

THE FEMALE GAZE: A STUDY OF FEMINIST ATTITUDES IN 19TH
CENTURY WOMEN'S LITERATURE

by Victorine Meurent
Literature, English Language



Portrait of Lady Selina Caroline Meade, Thomas Lawrence (1819)

ABSTRACT

The nineteenth century, for many an “age of transition”, of revolutions and significant social change, was also quite distinctly the age of the female novelist in English literature. The present study investigates these first feminine voices to come to the forefront of the literary imagination, by comparing and analysing four novels from the first half of the century (*Emma* (1815), by Jane Austen; *Jane Eyre* (1847), by *Charlotte Brontë*; *Wuthering Heights* (1847), by *Emily Brontë* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848)). In examining their representations of women's roles in a complicated social reality, it was found that they exhibited disruptive attitudes to traditional gender norms. This paper argues that through subverted narrative structures and character archetypes, they portray the fragmentation and suppression of the self caused by patriarchal expectations.

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El segle XIX, per a molts una “edat de transició”, de revolucions i canvis socials significatius, també va ser clarament l'edat de la novel·lista en la literatura anglesa. El present estudi investiga aquestes primeres veus femenines que van passar a l'avantguarda de la imaginació literària, comparant i analitzant quatre novel·les de la primera meitat del segle (*Emma* (1815), de Jane Austen; *Jane Eyre* (1847), de Charlotte Brontë; *Wuthering Heights* (1847), d'Emily Brontë, i *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848)). En examinar les seves representacions dels rols de les dones en una realitat social complicada, es va considerar que mostraven actituds disruptives envers les normes tradicionals de gènere. Aquest article defensa que, mitjançant estructures narratives subvertides i arquetips de personatges, retraten la fragmentació i la supressió del jo provocada per les expectatives patriarcals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the history of English Literature, few times has there been such a surge of popular female authors as the period between the mid-eighteenth and nineteenth century. In the midst of a time of social and political turmoil, of revolutions, industrialisation and wars, several high quality feminine works appear. Margaret Oliphant, in 1855 wrote: "This which is the age of so many things – of enlightenment, of science, of progress – is quite as distinctly the age of female novelists... The vexed questions of social morality, the grand problems of human experience, are seldom so summarily discussed and settled as in the novels of this day which are written by women"¹. Indeed, the nineteenth century saw a higher number of published women writers than any other preceding century. Alongside Byron, Keats and Percy B. Shelly, we can cite Austen, the Brontës, Eliot and more as equally prominent creators of the time, for one of the first instances in history. For the first time, women, whose access to higher education had increased exponentially during the century, had a voice to express their thoughts. Many of these early works are compliant with the domestic expectations of the era. Nonetheless, they hold a feminine outlook on life that was previously absent in literature. Often, one can see them begin to covertly express their social ills through the mouths of their female characters: it is here that the first feminist attitudes begin to come to the forefront of the literary imagination.

In this paper, I have endeavoured to explore these first emergences of feminist literature, by examining several novels of the 19th century. By comparing and analysing these works, I intend to form a coherent synthesis of life and literature at the time, in order to comprehend some of the factors that brought about this singular burst of female expression. That is not to say that these works, because they belong to a specific era and are all written by women, can be categorised into a single genre. Modern women writers already face the challenge of being categorised in different ways to men, struggling to place their works within the grand scale of literature rather than the female-only sphere they are often assigned to. Additionally, I have used the term "feminist" liberally here, however, we can only really speak of disruptive attitudes to the gender norms of the time, as feminism as a movement did not begin to systematise itself until the 1850s (although French philosopher Charles Fourier had already

¹ Oliphant, M. (1855). *Modern Novelists—Great and Small*. Blackwoodslxx-vii: 555.

coined the word in 1837²). Since we are not looking at a fully self-aware concept yet, one can only apply modern approximations.

One could postulate that the tendency began with Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) and one of the founding feminist philosophers. She was followed by her daughter, Mary Shelly, author of the gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818). For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen four works of the first half of the nineteenth century. Listed in chronological order, they are *Emma* (1815), by Jane Austen; *Jane Eyre* (1847), by Charlotte Brontë; *Wuthering Heights* (1847), by Emily Brontë and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), by Anne Brontë. All four are of an outstanding quality and present a female-focused narrative. As I was particularly interested in studying how, when given the opportunity, women present themselves in their literature, it was imperative that the works I chose could provide a prevalent female voice. Furthermore, to complement my literary analysis, I set out to create an artistic representation of one of the novels. The second part of this paper is constituted by an illustrated edition of *Wuthering Heights* and a complete documentation of the artistic process required to produce it.

1.1. Hypothesis

The purpose of this paper is to determine the disruptive attitudes present in early feminine literature and their accurate portrayal of a complicated social reality. It is hypothesised that *Emma* (1815), by Jane Austen; *Jane Eyre* (1847), by Charlotte Brontë; *Wuthering Heights* (1847), by Emily Brontë and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), by Anne Brontë all exhibit recurring characteristics in feminine literature of the period, and depict a historical record of Victorian women's lives, at least those of their corresponding social classes. In their descriptions of the often brutal and constricting relationships with patriarchal figures and of the fragmentation of self caused by patriarchal expectations, they deftly portray the internal and external conflicts women faced.

² Goldstein, L (1982). *Early Feminist Themes in French Utopian Socialism: The St.-Simonians and Fourier*. Journal of the History of Ideas, vol.43, No. 1.

1.2. Methodology

In terms of methodology, the research of this paper was conducted mainly through bibliographical analysis; both the consultation of secondary sources and a transversal and simultaneous reading of *Emma*, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *The tenant of wildfell hall*. To complement it, two interviews were carried out; to Dr. Eleanor Dobson, associate professor in nineteenth-century literature and deputy head of the department of English in the University of Birmingham and Meri Sañé, professional illustrator of children's literature and art teacher (see: annex 1 and 2). To begin with, I developed a sociocultural portrait of the era being studied, found in the second section, under "Contextualisation" (pp. 7-17). Then, once the novels were annotated and summarised, the most pertinent literary topics were expanded upon in "Literary Analysis" (pp. 17-37). Finally, in the second half of the paper, I created a series of 9 illustrations for a hypothetical edition of *Wuthering Heights* and documented the process in "Artistic Process" (pp. 37-53).

2. CONTEXTUALISATION

2.1. ECONOMY AND SOCIETY (1770-1850)

This paper will not delve deeply into the socioeconomic issues of this era, as there is not enough time nor space to do it justice and to do so would be to sacrifice the topic to the complexities of the 19th century. Nevertheless, a comprehensive synthesis is necessary in order to understand any literature that is the fruit of the changes that European society suffered during this period.

2.1.1. Britain: an economic power

Austen, oldest of the group, was born into an era characterised by the imperialist conflicts of the 18th century and ended her life on the cusp of the Victorian era (accepted by many as 1820-1914, although Queen Victoria's reign did not begin until 1837), one of the most prosperous periods in British history. The lives of these four authors coincided in a period of great change and rapid economic growth for the British Empire. The nineteenth century saw Britain become the leading economic power of Europe: in 1801 the national product had been valued at £138,000,000; by the end of the century it had risen to £1,948,000,000³. The three Brontë sisters themselves lived the height of this powerful and transformed Britain, of which Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1847 observed, "the modern world is theirs. They have made and make it day by day."⁴

During the period between 1760 and 1830 the technological advances that characterised the rise of the First Industrial Revolution were largely confined to Britain⁵. Coupled with the nation's imperial holdings, this allowed Britain to swiftly become one of the wealthiest countries in Europe, a lead that they maintained until late into the Victorian era, although their decline to other global powers, particularly the United States, was not acutely noticeable

³Tames, R. (2006). *Economy and Society in 19th Century Britain* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315020402>

⁴ Emerson, Ralph Waldo. (1909–14) *Essays and English Traits*. Vol. V. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son. Bartleby.com, 2001. www.bartleby.com/5/.

⁵ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. (13 Mar. 2022). *Industrial Revolution*. Encyclopedia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Industrial-Revolution>.

until after World War II⁶. This period in British history is often denominated the “First Industrial Revolution”, a term which, although used earlier by French writers, was first popularised by the English economic historian Arnold Toynbee (1852–83) to describe Britain’s extraordinary economic growth spanning from 1760 to 1840⁷.

However, the sporadic and unpredictable nature of this growth, due to factors such as war, weather and technological advances, also contributed towards a complex social environment. One of the most significant sociodemographic changes in English history – the migration of large populations from rural areas to cities – occurred between 1750 and 1850. The evidence of this contrast is frequent in mid 19th century novels; it is the title of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North & South*, in George Eliot's *Silas Marner* and in Dickens’ *Bleak House*. The juxtaposition of this industrial wealth with a new kind of urban poverty is only one of the paradoxes that characterise this long and diverse age.

2.1.2. "An age of transition"

All four authors lived through what would be one of the most substantial turning points of contemporary times. Richard Tames, in “Economy and Society in Nineteenth Century Britain”, observes:

“To call the nineteenth century an “age of transition” is to label it with a historical cliché. The study of change is the historian’s business, and therefore any age that he studies has features which might lead him to regard it as “transitional”. Nevertheless, the label is peculiarly appropriate for the nineteenth century, which saw a definite change both in the structure of society and in the image that various social groups had of it and their place in it. It was self-consciously an age of progress, and progress was interpreted in terms of social as well as technological advance”⁸

British historian Eric Hobsbawm popularised the use of the term “Age of Revolution” to refer to this period, first seen in his book of the same name, *The Age of Revolution: Europe*

⁶ Steinbach, Susie. (12 Mar. 2021) *Victorian era*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Victorian-era>.

⁷ Wilson, D. C. S. (2014). *Arnold Toynbee and the Industrial Revolution: The Science of History, Political Economy and the Machine Past*. *History and Memory*, 26(2), 133–161. <https://doi.org/10.2979/histmemo.26.2.133>

⁸ Tames, R. (2006). (P. 136)

1789–1848⁹, published in 1962. It was an accurate denomination: from the late 18th to mid 19th centuries, a number of significant American and European revolutionary movements upheaved the political and social structure of the Old Regime. The influence of new Enlightenment ideals led to a rising trend in democratisation – which was accompanied by the creation of the first constitutions –; the abolishment of absolute monarchies and independent movements. The American Revolution (1765–1783), often considered the first of the revolutions and the starting point from which others took inspiration, was followed by the French Revolution of 1789 and its subsequent wars. Napoleon, by conquering most of continental Europe, not only promulgated enlightened changes in law, but also triggered national rebellions in Europe with his military occupation. Following Napoleon's defeat, European powers attempted to restore the old order and prevent further revolutions at the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15. However, the consequences of the extended wars meant that many imperial countries were debilitated, allowing for a period in which many colonies proclaimed their independence. Tames remarked that “...the period of greatest structural change fell within the first three or four decades of the century, particularly in the two decades immediately following the Napoleonic wars. To some extent, the post-war spurt was intensified by the effect of the war in distorting and retarding the pattern of growth; but probably this would have been a period of relatively rapid change even without a war to complicate the process”¹⁰. Additionally, they put a large strain on the population by way of taxes, especially the income tax that was instituted in 1798. In Britain, the Napoleonic wars (from 1793 until the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815) cost more than £1,650,000,000 to finance, and only a quarter of this sum was funded by government loans¹¹.

A significant turning point in this period was marked by the Industrial Revolution (the shift to new industrial techniques between 1760 and some time between 1820 and 1840). Average income and population started to experience a persistent rise that was previously unheard of: urban areas underwent a rapid expansion, causing social tensions and upheavals. The socioeconomic issues brought on by this industrialisation inevitably came to fuel later revolutions and social movements, such those that began in 1848 – as Engels asserted, “The condition of the working-class is the real basis and point of departure of all social movements of the present because it is the highest and most unconcealed pinnacle of the social misery

⁹ Hobsbawm E. J. (1996). *The age of revolution 1789-1848* (1st Vintage Books). Vintage Books.

¹⁰ Tames, R. (2006). (P. 17)

¹¹ Tames, R. (2006). (P. 18)

existing in our day.”¹² Additionally, it allowed for the rise of new socioeconomic classes that started to oppose the politics of the traditional order. The rise of the urban middle class, which was such a force that it had to be included into the political system, serves as evidence of this.

E.P. Thompson, in “The Making of the English Working Class”, observes how this radical shift in the organisation of the classes and means of work affected the general population:

“The process of industrialization is necessarily painful. It must involve the erosion of traditional patterns of life. But it was carried through with exceptional violence in Britain. [...] The experience of immiseration came upon them in a hundred different forms; for the field labourer, the loss of his common rights and the vestiges of village democracy; for the artisan, the loss of his craftsman’s status; for the weaver, the loss of livelihood and of independence; for the child, the loss of work and play in the home; for many groups of workers whose real earnings improved, the loss of security, leisure and the deterioration of the urban environment.”¹³

One must be aware that this century culminated in the elimination of an entire order in order to completely comprehend the changes that occurred throughout this period, not only in terms of the political institutions and methods of gaining capital, but also in the minds of the individuals who lived it. With its foundation in land, social class, religion and monarchy, the old order that had formed ancient European society had been severely damaged and all but destroyed by the French and Industrial Revolutions. Within a few decades, the complex concepts of authority, status and wealth had undergone a full redefinition, leaving an entire society scrambling to find structure.

Robert A. Nisbet and Liah Greenfeld, on the topic of social science in the 19th century, write:

“In terms of the immediacy and sheer massiveness of impact on human thought and values, it would be difficult to find revolutions of comparable magnitude in human history. The effects of the two revolutions, the one overwhelmingly democratic in thrust, the other industrial-capitalist, have been to undermine, shake, or topple institutions that had endured

¹² Engels, F. (2009). *The condition of the working class in England* (D. McLellan, Ed.). Oxford University Press.

¹³ Thompson, E. P. (2013). *The making of the English working class*. Penguin Books.

for centuries, even millennia, and with them systems of authority, status, belief, and community.”¹⁴

2.1.3. Population and the agricultural revolution

Agriculture experienced a period of expansion during the first decade and a half of the century. The pace of reform accelerated during the Napoleonic Wars, when imports from Europe in quantity were neither technically nor economically feasible and the demand for food, because of the rising population and military demands for horses and grain, was at its highest. The transformation of the traditional agricultural system, due to increased investment in new agricultural techniques – the scale of investment in agriculture absorbed more capital than industry in this period¹⁵– such as selective breeding and crop-rotation methods, allowed for a staggering increase in agrarian productivity.

Among these new crop-rotation methods was the Norfolk four-course system, established in Norfolk County, England, which emphasised fodder crops and the absence of the until then conventionally employed fallow year. Wheat was planted in the first year, followed by turnips, barley and clover and ryegrass in the third¹⁶. The system became fairly common on the newly enclosed farms by 1800 – enclosure being another development that increased productivity and profits. The Enclosure Acts effectively ended the open field agricultural system. They were a series of Parliamentary Acts passed between 1750 and 1860 through which open fields and “wastes” (unproductive areas of land to which the peasantry had rights of access to in order to pasture animals) were closed to use by the peasantry. Open fields were large agricultural areas with certain accessibility rights which the village community tended to partition into narrow strips for cultivation¹⁷. But through the enclosure acts, the ownership and rights over lands were taken from the Lord and the villagers, abolished and re-allocated. The size and quality of these fields depended on the value of the claimant's previous rights¹⁸: smaller landowners often could not afford the costs of enclosure, and farmers of more weight

¹⁴ Nisbet, Robert A. Greenfeld, Liah. (29 Apr. 2021). *Social science*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/summary/social-science>.

¹⁵ Tames, R. (2006). (P. 18)

¹⁶ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. (4 Dec. 2015). *Agricultural revolution*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/agricultural-revolution>.

¹⁷ McElroy, Wendy. (2012). The Future of Freedom Foundation, *The Enclosure Acts and The Industrial Revolution*. WEB. <https://www.fff.org/explore-freedom/article/enclosure-acts-industrial-revolution/>

¹⁸ Sharman, Frank A. (1989). *An introduction to the enclosure acts*, *The Journal of Legal History*, 10:1, 45-70, DOI: 10.1080/01440368908530953

and better political standing were allocated to the best lands. Joseph R. Stromberg, in his essay “English Enclosures and Soviet Collectivization: Two Instances of an Anti-Peasant Mode of Development,” states:

“The political dominance of large landowners determined the course of enclosure...[I]t was their power in Parliament and as local Justices of the Peace that enabled them to redistribute the land in their own favour.

A typical round of enclosure began when several, or even a single, prominent landholder initiated it ... by petition to Parliament... [T]he commissioners were invariably of the same class and outlook as the major landholders who had petitioned in the first place, [so] it was not surprising that the great landholders awarded themselves the best land and the most of it, thereby making England a classic land of great, well-kept estates with a small marginal peasantry and a large class of rural wage labourers.”¹⁹

Displaced landowners often had no choice but to flock to the cities to protect their livelihood, only to be forced to assume low-paying factory jobs. As agriculture declined from a position of relative dominance, to one of relative unimportance, and was replaced by the growing power of industry, more and more farmers and peasants relocated to the growing urban areas. A common theme in the literature and social thought of the century is the exodus of large numbers of people from the more traditional and protective contexts of village, guild, parish and family and their massing in the new metropolitan regions, forming slums, living in grinding poverty and depravity, with their wages generally much lower than the cost of living, their families growing larger and their standard of living decreasing. In fact, as writers who specialised in economic issues, such as David Ricardo and Karl Marx, could see little prospect of the plight of labour improving under capitalism, economic philosophy became known as the "dismal science."²⁰

Europe's population increased from 140 million to 266 million people between 1750 and 1850, while the global population increased from 728 million to well over 1 billion. In his renowned Essay “the Principle of Population” (1798), English cleric and moral philosopher

¹⁹ Stromberg J. (1995). *English enclosures and soviet collectivization: Two instances of anti-peasant mode of development*. The Agorist Quarterly, 1(1), 31–44.

²⁰ Nisbet, Robert A.; Greenfeld, Liah. (29 Apr. 2021).

Thomas Malthus – who is regarded as an economist – first noted the huge relevance of this growth to human welfare. There were no easily predicted limitations to population expansion due to the reduction of historical controls on population growth, particularly those caused by high mortality rates – a reduction that, as Malthus understood, was one of the benefits of technological advancement. And he emphasised that such expansion would only upset the established balance between the food supply, which Malthus asserted was rising at a geometrical pace, and the population, which could only increase in size at an arithmetic rate.²¹

2.1.5. Science, religion and education

By the beginning of the Victorian age, the protestant church had entered a state of crisis, for one of the first instances in its history. The Church of England had ended the previous century in the position of the country's established church. Nonetheless, by 1851 a census revealed that out of a population of nearly 18 million, only 5.2 million attended Church of England services, with 4.9 million attending other Christian places of worship - including Methodists, Baptists and Quakers, which represented nearly half the worshipping nation. Several parliamentary acts, such as the 1828 and 1829 acts which gave Catholics and non-conformists the same political rights as Anglicans and the 1835 marriage act, gave political protection to these emerging faiths.

For many, this era is a conflict between science and religion; between a rising enlightened group, led by Charles Darwin and his *On the Origin of the Species* (1859), which presented their scientific writings as secular and the members of the clergy still trying to perpetrate the old order. However, any perceived laical process was in reality radically divided amongst different sectors of the population, so that we cannot really speak of a unified and linear progress in the relationship between the two. Sydney Eisen, co-author of *Victorian Science and religion* (1984), remarks:

“Until the last two or three decades, historians tended to see the 'crisis of faith' in Victorian England in relatively simple terms. They regarded it as an intellectual and emotional upheaval, stemming from challenges to the historicity of the Bible, discoveries in geology

²¹ Malthus, Thomas Robert. (1798). *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, History of Economic Thought Books. McMaster University Archive for the History of Economic Thought

and biology, and concerns about morality, or rather, the apparent lack of it, in nature. Science and religion, more precisely science and theology, were deemed to be 'in conflict', the battle lines clearly drawn, and for some time, the Victorian champions of science and unbelief seemed to carry the day with the historians.”²²

Additionally, from a historical perspective, the two are separate, almost contrary entities. But the beginning of the nineteenth century had seen faith and the sciences achieve a peculiar sort of harmony that complicated the search for a clear distinction between their definitions, which we can observe in works such as William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802), or Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, published in three volumes from 1830 to 1833. Paley presented the natural world as God's creation and from there drew a parallel between the study of the bible and the study of nature, which to him was the definitive proof that substantiated the biblical theory of Genesis. Especially in the fields of geology, palaeontology and evolutionary theory, mainstream scientific literature interacted actively with faith in its writings, or else still retained a spiritualistic tone.

More materialistic scientific perspectives, which emerged towards the 1820s and 1830s, were chiefly adopted by radical working class members, whose religious beliefs strayed towards agnosticism and atheism. Early in the century, the Church had a low presence in England's new urban areas due to the difficulties of establishing new parishes, a process that until 1843 could not be completed without an Act of Parliament. The Church not accounting for the drastic population shifts until the 1840s allowed for other non-conformist faiths to occupy the space that the state-sanctioned religion had neglected. This growing distance from the Church in industrial cities was aided by its association with the old political order in the writings of working class philosophers. Thus, the place that religion had traditionally occupied in society shifted and acquired a more political connotation, meaning that certain sectors of the population adopted atheism as a form of protest.

In terms of education, general knowledge became increasingly enriched through public access to scientific papers and a higher attendance in schools. As the masses, especially the middle class, began to be influenced by enlightened ideals, progress in the fields of science and education started being viewed as essential to the bettering of society. The Augustan

²² Wilson, D. B. (1977). Victorian Science and Religion. *History of Science*, 15(1), 52-67.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/007327537701500103>

linear view of time, which asserts that humanity has historically progressed in a continuous manner, supported this. David B. Wilson described the impact of science upon Victorian England: “Science touched the imagination by its tangible results. It was immersed in matter, and it conformed directly to the Augustan canon of historic progress by its immediate contribution to the “order, regularity, and refinement of life”. Romance and the Revolution bred ideas of human purpose which only slowly permeated the English mind. Even in 1830 far more powerfully in 1840 they were beginning to work.”²³

And as public conscience grew, so did demands for a better, secularised education. The working class petitioned for religion and education to be separated, leaving cult practices to ministers of the sects, and for the government to employ a more balanced management of its funds. In Engels research, he finds that "The Ministry, in its whole enormous budget of £55,000,000, has only the single trifling item of £40,000 for public education, and, but for the fanaticism of the religious sects which does at least as much harm as good, the means of education would be yet more scanty."²⁴ (A worthy item to note is that his paper was written between 1842 and 1844, just prior to the Irish Famine, therefore a significant amount of funds were being dedicated towards crisis relief). Others opposed the few advancements that were granted, complaining that,“The discipline of children was becoming milder, because it was touched with that tenderness for all helpless things which we see increasing throughout the eighteenth century, and with that novel interest in the spectacle of the opening mind which was a characteristic product of the Revolutionary years. But it was, perhaps for the same reason, more vigilant; and moral, or social, anxiety made it for girls at least more oppressive.”²⁵

2.2. THE WOMAN QUESTION

2.2.1. “Separate spheres”, sex and the Angel of the House

Victorian gender ideology was based on the doctrine of 'separate spheres'. Men and women were believed to be divided incontestably by their gender, which was biologically based and determinative of almost every aspect of a person's identity. The 'natural' characteristics of

²³ Wilson, D. B. (1977). (P. 23)

²⁴ Engels, F. (2009). (P. 15)

²⁵ Young G. M. (1953). *Victorian England : portrait of an age* (2d ed.). Oxford University Press.

men and women evidenced that one was physically weaker, dependent and intellectually inferior, yet morally finer and more religious than the other. According to these characteristics, each gender's inherent potential was suited towards one aspect of life or another. Reproduction was central to a woman's physiology, while for men sex was central. A woman was not plagued by the sexual temptations that distracted a man, as a 1857 medical text remarked: "the majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled by sexual feelings of any kind"²⁶. Most Victorians were severely uninformed about sexual matters due to social stigma and lack of proper scientific information. The moral double standard that permitted men to have multiple sexual partners and women to pay dearly for adultery was supported by the assumption that women did not experience sexual desires and, therefore, one who allowed herself to be led by such urges must be unnatural, demonic and "fallen". Furthermore, in order to deter premarital sex, the New Poor Law obligated women to "bear financial responsibilities for out-of-wedlock pregnancies": from 1834 onwards, women became financially and legally responsible for any illegitimate children²⁷.

The Victorian ideal of femininity was epitomised by the "angel of the house", best illustrated in a 1863 didactic poem by Coventry Patmore:

"Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
How often flings for nought! and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes;"²⁸

²⁶ Acton W. & Lindsay & Blakiston. (1871). *The functions and disorders of the reproductive organs in childhood youth adult age and advanced life : considered in their physiological social and moral relations* (3d American from the 5th London). Lindsay & Blakiston.

²⁷ Forman, Cody Lisa (2000). *The Politics of Illegitimacy in an Age of Reform: Women, Reproduction, and Political Economy in England's New Poor Law of 1834*. *Women's History*. 11 (4): 131–156.

²⁸ Patmore, Coventry Kersey Dighton (1863). *The Angel in the House*, Part I. London: Macmillan & Co.

Virginia Woolf ridiculed this ideal of femininity, writing that "She [the perfect wife] was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed daily. If there was a chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it ... Above all, she was pure." She emphasised that she "bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her"²⁹. Woolf satirised this unobtainable concept of a sterile, silent woman. Such purity could only really exist on an ideological level, and so she "kills" her, because ultimately she did not fit into reality. The cult of domesticity reflected the ideal of what proper womanhood or manhood should be, but did not accurately describe the reality of women's roles, which moved on a much more fluid spectrum. Dr. Eleanor Dobson asserted that "we think of that moment in history as one with very rigid morals, but in actuality a lot of those women overstepped those boundaries." (see: annex 1, min.13). To most working class families, for example, the angel of the house was inconvenient: they were unable to maintain the doctrine as survival on a single male wage was unsustainable.

3. LITERARY ANALYSIS

3.1. Women novelists of the 19th century

The novel became immensely successful during the 19th century, mainly due to the fact that, as Daiches describes in *A Critical History of English Literature* (1960), it was "the vehicle best equipped to present a picture of life lived in a given society against a stable background of social and moral values by people who were recognizably like the people encountered by readers, and this was the kind of picture of life the middle-class reader wanted to read about"³⁰. In a society dominated by the middle class, the novel was something in which the average person could see themselves reflected. Beginning in the 18th century and continuing on into the 19th, the circulating library also became integrated into the literary marketplace. Books were borrowed and sent into all parts of the country through subscription services, most famously W. H. Smith and Son's Subscription Library, making the novel easily obtainable and an immediate staple in almost every household³¹. The early 50's saw an

²⁹ Woolf, V. (1966). *Professions for Women*, Collected Essays (London: Hogarth Press)

³⁰ Daiches, D. (1960). *A Critical History of English Literature*. London: Secker & Warburg.

³¹ Bassett, Troy J. (2017) *Circulating Libraries in the Victorian Era*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature.

expansion in access to literature with the Public Libraries Act (1850). This was especially important to female novelists, who unlike male writers depended mostly upon literature to connect with their contemporaries and provide a sense of artistic community. Ellen Moers illustrated the isolated condition of the woman writer: "Male writers could study their craft in university or coffee house, group themselves into movements or coteries, search out predecessors for guidance or patronage, collaborate or fight with their contemporaries. But women through most of the 19th century were barred from the universities, isolated in their own homes, chaperoned in travel, painfully restricted in friendship. The personal give-and-take of the literary life was closed to them. Without it, they studied with a special closeness the works written by their own sex, and developed a sense of easy, almost rude familiarity with the women who wrote them."³²

In *A Literature of their Own* (1999),³³ Elaine Showalter describes three phases of the history of women's writings in the west:

(i) *A feminine phase* (1840-1880), characterised by an imitation of sorts of the artistic standards and views on social roles of the dominant tradition, i.e. male literature. It appeared in the 1840s and ended in George Eliot's death in 1880, spanning the life and works of writers such as the Brontës, Mrs. Gaskell, E.B. Browning, H. Martineau and George Eliot. This period included the adoption of male pseudonyms by authors of the time. Charlotte, Emily and Anne's works, for example, were initially published under androgynous names (Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell), a decision that was justified in the 1850 preface to a posthumous edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* (published by Charlotte): "Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because (...) we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise."³⁴

³² Moers, E. (1985). *Literary Women*. New York: Oxford University Press.

³³ Showalter, E. (1999). *A literature of their own: British women novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press,

³⁴ Brontë, Charlotte. (1850) *Forward* in *Wuthering Height and Agnes Grey*.

(ii) *A feminist phase* (1880-1920) in which we see expressed a demand for autonomy and a protest against masculine standards and values. Spanning 1880 to 1920, its principal writers are Charlotte Yonge, D.M. Craik, M. Oliphant and E.L. Linton.

(iii) *A female phase* (1920-present) Finally, in the third phase of self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition and the period was marked by a search for identity.

These works exist in a specific place in the chronology of feminine literature which has set them apart and has, perhaps, along with their evident literary quality, contributed to their spectacular reception in contemporary criticism. They are not reactionary in nature, as many posterior works tend to be. Once the advent of occidental feminism became consolidated, an immediate struggle arose to define feminine culture as a separate entity from masculine culture. Simone de Beauvoir wrote, "Women have no separate history, no natural solidarity; they have not combined as other oppressed groups have. Woman is riveted into a lop-sided relationship with man; he is the one and she is other"³⁵. In a strife to revert this traditional historical course, feminism's foundational values became unrelated in an opposition to patriarchal tradition, rather than an original and primary culture. Such a strong desire for emancipation prevented the possibility of overcoming male cultural imperialism, as paradoxical as it was. John Stuart Mill argued that for women's literature to be separate from the influence of male standards, complete isolation was necessary: "If women lived in a different country from men, and had never read any of their writings, they would have a literature of their own", or that at least much more time was needed before it could "guide itself by its own impulses"³⁶. Indeed, even in the imagined Amazonian worlds of the late century, women did not write or paint or involve themselves in the fields of man. E. Showalter asserted that "feminist utopias were not visions of primary womanhood, free to define its own nature and culture, but flights from the male world to a culture defined as oppositionary to the male tradition"³⁷. However, early in the feminine phase of development, feminine literature presented a certain lack of self-awareness: Charlotte Brontë wrote that they (women writers) didn't "at that time suspect that our mode of writing and thinking was

³⁵ Beauvoir, S de. (2015). *The Second Sex*. London, England: Vintage Classics.

³⁶ Mill, John Stuart. (1869). *The Subjection of Women*. London: Longmans Green Reader and Dyer.

³⁷ Showalter, E. (1999). *A literature of their own: British women novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton, N.J. :Princeton University Press

what is called “feminine”³⁸. This allowed for a natural expression of female values; in its most initial phases, feminine literature did “guide itself by its own impulses”.

3.2. Structural aspects

3.2.1. Inception of narrative voices in the Brontë's literature

Despite Anne and Emily's works being frequently placed on opposing sides of the “Brontë spectrum”, their major novels demonstrate a kinship of narrative structures that *Jane Eyre*, whose plot is told linearly, does not follow. Both *The Tenant* and *Wuthering Heights* adopted their structure from the typical gothic frame-tale: framed narratives – stories within stories – were featured in many canonical gothic novels, often utilising the “found document” trope to introduce a new voice.

The Tenant is divided into three different sections and provides 2 narrative voices, both presented through indirect dialogue, or “found documents” (correspondence between Gilbert Markham and his friend Halford and excerpts from Helen's personal diary). The first section, from chapter I to XV, is narrated by a middle-aged Gilbert recounting the events of his youth through letters to his brother-in-law. It is marked by Brontë's description of Gilbert's evolution from naïve egotism to sensitivity and maturity. This initial point of view includes suspense in the form of Helen's persona, who is introduced as the impressive, mysterious stranger and mature heroine. The second section, from chapter XVI to XLIV, narratively enclosed between the outer frame of Markham's letters, consists of Helen's diary, which she gives to Markham: the account of her first marriage and an intimate description of her personal growth. Lastly, the third section, from chapter XLV to LII, reverts to Markham's narrative with occasional incisions of Helen's voice supplemented by letters to her brother.

This bipartite narrative structure is often associated by critics with the separation of the public and private spheres, stereotypically attributed to men and women respectively. N. Jacobs, in her essay *Gender and Layered Narrative in Wuthering Heights and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, remarks that in both *The Tenant* and *Wuthering Heights* “we approach a horrific private reality only after passing through and then discarding the perceptual structures of a narrator –

³⁸ Brontë, Charlotte. (1850) *Forward* in *Wuthering Height* and *Agnes Grey*.

significantly, a male narrator – who represents the public world that makes possible and tacitly approves the excesses behind the closed doors of these pre-Victorian homes”, and describes the narrative structure as one that “replicates a cultural split between male and female spheres that is shown to be at least one source of the tragedy at the centre of the fictional world.”³⁹ From a modern perspective, it is easy to view it as a binary choice between the public and private spheres, or a patriarchal account oppressing a transgressive female narrative. This kind of dichotomy threatens to standardise a black and white view of a multifaceted period, but the fact that Helen and Nelly's narratives are sandwiched between their male counterparts is undeniable.

Though her position in the plot is as the main character and heroine, Helen Huntington remains throughout the narrative a rather invisible, background voice serving mainly to humanise and focalise the actions of her husband: although her incision into the narrative provides a critique of masculine behavioural standards, it is nonetheless subordinated to the relationships between three male characters (Markham's account of his efforts to strengthen his relationships with his brothers-in-law). Within the confines of her inner narrative, Helen is shown to be a professional and pragmatic woman, who refuses the gender roles imposed upon her by challenging the legal and economic submission of women in marriage. She revindicates her right to maintain her profession as a painter and raise her child as she sees fit.

Brontë's novel challenges traditional Victorian gender roles, but she does not advocate for a radical shift in the separation by spheres. The final suppression of Helen's narrative voice marks her return to the private sphere, as the nurturer of both her son and husband, to which she acts as a moral compass, providing a rational kind of humanism that will enable him to be a more sensitive and patient participant in the public sphere. Even her most literate, rebellious and rational character isn't allowed to fully transgress the bounds of the status quo. Brontë focuses her plot on an insubordinate woman, but ultimately opts for voicing her ideas through the mouth of her husband. Thus, she suggests that a woman receiving adequate credit for her judgement is less paramount than the overall contributions it might have, placing the public good before the individual, even an individual much disadvantaged by the public. The secondary role of individual and, in this case, feminine desires replicates the nineteenth-century tendency of women writers to adopt male pseudonyms in order to get their

³⁹ Jacobs, N. M. (1986). Gender and Layered Narrative in “Wuthering Heights” and “The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.” *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1986, pp. 204–219.

ideas across to the political sphere. Stealing the voice of the dominant culture seemed to be to Anne and Emily the only way to discredit its conventions and deal with the unacceptability of their subject matter.

Both Anne and Emily found it necessary to adopt a male persona in order to delegitimise the domestic ideal and reveal an uncomfortable and often violent hidden reality. Gilbert and Gubar maintain that Emily Brontë willingly “[...] produced literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning”⁴⁰. Lockwood, the gentlemanly and civilised first narrator, is avoidant and thus tacitly permissive of the abuse at the Heights. When he sees Heathcliff going to strike Cathy junior, his response is one of repression and trivialisation: “Having no desire to be entertained by a cat and dog combat, I stepped forward briskly”⁴¹. The abuse is not imagined as continued in his narrative, simply perceived and dismissed. However, through Nelly's story, we uncover the injustices that take place behind the closed doors of the Victorian household. Gilbert, too, is ignorant of the mistreatment that Helen has suffered until it is revealed in her diary. Both beneficiaries of the social structure that allows this violence, their views are distorted by their positions of power. The feminine accounts of the inner reality in the Victorian household then serve to discard their perceptual narratives and reveal an antipatriarchal truth.

3.1.2 Treatment of space and time: the pathetic fallacy

The phrase pathetic fallacy (from the Greek words "páthos" – emotion, suffering – and "fallacy" – false idea –) used in a literary context, refers to the attribution of human characteristics to elements of nature. It was coined by English critic John Ruskin in 1856⁴² to define the rhetorical device popular among late 18th and early 19th century poets, of which we can highlight Burns, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats. Although in the 1840s, the portrayal of urban discontent and hardship was becoming an increasingly popular topic – moving away from the high society oriented fiction of the early century – some novels remained fixated on using nature and traditional rural scenes as a thematic resource. In gothic

⁴⁰ Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). *The madwoman in the attic: the woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination*. Yale University Press.

⁴¹ Brontë, Emily. (1847). *Wuthering Heights*. Global Grey, 2004.

⁴² Ruskin, J. (2010). Modern Painters, VOL. III. (CONTAINING THE TEXT OF ALL THE EDITIONS). In E. Cook & A. Wedderburn (Eds.), *The Works of John Ruskin* (Cambridge Library Collection - Works of John Ruskin, pp. 1-2). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511696084.003

and romantic literature especially, it was common for the lines between nature and sentimentality to be blurred and often the wilderness of the outside was personified to reflect the inner emotional turmoil of its characters.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Lockwood's second visit to the Heights is marked by an overwhelming blizzard, serving to compel the plot forward and introduce the emotional character of Catherine's birthplace: "I approached a window to examine the weather. A sorrowful sight I saw: dark night coming down prematurely, and sky and hills mingled in one bitter whirl of wind and suffocating snow"⁴³. This is the first in a series of many symbolic devices: the violent storm that foreshadows Earnshaw's death ("the hour came, at last, that ended Mr. Earnshaw's troubles on earth... A high wind blustered round the house, and roared in the chimney: it sounded wild and stormy, yet it was not cold, and we were all together"⁴⁴); the havoc and destruction caused by the particularly violent thunderstorm on the night Heathcliff leaves the Heights ("the storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury. There was a violent wind, as well as thunder, and either one or the other split a tree off at the corner of the building: a huge bough fell across the roof, and knocked down a portion of the east chimney-stack, sending a clatter of stones and soot into the kitchen-fire."⁴⁵). In *Wuthering Heights*, nature acts as a mirror of the characters themselves, narrating their most raw and emotional moments and enhancing the psychological poignancy of the novel.

The moors, which act as a sort of purgatory; an in between place caught between heaven (Thrushcross Grange) and hell (Wuthering Heights), where nothing "civilised" can grow, and the wilderness runs rampant and untamed are the most representative description of Heathcliff and Catherine's psychology. A parallel is drawn between the realm of nature and the kind of freedom and assertiveness seen in Heathcliff and Catherine's characters, later contrasted with the restraints of domesticity. They are at once liberty and a cage: for Catherine, stagnation in the simple but restricting world of her childhood; for Heathcliff, a vast and endless reminder of what he has lost, "the entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she (Catherine) did exist"⁴⁶.

⁴³ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 12)

⁴⁴ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 38)

⁴⁵ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 78)

⁴⁶ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 300)

3.3. Themes and character archetypes

3.3.1. The governess and the female orphan

The figure of the governess in 19th century society became an important instrument in bridging the gap between the rising bourgeoisie middle class and the nobility: the education of the younger generations played a major role in the imitation of the higher classes, who had been employing governesses for centuries. A household with a governess was one of higher status, not only because the family could afford the upkeep, but also due to the fact that it meant the mother did not have to assume the responsibilities of nurturing her children and could commit herself to her social duties, an option that was unavailable to the lower classes and therefore became a symbol of wealth. Kathryn Hughes, in *The Victorian Governess*, commented that “by the 1850s the wiping of small noses had become an unacceptable task for any woman who sought to observe these social codes”⁴⁷.

The governess herself represented the other half of the English bourgeoisie: daughters of middle class families who had fallen into destitution during the collapses in the first half of the century. Following a series of bank failures surrounding the Napoleonic wars, children of bankrupt houses were forced to find jobs to support their families. Having been educated themselves, many of these young ladies were in a position to occupy the space that working class women were unable to fill, and wealthier women would never even consider.

A prerequisite for the Victorian governess was that she should comply with all the expectations of ladyhood and, at the same time, be content with enjoying none of its benefits. She must be at ease with the gentility, but never expect to be fully integrated into their company. She must be accomplished in all things that would classify a woman as marriageable, without ever intending to enter that state herself, and a surrogate without hopes of participating in motherhood. Additionally, her subordinated position in the household fluctuated in relation to each of its members, giving her an unstable understanding of her status and further contributing to her isolation. Terry Eagleton saw the governess as a “Servant, trapped within a rigid social function which demands industriousness, subservience and self-sacrifice: but she is also an upper servant... furnished with an imaginative awareness

⁴⁷ Hughes, K. (1993). *The Victorian Governess*. London: Hambledon Press

and cultivated sensibility... She lives at that ambiguous point in the social structure at which two worlds – an internal one of emotional hungering, and an external one of harsh mechanical necessity – meet and collide.”⁴⁸ Jane Eyre explores the permanently alienated position of the governess and the discomfiting ambiguity of her social class, mirroring the life of the author. “The Brontës are known famously for their stories being, not necessarily semiautobiographical (...), but they (the Brontës) all became involved to some degree in educating young women. In Jane Eyre the parallels are obvious,” comments Dobson (see: annex 1, min. 22). In a letter to Elisabeth Gaskell, on August seventh, 1841, Brontë wrote, “To speak truth, though I am solitary while they are away, it is still by far the happiest part of my time (...) If teaching only were requisite, it would be smooth and easy; but it is the living in other people’s houses – the estrangement from one's real character – the adoption of a cold, frigid, apathetic exterior, that is painful.”⁴⁹

Becoming a governess was at once one of the few ways a woman could liberate herself and gain economic independence, and a sentence of social marginalisation and entrapment. This dichotomy classifies Jane the governess in a peculiar characterisation. A rebellious woman discontent with what life had offered her, “I longed for a power of vision... which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen... I desired more of practical experience than I possessed; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character, than was here within my reach.”⁵⁰, and free to move outside the constrictions of social norms. For Eagleton, Jane's double fold social ostracisation, in the form of her employment and status as an orphan, “leaves the self a free, blank, ‘pre-social’ atom: free to be injured and exploited but free also to progress, move through the class structure”⁵¹. In a Marxist reading of Jane Eyre, he identifies the transformation of traditional subordination into a strategy of social advancement as an attribute of the “deep bourgeois ethic” present in the novel. However, she is also estranged and subordinated, an oppressed victim of her class. Jane is a perpetual observer, both an insider and an outsider in the house, a fact which is often literalised by physical separations between her and the other characters. In Gateshead, we see her in the “double retirement”⁵² of the window seat and the red moreen curtain she draws closed. Later on, in the house party at

⁴⁸ Eagleton, T. (2005). Jane Eyre. In: *Myths of Power*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

⁴⁹ Gaskell, E. C., & Jay, E. (1997). *The life of Charlotte Brontë*. London. New York, Penguin Books.

⁵⁰ Brontë, C. (1847). *Jane Eyre*, 3rd ed. Planet ebook. (P. 166)

⁵¹ Eagleton, T. (2005).

⁵² Brontë, C. (1847). (P. 7)

Thornfield the situation is repeated: “The crimson curtain hung before the arch: slight as the separation this drapery formed from the party in the adjoining salon, they spoke in so low a key that nothing of their conversation could be distinguished...“Why, I suppose you have a governess for [Adèle]: I saw a person with her just now – is she gone? Oh, no! there she still is behind the window-curtain. You pay her of course.”⁵³ Peter J Bellis observes that Jane positions herself on the margins, “where inside and outside meet,” and thus creates a space for herself where initially there was none, converting “a boundary line into a new interior space”⁵⁴. It is difficult to discern to what point Jane's isolation is a product of her social standing or a self-imposed sentence.

A natural transition from the topic of the governess is to another recurring literary motif: the female orphan. *Jane Eyre* unites two socially marginalised and vulnerable groups (the orphaned child and the middle class governess) into its main character. In doing so, Brontë creates a reverse juxtaposition: she compares two seemingly different elements by placing them side by side and forcing the acknowledgement of their common theme. By equating the governess to the orphan in social vulnerability, she visibly draws attention to her helplessness. *Emma*, a few decades earlier, presents an almost identical dilemma through the mouth of Jane Fairfax. She, the female orphan, is left with two survival options once she becomes estranged from her adoptive family: on the one hand, marriage, and once her engagement plans with Frank Churchill fall through, becoming a governess. This, she equates in no uncertain terms to slavery: “There are places in town, offices, where inquiry would soon produce something-offices for the sale not quite of human flesh, but of human intellect.”⁵⁵

The governess, and by extension the female orphan, was both threatening to the social order and one of its most vulnerable components. Mary Poovey defines the cultural significance of the governess: “because of the proximity she bears to two of the most important Victorian representations of woman – the figure who epitomised the domestic ideal, and the figure who threatened to destroy it”⁵⁶. The sexual (in virtue of being unmarried and generally unchaperoned) and economic independence of the governess, and her proximity to husbands

⁵³ Brontë, C. (1847). (P. 258)

⁵⁴ Bellis, P. J. (1987). *In the Window-Seat: Vision and Power in Jane Eyre*. ELH, 54(3), 639–652.

⁵⁵ Austen, J. (1815). (p. 235)

⁵⁶ Poovey, Mary. (1988). *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Print.

and sons, often associated her with the figure of the prostitute in the Victorian mind. The prostitute acted as the surrogate wife; the governess as a surrogate mother. She was liberated from her father's home, but unmarried, and living in close quarters with men who were not of her blood. In literature, it became necessary to insist upon her plainness and spinsterish qualities, much as *Jane Eyre* does (Jane is “disconnected, poor and plain”⁵⁷).

3.3.2. The politics of marriage: the divorce novel

Before 1857, with the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act (popularly known as the Divorce Reform act), divorce was legally impossible in England, and available in effect to only a select few. Thus, the introduction of divorce or separation into the conventional marriage plot was only seen in a handful of novels before the mid-century, most notably *Hard Times* (1854) by Charles Dickens. This makes *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* a particularly revolutionary work.

First, to understand the thematic importance of the separation featured in Anne Brontë's novel, we must understand a few legal facts. After 1700, there were effective means of terminating an existing marriage to allow remarriage through a private act of Parliament, but only those who were very wealthy and mainly men could successfully petition for a full divorce. In these instances, the main motivation would be to prevent undesired offspring from inheriting large estates, so the only accepted cause was adultery. Wives could only initiate a divorce Bill if the adultery was aggravated by life-threatening cruelty. A woman's legal status in the event of marriage became null; her rights were adopted and represented by her husband, and she ceased to be a person in the eyes of the law. Even judicial separation, in practicality a much simpler procedure, left a woman without the rights to her income or custody of her children. This prevented many women from initiating the proceedings: only four women were granted full divorce by Parliament before 1857, while 140 men achieved it in the same period.

In 1857, divorce proceedings were transferred from Parliament to a majorly reconstructed court. The new bill, though still very conservative, allowed for an increase in divorces for the middle classes and women. The grounds for divorce remained substantially the same, but the

⁵⁷ Brontë, C. (1847). (P. 161)

act added cruelty and desertion as aggravated causes for women and more importantly protected her property in the case of judicial separation.

The presence of the reform debates in the public eye gave rise to what was dubbed the Divorce Novel. Anne Humphrey, in her essay *Breaking apart, the early Victorian divorce novel*⁵⁸, distinguishes two main tropes that separate the genre: the “Caroline Norton” plot, which was the most commonly seen and appeared in novels such as *Stuart of Dunleith*, by Caroline Norton (1851), *Thrice his*, by Louisa Jane Campbell (1866) or *The Tenant* itself. Named after the real-life figure of Caroline Norton, who advocated for changes in women's legal rights and whose life reflected the fictional pattern, the plot usually contains an adulterous, cruel and often times abusive husband which a long-suffering and heroic wife must bear until his death or, in some cases, until she decides to leave. In the second trope, seen in a minority of novels such as *Jane Eyre* and *Held in Bondage* (1863), the husband is the one who has been tricked into a bad marriage and wishes to marry the “good” woman he has fallen in love with. Both *The Tenant* and *Jane Eyre* face the dilemma of the second marriage and its validity in the eyes of religious morality: if marriage is seen as a civil contract that can be dissolved, their heroines could achieve their happy ending with their respective love interests. However, religious doctrine established marriage as a sacrament, meaning that it was insoluble and therefore remarriage became a sin. In both cases, instead of risking the possibility of losing the heroine's innocence and sympathy with the reader, the authors decide to eliminate the inconvenient “other” that obstructed the romance plot: Bertha kills herself and Arthur dies of consumption.

Illustrated in a very clear manner in the confrontational scene between Helen and her husband is the legal enslavement of a woman's possessions and person in Victorian society: “Only this,' returned I; 'will you let me take our child and what remains of my fortune, and go?' 'Go where?' 'Anywhere, where he will be safe from your contaminating influence, and I shall be delivered from your presence, and you from mine.' 'No.' 'Will you let me have the child then, without the money?' 'No, nor yourself without the child. Do you think I'm going to be made the talk of the country for your fastidious caprices?'”⁵⁹. Brontë draws attention to the systemic

⁵⁸ Humphreys, A. (1999). *Breaking apart: The early Victorian divorce novel*. In N. Thompson (Ed.), *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question* (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, pp. 42-59). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

⁵⁹ Brontë, A. (1855) *The tenant of Wildfell hall*. New York, Harper & brothers. Retrieved from the Library of Congress. (P. 20)

resources a husband can make use of to disenfranchise a woman and rob her of her agency. Furthermore, she makes Arthur restrict Helen's access to her only source of income, i.e. her paints, upon learning of her plans to flee. The paints are not only a symbol of her livelihood, but a general feminine struggle to gain even the smallest measure of independence. Without which, as Arthur Huntington knows, a woman can be trapped into staying in a marriage with no economic or legal foundation that would enable her to leave. Helen Huntingdon initially experiences conflict between her obligations to mould her son into a model citizen and her role as a professional painter and wage earner. Ultimately, Brontë directs Helen's logical and artistic skills back to the family, where they will be applied to humanise her husband and son for the benefit of the public sphere. By giving up her work as a professional painter, Helen symbolically silences the voice of women in literature.

3.3.3. The politics of pretty: the feminine ideal

The ideal of femininity is interestingly portrayed in *Wuthering Heights*. Catherine senior is a character that begins her life as far removed as possible from the influence of the patriarchy and its standards for women: in an isolated geographical location, motherless and eventually fatherless and relatively exempt from an organised or formal education, she reaches the cusp of puberty untainted by social norms. She spends her formative years in a wild, unsocialized and ungendered environment. Her encounters with authority, such as her brother's tyrannical nature and Joseph's Christian morality, cultivate a rebellious and free spirit: "she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words; turning Joseph's religious curses into ridicule"⁶⁰. Her only feminine virtue, described by Nelly herself, is her beauty, "A wild, wicked slip she was—but she had the bonniest eye, the sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish"⁶¹. Brontë presents us with an image of the "nature" of a woman removed from the influences of society. Demonstrating, quite clearly, that female gentility as it was perceived in Victorian society was a product, rather than an innate characteristic of a woman.

By then contrasting this state with Cathy's drastic transformation at Thrushcross Grange, Brontë further reinforces this idea. *Wuthering Heights*, symbolising Catherine's natural state and instinctive preferences is left behind and substituted by the castrated and alien land of

⁶⁰ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 13)

⁶¹ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 13)

Thrushcross Grange, where in order to achieve the acceptable ideal of femininity she creates a parallel of herself, based upon the concealment of all of those elements that defined her at the Heights. Catherine is forced to face two opposing versions of her own femininity, personified by the two male love interests. Heathcliff signifies Catherine's rebellious *alter ego* and Edgar the patriarchal principle and the ruthless employment of social and sexual powers and manliness. Thus, the two men signify for Catherine different identities and different positions in life (the fact that her self and the course of her life end up being dictated by the men around her is a show of striking social realism). Furthermore, the relationship between her name and her identity plays a recurring role in the novel, reaffirming the idea that her self is closely tied to the male figures in her life: "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*."⁶² Catherine, as we see at the conclusion of the novel, is ultimately unable to reconcile the conflicting versions of herself and her female gentility. During her final illness she experiences a derangement which creates a psychic split and blurs both Heathcliff and Edgar's different versions of her.

3.3.4. The angel of the house and the female monster

The female monster archetype has been present in a transversal manner across most of literary history, as far back as depictions of monstrous Greek goddesses such as Medusa or Scylla (although they were perhaps not intended as monstrous, posterior interpretations have established the figures as symbols of female villainy). Other examples are Lady Macbeth, Carmilla and Lilith. Often used by male authors to serve as a contrast and a haunting mirror to an angelic and ideally feminine character, she expresses "male anxieties about female autonomy"⁶³. The female villain is a result of a fear of an indomitable woman; a woman that exists without man as her acknowledged principal. Simone de Beauvoir notes that "Male dread of women, and specifically the infantile dread of maternal autonomy, has historically objectified itself in vilification of women". In the patriarchal tradition, this unease manifests itself in depictions of women with monstrous power. The essential characteristics that define her are decadence, assertiveness, cunning and violence, all monstrous qualities in a woman primarily because they are traits praised in the masculine world. Her sexuality is defined as grotesque, perverse. A woman in possession of such characteristics is unsuited to existing in

⁶² Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 9)

⁶³ Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). (P. 28)

the pure realm of the private sphere, therefore, she is unfeminine. She transcends the boundaries of masculine and feminine, and is transgressive in her abnormality. Oftentimes, her androgyny manifests itself in her animalistic physical attributes. The archetype typically acquires a mystical or religious connotation, using strong imagery of diabolical qualities or witchcraft.

Contrarily, the female angel is holy, a sanctum of domesticity and purity. Enclosed in her home, the Victorian angel silently serves as a sacred refuge to her husband and children and never once calls attention to her suffering. The term "angelic" refers to a being that lacks self-identity, one who serves others cheerfully and without ever considering their own needs or wants. Such a being, in fact, has no needs of its own and has no cravings other than to be available to others. Gilbert and Gubar write that female angels "are, of course, self-less, with all the moral and psychological implications that word suggests"⁶⁴. As in *Wuthering Heights*, the sanctified angel of the house is usually accompanied by a sister image – the embodiment of sacrilegious feminine traits –, who haunts her and provides a negative mirror. Catherine Earnshaw's monstrosity is not only contrasted with her daughter's angelicness, but also defined as a separate manifestation of her self.

3.3.5. Christian metaphysics in *Wuthering Heights*

Wuthering heights utilises heavy symbolism of clashing forces, in addition to the clashing narrative voices in its subversive structure. The plot is divided into the opposing worlds of *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange*. These central points around which much of the story circulates represent the two religious notions within Christian doctrine about the afterlife: hell, the former; and heaven, the latter. The metaphysical universe within the novel allows for a "fall" plot line, however, Brontë subverts this traditional trope by having her characters reject heaven and embrace hell. Heaven (the Grange) is put into moral questioning, as it functions as the domestic sphere, "the eternal prison-house of the wife"⁶⁵ into which Cathy "falls", but ultimately rebels against. Note, also, that the story is not the typical tale of "a woman tempted by Satan who falls into her shadow self"⁶⁶, but a fall from hell into heaven. Significantly, a *fall* and not an ascension, because it is the loss of Satan (leaving the

⁶⁴ Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). (P. 20)

⁶⁵ Oakley, A. (2013). *Sex, Gender and Society*. Farnham: Ashgate.

⁶⁶ Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). (P. 255)

Heights) and the submission to God (moving into the Grange) that mark the painful transition into Catherine's misery. Her desire to remain tied to hell is explicit: "Heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out in the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy". In reversing the terms of Christian cosmogony – defining what Christianity calls Hell as freeing, ecstatic and fulfilling, and Heaven as rigidly hierarchical, constricting and associated to the patriarchal state – Brontë commits to a surprisingly radical religious position.

3.3.6. Female-female relationships: rivalry and objectification in *Emma*

The gynocentrism in Austen's works allows her to highlight women as psychologically complex and socially intelligent creatures, and to examine the intricacy of female-female relationships. Setting her novels in secluded, quotidian society with a small ensemble of characters allows for a precise dissection of social mannerisms. The rural English environment, according to Edwin M. Yoder, allows Austen to "intensify the punctilio of social life and impart intense significance to small gestures,"⁶⁷. In *Emma* Woodhouse she creates a character "whom no one but [herself] will much like"⁶⁸, who is manipulative, witty, and obsessed with maintaining her social dominance. Significantly, whose behaviour also exhibits both the deep set craving for female alliance and the relational aggression and envy most women experience. In *Emma*, the strategising implicit in female friendships is uncovered: in her relationships with Harriet Smith, Jane Fairfax and others, she presents the spectrum of female friendship, balanced precariously between cooperation and competition. The novel doesn't eclipse the complications of intrasexual relationships, despite the societal discomfort with the idea that women can display aggressive, envious and competitive behaviour. Women frequently engage in social violence in order to manage and dominate intrapersonal relationships and groups in ways that serve their own interests, all the while denying any hostility because they are conditioned to regard such behaviour as deplorable.

Emma's female relationships are caught in an underlying network of competitive behaviour and alliance, which are incongruent with the nineteenth century evolutionary perspective of

⁶⁷ Yoder, E. M. (2008). *Otelia's Umbrella: Jane Austen and Manners in a Small World*. The Sewanee Review, 116(4), 605–611.

⁶⁸ Austen-Leigh, J. E., & Chapman, R. W. 1. (1926). (P. 157)

women's passivity, that associated competition with sexuality (since women were not sexual creatures but rather maternal and nurturing, they could not be competitive in the same way men were. Darwin hypothesised that sexual selection compelled men into a “contest of rival males”⁶⁹, while women remained meek and passive). In Emma's relationship with Harriet, she frequently alludes to the hierarchical difference in their alliance; according to Emma, her benevolent attentions are to lower-ranking Harriet's advantage: “she would notice her; she would improve her; she would detach her from her bad acquaintance, and introduce her into good society”⁷⁰. She employs language of use to justify their connection, and one can observe a certain objectification from the very beginning: “as a walking companion, Emma had very early foreseen how useful she might find [Harriet]”⁷¹. Her initial attraction to Harriet is on account of her physical appearance, and thenceforth a theme of comparing Harriet to an accessory or a decorative object continues: “a Harriet Smith,” she muses, is a “valuable addition to her privileges”⁷². Despite considering Harriet to be attractive, even far more than she, she believes her to be unthreatening. The assumption that Harriet is not a sexual competitor, on account of her inferiority of birth, allows them to form a close alliance, which later “sinks”⁷³ when their romantic interests intersect.

Jane Fairfax, sensible, unwilling to express her needs and desires, benevolent and silently suffering, is at once Emma's opposite (Emma, assertive, satirical and quick at articulating her judgements, is far less conforming to the standards of passive and refined femininity) and her double: “like the antithetical sisters [Jane and Elizabeth Bennet], Jane Fairfax and Emma are doubles. Since they are the most accomplished girls in Highbury, exactly the same age (and) suitable companions”⁷⁴. Naturally, then, they cannot ever be friends. As they are too evenly matched as rivals, man-made competition effectively divides them from one another. Their intimate friendship is interrupted before it ever comes to fruition.

Austen may be condemning one fictional woman to a life of relative friendlessness by exposing female conflict in *Emma* rather than hiding it, but in doing so, she disproves the accepted notion that friendship exists in a realm of pure ether, utterly free from rivalry,

⁶⁹ Darwin, C., Kessler, L. & Joseph Meredith Toner Collection. (1871) *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. London: J. Murray. Retrieved from the Library of Congress.

⁷⁰ Austen, J. (1815). (P. 37)

⁷¹ Austen, J. (1815). (P. 39)

⁷² Austen, J. (1815). (P. 255)

⁷³ Austen, J. (1815). (P. 380)

⁷⁴ Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). (P. 159)

violence, and selfish motives. Emma is the spokesperson for "women's language" – the rules and mechanics of women's intrasexual relationships – in all of its unsavoury manifestations. Her competitive and audacious behaviour and manipulations refute long-held stereotypes about women's cognitive limitations.

3.3.7. Female rage and hysteria in gothic fiction

A striking figure in *Jane Eyre's* narrative is that of Bertha Mason, Rochester's first wife and the infamous "madwoman in the attic". Rochester, acting as judge, jury and incarcerator, maintains his first wife, whom he accuses of being mad, imprisoned in the attic of his house for eleven years. In order to dismiss his inconvenient responsibilities in the role of her husband, Rochester erases Bertha's identity as both Mrs Rochester and Bertha Antoinetta Mason, transforming her simply into "the mysterious lunatic kept [at the house up yonder] under watch and ward"⁷⁵ (her name features in the novel only seven times; in every other instance she is referred to as a "hag", a "lunatic", a "mad-woman"). His erasure of her is so significant that she is completely silenced throughout the novel. She has not one word of dialogue in the entire book, no opportunity to present an account of her own madness. Her role in the plot is a driving force and a temporary obstacle to the main love story; her status as a character, secondary.

Hysteria in the novel is understood as a symptom of the supernatural, as Bertha's insanity is linked to demonic qualities. She is the inhuman spirit that "haunts" Thornfield, corrupted by the devil's influence; Edward asserts "that demon's vicinage is poisoned,"⁷⁶, once again relying upon religious rhetoric to justify her eleven years of imprisonment. Jane goes so far as to compare her to the "German vampire", and describes her as bestial and animal-like: "What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face."⁷⁷ The neutral pronoun "it" is used both to degrade and dehumanise her and to identify her as something alien.

⁷⁵ Brontë, C. (1847). (P. 259)

⁷⁶ Brontë, C. (1847). (P. 262)

⁷⁷ Brontë, C. (1847). (P. 263)

As she is physically absent for most of the novel and described mostly through references to her unnatural qualities, the topic of her race is ambiguous. What is palpable is her status as a “Creole” (“I longed only for what suited me- for the antipodes of the Creole”⁷⁸); however, that may indicate that she is a descendant of white European settlers born in a colonised country or a person of African descent born in the Caribbean. While her ethnicity is inconclusive, she is classified as the antithesis of Blanche Ingram, arguably the paragon of the white Englishwoman, whose name literally denotes paleness and purity. Bertha is described as dark, tall, with large black eyes, an olive complexion and raven hair: her “darkness” is palpable, as is her insanity, and contrasted with Blanche’s whiteness and soundness of mind, the two concepts (of darkness and madness) potentially conflate. Rochester asserts that Bertha’s family “wished to secure me because I was of a good race”⁷⁹. Bachman, in *Shutting Her Up: An Exploration of the Madwoman and the Madhouse in Victorian Literature*, writes about the binary established in this particular assertion: “The etymology of “race” in nineteenth-century England may refer to ethnicity or ancestry; nevertheless, assigning Edward to being “of a good race” signifies that there are both “good” and “not good” races. It is implied that Bertha is of the latter category.”⁸⁰. Her race serves to give further justification to her characterisation as “other” and bestial, a perspective that reveals the European imperialist position of the author. Her final suppression (or extermination) within the narrative, taking into account this racial rhetoric, acquires an almost genocidal tone. Gilbert and Gubar write that “the dehumanization of Bertha Mason Rochester, the Jamaican Creole whose racial and geographical marginality oils the mechanism by which the heathen, bestial Other could be annihilated”⁸¹.

Bertha’s madness is associated with her unfeminine behaviour; she operates independently of Victorian gender ideology in that she is insubordinate and authoritative, and lacks the feminine virtues that Edward describes: “I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her. I was not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature: I had marked neither modesty, nor benevolence, nor candour, nor refinement in her mind or manners—and, I married her”⁸². The consequence of being an unnatural, untamable and unfeminine woman was confinement in an institutional asylum. English law in the Victorian era afforded men the

⁷⁸ Brontë, C. (1847). (P. 274)

⁷⁹ Brontë, C. (1847). (P. 333)

⁸⁰ Bachman, Savannah Jane. (2017). “*Shutting Her Up:*” *An Exploration of the Madwoman and the Madhouse in Victorian Literature*. Senior Projects Spring 2017. 146.

⁸¹ Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). (P. 27)

⁸² Brontë, C. (1847). (P.279)

responsibility of identifying, controlling and restraining “madwomen”. Two certificates of lunacy, signed by a doctor, were required in order to confine an individual in an insane asylum, a procedure that was instituted in 1774. Showalter considered that “Victorian England endured the stigma of epidemic insanity”⁸³, as the rate of confined people, especially women, rose across the first half of the century. The asylum is metaphorized in *Jane Eyre* in the form of the attic, Bertha's prison. Similarly, Jane is also confined to the red room in her youth when she expresses “madness”: “Mrs. Reed [...] now came upon the scene, followed by Bessie and her maid Abbot. We were parted: I heard the words— ‘Dear! dear! What a fury to fly at Master John!’ ‘Did ever anybody see such a picture of passion!’ Then Mrs. Reed subjoined— ‘Take her away to the red-room, and lock her in there.’”⁸⁴. Her rage, stemming from her frustration with her position as an orphan and the submission and abuse she is subjected to in Gateshead, manifests itself in her childhood in episodes of what a mature Jane and the family consider “madness”.

Contrarily, though, Jane manages to overcome her madness and saves herself by learning to internalise patriarchal ideals. Lowood, the institution for orphan girls in need of being “schooled into Christian submission”⁸⁵, allows her a chance to govern her anger, learning from Miss Temple and Helen Burns, both examples of Victorian femininity. By constructing a confinement of her own making, by imprisoning her hunger, rebellion and anger, she avoids confinement by a man. When she confronts Bertha, she is facing her own suppressed rage. Gilbert and Gubar observe that “Thornfield's attic soon becomes a complex focal point where Jane's own rationality (what she has learned from Miss Temple) and her irrationality (her “hunger, rebellion and rage”) intersect.”⁸⁶ Bertha is Jane's shadow self, her “truest and darkest double”⁸⁷, a psychological doppelgänger representing her socially unacceptable and criminal self. Every one of Bertha's manifestations function as an indirect expression of Jane's secret resentment and desires: she wishes to destroy the symbol of her servitude to Rochester (Thornfield), and Bertha burns it down; Jane expresses her anxieties about the upcoming bridal day and her perturbation with the estranged image of herself in the veil, and Bertha tears the garment up; her resentment towards Rochester and his treatment of her are voiced in her prediction of “you shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right

⁸³ Showalter, E. (1999). *A literature of their own: British women novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton, N.J. :Princeton University Press,

⁸⁴ Brontë, C. (1847). (P.333)

⁸⁵ Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). (P. 352)

⁸⁶ Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). (P. 348)

⁸⁷ Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2020). (P. 360)

hand"⁸⁸, and it comes true when Bertha's death causes Rochester to lose an eye and a hand in the fire.

4. ARTISTIC PROCESS

The program used is *Krita*, a professional and open source painting program, first developed in 1998, made by artists in order to offer affordable art tools to a wider audience. The decision to use a digital medium instead of a traditional one was based mostly on the practicality of the method: it is generally considered to be faster (as long as the artist is familiar with the medium and the program they are using), due in part to the large variety of digital tools that replace traditional instruments, essentially recreating the same function more efficiently, and with less mess. In addition, it affords an easier means to replicate them in differing formats, a requirement that would be necessary if they were to become illustrations for an edition of a book.

4.1. Inspirations

4.1.1. Wind as a character and *Wuthering Heights* (2011)

In order to keep with the aesthetic of the Yorkshire moors, I drew much of my inspiration and references from the 2011 *Wuthering Heights* movie, directed by Andrea Arnold, starring Kaya Scodelario as Catherine and James Howson as Heathcliff. This particular take on the novel reads as a rawer version of the story, separate but not entirely unattached to the original narrative, as if it were a series of real events upon which the book might have been based. The love interests, one of which is played by the first POC actors to portray Heathcliff (Solomon Glave as the younger and James Howson as the elder), are represented as equals – unlike in other more “swoon-worthy” adaptations, in which Cathy is a Victorian lady besotted with a “bad-boy” style Heathcliff – consumed by a childish love, turned into something wilder and darker.

While the movie doesn't stay entirely true to the original plot, it effectively portrays, through its visuals, the landscape of the novel. The real, harshness of the York countryside and the

⁸⁸ Brontë, C. (1847). (P. 280)

unforgivingness of life on a farmhouse in the 19th century is presented in a fresh, unromanticized manner. A.O. Scott, of the New York Times, writes, “Abandoning the lush and stately romanticism of most earlier filmed versions (...) Ms. Arnold’s “Wuthering Heights,” (...), emphasises mud, misery and savage, inarticulate feelings. Shot in a boxy format with a drab, harsh palette that suits the weather and the mood of emotional and material deprivation, the film intersperses vertiginous Yorkshire vistas with almost microscopic examinations of the local flora and fauna”⁸⁹. The adjacent moors to the Brontë parsonage, which was a late-eighteenth-century house of some elegance and charm, were a large source of inspiration to the sisters' writings and a fairly romanticised aspect of their life in biographies. Elisabeth Gaskell, recounting her visit to the parsonage in her book *The life of Charlotte Brontë*, remarked that “Haworth village was wild and lonely”, and described the moors as an “ominous brown”⁹⁰.

In particular, the wind is given prominence, and becomes a character in its own right. The colour palette, composed of dark blues, greys and muddy greens, tinged with the ever present whiteness of fog, reflects the sparsity and bleakness of the novel. This is the palette I’ve tried to recreate: a range of murky, toned down hues, in cool tones, contrasted with the opaque whiteness of mist and the ghostly elements of the novel.

4.1.2. Impressionism and Japanese Ukiyo-e illustration

In terms of style, the illustrations intend to evoke a sense of the turbulent weather by using a sketchy technique that offers more precedence to the brushstrokes. The thick and swirling brushstrokes employed incorporate the windy climate of the moors into the landscape, in much the same way that Van Gogh renders his clouds in *Starry Night* (1889). In this, I have tried to draw from the way impressionist pieces are dynamic in their composition (especially regards to weather), such as in Claude Monet’s *Woman with a Parasol* (1875).

⁸⁹Scott, A. O. (October 4th 2012). *Heathcliff and Cathy, With Lust and Mud*. New York: New York Times. WEB. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/05/movies/wuthering-heights-by-andrea-arnold-with-kaya-scodelario.html?smid=url-share>>

⁹⁰Gaskell, Elizabeth Cleghorn. (1900). *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. New York and London: Harper & Bros.,. Internet Archive. Contributed by the Library of Congress.



Woman with a Parasol (1875), Claude Monet

The development of art in the 20th century was significantly influenced by Impressionism, which was the first movement in the canon of contemporary art. The Impressionists were inspired by recent advancements in colour theory, which aided in their quest for a more precise understanding of how colour and light interact in nature. They disregarded the prevalent belief that an object's shadow is primarily composed of its hue with a little brown or black added. Instead, they added depth to their colours by using the concept that an object's shadow is broken up by dashes of its complementary colour. For instance, to give an orange's shadow more energy in an Impressionist painting, blue paint strokes may be added to the shadow.

The Impressionists focused on depicting the atmosphere of a certain hour of the day or the influence of various weather patterns on the environment. They had to work swiftly in order to catch these transitory impacts. They painted with delicate, vivid strokes, sacrificing a lot of the subject's outline and finer details in the process. Their painting style put them at odds with the traditional Académie of the French artistic establishment, which emphasised delicate colour and exact detail that was painstakingly created in the artist's studio with great expertise. The Académie failed to recognise how the spontaneity of Impressionist colour and brushwork, which previously had only been praised in the sketches of the ancient masters, conveyed a freshness. However, as time went on, the public came to adore the energy of the Impressionist approach, and over time, Impressionism rose to become the most well-liked artistic trend ever.

An inspiration for the Impressionists were the striking designs of the Japanese woodblock prints that were fashionable at the period in France. Their asymmetrical compositions gave the Impressionists a compositional format to employ to develop their theories about colour, contrasting broad swaths of flat colour with patches of detailed pattern - even the most avant-garde artists occasionally require the assurance that their chosen course has some historical precedent -. The Ukiyo-e masters' works, particularly those of Hokusai and Hiroshige, gave the Impressionists this precedence of tradition, albeit from a different culture, and gave them the courage to move forward with their original concepts. In the late 19th century, Ukiyo-e played a significant role in shaping Western perceptions of Japanese art, particularly those of Hokusai and Hiroshige's landscapes. Beginning in the 1870s, Japonisme gained popularity and had a significant impact on early Impressionists like Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, and Édouard Manet. It also had an impact on Post-Impressionists like Vincent van Gogh and Art Nouveau artists like Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

Following in the same trajectory, I too was influenced by the strong lines and colour blocking of the Ukiyo-e. Ukiyo-e was a popular Japanese art form from the 17th to the 19th century. Woodblock prints and paintings depicting female beauties, kabuki performers and sumo wrestlers, historical and folkloric scenes, travel scenes and landscapes, flora and fauna, and eroticism were created by its artists. The Japanese word ukiyo-e (浮世絵) means "pictures of the floating world.". The capital of the Tokugawa shogunate shifted to Edo (Tokyo) in 1603. The chunin class (merchants, craftsmen, and workers), who were at the bottom of the social scale, reaped the greatest benefits from the city's rapid economic development and started to partake in and support the kabuki theatre, geisha, and courtesans of the pleasure districts; the phrase "floating world" came to refer to their hedonistic lifestyle. The chunin class, who had amassed sufficient riches to afford to do so, was fond of printed or painted ukiyo-e masterpieces and used them to decorate their homes. The first ukiyo-e works appeared in the 1670s with the paintings and monochromatic prints of lovely women by Hishikawa Moronobu. Colour prints were gradually added, first being reserved for special orders. By the 1740s, painters like Okumura Masanobu were printing coloured regions with many woodblocks. While most of their works were prints, several ukiyo-e painters were known for their paintings. Due to the fact that printing was done by hand, techniques like colour blending or gradation on the printing block were possible that were impractical with machines. In their art, flat, unshaded areas of colour are contrasted with decorative patterns, such as the swirling clouds or floral wallpapers featured in the illustrations. The delicate line

variation is employed to convey whimsy and detail, and takes a prevalent role before colour rendering, which is secondary.

4.1.3. Art Nouveau poster art: Mucha and the modernists

Between roughly 1890 and 1910, both in Europe and the United States, an ornamental art movement known as Art Nouveau flourished. Art Nouveau was most frequently used in architecture, interior design, jewellery and glass design, posters, and graphics, and it was distinguished by the use of a long, sinuous, organic line. It was an intentional effort to develop a new aesthetic that was unconstrained by the historicism that characterised so much of the art and design of the 19th century.

The aesthetic characteristics of prints and posters created in the Art Nouveau style include a tendency for curving lines, balanced asymmetry, patterns and decoration drawn from the decorative arts, and subject matter drawn from nature. Sinuous lines and swirling forms, a major feature of Art Nouveau, may be seen in many contemporary lithographs. The soft curves of the female form, which can be found in the figures' flowing, fashionable hair, elegantly moving bodies, and draped clothing, were frequently used by artists as a means to incorporate such contours. Lithographic artists often choose to represent these curved lines asymmetrically in order to highlight their dynamic quality, probably being inspired by the balanced-yet-imperfect style of elements of nature. Art Nouveau posters usually have an amalgam of chaotic patterns and lavish decorations due to the fact they were heavily influenced by the decorative arts, particularly textiles and wallpaper. Similarly to how printmakers used asymmetry, artisans of decorative arts drew inspiration from nature, as seen in the repetition of the designs, the fluidity of their forms, and the motifs themselves, which would mimic leaves, flowers, scales and seashells. Additionally, they were significantly influenced by Japanese prints, particularly those of Hiroshige, whose two-dimensional, flat planes were popularised in Paris during the period.

4.1.4. Caspar David Friedrich and Romantic art

Impossible not to include is the artistic movement that paralleled the evolution of gothic and romantic literature. Romanticism gained traction as an artistic movement in France and Britain in the early nineteenth century and persisted until the middle of the century. It was

initially identified as an aesthetic in literary criticism around 1800, but it developed in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789 as a reaction, through emphasis on the imagination and emotion, to the Enlightenment values of reason and order. Early Romanticism was greatly influenced by artists trained in Jacques Louis David's (a neoclassical painter) studio, such as Baron Antoine Jean Gros, Anne Louis Girodet-Trioson, and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, while also being frequently placed in opposition to Neoclassicism. Ingres' *Apotheosis of Homer* and Eugène Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* (both in the Musée du Louvre, Paris), which divided the public in the Salon of 1827 in Paris, are the best examples of this blurring of stylistic boundaries. While it would have appeared that Ingres' work epitomised the Davidian tradition's controlled classicism in contrast to Delacroix's chaos and upheaval, in reality both pieces draw from it but eventually subvert it to establish the originality of the artist—a key Romantic idea.

Nature provided a counterpoint to the rational world of Enlightenment philosophy in Romantic art, with its unpredictable force, unpredictable outcomes, and propensity for apocalyptic extremes. Romantic artists' violent and scary depictions of nature evoke the Sublime aesthetic of the seventeenth century. Edmund Burke, a British statesman, stated in a treatise from 1757 that "all that stuns the soul, all that imprints a feeling of terror, leads to the sublime,"⁹¹ an assertion which was echoed by Denis Diderot, a French philosopher, a decade later. The frequent depictions of shipwrecks and other representations of man's battle against the mighty power of nature in French and British painting from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century demonstrate this sensibility. *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps* by J. M. W. Turner in 1812, in which the general and his soldiers are dwarfed by the vast scale of the environment and enveloped in the swirling vortex of snow, epitomises the iconography of the developing romantic style. In particular, his recurring depictions of gnarled and angular trees, murders of crows and sparse landscapes are reflected in the illustrations.

4.2. General elements

4.2.1. Crow symbolism

⁹¹ Burke E. (1958). *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

What's more, throughout the series of illustrations, I wanted to incorporate the crow (*genus corvus*) as a symbolic element, because of their thematic significance, and also to convey continuity and cohesion. Via research on the main themes of the book, I became aware of some characteristics particular to the animal. Crows are often depicted as “intelligent” creatures in popular culture. One of the most known and ancient examples is the character in *Aesop's fables*, written over two millennia ago. In Native American culture, crows and ravens are seen as tricksters, and their intelligence is said to be their most important feature.

In fact, recent studies have shown that their cognitive abilities and those of other birds in the corvid family could be equal or even superior to primates⁹². What fascinated me about the crow's psychology, however, was their apparent ability to remember faces and identities⁹³. Crows have been known to recognize and attack humans who wronged them after years of not seeing them, and even transfer this knowledge onto their young, who react similarly⁹⁴. While they are not the most “vengeful animal” (that title goes, surprisingly, to the Siberian tiger), they remember longer than most. They recollect those who have been kind to them, or those who have been cruel, and treat them accordingly. The recurring themes of revenge in the novel- the years-long grudge that occupies most of the narrative- make crows a relevant symbol. This, and their frequent association with dark themes in human culture (in Welsh mythology, the *Mabinogion* is a harbinger of death; in parts of the Appalachian mountains, a low-flying group of crows means that illness is coming, and if a crow flies over a house and calls three times, there is thought to be an impending death in the family) prompted me to try to include them prominently in the illustrations. They serve as both an omen and a personification of Heathcliff's most vengeful sides.

4.3. The illustrations

4.3.1. Cover (part one and two)

The cover piece, which would hypothetically decorate the outer casing of the book, is a horizontal landscape divided into two sides: one for the front cover and the other for the

⁹² Pika, S., Sima, M. J., Blum, C. R., Herrmann, E., & Mundry, R. (2020). *Ravens parallel great apes in physical and social cognitive skills*. *Scientific Reports*, 10(1), 20617.

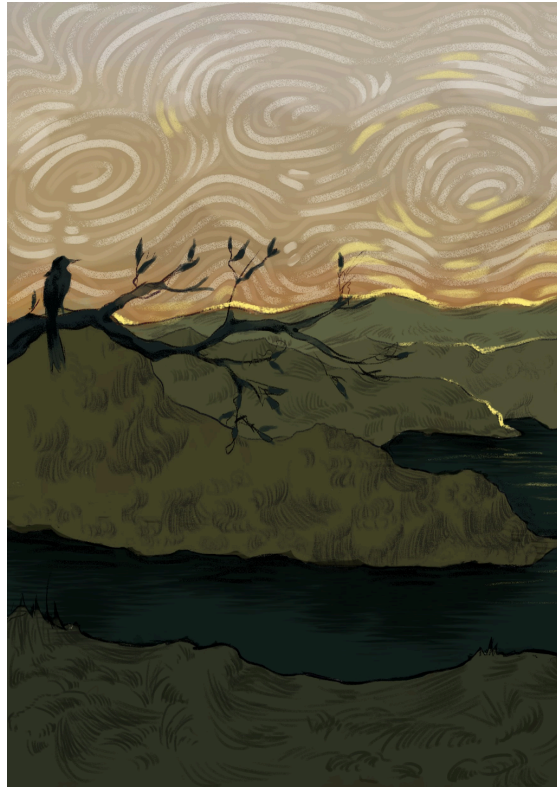
⁹³ Clucas, B., Marzluff, J.M., Mackovjak, D. & Palmquist, I. (2013). *Do American Crows Pay Attention to Human Gaze and Facial Expressions?*. *Ethology*, 119: 296-302

⁹⁴ Cornell Heather N., Marzluff John M. & Pecoraro Shannon (2012) *Social learning spreads knowledge about dangerous humans among American crows*. *Proc. R. Soc. B*. 279499–508

blurb. It features countryside scenery of the type of rolling hills that are native to the Yorkshire Moors. Using neutral tones of greens, browns and greys and curving brushstrokes, the sparse texture of their native flora are represented in a mossy carpet covering the hills. A wide river separates the first and second planes and provides a break in the overlapping landscape of the Heights. In the background, a slightly warmed sky marks the start of sunset. Favoured by the romantics for its poetic connotation, the sunset is the agony of a dying sun, the most dramatic point of the day because of its association with death. The characteristic wind of the moors is illustrated with swirling white sketch lines, in the style of the impressionists.

In the forefront, Heathcliff's silhouette next to a gnarled tree on the right is paralleled with a crow perched on a branch on the left. This is used to symbolise the two faces of his character; both the optimistic, youthful person he was with Cathy, and the more vengeful and scheming person he was after she left. One representing the hopeful possibility we are given at the beginning of the novel, and the other the inevitable conclusion - the steady corruption of his character to the detriment of all those around him.





4.3.2. Heathcliff arrives at the Heights

In chapter IV, Nelly narrates to Lockwood the arrival of Heathcliff at the Heights: "Then it grew dark; she would have had them to bed, but they begged sadly to be allowed to stay up; and, just about eleven o'clock, the door-latch was raised quietly, and in stepped the master (...) We crowded round, and over Miss Cathy's head I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk."⁹⁵ This is young Heathcliff's first appearance, as an orphan "gypsy" child brought home by Mr Earnshaw on a trip to Liverpool. He is treated much like a stray animal at first, described by Nelly with the neutral pronoun it and rejected by the children. Furthermore, Earnshaw first introduces him to the family by comparing him to a creature of the devil: "See here, wife! I was never so beaten with anything in my life: but you must e'en take it as a gift of God; though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil."⁹⁶

In the illustration, Heathcliff clings to Earnshaw's hand as he leads him to the Heights, both of them silhouetted against the dark night sky by the orange light of the lantern in Earnshaw's

⁹⁵ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 32)

⁹⁶ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 32)

grasp. Despite the large, flat surfaces of colour, slight chromatic gradients applied in vertical strokes achieve a certain depth. Drawing on the heavy symbolism of heaven and hell, Earnshaw's and Heathcliff's figures are surrounded by a glowing arch of fire, creating a sharp divide between the obscure background and the more defined space connecting the two. Heathcliff's presence at the Heights perhaps, as Earnshaw alluded to, brought a certain devilish quality to the household. He, the eternal scapegoat, is the demon that came hand in hand with the misfortune that cursed the family.

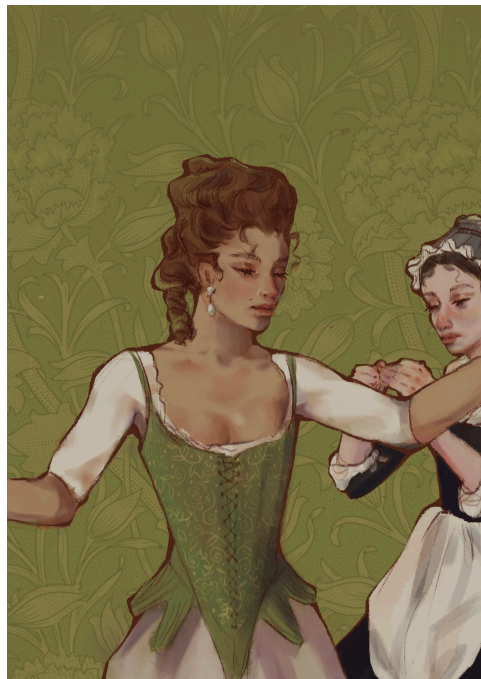


4.3.3. Cathy at Thrushcross Grange

Chapter VI begins Cathy's process of transformation and alienation from the version of herself she was with Heathcliff at the Heights. Through a series of coincidences (Heathcliff and Cathy are playing in the moors, they stumble across Thrushcross Grange and Cathy gets bitten by their dog) Cathy stays at the Grange for five weeks, both to recover from her injury and to receive the formal education she had lacked throughout her childhood. She returns much changed: "The mistress visited her often in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery, which she took readily; so that, instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there 'lighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person,

with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in."⁹⁷.

Depicted in this illustration is an imagined scene that would have occurred during this period: an intimate moment in which Cathy is being dressed by a Linton servant. Feminine clothing, particularly 18th century garments such as stays, were designed to conceal and constrict. The process of being dressed, for Cathy, signifies a gradual masking of the undesirable traits she exhibited freely at the Heights. It shows not only Catherine's submission to the servant's hands dressing her, but the patriarchal expectations of a feminine ideal. She is featured in what would be considered undergarments in the late 18th century (the year of her return to the Heights in the novel is 1777): a chemise, or a shift in English, was the underlayer and consisted of a simple white smock, with a low neckline and elbow length sleeves, which became increasingly narrow as the century progressed. Over it, a stays (corsets, which were significantly lighter boned garments, only started being worn once the more relaxed country fashion took hold in Europe), with a rather conical torso, straps and missing the attachable pannier which would have widened the hips according to fashionable standards.



⁹⁷ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 47)

4.3.4. "He's more myself than I am"

In chapter IX, Cathy's speech to Nelly about her acceptance of Edgar's proposal (overheard in part by Heathcliff) reverses the course of the novel and kick-starts the revenge plot. During this speech, Cathy describes the nature of her relationship with Heathcliff in a few lines: "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and [Edgar's] is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire"⁹⁸. Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship transcends material desires; their love is a unity of souls so strong that one cannot be separated from the other. It is not merely a pursuit of one's other half, or a desire to be whole: Heathcliff is not her natural other half or even a part of her, he is her. Their relationship ventures dangerously into codependency. The destructive consequences of a love so intense that it denies individuality are demonstrated with the painful end of the relationship.

The concept of a mirroring of souls is metaphorized in the scene: Cathy, seen from behind in an aerial perspective, stares into the waters of the lake in front of her, where Heathcliff's silhouette, substituting her own reflection, swirls. Neither of their faces can be clearly distinguished, illustrating that when they are with each other they relinquish their own identities. She wears a white, spectral nightgown that moves, along with the grass, with the constant wind. Heathcliff's ghost-like reflection mimics the way he will later ask Catherine to haunt him, rather than leave him on earth alone. Thus, this illustration and illustration number 7 can be viewed as pairs or mirrors of each other.

⁹⁸ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 74)



4.3.5. Heathcliff returns

After three years away from the Heights, Heathcliff finally returns in chapter X, arriving at the front steps of Thrushcross Grange on a “mellow evening in September”, when “it had got dusk, and the moon looked over the high wall of the court, causing undefined shadows to lurk in the corners of the numerous projecting portions of the building.”⁹⁹ He comes solely to see Catherine once more before enacting his vengeance upon Hindley and subsequently killing himself, as he confesses to her on their first meeting in the parlour of her husband's house. Notable in this first interaction is the change perceived in Heathcliff's manners and person: Cathy remarks that “Heathcliff was now worthy of anyone's regard, and it would honour the first gentleman in the country to be his friend”¹⁰⁰. Despite this, he remains the same in character: pitiless, fierce and rancorous – as Nelly says, a “bird of bad omen”.

The dusk landscape is made dynamic and vivacious by means of thick brushstrokes that move with the contours of the scene. Muted tones of greens and lavender permeate the canvas, broken only by the bright white of the moon, the backlit reflection on Heathcliff's head (somewhat halo-like, despite the evident bad omen that he represents) and his cravat. The grey tones of his suit change in a slow gradient until they merge with the greens of the hills behind him, reflecting the way that, although Heathcliff has returned in the clothing of a gentleman, he is still a child of the moors and they recognise him as such. Using a reverse highlighting technique; i.e., allowing a lighter base to transpire from underneath a darker

⁹⁹ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 86)

¹⁰⁰ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 91)

overpainting (for example, in the green and lavender highlights of the horse's flank and Heathcliff's coat) serves to further mute the composition and achieve the atmosphere of dawn.



4.3.6. "Haunt me then"

Chapter 16 marks the culmination of Heathcliff's corruption arc, provoked by Catherine senior's untimely death following the birth of her child. He comes to see her in her final days, though she is delirious and barely recognises him. Once he learns of the news of her death, he pleads for her spirit to remain on earth in an emotional monologue: "And I pray one prayer — I repeat it till my tongue stiffens — Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living! You said I killed you — haunt me, then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers. I believe — I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always — take any form — drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!"¹⁰¹ He repeats the statements that Cathy herself made in chapter IX; referring to her as not his love, but his life. His very existence, the making of his soul, has abandoned him of earth and his first instinct is to (selfishly) demand its return. In the illustration, Heathcliff clings to Cathy's spectral image, while she embraces him tenderly but floats upwards and away from him. As in its sister image, Heathcliff's and Cathy's faces have been omitted, representing the erasure of their individual identities in their relationship.

¹⁰¹ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 156)



4.3.7. Cathy Linton trapped at the Heights

Illustration 8 depicts the scene in chapter 27, where Heathcliff's machinations to wed Catherine Linton and his son before Edgar Linton's illness kills him (thereby controlling both properties of Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights) are revealed. His manipulation goes so far as to lure Nelly and Cathy to the Heights and imprison them there for the night. By locking the door ("sit down, and allow me to shut the door.' He shut, and locked it also."¹⁰²) and withholding the key, he confines them to the Heights; Cathy tries to escape by seizing the key but she is unsuccessful. Despite his superiority in strength, she resists against him: "I am not afraid of you!" exclaimed Catherine, who could not hear the latter part of his speech. She stepped close up; her black eyes flashing with passion and resolution. 'Give me that key: I will have it!"¹⁰³; and almost succeeds, by "seizing him with a sort of surprise at her boldness"¹⁰⁴.

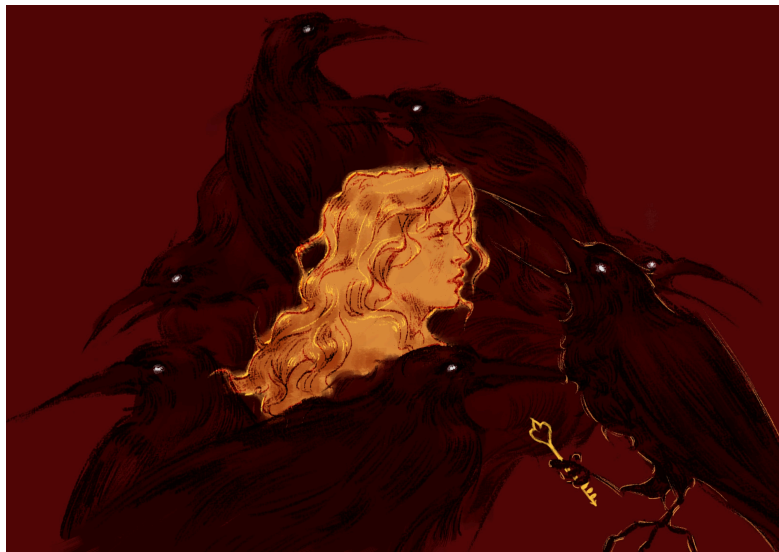
Cathy junior occupies the central position of the composition, mimicking the way she becomes the focus in the story of the second generation. She is surrounded, and enclosed, by several dark crows, curving around her face and hair. Their proportions are slightly distorted and exaggerated to better emphasise the dynamism. Additionally, the violence of their movements is coupled with sinister features, such as white piercing eyes on dark faces. On a dark red background, her profile is coloured a pale yellow which slightly transgresses the

¹⁰² Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 250)

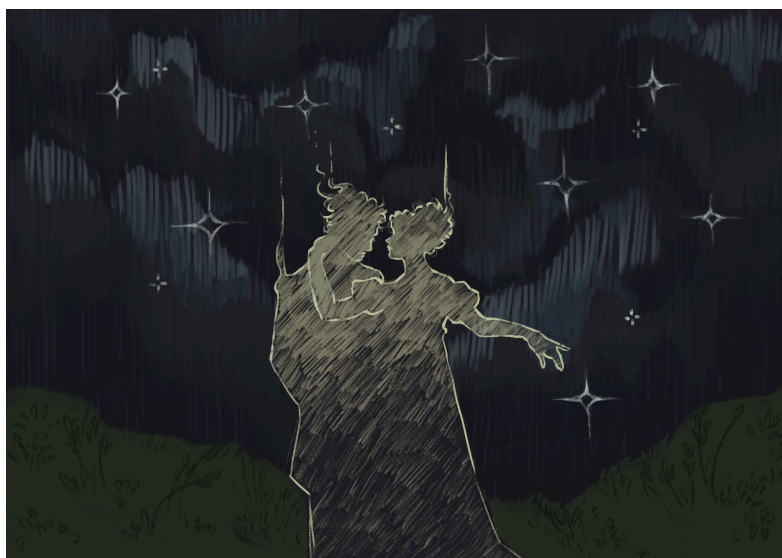
¹⁰³ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 251)

¹⁰⁴ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 251)

outline of her face, giving the illusion of a halo. Drawing on descriptions of her "small features, very fair; flaxen ringlets, or rather golden, hanging loose on her delicate neck; and eyes, had they been agreeable in expression, that would have been irresistible"¹⁰⁵ and her characterisation as the angel of the house (in contrast with Cathy senior as the female monster) she is alluded to as angelic. Looking towards the right, she is faced with a crow holding a key in its beak - Heathcliff blocking her escape and trying to trap her in a life she doesn't want.



4.3.8. Cathy and Heathcliff's ghosts



¹⁰⁵ Brontë, E. (1847). (P. 9)

Finally, the illustration that marks Heathcliff and Cathy's reunion in death, that Nelly alludes to in the last chapter: "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, you'll say, and so say I . . . Yet, still, I don't like being out in the dark now; and I don't like being left by myself in this grim house". One dark evening that threatened thunder, she explains, she was walking to the Grange when she encountered a disconsolate little boy, who told her there was "Heathcliff and a woman yonder, under t'nab,"; "I darnut pass 'em", he continued. Here, they embrace and dance in the moors, their translucent figures fading into the background, demonstrating that they have become one with their childhood paradise.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Despite women writers themselves would very rarely define themselves as a collective, most scholars have noted an indistinct but undeniable unifying voice in their literature. There is a difference between feminine literature and literature written by women; the former, in general terms, preoccupies itself with female experiences and the ways in which women relate to society. Although it might be tempting to dismiss the idea in order to avoid judgements based on stereotypes, desexing feminine literature reduces its merit and makes the academic lose a significant amount of context.

Observing the lives and works of these authors, it is impossible to deny that they did not fit the archetype of a typical Victorian woman, if such a thing ever existed. Perhaps the woman writer was already intrinsically divergent, or perhaps it was the profession that changed her. A woman who wrote in the early 19th century, by pursuing a profession that had not been societally afforded to her, had evidently outgrown the constraints of established gender roles. In 1862, Gerald Massey wrote that "Women who are happy in all home-ties, and who amply fill the sphere of their love and life, must, in the nature of things, very seldom become writers."¹⁰⁶ If, then, the woman writer was so changed from the domestic woman of the era, were they the ideal vehicle through which their experiences could be transmitted? Many critics worried that women novelists, having become so far removed from the sphere in

¹⁰⁶ Massey, Gerald. (1862). *THE POEMS AND OTHER WORKS OF MRS BROWNING*. North British review, vol.3. <https://minorvictorianwriters.org.uk/massey/cpr_mrs_browning.htm>

which the ordinary woman lived, had lost the authority to describe her accurately. Arguably, the opposite can be affirmed. By operating outside the bounds of social conventions, she acquires a perspective that makes her the exemplary spokesperson for feminine troubles.

Emma, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are concerned with representing feminine frustrations in a world that actively works to confine her. Their character archetypes, such as the madwoman, the female orphan, the governess, and the divorcee, are chosen in order to portray a lack of agency. By employing the use of literary doubles, such as Jane and Bertha, the two Catherines and Emma and Jane Fairfax they illustrate the psychic fragmentation that patriarchal expectations induced in the Victorian woman. The suppression of the self, the “estrangement from one's real character”¹⁰⁷, that caused women to be alienated from their emotions and forced them to maintain a silent self-control is metaphorised into haunting images of their “other” selves. In some cases, the idealised self (that conforms to the domestic doctrine) is subverted to represent an unnatural parallel. In *Wuthering Heights'* Christian metaphysics, the Catherine that accepts the constraints of domesticity is placed in hell; her “fall”, seen as her painful submission to the expectations of womanhood. Framed narrative structures demonstrate the Brontë's devotion to uncovering unsavoury truths through several layers of conventions. An other-world, a violent and uncomfortable private reality, is approached through layers that are each distorted by the power structure of the characters' world.

These books are confrontational, not because they were intended to be revolutionary, but because they are realistic accounts of a woman's socially disadvantaged state; because their heroines, even as they adhere to basic social conventions, struggle against the limitations imposed upon them by traditional domesticity. More than that, though, the very act of publishing as a woman about women in the 19th century denotes a disruptive attitude.

¹⁰⁷ Gaskell, Elizabeth Cleghorn. (1900). *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. New York and London: Harper & Bros. Internet Archive. Contributed by the Library of Congress.

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7. ANNEXES

7.1. Interview Dr. Eleanor Dobson

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nneBLjZJB6CE7Y9zOruP5mgoRXrDekT9/view?usp=share_link

7.2. Interview Meri Sañé

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eIgo4MtXfUGBtjRDr7O7zJXJKZtfczWR/view?usp=share_link