect[ing] borders, positions, rules", "the in-between, the ambiguous" (Kristeva 4). While both, the uncanny and the abject, make the boundary between life and death (or being alive and dead) less binary opposite and vaguer, the aim of the abject is to trigger fear in its audience. Burton's movies do not focus on such a response at all; thus, we are not able to categorise them as horrors.

The Burtonesque style proves to be as difficult to define as all its apparent inspirations. The ambiguity of his cinematography conduces to its traversability, where no binaries can remain stable. What is even more interesting, there is one more theme which pervades majority of his creation, that is the existence of parallel realities, or even distinctive worlds which can be traversed by the characters. Fragmentation of spatiality is present in movies based on his original ideas, e.g., *Edward Scissorhands* (Burton 1990), *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (Selick 1993), and *Corpse Bride* (Burton 2005). Curiously enough, it seems that majority of his many adaptation movies also tend to comply to this rule, most notably *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), *Miss Peregrine's House for Peculiar Children* (2016), and one that will be dealt with in particular in the later part of this article, *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).

Burton's films usually focus on an outcasted individual traversing his worlds. His heroes and heroines tend to follow the hero's journey structure as theorised by Joseph Campbell in his 1949 work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. There, basing his research on such landmarks of literature as Homer's *Odyssey*, he puts forward a universal structure of the monomyth. According to Campbell, a hero's travel starts with the call to adventure, a situation in which "the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit" (Campbell 47). The hero/ine has to leave their plane and experience symbolic rebirth moments, challenge evil forces, usually while aided by supernatural characters. Campbell summarises the scheme: "a hero ventures forth

from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered, and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (Campbell 30). Since the Campbellian monomyth assumes the characters must "cross the threshold" between different lands, areas or worlds, the multiplicity and fragmentation of the Burtonesque space seem to constitute appropriate planes for the monomyth realisation. Moreover, I would like to notice that Burton's ambiguous and spectral mise-en-scène as characterised above further facilitates transformative processes and transgressions of binaries.

Alice in Wonderland (Burton 2010)

Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* was released in 2010 and distributed by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures. The movie features frequent Burton's collaborators, such as Helena Bonham Carter (starring as the Red Queen), Johnny Depp (the Mad Hatter), and Danny Elfman who was responsible for the film score (as he was on every other Burton's movie except for *Miss Peregrine's…*). Screenplay was written by Linda Woolverton who was also the sole writer for animated feature *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and live-action *Maleficent* (2014), both distributed by Disney. Her idea about the Lewis Carroll's Alice books adaptation was pitched to Disney which employed Tim Burton to direct it.

Woolverton's story revolves around nineteen-years-old Alice Kingsleigh (played by Mia Wasikowska) and her struggle to meet societal expectations for young women. The filmic diegesis of *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) is divided into two distinctive worlds: the real and the Underland. The time is not specified, but one can assume it happens in late Victorian or early Edwardian era England due to clothing, customs, architecture, and mentions of London. Alice is unwillingly taken by her widowed mother, Helen, to an aristocratic event which, to Alice's surprise, turns out to be her engagement party. Startled, she runs away from her arranged fiancé, and chasing the white rabbit, falls into a rabbit hole and enters the Underland. There, she meets all sorts of characters who dispute her identity. She learns that the Underland is ruled by a despotic Red Queen, Iracebeth of Crims, and the oppressed citizens eagerly await their champion, who will kill the Jabberwocky, Red Queen's pupil dragon, and hand the crown back to the White Queen, Mirana. The strange characters she meets show her The Oraculum, "a calendrical compendium of Underland", where it is written that Alice is the White Queen's champion, and she is destined – and expected – to kill the Jabberwocky.

The real world

The first scene of the movie shows Alice's father, Charles, talking to his business partners about a new venture – developing trade ways to Africa. They are in Kingsleighs' mansion, bathed in warm light, enhanced by the richly decorated wooden interior. Suddenly, Mr Kingsleigh stops mid-word and moves his gaze away from the men and out of the room, fear painted on his face as if he saw a ghost. The camera moves and a young girl is in the centre of the shot. She is wearing a white, long nightgown, her hair almost white and loose, her gaze sad and lips pouted. For a second, the viewer is led to believe the figure is truly a spectre. Then Charles asks her if she had the nightmares again, and suddenly she is not a tormenting figure, but a tormented one. Father takes Alice to bed, and they talk about weird creatures from Alice's dreams. She asks if she is going mad – and receives the reply that only these who are mad are worth knowing.

The next scene happens thirteen years later. Now, Alice is a young adult woman, and her mother is a widow. We see them talk in the carriage - Alice, with her hair tied up and wearing a pastel blue dress, is being scolded for wearing neither a corset nor stockings. She is clearly opposing the strict norms of fashion and deems them too nonsensical, comparing them to wearing a cod on one's head. Helen takes off her golden necklace and adorns Alice's neck with it, designating her the woman she would like to see.

The spectator follows the mother and daughter to an aristocratic palace's gardens, where chatty people wearing elegant and exclusively white, ivory, pastel blue and yellow clothing have gathered. The sky is clear and almost cloudless, the grass seems like the greenest it could ever be, the guests dance traditional dances like quadrille and seem to enjoy it. Alice enters the scene as a recently orphaned girl. She is told where to go and with whom to dance and while she is politely accepting these, she seems not to be present there with her mind: she wonders what it would be like to fly or imagines the dancing women in trousers and men in dresses. The disruption slowly begins while thinking about such perversities, she bumps into another pair, and when she shares her thoughts with Hamish, the party hosts' adolescent son and her dance partner, he drags her off the dance floor, silencing her.

Soon, Alice learns the true reason for the reception. Her older sister, Margaret, recommends accepting the engagement with Hamish as Alice "won't do better than a lord" (00:07:25). "It's already decided", she says, assuring the younger that she will be as happy in marriage as she is with her husband, Lowell. When Alice does not take her words enthusiastically, Margaret tries to scare and manipulate her emotionally, forewarning her of becoming a spinster and a burden to their mother.

She might not do this deliberately; she lives in a patriarchal system and decided not to fight it. Unfortunately, as a passive compliant, she further perpetuates the idea that women submission to their husbands is a virtue. Alice, although demeaning her spinster Aunt Imogene who believes her prince fiancé will come to marry her soon, is still not convinced that a married life is for her. Later, in the maze garden, Alice learns that there is little truth in Margaret's claims about her happy marriage – the younger sister catches Lowell red-handed cheating on his wife with another woman.

One of the scenes in the mansion's maze garden features Hamish's mother taking a walk with Alice. For a viewer already acquainted with Carroll's novel this scene serves as a foreshadowing: the hostess complains about the color of roses in her garden as they are white when she clearly asked for red ones. Alice suggests painting them red but is ignored. The dame confides in Alice her biggest fear - "The decline of the aristocracy?" Alice asks (00:08:22), but is only given a brief, shocked and contemptuous look before Hamish's mother continues as if nothing has happened and she has not just received a class criticism from a young woman. "Ugly grandchildren", she says, but shares her relief that Alice is a rather pretty girl. It is worth noting here that Hamish is not portrayed as a particularly handsome man of class - his face is not conventionally attractive with relatively big front teeth and there is a shot of him picking his nose. Hamish's mother's remark then has an ironic, or even hypocritical overtone to the viewer. Moreover, she tries to prepare Alice for taking care of her son, talking about his digestive problems, as if she was passing down the role of a nanny to Alice. This visibly disgusts our heroine who finally finds an excuse to run away from the woman – the white rabbit.

To Alice's discontent, she does not manage to run far just yet. Instead, she is taken to a gazebo where Hamish proposes in front of all the party guests. He says, "Will you be my wife?" (00:11:18) as if stressing the fact that in his society women belong to men. Alice replies, "Everyone expects me to" (00:11:26) and recounts all the reason she has listened to earlier that day. "I need a moment", she says as she notices the White Rabbit in a waistcoat tapping his finger on a pocket clock, and, leaving the bewildered crowd behind, finally allows herself to chase after him.

The real world and its inhabitants are strictly bound by society's rules. The characters look and behave unnaturally and with fake poise; yet they are what is deemed normal. The fashions must be perfect, the hair pinned, the roles obeyed. The people gathered at the party are blinded by the conventions to the point of hypocrisy. Alice seems to be the only one who sees through their phoniness. Her child-like ability to wonder and to imagine the unreal pose a threat to the norms, so her opinions are ignored, her voice silenced, and choices denied. Admiration for the wondrous passed onto her by her father is no longer valid - he is dead, and "the familiar life

horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit" (Campbell 47). Alice must grow up – this is how time works in her world – but to be an adult woman means to be a woman subjugated to the oppressive system and demands leaving girlhood behind. Not ready to make the decision, she follows her Campbellian personification of destiny, the Rabbit, to the only dark-looking thing in the pastel-bright real world: a crooked and grey tree stump, and further down into the rabbit hole.

The Underland

The inside of the rabbit hole serves as a link between the real world and the Underland. Alice falls through a tunnel which is strikingly reminiscent of the first scene of the movie: warm, amber colour, old books and paintings, even the furniture remind the spectator of the Kingsleighs' house. Alice must navigate well through the floating objects no to get crushed by them. Finally, she reaches the end of the tunnel as she hits the ceiling only to fall again, visibly painfully, on the floor. The room she is in looks old and timeworn; the walls are covered in doors. Behind a curtain she finds a very small door, its key on the table; but she is too big to go through it. She goes back and forth with the shrinking "Drink me" potion and enlarging "Eat me" cake, not able to find just the right size. She asks no questions and makes no remarks as the spectator watches her struggle. With a sudden camera shot through a keyhole and voices coming from outside the screen, the spectator realises they are not alone: there are others who watch Alice. "You'd think she would remember all this from the first time", says one. "You've brought the wrong Alice!" (00:16:27–00:16:34), exclaims the other. The Alice who fell down a hole finally manages to be the right size to go through the small door.

She enters an unusual garden. It is full of rich and vivid colours, though it looks unkept with its overgrown hedge sculptures, crooked trees, and fences covered by greenery. The clouds are dark and layered. From the other side, the small door (though now it is relatively normal sized when compared with Alice) is not attached to any wall and its shape is not a right rectangle; its sharper edges, grey color, and cartoonish design is reminiscent of the mock-up set designs of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene 1920), a landmark of the German Expressionist cinema. The threshold of the mind has been crossed; so has the threshold of a heroic adventure.

"Curiouser and curiouser" (00:18:43–00:18:46), Burton's Alice quotes Carroll's Alice as she ventures further into the garden. There, she meets talking flowers, Tweedledee, Tweedledum, Dodo, the White Rabbit (who says they've been tracking her for weeks), and the dormouse, none of whom she recognises. Yet, they

seem to know her, but cannot agree whether the Alice in front of them is the right one. The girl does not understand what these creatures mean and tries to defend herself: "I ought to know who I am", she says. Yet, she is not able to determine whether she really is Alice or not. She is taken to Absolem, a pipe-loving caterpillar, who shows her the Oraculum and tells her "What is written": it is Alice who is destined to fight the evil Red Queen's Jabberwocky and free the Underworld from her rule. Although she is sure it is all just a dream, she gets scared of the prophecy, claiming that it cannot possibly be her. After being deemed stupid and "not hardly Alice" by Absolem, she apologises for being the wrong one.

The question of Alice Kingsleigh's identity in the Underland is of the paramount importance. If she is not the right Alice, she will not fight the monster and the land will fall into the Red Queen's rule forever; but if she is the right one, she will kill the Jabberwocky and save everybody, including herself. As Alice travels through the Underland and meets the characters, not only does everybody say they used to know her but seem to have their own opinion whether she is her now. When Alice approaches the site of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, its participants are suddenly brought round: "We are still drinking tea. … I was obliged to kill Time waiting for your return" (00:31:33–00:31:37), says the Hatter. He mentions that Time got offended and stopped at all, which brings up an important difference between Alice's real world and the Underland. Here, although it seems linear, is malleable. The Hatter immediately recognises The Alice in this Alice. However, after she repeats that she "doesn't slay", he soon realises something's missing inside of her: "you've lost your muchness" (00:38:09–00:38:18).

As Alice learns more about the Red Queen's tyranny and befriends the Underland dwellers, she gradually gains self-confidence. She wants to free the Hatter who was captured by the Red Queen's army, but one of the characters tries to forbid it by saying "it was not foretold", she finally decides on acting upon her own wishes. "I don't care!", Alice exclaims; "from the moment I fell down that rabbit hole I've been told what I must do and who I must be. I've been shrunk, stretched, scratched, and stuffed into a teapot. I've been accused of being Alice and of not being Alice, but this is my dream. I'll decide where it goes from here. I make the path!" (00:43:35-00:44:49). This time, instead of running away from danger, she goes right into it - to the Red Queen's castle.

At Salazen Grum, the Red Queen's playing-cards-themed palace, Alice must conceal her identity. She takes on the name "Um from Umbradge" after the White Rabbit (who is an unwilling royal page) hesitates to introduce her to the monarch, uttering just an "um". The Queen does not recognise Alice as The Alice: she is too fascinated by the huge size of the girl. Alice (or Um) is thus accepted as a member

of the court and designated the Queen's favourite, for all Salazen Grum's aristocrats have a particularity to them - at least one unnaturally enlarged body part. Men with huge bellies and women with big ears or noses all religiously follow their notably big-headed Queen in a grotesque procession. As it soon turns out, the court is comprised of cheats wearing prosthetics to win the Queen's favour. Alice's identity is also uncovered: when Mallymkum says her real name out loud, the Red Queen's knight suddenly recognises Alice as if the dormouse has uttered a magic spell. Indeed, at this point of the movie, the symbolic function of a name as a revelation of one's identity is already an established issue.

After fleeing Salazem Grum, Alice stays at the White Queen's castle. While it is surrounded by blooming trees and is built of white marble, it is bathed in shadows, lacks any lustre or warmth. The White Queen's appearance appropriates her palace: her gown and hair are as white as snow, but her face looks sickly pale, almost grey, and dominated by heavy, dark makeup. While the Red Queen looks monstrous with her enlarged head, Mirana reminds the spectator of a ghost of a dethroned monarch. However, their horroresque design is not focused on eliciting fear. It seems to serve as much an aesthetic purpose as a narrative commentary on the sisters' complexes: Mirana only used to be the Queen, and Iracebeth is too full of herself.

Even after retrieving the Vorpal blade meant to kill the Jabberwocky, Alice is still adamant she is not the one that slays the beast. A day before the Frabjous Day (the day of the final battle between the queen sisters), Mirana is ready to choose her champion. While the brave dormouse offers her needle-sword, the rest of the gathered characters are sure it must be Alice. The girl faces a similar situation as she did during Hamish's engagement though in a different world. She looks on her friends' terrified faces when the White Queen tells her: "Alice, you cannot live your life to please others. The choice must be yours, because when you step out to face that creature, you will step out alone" (1:19:32–1:19:48). Again, Alice is not ready and flees to yet another garden – this time the White Queen's.

In the yard, she sees a pupating Absolem who calls her stupid again for not knowing who she is. This time, she does not apologise, but opposes his words: she tells him her full name, where she lives, names of her parents. Absolem with a smile calls her "Alice, at last" (1:21:00–1:21:07), as if the identity of Alice was a destination that has just been reached. He says that she used to call their world the Wonderland, triggering a flashback. The movie's audience sees what Alice is remembering: her younger version from the film's first scene, engaging with the Underland's characters in situations from Lewis Carroll's version of the story, like painting roses red and having a tea party with the Hatter. The nineteen-year-old Alice

Kingsleigh accepts the existence of the Underland as real and realises she must protect it fighting the Jabberwocky. When the war starts, she joins the White Queen in an armour, her blond hair loose, the Vorpal sword in her hand.

Iracebeth and her deck of cards soldiers, as well as Mirana, her chess pieces army, and the whole mad pack of friends meet at a chequered battleground. Alice fights only with the Jabberwocky, who talks to her sword, calling the blade its ancient enemy whom it meets again. Alice, to find her inner strength, resorts to her father's saying - Charles used to claim that he believed six impossible things before breakfast. Now, Alice is listing six things she considered unreal but believes now: that there are cakes and potions that change one's size, that animals talk, and that she will kill the Jabberwocky. Relocating the fight to ruins next to the chequer, among ancient-looking, fallen Doric columns, she climbs the highest stairs. With a powerful, peremptory voice she screams the Red Queen's favourite saying: "off with your head" (1:30:51–1:30:53) and beheads the beast. The battle stops as its participants observe the severed head rolling down the stairs.

The crown, changing its colours from red and gold to blue and silver, is returned to the White Queen. Mirana banishes her cruel, now abandoned by her servant's sister to "the Outlands", suggesting the spectator an even further defragmentation of the diegetic space. The victory is won, and the citizens of the Underworld are now free from the Red Queen's terror. The Alice who entered the Wonderland and was not sure of her name, matures into the Alice who slays beasts. The monsters are gone, and she is ready to return to her world.

After crawling back up from the rabbit hole into the real world, Alice returns to the gazebo. The bewildered crowd of aristocracy is still there as if the time in the real world stopped for the duration of Alice's adventure. Offering no explanation as to why is her baby-blue dress all dirty and her hair loose, she declines Hamish's engagement, stating that he is not the right person for her. Again, she addresses the same people as before - this time not recounting their advice but replying to them. She says it is her life and she will do what she deems appropriate and useful, asks Aunt Imogene to get help for her delusions, and openly opposes Lady Ascot's opinion. Finally, Alice turns to Lord Ascot and tells him she has a business she would like to discuss. The crowd looks at her with awe, listens attentively, and nobody tries to stop her. Soon, Alice is making plans for the trading company her father led, and, eventually, she boards a ship named "Wonder". The final scene features her standing at the stern, greeting a blue butterfly who she recognises as Absolem.

Conclusions

Alice's journey starts in an oppressive, misogynistic world. There, she is standing on the brink of adulthood, in the eyes of the society ready to marry and reproduce. Since she is not ready to disown neither her girlhood nor her child-like curiosity, the society tries to trick her into the role of a silenced wife. Her ideas and ambitions are perceived as mad and undesirable, and they are constantly subject to reprimand. Alice's identity is threatened, and she embarks on a truly Campbellian journey to save it. She transgresses the boundary between the real and the fantastic, reaching a new plane that provides a space for growth, development, and connecting with the inner child. In the Underland mad is the norm and imagination are key. There, Alice changes her size back and forth, wears different dresses, gains allies and enemies, and gradually becomes a stronger version of herself. When she returns to the real world, she returns transformed, ready to face the oppression and free herself from the world's expectations. She also takes a piece of the Underland with her – as she meets Absolem on the board of her ship, the real and the fantastic blur.

The fantastic Wonderland and the realistic world can be read as the Gothic double. Although seemingly opposing, the Underland is a mirror to the reality, highlighting the mechanisms of oppression with a caricatural exaggeration, revealing the truth by using absurd. The characters Alice meets in the Wonderland are like the ones in the real world: the despotic Red Queen might be an impression of the proud Lady Ascot, and Alice compares the Tweedles to two sisters from the party herself. In both worlds Alice is expected to be a particular version of herself. In the real world it is a submissive and unwilling wife of Hamish Ascot, in the Underland - Alice the champion and monster slayer. While both challenging, only one allows her to be her own person.

Works Cited

Alice in Wonderland. Dir. Tim Burton. Walt Disney Motion Pictures, 2010.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 3rd ed, New World Library, 2008.

Carroll, Lewis, and Lewis Carroll. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: And, Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. Modern Library, 2002.

Hogle, Jerrold E., editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. First edition, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Kavka, Misha. “The Gothic on Screen.” *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, by Jerrold E. Hogle, First edition, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Salisbury, Mark. *Burton on Burton*. Rev. ed, Faber and Faber, 2006.

Savoy, Eric. “The Rise of American Gothic.” *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, edited by Jerrold E. Hogle, First edition, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Siegel, Carol. *Goth’s Dark Empire*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005.

Punter, David. “Gothic, Theory, Dream.” In Crow, Charles L (ed.), *A companion to American Gothic*, edited by Charles L. Crow, First edition, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

WARSAW LITERARY MEETINGS RISING STARS 1

If you are interested in the articles from the first WLM RS,
you may find them in *Folio* #5 (18) 2019:

Rafał Borkowski
The Human Body as the Transmitting Telegraph:
Mesmerism and Literature in the Victorian Era

Joanna Morawska
The Body as a Means of Exerting Control:
Mesmerism and Shapeshifting in *The Beetle* by Richard Marsh

Aleksandra Baryłowicz
Working Bodies as the Sight of Horror and Pride:
A Memoir of Robert Blincoe (1832) and *A Narrative of the Experience and Sufferings of William Dodd a Factory Cripple* (1841)

Maria Szafrańska-Chmielarz
"Dressed as the dirty old Jew, I knew I should not be recognized":
Disguised Bodies and Physical Britishness in Baroness Orczy's
The Scarlet Pimpernel (1905)

Katarzyna Koźma
Anthropology and Literature in Movement:
Savage Dance in H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885)
and Lilly *Grove's Dancing* (1895)

Just follow the link: Folio #5

ISSN 2450-5064

INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW