

The Gothic Literary Complex in Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights"

Božoki, Božica

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2017

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište u Rijeci, Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:186:894279>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-09-07**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[Repository of the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences - FHSSRI Repository](#)



UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Božica Božoki

**THE GOTHIC LITERARY COMPLEX IN EMILY BRONTË'S
*WUTHERING HEIGHTS***

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the B.A. in English Language and
Literature and Pedagogy at the University of Rijeka

Supervisor:

Sintija Čuljat, PhD

Rijeka, September 2017

ABSTRACT

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, a novel written in the Victorian era, nowadays is considered a classic, though it was controversial when first published in 1847. In her writing, Brontë was influenced by the Gothic genre, expanding the Female Gothic and establishing the New Gothic genre.

The use of gothic elements in *Wuthering Heights* is abundant, and although it evoked terror in the readership, it, nonetheless, conveyed a strong message. This paper places Brontë's novel in the Victorian era and Female Gothic genre and discusses the use of gothic elements. Gloomy setting, old and frightening house, a hell, opposed to a high society mansion, a heaven, ghosts, haunting repetition of names and fates intermingled with a destructive romance and eternal conflict between the cultured and natural, are some of Brontë's dark themes.

Through the horror of Gothic fiction, Brontë also wrote of Catherine's descent into madness because she was forced to abandon her wild nature to become a lady and Heathcliff's revenge and monstrosity after the loss of his other half, situations that vividly expressed her opposition to the Victorian norm and society, in which women were oppressed, imprisoned in houses, and men had all the power in both public and domestic sphere as powerful patriarchs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. WUTHERING HEIGHTS: GOTHIC NOVEL IN THE VICTORIAN ERA.....	3
1.1. THE FEMALE GOTHIC.....	4
2. ELEMENTS OF THE GOTHIC	6
2.1. DUALITY.....	7
2.1.1. NAMING.....	8
2.1.2. TWO HOUSES – HEAVEN AND HELL.....	9
2.2. DREAMS VERSUS REALITY.....	12
2.3. GHOSTS.....	13
3. POSITION OF WOMEN IN VICTORIAN PATRIARCHY	15
4. MONSTROSITY OF A MALE	19
CONCLUSION	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25

INTRODUCTION

Emily Brontë's (1818-1848) *Wuthering Heights*, written under a pseudonym Ellis Bell in 1847, is considered one of the most perplexing novels of the Victorian era. Born and raised in West Yorkshire, mostly by their father due to their mother's early death, all three Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne, lived fairly secluded lives finding the company in their imaginations and each other. Their marginalization and relative isolation limited their experiences with the society and gave rise to desires and needs that fuelled their creativity in writing. As highly educated introverts of poor wealth, they observed people and their personalities to create now timeless works of English literature. (Bronte 2010: v)

Experiences and solitary life in the isolated and gloomy landscapes of the Yorkshire moors unquestionably influenced the work of Emily Brontë the most. The only close bond was with her family and her dog Keeper. (Adams 2000) The majority of what is known about her and her life comes from what others wrote and scarce private letters and journals. Even though she wrote it under a male pseudonym, many believed that she, as a female in the Victorian era, was not able to write such an intense and dark novel in which the characters are driven by their desires. At the time of the novels release, critics and the audience were deeply distraught by its refusal to accept the norms of the Victorian era and almost demonic characterisation of main characters.

Victorian era was the time of the industrial revolution which had many effects on both economy and society. Deterioration of rural England, rapid rise of middle class and constant pressure towards unavoidable social and political reform were common themes in writing, Brontë's included. (Abrams 1999:153) She wrote about the changing times in a darker and

unconventional way using eerie and paranormal elements, depicting the struggles uniquely and simultaneously criticising the majority of the burning questions and problems of the time.

All Brontë sisters resorted to the Gothic novel genre in their writing, but they also greatly expanded the genre and went beyond it to accommodate their ideas and by doing so they reinvented and expanded the Female Gothic into the New Gothic.

This paper explores the gothic literary complex Emily Brontë used to write *Wuthering Heights*. The focus is on the elements of gothic and how their abundance in this work successfully enables the author to criticize all aspects of the Victorian era and depart from the established Victorian values.

Structurally, in the paper, the novel *Wuthering Heights* will be presented as a gothic novel in the Victorian era and explored how it is an example of the Female Gothic genre. Various elements of gothic throughout the novel, mainly through themes of duality, oppositeness of heaven and hell, dreams and reality and occurrences of ghosts will be explored and interpreted.

Being a Victorian novel that rejects the Victorian norm, an explanation to Brontë's depiction of women in the novel and their position in the Victorian society will be discussed. The final part of the paper explores the illustrated monstrosity of a male, feminine masculinity and how revenge has been the driving force for most of the behaviour of men.

The aim is to provide instances of the vast gothic literary complex of *Wuthering Heights* and how important, though monstrously depicted, is the novel's stance on Victorian society, morality, and class and gender differences.

1. *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*: GOTHIC NOVEL IN THE VICTORIAN ERA

Emily Brontë's only novel *Wuthering Heights* is considered to be "a complex Gothic tragedy, spanning two generations that express the mess people can make of their lives when needs and desires are allowed to control their actions and reactions, as opposed to common sense and restraint." (Brontë 2010: v) It is also a ghost tale with many detailed descriptions and "shifting fortunes" of the characters are built through "sensational revelation." (Snodgrass 2005:40) Brontë ties naturalism, "the primacy of physical bodies in a physical world", and supernatural fantasy which as a result unveil everything in mystery. (Carroll 2008:242) There is an opposition between "the elemental", represented in Catherine, Heathcliff and the Heights, and "the socially tamed nature", represented by the Lintons, the Grange and Nelly. (Zirra 2003)

Even though she might appreciate, even aim towards traditional values, her writing and characterisation does in fact point to emotional discrepancies and reflects "disturbed forms of social and sexual development." (Carroll 2008:243)

Victorian society characterized the distinction "between the male public sphere and female private sphere, sexually active men and passive women" (Sahin 2014: 586) Victorian novels main subject matter is the relation between the self and the society so writing about class and gender was an important development of the Gothic in the 19th century as "it moves away from Romantic concepts and addresses the social and economic strains endangered by maturing industrial society." (Smith 2007:48) *Wuthering Heights* portrays an anti-Victorian standpoint, refusing socially acceptable "moral and sexual codes" and continually depicting violence.

Brontë's use of Romanticism does in fact change "classic" Gothic genre, she is considered to be one of the female writers of the 19th century who delineated a different heroine, one that is not easily conformed to the society's values. These changes to the classic, "male" Gothic literature are elements of the Female Gothic.

1.1. THE FEMALE GOTHIC

In 1977, the feminist critic Ellen Moers was the first to use the term Female Gothic for "the women-liberating Gothic literature" typically written by women for women. (Snodgrass 2005:115) The appearance of the new genre - Female Gothic - brought an important change to the Gothic novel. While the traditional Gothic literature generally "emphasised women's weak and submissive position", the women writers of the Female Gothic were extremely critical of the society and considerably "changed the approach towards the woman question." (Kadlecová 2014:1) Some of the most notable writers of the Female Gothic genre are Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, Charlotte and Emily Brontë. Their primary audience were middle-class, female readers. (Yopp 2007:3)

"Moers stated three focal elements of female Gothic: the gendered behavior and attitudes of the heroine and hero, the importance of the female protagonist's virginity and sexuality, and the impact of social, racial, and economic status on the action, [...]" (Snodgrass 2005:115)

What women of that time experienced can be interpreted as a tyranny of patriarchal society in which they had no say, no rights and felt as prisoners in their homes and families, and the only way to vividly enable us to see these images is to cloak them in gothic form. The question of their identities peaked their interest the most. (Yopp 2007:11)

The Brontës used their writing to express their disagreement with the appointed gender biased-roles of women and their confinement to the home. They adopted the Female Gothic to their needs and created the New Gothic. Characters were no longer merely symbols, they had strong emotions that drove their actions, the heroine was no longer helpless, and they became almost the complete opposite. Their heroines, Jane Eyre and Catherine Earnshaw, respectively, are difficult to define as either good or bad due to their complex, and multi-layered personalities. The Brontë's novels managed to portray the "social and economic changes" as "emotional and sexual turbulences." (David 2005:100) Moreover, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* belongs to the second type of the Gothic sensational fiction where the woman protagonist is both the heroine and mad, monster-like character questioning changing identities and gender roles. (Punter and Byron 2004:27)

2. ELEMENTS OF THE GOTHIC

Wuthering Heights is not a Gothic novel in a conventional sense but it is an example how “the Gothic elements and atmosphere infiltrated other forms of writing”, primarily seen in sensation fiction or Female Gothic genre. (Smith 2007:72)

“The Gothic resonates both with the anxieties and fears concerning the changes in the present and the terrors of the past and the term ambivalence may be considered as a key term for the genre.” (Kadlecová 2014:5)

Primary usage and purpose of Gothic literature is to induce certain emotional response from the readers and in the earlier works, writers thought that the only way to accomplish such strong reactions was to use horror, suspense and supernatural elements. (Yopp 2007:7) As a result, nowadays, when someone mentions the Gothic genre, the majority of people would immediately think of the typical reoccurring elements – old castles, strange houses with dark corridors and haunted by ghosts. But overgrown “picturesque nature” near the castles, “bad weather with storms and dark nights” also greatly attribute to the overall uncanny atmosphere. (Kadlecová 2014:6) The coexistence of the nature and the culture, or the questionable boundary between the two, is one of the constantly present struggles Brontë wishes to depict.

Although it is never explicitly stated that Brontë draw inspiration from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, his presence and elements from his work are clearly evident. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:253) *Wuthering Heights* is interpreted by many critics as a novel about heaven and hell, in which “Satan as Milton’s prototypical Byronic hero” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:253) is present in the savage and devilish Heathcliff, a lover and a torturous demon.

2.1. DUALITY

Duality, or the use of doubling, was a very common literary figure used in Gothic literature because many authors used it to express the oppositeness or the unavoidable internalized evil. (Smith 2007:94) The Gothic was commonly used to vividly express opposition, “old-fashioned to the modern, the barbaric to the civilized, crudity to elegance.” (Punter and Byron 2004:8)

Doppelgängers, look-alikes or the doubles of a living person, represent the duality of a character, they are a “twin, shadow double, demon double, and split personality, all common characterizations in world folklore.” (Snodgrass 2005, 83) In some cases, doppelgänger is a completely different person, usually with some connection to their counterpart but an “antithesis of the original.” (Snodgrass 2005, 84)

There are many instances of duality in Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, most prominent being the duplication of names, events, and places. It almost seems that the only way to sustain and explain both nature and culture is to “endlessly re-enact itself” in cycle. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:257)

“It illustrates continuous tensions between such opposites as nature and culture, the Grange and the Heights, consciousness and unconsciousness, location and dislocation, Romantic individualism and socialization.” (David 2005:66)

2.1.1. NAMING

The ledge, [...] was covered with writing scratched on the paint. This writing, however, was nothing but a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small *Catherine Earnshaw*, here and there varied to *Catherine Heathcliff*, and then again to *Catherine Linton*. In vapid listlessness I leant my head against the window, and continued spelling over Catherine Earnshaw – Heathcliff – Linton, till my eyes closed; but they had not rested five minutes when a glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as spectres – the air swarmed with Catherines; [...] (Brontë 2010:21)

Uncanny repetition of names in the novel makes it even more complex. The name Catherine is repeated in the novel, but the repetition represents the change in Catherine's personality, and it also opposes the two Catherines. Though Catherine and Cathy¹ are related in blood, mother and daughter, they stand for different values of the Victorian time. The novel starts with Catherine Earnshaw, wild child from Wuthering Heights, then she becomes Catherine Linton, a lady of Thrushcross Grange. One and the same person, bearing two different names that ask of her to be two different personalities, one liberated, and the other tamed. Catherine was the main cause of the rivalry between the families. Cathy, her daughter, went through the opposite transformation, from a seemingly wild and witchlike female into a cultured and family-oriented lady, and eventually staying true to her initial self. Cathy Linton, "cultivated Catherine", became Cathy Heathcliff and eventually Cathy Earnshaw, reuniting Lintons and Earnshaws and establishing peace among the families by giving into traditional values of family life.

¹ Catherine II, Catherine Earnshaw's daughter, will be referred to as Cathy in the remaining text

Wuthering Heights was founded in 1500 by Hareton Earnshaw and 300 years later, another Hareton Earnshaw was its master again. Though his rightful inheritance and wealth as an Earnshaw were taken from him at a young age by Heathcliff, making him as savage and illiterate as Heathcliff has been upon his arrival, he was able to regain what was always his.

When he was first brought to Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff was a nameless gypsy from the streets of Liverpool. He was named Heathcliff, serving as both his name and surname, after “a son who died in childbirth.” (Brontë 2010:39) There should have always been three children in the family and the fact that he was given the same name as the lost son, “perhaps even the true oldest son”, points to a few things. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:264) Maybe he was thought to be the reincarnation of the lost son, meant to become a member of the family to complete it. But the most interesting theory is, if he is truly taking place of the dead oldest son, he was always supposed to take over and become the master of Wuthering Heights. It was always his destiny.

2.1.2. TWO HOUSES – HEAVEN AND HELL

Thruscross Grange and titular Wuthering Heights are the two contrasted houses and main places where the conflicts occur in the novel, “Two houses are opposed to each other as if each must absolutely deny the other’s being.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:273)

Wuthering Heights, the novel and the house “may be seen both as Brontë’s own strange house of fiction and as suggestive of the frequent strangeness of Victorian fiction in general.” (David 2005:64)

““Wuthering”, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. [...] one may guess the power of the north wind,

blowing over the edge [...] the architect had the foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, [...] a grotesque carving lavished over the front.” (Brontë 2010:4)

The moment Lockwood came to Wuthering Heights, he concluded it is a “perfect misanthropist’s Heaven” far away from the society. (Brontë 2010:3) There is no parlour, with unornamented high oak dresses filled with raw goods and guns, floor “smooth, as white stone, the chairs; high-backed, primitive structures.” (Brontë 2010:5) Everything good is substituted for the bad, almost evil – love is hate, peace is violence, life is death, everyone inhabiting there are hostile towards each other and the guest, Lockwood, who believes young Cathy practices “Black Art.” (Brontë 2010:16) Gilbert and Gubar perfectly summed up the life in Wuthering Heights claiming they “seem to live in chaos without the structuring principle of heaven’s hierarchical chain of being, and therefore without the heavenly harmony.” (2000:262)

Heathcliff’s arrival to the house transformed it into young Catherine’s personal paradise, heaven which is fairly similar to what others, cultured people like Lockwood would call hell, fierce, diabolical and uncultivated. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:266) It is a place where passion and natural energies are free to exist within, and the wild and stormy moors cannot fuse with the social conventions of the time.

“‘You’d better let the dog alone,’ growled Mr. Heathcliff in unison, checking fiercer demonstrations with a punch of his foot. ‘She’s not accustomed to be spoiled not kept for a pet.’ [...], leaving me vis-a-vis the ruffianly bitch and a pair of grim shaggy sheep-dogs, [...] half-a-dozen four-footed fiends, of various sizes and ages, issued from hidden dens to the common centre [...].” (Bronte 2010:8)

At Wuthering Heights, dog were not pets, something that Heathcliff violently demonstrated. “A huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer” (Brontë 2010:5) is definitely not a

description someone would use to describe a pet dog. They were working sheepdogs and hunters. They were the hellhounds, the keepers of the Catherine and Heathcliff's heavenly hell.

“[...] Ah! it was beautiful a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers.”
(Brontë 2010:50)

From the very first introduction to the Thrushcross Grange, it is impossible not to notice it is the exact opposite from Wuthering Heights, both in its outlook and the behaviour of its inhabitants. It is a representation of the society and economy of the Victorian era, more stable than Wuthering Heights. While most people would call this heaven, Heathcliff and Catherine knew that “in their terms this heaven in hell.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:272) Isabella, born in this heaven, impulsively ran away from home at adolescence and “chose her own fate”, an unhappy and miserable one at Wuthering Heights, the hell.

At Thrushcross Grange, first time the Linton children are introduced they fought over who was to play with a little dog, “who should hold a heap of warm hair.” (Brontë 2010:51) The dog were lap dogs for ladies. After they have been discovered, Catherine was bitten by a bulldog Skulker, “a sort of a hellhound posing as a hound of heaven.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:272) His bite also left her bleeding and initiated her transition into a lady.

One shocking instance in the novel, when Heathcliff hangs Isabella's spaniel Fanny, can be interpreted as the portrayal of “the link between animal abuse and domestic violence.”
(Adams, 2000: 186)

“The first thing she saw me do, [...], was to hang up her little dog, [...] Miss Isabella's springer, Fanny, suspended by a handkerchief, and nearly at its last gasp. I

quickly released the animal, and lifted it into the garden. I had seen it follow its mistress up-stairs when she went to bed.” (Brontë 2010: 159, 135)

Heathcliff is a violent and temperamental person, often degrading others and threatening them without empathy or remorse. By hanging Fanny, he directly threatened Isabella. Hareton, and for some time Isabella, stay loyal to Heathcliff no matter what he does and despite seeing his true nature.

Wuthering Heights is raw and functional, “anti-hierarchical and egalitarian”, while on the other hand, Thrushcross Grange represents the “hierarchical Western culture” where ladies and aristocrats live. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:274) For Catherine, Thrushcross Grange is the place where forced change of personality and identity occurred, where she was not allowed to act as usual.

2.2. DREAMS VERSUS REALITY

The boundaries between dreams and reality are blurred in the novel. The first time the reader notices it is at the beginning of the novel when Lockwood stays for the night at Wuthering Heights. He is at first confused and distraught by the repetition of the name Catherine in various variances, though the real revelation of the “shifting boundaries” occurs in his dreams. (Punter and Byron 2004:214)

“I heard, also, the fir bough repeat its teasing sound, and ascribed it to the right cause: [...] I rose and endeavoured to unhasp the casement. [...] knocking my knuckles through the glass and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch; instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand! The intense horror of

nightmare came over me: I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed, ‘Let me in let me in!’” (Brontë 2010:26)

Lockwood was unable to differentiate one from the other as the tapping of a branch against the window pane suddenly became the ghostly apparition of Catherine. Unlike Lockwood, Heathcliff instantly believed Lockwood’s experiences were true, that Catherine did return. Heathcliff lived on the boundary between dreams and reality as it was the only way to keep the memory of his love alive. What he desired the most was for this barrier to dissolve.

Throughout the novel, “doors, windows and gates” are the points where the barriers between the civilised and cultured spaces, or reality, and the wild, natural landscapes, or dreams, are blurred and make it impossible for some to distinguish them. (Van Ghent 1953, in Punter and Byron 2004:214) A window as a gateway to the other realm is again present in Catherine’s last moments when she longingly looked towards Wuthering Heights and searched for Heathcliff.

2.3. GHOSTS

Ghosts in Victorian literature are a recurring theme and motif expressing author’s different ideas and beliefs. While some see ghosts as an indication that there is a life after death, others believe that “the incoherence of their appearances” only disrupt the tranquillity of the living. Furthermore, if ghosts point to the existence of immortality, then “ghost stories by women should tell us something about women’s suppressed condition.” (Auerbach 2004:281) Taking this into consideration, it is fair to conclude that Brontë’s representation of ghosts points to each of the meanings above. Catherine continued her life in death as a ghost haunting

Heathcliff's memories and *Wuthering Heights*, as well as becoming her true, free self in death, reunited with Heathcliff.

The presence of ghosts in *Wuthering Heights* is implied from the start. When Lockwood spent the night, he had a nightmare and his sleep was greatly disturbed by "the ghost of Catherine in the guise of a child requesting admission to his room." (Smith 2007:71) He was so shocked by the reality and apparent indestructibility of the child, when in fact, he was merely unable to grasp what "life" really means at *Wuthering Heights*.

"But the country folks, if you ask them, would swear on the Bible that he walks: there are those who speak to having met him near the church, and on the moor, and even within this house. Idle tales, [...]. Yet that old man by the kitchen fire affirms he has seen two on 'em looking out of his chamber window on every rainy night since his death [...]." (Brontë 2010:354)

At the end of the novel, it is strongly suggested that the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff haunt the moors together, reunited in death and once again able to live freely and fully as they always desired. Their love simply could not survive in human society, and now when undead, they are more alive than ever and are present as a "constant reminder of the limitations of a bourgeois culture, of the radicalism that is not yet laid to rest." (Smith 2007:71) It is almost impossible to resolve the conflict between the powerful Romantic individualism and the necessary socialization where the first notion disappears. The only place where there is a chance for its existence is in the supernatural world. (David 2005:67)

3. POSITION OF WOMEN IN VICTORIAN PATRIARCHY

Emily Brontë lived in the 19th-century patriarchal society where women were only seen as housekeepers and were a part of the private sphere in the society. There was a certain Victorian domestic ideology present which almost forcibly gave women no other choice but to conform to “the ideal of the natural mother and moral wife.” (Sahin 2014:591)

Just like Brontë, Catherine grew up without a mother. She was a very energetic and lively child, at times her behaviour was even rude, “never docile, never submissive, never ladylike.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:265)

[...] we had not a minute’s security that she wouldn’t be in mischief. Her spirits were always at high-water mark, her tongue always going singing, laughing, and plaguing everybody who would not do the same. A wild, wicked slip she was [...] (Brontë 2010:43)

Catherine was never at peace and was more like a boy than a girl. When her father asked what she wanted from his trip, she asked for a whip, “a powerless younger daughter’s yearning for power.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:264) Heathcliff, a gypsy brat, was the figurative whip she received. She was finally able to take her claim over the house, because as her whip he represents the extension she is able to use in her favour and her other self.

Also similarly to Brontë, growing up in an isolated place and in partial solitary, Catherine rebelled and wandered through the moors completely emerging herself wholly, body and soul, into the nature and Heathcliff’s company. (Mahapatra 2014:12024)

“But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at. [...], they forgot everything the minute they were together again: at least the minute

they had contrived some naughty plan of revenge; and many a time I've cried to myself to watch them growing more reckless daily, [...] (Brontë 2010:49)

The loss of her father at a young age left her completely without a parent who would teach her how to properly behave and brought an end to her savage and free childhood. Catherine's transformation into a proper lady and "partial taming of her body" happened when she entered the cultured space of Thrushcross Grange. (Sahin 2014: 587) Nelly described this change as a reform, or a process of a "socially produced and reinforced" version of an ideal cultured female. (Mahapatra 2014: 12025) "Having fallen into the decorous heave of femaleness, Catherine must become the lady." (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:274) This reform started the violent process of confinement that can only end in her death. When she was bitten by Skulker, she bled a lot, and that signified her transition from a wild child into "adult female sexuality" while simultaneously being "castrated", deprived of her true self and Heathcliff. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:272) She is treated like a doll and imprisoned in the house, Thrushcross Grange, but also in her own body, unable to escape becoming a woman and a mother.

"The femme fatale in Gothic fiction is "dark, imperious, passion-ridden," and has "independence of spirit, the emotional vibrancy, the ingenuity, and the moral fallibility the heroine often lacks" (Conger 95, in Yopp 2007:15)

Catherine Earnshaw undeniably fits the description above. She is most certainly not a damsel in distress and tamed heroine usually present in Gothic literature. She does not subdue her desires or her passionate love for Heathcliff and "all too clearly recognizes her feelings and is vocal in her expression of them." (Sahin 2014: 587) In fact, she openly embraces her darker side. Her actions and behaviour before and after entering Thrushcross Grange are an exemplar

of “the soul’s fierce battle between immersion in nature and society’s demand for domestication.” (Snodgrass 2005:100)

Catherine’s initial unwillingness to choose her husband, to choose between two polar opposites Heathcliff and Edgar, caused to somewhat develop “a double standard to accommodate her feelings for both men.” (Mahapatra 2014:12023) The actual doubling and split of her personality was inevitable. She was forced to deny herself, her whip, her devilishly rebellious alter ego to accommodate the personality and marry Edgar. Her decision to marry Edgar over Heathcliff does not provide even the slightest hint of a solution for her indecisiveness and feeling of being torn between two men that are trying to conform her to their own versions of her, two men demonstrating two different worlds. If anything, her split between the two became even greater. (Mahapatra 2014:12024) Catherine’s rejection of self was what drove her into madness. Moments before death, she realised that the imprisonment and subsequent self-inflicted starvation could have been avoided if she made a different decision and not abandoned her other half. In her madness, she is unable to recognise herself, questions who she has really become. By ripping into the pillow with her teeth, she is “liberating feathers from the prison, they are once more reborn, whole and free.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:284) Something that she wants to be. In the end, ladyhood and childbirth of the unwanted baby brought death to Catherine, and consequently Heathcliff in a way.

“She broke apart into two Catherines – the old, mad, dead Catherine fathered by Wuthering Heights, and the new, more docile and acceptable Catherine fathered by Thrushcross Grange.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:287)

The exact opposite happened to Isabella, though their fates were the same. A headstrong girl fell for the monstrous Heathcliff, disguised as an honourable man, and learned the hard way that “hell really is hellish for the child of heaven.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:288)

The second generation, Cathy in particular, represent the other end of the spectrum. Her mother was always a wild child, unable to conform into a lady, which eventually lead to her doom, while on the other hand, Cathy, apparently the same when first introduces, never strayed away from her true self, kind-hearted and willing to help even those who have wronged her. Cathy is loyal to her father till his last breath, cares for her husband even though she despises him, teaches Hareton how to read and write. She is the example of the perfect housekeeper, an ideal Victorian woman. Nelly was the mother figure in her life so the development of these talents was expected. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:299)

The ghost story from the first half of the novel is now reimagined as domestic realism, with “the civilizing process now working and Hareton and Cathy functioning effectively within the domestic world.” (Punter and Byron 2004:213) Cathy is perfectly suited to culture’s expectations and helped Hareton to prepare for his new role in the patriarchal society. Their marriage and final move to the Thrushcross Grange is believed to have dissolved all the ghosts haunting them and re-established the traditional Victorian family values.

Nelly Dean appears to be “the voice of domestic order and rationality”, serving as a foster-mother, caring for and raising children through two generations, but at the same time experiencing the complete opposite of what she is so avid of – family rivalries that destroy all orderly family life. (Smith 2007:69) But even though she outlasts the fall of the families and again their rise, and at times, expresses strong emotions and opinions, she stays on the side without meddling. She is the only character who is able to escape the imprisonment of the tyrannical Heathcliff and Wuthering Heights. When others are unable to do anything against Heathcliff’s ill-natured and destructive actions, Nelly is the only one who can avoid his horrible punishments and express her free will.

4. MONSTROSITY OF A MALE

Heathcliff, a Byronic hero or rather the anti-hero, is equally passionate in his love and hatred. (Sahin 2014:589) He is the example of a traditional Gothic demonic love interest to an innocent heroine and “ferocious natural force.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:253) Just as Milton’s Satan, Heathcliff both “repels and fascinates.” (Snodgrass 2005:45)

The first half of his life is driven by “a fierce sexual passion and love of freedom” that eventually progressed into revenge and reign of terror. (Smith 2007:70) The only constant in his life is Catherine, even long after her death.

“Heathcliff is a creature moulded by the economic extremes between England’s privileged haves and coarse havenots.” (Snodgrass 2005:173) He was brought to Wuthering Heights an orphan, without a name and heritage and adopted by Mr. Earnshaw and had to establish his place in the society and family.

The way Nelly describes Heathcliff emphasises that he is different from the other children, going as far as to “demonise certain types of behaviour.” (Smith 2007:69).

“[...] those thick brows, that, instead of rising arched, sink in the middle; and that couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk glinting under them, like devil’s spies? [...] Don’t get the expression of a vicious cur that appears to know the kicks it gets are its desert, and yet hates all the world.” (Brontë 2010:60)

When talking about him, Nelly refers to him as “a goblin” (Bronte 2010:347), even asking “Is he a ghoul or a vampire?” (Bronte 2010:348)

“Heathcliff’s character tests the boundaries between human and animal, nature and culture, and in doing so proposes a new definition of the demonic.” (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:293)

Nelly’s depiction of Heathcliff, and moralizing, in general, can be fairly dehumanising. To her, Heathcliff is an outsider who will cause trouble and refuses to accept him completely and equally into the family. (Smith 2007:69) The only person who accepted him undividedly was Catherine. Heathcliff and Catherine’s erratic and reckless behaviour always lead them into trouble. When they ran to Thrushcross Grange to escape their “sexual awareness imposed by Hindley’s romantic paradise”, their hellish heaven rapidly turned into heavenly hell. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:271)

“Victorian masculinity assumed that it took a fundamentally asocial desire to acquire wealth and rise in the social world.” (David 2005:108)

When he disappeared for a couple of years, mainly driven by jealousy and feeling rejected by Catherine, he became exceptionally rich and greedy even though “he was alone in the world.” (Brontë 2010:35) No one knew how he became rich, but it did make him desirable and strongly established his position in the society. His return caused Catherine’s state to worsen and Edgar’s hostility reached a new level. Heathcliff’s constant visits to Thrushcross Grange and intentionally seeming interest in Isabella were all to provoke Edgar. At first, Edgar only allowed Heathcliff, a “ploughboy” to visit in the kitchen, and later completely expelled him out of fear this “demonic intruder” might cause both Catherine and Isabelle to run from their imprisonment. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:280) Heathcliff was transformed and superior in his maleness, his rougher and darker exterior became a true archetype of masculinity, features that were much gentler in Edgar. Edgar, a born gentlemen, almost an effeminate one, expressed his masculinity more gracefully, even more through his personality and kind manners. In his

marriage to Catherine, the gender roles are also reverse. Catherine is the dominant one, a male in a female body. (Paglia 1991:448)

Heathcliff's revenge did not exclude anyone. He used Isabella's innocence to marry her, and obtain power over her brother's wealth. She became his prisoner, always at his reach to torture. Hindley became a drunkard and gambled everything, easily enabling Heathcliff to take everything and destroy the last of Earnshaws, Hareton. He wanted to destroy the families, the patriarchy by becoming the ultimate patriarch. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:297) Heathcliff also became the "devil daddy" by forcefully taking children from their homes and trying to destroy their lines of descent. He used his own weak and sick son as a pawn in arranged marriage, to Cathy, now making her a prisoner and taking claim of her wealth.

"But Mr. Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a dark-skinned gipsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman: that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, [...] he has an erect and handsome figure; and rather morose. [...] He'll love and hate equally under cover [...] (Brontë 2010:5)

He was seen as a gentleman in the society, though at the same time remained true to his inner-self, and as the time progressed his temperamental side only became more dominant. He was still strongly dependent on Catherine, even his memory of her, he was "her primordial half-savage self". (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:293) While Catherine is more like a male, Heathcliff, an extension of her, is more "female in his monstrosity." (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:293) Catherine is as violent and full of rage and revenge as Heathcliff, even from a fairly young age when she asked for a whip. Consequently, she and Heathcliff became one, he fully gave himself over to her and became her whip of power. They are alike, the exact doubles, differing only in sex which is even said by Catherine. (Paglia 1991:446)

“If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; [...] My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff!” (Brontë 2010:87)

Outward his masculinity is demonstrated through his military stance and build, but inward, he is a female, identifying himself with Catherine, becoming “a woman’s man”, a male into which a female transfers her own insecurities and questions about sex. (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:294) Then again, for an exceptionally masculine male, Heathcliff’s own son was surprisingly the exact opposite. As nearly all the Lintons were pale and weak, Linton Heathcliff was no exception.

“[...] he was constantly getting coughs, and colds, and aches, and pains of some sort. ‘And I never know such a fainthearted creature,’ added the woman.” (Brontë 2010:225)

It is almost as if Heathcliff were infertile due to him being an extension of Catherine, without a specific gender, “suffering from internal self-impairment, a hermaphrodite sexual personae.” (Paglia 1991:453)

Heathcliff’s aggressive, violent behaviour never seemed to diminish, his passions and desires are always expressed with such force that it can almost be seen as “a sublimation of his sexuality.” (Sahin 2014:589) At a young age, Heathcliff was oppressed and degraded by Hindley, never able to dominate and full stand up for himself. Befriending Catherine, and forming a close bond with her, he managed to take some of the dominance.

Hindley humiliated and dominated Heathcliff from the moment he came into their household. He was supposed to be the next master of the household, but his wife’s death at childbirth set his downfall in motion. He never properly cared for his son, and never really

became the master of Wuthering Heights he wanted to be. Heathcliff took it all away from him but only after Hindley destroyed himself.

He also degraded Hareton, Hindley's son, even more than Hindley degraded him. Hareton was a savage when first introduced, uncultured and illiterate. But he is also the antithesis to Heathcliff, or rather "Victorian embodiment of Heathcliff – a Heathcliff with morals." (Landers 2005) Starting out the same, Hareton managed to become the representative of the new generation, more open to changes and willing to change. He learned to read and eventually became the perfect fit for Cathy (Gilbert and Gubar 2000:301)

Heathcliff, though a horrifying villain, a demon-like human, is still a human, driven by everlasting love and justified motifs for revenge against those who wronged him. Orphaned at a young age, he only wanted to be loved and find his happiness which he was unable to do. Later, as seeming gentlemen, he is still passionate and does not repress his emotions, causing unhappiness and death around him until he is finally reunited with his equal, other half, Catherine.

CONCLUSION

In her short life, Emily Brontë made a significant contribution to the Gothic novel and genre with her only published novel, *Wuthering Heights*. This unique literary piece, “a romance that brilliantly challenges the basic presumptions of the “romantic”” (Oates 1983) and a gothic fiction that “crosses the material world into the spiritual realm”, altering the classical gothic elements to portray the notions of social injustice, desire and revenge. (David 2005:66)

While the writing is abundant with what are now considered to be the classic Gothic elements and settings, the real significance of *Wuthering Heights* is in what they convey and portray. Brontë altered the Gothic genre and greatly contributed the beginnings of the Female Gothic.

Gloomy surroundings, ghostly apparitions, uncanny repetition of names, unimaginable revengeful viciousness and monstrosity of *Wuthering Heights* opposed to idealistic, fragile, and heaven-like Thrushcross Grange portray the never-ending battle between the natural and the cultured. The romance, dark, passionate and doomed from the beginning, where it is not possible to distinguish male from female, one being from the other and the domestic from the public is the backbone of the novel, critiquing old beliefs, discriminating the position of women in an extremely patriarchal society and strict male dominance. The world is changing and the Victorian norm is no longer existent in Brontë’s mind. The terror and shock she wanted to achieve with such a grotesque and cutting-edge novel was an attempt to influence the society’s established views and provoke a much-needed change.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Abrams, Meyer Howard. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999
2. Adams, Maureen B. "Emily Brontë and Dogs: Transformation within the Human-Dog Bond". *Society and Animals*. Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2000. 8:2
3. Auerbach, Nina. Ghosts of Ghosts. *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 2004, 277–284
4. Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. London: Harper Press, 2010
5. Carroll, Joseph. The Cuckoo's History: Human Nature in *Wuthering Heights*. *Philosophy and Literature*. 2008, 32: 241–257
6. David, Deirdre. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005
7. Gilbert, Sandra M. and Gubar, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000
8. Kadlecová, Zuzana. *Reading Oppression and Empowerment in the Brontë Sisters' Gothic Novels*. Master's Diploma Thesis. Masaryk University. 2014
9. Landers, Kendell. *Wuthering Heights: From Victorian to the Romantic*. *The St. Lawrence Review*. 2005, Volume II, 6. 20 Aug 2017.
< <http://it.stlawu.edu/~slureview/2005/6.htm>>
10. Mahapatra, Biswanath. Feminist Literary Criticism and *Wuthering Heights*. *European Academic Research*. 2014, Vol. II, Issue 9
11. Oates, Joyce Carol. The Magnanimity of *Wuthering Heights*. *Critical Inquiry*, 1983., reprinted in *The Profane Art*. 20 Aug 2017.
< <https://celestialtimepiece.com/2015/01/27/the-magnanimity-of-wuthering-heights/>>

12. Paglia, Camille. *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickenson*. New York: Vintage Books ed. 1991
13. Punter, David and Byron, Glennis. *The Gothic*. Cornwall: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004
14. Sahin, Anjumon. *Wuthering Heights: A Challenge to the Victorian Universe*. *International Journal of Research (IJR)*, 2014, Vol-1, Issue-4
15. Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. *Encyclopedia of Gothic Literature*. New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2005.
16. Smith, Andrew. *Gothic Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2007
17. Yopp, Jessica. *Gothicizing the Domestic: Subversion of the Patriarchal Home in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights*. Senior Honors Thesis. Hollins University, 2007
18. Zirra, Ioana. 2003. University of Bucharest. *Victorian Fiction II: Victorian Realism Comes into Its Own in the Intensely Structured Work of the Three Memorable Women Writers: Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë and George Eliot*. 10 Aug 2017
<<http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/lis/IoanaZirra-VictorianAge/7.htm#72>>