



Universidad de Valladolid

FACULTAD de FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS
DEPARTAMENTO de FILOGÍA INGLESA
Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

“A Look Upon All Dreadful Things”: Joanna Baillie’s
Orra and the Female Gothic

Alba Martín Castelao

Tutora: Sara Medina Calzada

2017/2018

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses *Orra* (1812), a play written by Joanna Baillie, with the purpose of showing that it belongs to the Female Gothic subgenre. In order to examine the play thoroughly, both the definitory characteristics of the Gothic genre and the Female Gothic subgenre have been taken into account. A category system has been created in which all the characteristics of the play that define it as a Female Gothic phenomenon are organised, analysed and explored. Some attention has also been paid to those especial features or treatments that are unusual or outstanding in that subgenre. This is the result of an analysis of the characters, the plot, and the inner psychology present in them, together with the examination of several articles and books specialized in the Gothic, the Female Gothic, Joanna Baillie and her work and *Orra*, in particular.

Key words: *Orra*, Female Gothic, fear, oppression, imagination, female.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo se centra en el análisis de la obra de teatro *Orra* (1812), escrita por Joanna Baillie como perteneciente al subgénero del Female Gothic. Para conseguir un análisis completo, se han tenido en cuenta las características definitorias tanto del género Gótico como del subgénero "Female Gothic." Se ha creado un sistema de categorías en el que se organizan, analizan y exploran todas las características de la obra que la definen como perteneciente al subgénero. También se ha prestado atención a aquellos rasgos o tratamientos que son especiales por salirse de la norma establecida. Esto se ha llevado a cabo tras un análisis de los personajes, de la trama y de la psicología contextual de ambos, además de varios artículos y libros especializados en el Gothic, Female Gothic, Joanna Baillie y su obra, en particular, *Orra*.

Palabras clave: *Orra*, Female Gothic, miedo, opresión, imaginación, femenino.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	5
CONTEXTUALIZATION.....	7
<i>ORRA</i> , A PLAY ON THE PASSIONS.....	7
ANALYSIS OF THE FEMALE GOTHIC.....	8
1. Spatial symbolism.....	10
2. The Gothic withdrawal.....	10
3. The female figure.....	11
3.1. Visions of female characters.....	11
3.2. Female victims and male oppressor.....	13
3.3. Female power through pretended weakness.....	14
4. The “mad beast”.....	16
4.1. Madness.....	16
4.2. Monstrosity.....	17
5. Depiction of terror.....	19
5.1. Imagination.....	19
5.2. Fear.....	20
6. Pathological love and ambiguous happy ending.....	23
CONCLUSION.....	27
WORKS CITED.....	29

INTRODUCTION

British Romanticism was one of the most prolific eras in the history of literature. However, when taking an overlook at the authors that produced their work at that time, we find few female names. This silence has been accentuated over the years, burying lots of the female voices that managed to publish their writings. As Virginia Woolf states in *A Room of One's Own*, “it is fairly evident that even in the nineteenth century a woman was not encouraged to be an artist. On the contrary, she was snubbed, slapped, lectured, and exhorted.” (2000, 56). After her, the Second Wave Feminism vindicated the importance of female authors and the necessity of recovering their works. And this is also one of the purposes of my undergraduate dissertation.

It was precisely when reading Woolf's work when I found one special passage in which this topic was being discussed. Then one name caught my attention: Joanna Baillie (1762-1851), a Scottish poet and playwright whom I had never heard about, whose plays, according to Woolf, had an important influence on the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe. And so it began. By investigating and reading, I found out that she was an influential figure in the literary circle of her time, not only because of her merits as dramatist and poet, but also because of her friendly ties with important writers such as Walter Scott. The connection between Baillie and Scott is not restricted to their friendship; the critics wrongly suspected that *De Monfort*, one of Baillie's plays, could have been written by Scott (Schlneiter and Schlneiter 1988, 15). The same happened with the authorship of her drama compilation, *Plays on the Passions*, which was wrongly attributed to Ann Radcliffe, one of the few women writers whose fame has survived until our day and one of the most relevant of her time (Hoeveler 2001, 1). Despite these erroneous attributions, Baillie was certainly a renowned writer in the early nineteenth century. She caught the attention of authors of great importance, as Lord Byron, who was “both fascinated and bewildered by Baillie's accomplishments as a dramatist, especially her ability to write tragedies” (Brewer 1995, 165). In addition, her poetry seemed to have had an influence on John Keats' *The Eve of St. Agnes* (Hoeveler 2001, 11).

Nevertheless, when looking for information about her, I found little evidence about Baillie and her works. The main sources I found were the primary ones, her texts, from which I chose the tragedy *Orra*, one of her *Plays on the Passions, vol. III*. Regarding secondary sources, most of the information I found was related to historical context and life of the author, containing the basic information of the writer, as displayed by Schneter (1988). Similarly, information about the subgenre the play belongs to, the Female Gothic, can be found in the work of Smith and Wallace (2004), which focuses on the evolution of the genre and its historical connotations since its origins. Adams (2018) and Moers (1985) are have also provided me with information related to the Female Gothic. In addition, concerning the analysis of Baillie's work, and focusing on *Orra* in particular, I must mention Hoeveler (2001), who analyses *Orra* in one of the most complete and helpful studies about the topic. Regarding not only the analysis of the play, but the exploration of the characters, Eva Coupková (2012) has also been one of the bases of my analysis, due to her exploration of the protagonist.

However, it is important to note that Baillie has not received much critical attention. She, like many other female writers, has been silenced, forgotten and almost erased. This silence is the reason of my paper. It is essential to recover the work of women writers to fill that research gap, as Woolf suggested. The objective of this paper is to demonstrate that *Orra* belongs to the Female Gothic subgenre by studying its characteristics, even when it has some especial features, which only contribute to make the play unique and different from any other. In order to do this, I will explore the features of both the Gothic genre and the Female Gothic. After that, I will establish some characteristics that define *Orra* as a Female Gothic work by an exhaustive analysis of the play, while briefly enumerating its differences regarding the subgenre. Finally, I will draw some conclusions about the whole analysis.

ORRA, A PLAY ON THE PASSIONS

Orra: A Tragedy in Five Acts (1812) is one of the four plays included in Baillie's third volume of her *Plays on the Passions* and was published in 1812. The other three plays are *The Dream* (a tragedy), *The Siege* (a comedy) and *The Beacon* (a musical drama). Her plays were more frequently read than represented, thus belonging to the closet drama, a school of drama which translated the domestic "closet" to the public stage, defending "the realm of feelings, sympathy and curiosity as the basis of all human culture" (Mellor 1994, 563).

Orra is the story of a young, orphaned princess with an unusual fondness for ghost stories and the experimentation of fear. The plot begins when she refuses to marry Glottenbal, the son Theobald, her guardian and head of the Aldenberg family. This marriage would mean the assurance of wellbeing and wealth for Glottenbal, so, after the rejection of Orra, Theobald decides to lock her in a castle to force the princess to change her opinion on the proposal. This idea was proposed by Rudigere, a bastard of the Aldenberg family, who is in charge of guarding Orra during her confinement. Nevertheless, this plan had a hidden intention: to seduce the princess, for Rudigere is attracted by her and her fortune. He tries to court her several times, but all of them without any positive response, even when relying on extortion and force. Back in the kingdom, Theobald, the bastard of an enemy family of the Aldenberg and who is genuinely in love with the princess, plans to rescue her by asking for help to some outcasts whose leader he is friend with. After deciding how to enter the castle, Theobald sends a letter to Orra informing her about everything that is going to happen, but she never gets to read it. The environment of the castle and Orra's own craving for ghost stories create a suggestive situation that explodes when Theobald enters in her room to save her. Orra, unaware of the intruder's identity and trapped in fear after listening to a terror story told by her servant Cathrina, believes that the apparition of Theobald is but a supernatural manifestation, and faints. While she is unconscious, most of the court meets in the castle attracted by the rumours that circulate about Rudigere. It is at this at this moment when the Aldenberg's bastard kills himself after poisoning Glottenbal. In the middle of this drama, Orra awakens, completely

mad, for the shock has made her lose her mind completely. This new situation plays a double role: Orra has become insane, but she is able to avoid an undesired marriage with any of her suitors. The play ends as a complete tragedy, by Orra not recognizing anyone, not even her friend and mother-like Eleanora, nor Theobald, who, as the rest of the characters, is completely destroyed by pain.

ANALYSIS OF THE GOTHIC AND THE FEMALE GOTHIC

Before exploring the Female Gothic, it is essential to define its roots, the Gothic genre, and the characteristics that define the genre. According to Stevens (2000), there are several distinctive features in Gothic texts, such as a general fascination for the past and exotic settings and locations in order to move the narration away from the reader; a liking for the eccentric, supernatural and consequent sublime usually intermingled with the reality; an interest for the psychology of the characters and the stimulation of fear and horror from an emotional side; and finally, the recurrent plots within plots scheme in the stories (Stevens 2000, 46).

Orra conforms with the above-mentioned characteristics of the Gothic genre, but a careful analysis of the play reveals that it also contains other features that associate it with a subgenre known as “Female Gothic.” Nevertheless, this subgenre has experienced significant changes regarding its extent, and thus, the definition of “Female Gothic” has been volatile since its origins. One of the first definitions of this subgenre appears in the magazine *Literary Women* in 1976 as “the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called ‘the Gothic’” (quoted in Smith and Wallace 2004, 1). Later on, the Female Gothic changed its perspective and was understood as a subgenre whose goal is to educate female readers, which criticises the patriarchal structures and focuses on the female figure emphasizing her independence (Adams 2018). Taking into account the oppressive and adverse social situation of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this new view of women as independent and valuable beings is something revolutionary. This is endorsed by the perspective of the

Female Gothic as containing “the ideology of female power through pretended weakness” (quoted in Smith and Wallace 2004, 2). This is a completely innovative and even ironic perception of the female characters as powerful, precisely by using their weaknesses as weapons against the oppressing system. Another different perspective on the definition of Female Gothic is provided by Moers, who distinguishes between two types of female gothic novel: Ann Radcliffe’s, in which the protagonist is a young woman who is simultaneously a persecuted victim and courageous heroine; and Mary Shelley’s heroine, “a ‘birth myth’, a tale of hideous progeny both literary and physiological” (Showalter 1994, 127). This second model refers to the analogy between the creation of a novel and the birth of a child. Moers extended her theory of the Female Gothic to a rejection of the female body, including such strong feelings as hate and disgust towards it and its relation with sexuality and reproduction. The author believed that the Gothic had much to do with female anxieties about both birth and creativity, and even the mixture of both, the apprehension in the “unnatural” process of giving birth to stories (Showalter 1994, 128). However, it should not be forgotten that “the term ‘Female Gothic’ is still a flexible and recognisable term for an area which is if anything gaining in vigour and complexity” (Smith and Wallace 2004). None of the definitions provided are definitive, the subgenre is as changeable as the works that are named under its name are produced, and so, it can evolve and transform into something different.

Taking into account these changeable interpretations of the Female Gothic subgenre, it would be more pragmatic for this analysis to identify at least some common characteristics. This category of Gothic literature has some different, yet attuned features with the general genre that can be found in *Orra*. In order to organize the analysis and explain these features in a sensible and coherent way, a list of six categories with their respective subcategories has been created. The division has been conceived by pointing out ten of the most representative characteristics of the Female Gothic that can be identified in *Orra* according to several sources: Adams (2018), Hoeveler (2001), Smith and Wallace (2004), and Coupková (2012). Some of these features have a similar nature, so they have been grouped in more general sections. Thus, the Female Gothic characteristics that can be found in *Orra* are explained in the following pages.

1. Spatial symbolism.

Closely related to the general Gothic characteristic of exoticism, spatial symbolism is based in the correspondence between the spatial confinement, usually in a gothic style and partly in ruins (Adams 2018, 2), and the metaphorical confinement, something that oppresses the protagonist. In the case of *Orra*, the spatial confinement is represented as a German Gothic castle, in the thick of Black Forest, while the metaphorical confinement is symbolized by the undesired marriage with Glottenbal, imposed by the whole branch of the Aldenberg family. In addition, any chance to change this situation is blocked by Rudigere's desire and Theobald's infatuation: she can escape neither from the physical nor from the metaphorical prison.

In addition, according to Moers, there is an identification of the gothic castle as the house of the dead mother. Thus, the protagonist thinks that she is locked in the building by external forces, in this case by Hughobert; but she is actually in a quest to find her "lost mother", a representation of the feminine existence (Showalter 1994, 128). In the case of *Orra* there could be a reading that fits this theory, as the mother of the protagonist is dead and she reaches her purest and wildest form after her imprisonment. However, the search for her mother, who is hardly mentioned in the play, is not as relevant as the quest for her freedom, which is triggered by this apparently suffocating confinement.

2. The Gothic withdrawal.

According to Hoeveler (1998), the Gothic as an escape is based on the assumption that in this type of literature ghost stories enable women to avoid an undesired marriage (as mentioned by Smith and Wallace 2004, 2). The Gothic used as a way of escape is recursive in *Orra*: she shelters in the horror and embraces it as a home rather than facing her reality. But this enjoyment is not free of fear as such; as reflected in several scenes of the play, she

is scared even when she “feels a horrid sympathy jarred on her heart” (1812, 74) or “the icy scalp of fear” paralyzes her (77)

Nevertheless, this idea is slightly different in the Radcliffean Female Gothic, in which the Gothic heroine defends not only the evasion from the undesired reality (usually marriage) by using ghost stories, but also by dealing with a more radical critique of the female power, violence and predatory sexuality. This way, the ghost story may function as an unconscious part of the story, as the representation of something that would not be respectable to show in a more open way (Smith and Wallace 2004, 4-5). This interpretation also corresponds with the scheme followed in *Orra*, since the use of the Gothic not only allows the protagonist to evade herself from the masculine-led reality, but may serve Baillie to escape her own reality. The author might use the writing of the (Gothic) play in the same way as *Orra* uses the listening of ghost stories as if the play reflected the reality, translating her own reality into *Orra*'s (Smith and Wallace 2004, 2)

3. The female figure.

Following the previous ideas, it is necessary to focus on the female figure as such. Female characters in *Orra* are affected by what Hoeveler defines as dark, suffocating sphere that surrounds them, a dramatic universe much darker than for the male characters (2001, 2). Considering the main features of the Female Gothic, this section explores female representations in *Orra* by analysing the female point of view, the role of the heroine as a persecuted victim and female power through pretended weakness.

3.1. Visions of female characters.

Taking into account that *Orra* is a play, it does not have any narrator. The story is not told from the point of view of any character in particular, since all of them are subject to the limitations of the genre: the audience cannot notice the characters' thoughts or feelings unless they exteriorize them, as the main female characters do.

It is important to notice that Orra's testimony is complete, with the exception of her past since the audience does not know too much about her parents. Be that as it may, the information about Orra's current situation needed by the audience to understand the play is clearly displayed by her as she expresses what she thinks and feels without any hindrance. Orra is thus a transparent character (Smith and Wallace 2004, 2). Similarly, the testimonies of two of the other female characters, Cathrina and Eleanora, are displayed by themselves in a comprehensive style, indicating their thoughts and desires, if not in such a complete way as Orra, in an understandable way.

Cathrina is one of Orra's servants and the partner of Rudigere. One of her most important roles in the play is the one of storyteller: she is the one who narrates the ghost story to Orra and the one who causes the loss of her mind later on, which makes her indirectly an assistant of Rudigere's plan. She is easily influenciabile especially by him, as she does whatever he orders obediently, but, maybe as a reflection of Orra, she is a bit rebellious. She even defies Rudigere, insults him and refuses to leave Orra alone with him at some point because she feels he is not good. This last drop of rebellion gives the idea that Cathrina is not evil, but selfish. This thought is reinforced by his reaction when Rudigere's plan is discovered and dismantled: even when her instant response is the same as Rudigere's, she feels disturbed, which makes the difference between her and him: "Cath: (aside as she retires in agitation) O heaven forbid! What hole o' th' earth will hide me!" (Baillie 1812, 81).

Regarding Eleanora, the wife of Hughobert, she represents the voice of motherhood in the play. Even when she tries to convince Orra to marry her son at the beginning she does so in a gentle way, using dialogue (Baillie 1812, 15), which is opposed to the force used by her husband. As both an indicatory and resultative reality, Orra loves her not only as a friend, but as a mother: she wants the best for Glottenbal, his son, but without doing any kind of harm to Orra. In addition, the loss of Orra's father is noted in the play, but her mother is not mentioned. Maybe the reason for this is because Orra does not feel as if she had lost that maternal figure: Eleanora covers it and fits in that role perfectly. Eleanora's tenderness is reflected in the sorority she professes, as when she tries to temper his

punishment (“Nay, good lord, consider!” [Baillie 1812, 34, 38]). As a mother, she is the only one in the whole play allowed to see Orra’s vulnerability (“...and then throwing herself [Orra] into the arms of Eleanora, gives vent to her feelings” [Baillie 1812, 40]), being so compassionate that she even despises his son’s interests against Orra’s happiness when she manifests that Theobald is a better suitor for her (Baillie 1812, 96).

These two characters, if contrasted and compared, can be regarded as two sides of the same coin, as two opposites that converge in the general type: the dichotomy of the female assistant figure. There is a clear distinction between Cathrina and Eleanora, even when they both somehow love Orra and have a close relationship with her. The main distinction between both characters, apart from the noble origin of Eleanora and the humble one of Cathrina, is their response to male power: while Cathrina shows a submissive approach to Rudigere most of the time, Eleanora shows defiance to Hughobert’s decisions whenever she thinks he is not doing something ethical. Thus, it can be said that while Cathrina embodies the evil side of the female assistant figure, Eleanora embodies the virtuous one, being two forces that are continuously fighting and influencing the plot due to their (good or bad) actions and ethical systems.

3.2. Female victims and male oppressors.

The relationship between the female victims and the male oppressors is one of the peculiarities of *Orra* as a Female Gothic play. It depicts the victimization of the character as a result of the oppressing reality, which is predominant in the whole play. Orra is metaphorically and physically persecuted by men since the beginning of the work until her tragic ending. She is a true victim: she does not ask for anything, nor she wants anything from men. The fact that Orra, as the protagonist of the play, is a female character is not something trivial. According to Hoeveler, when Orra feels a connection with the hunter-knight (as both of them belong to the same family), “the gender dynamics have transformed a male victim into a female one” reversing the “classical” Gothic plots in which the absolute majority of the protagonists are male characters (2001, 6). Besides this, even the motivations for the murder are the same as in the standard gothic narratives, transforming the plot in a kind of parody or criticism of the Gothic novel. Orra is not only the victim but

also the main character, usually played by male protagonists, who leads the plot and fulfils a double role (Hoeveler 2001, 6). On the other hand, her oppressors are male characters.

The main dominance is exerted by Hughobert, the father of Glottenbal and the designed tutor of Orra until she gets married. As it is easily guessed, he has economical interest on his son marrying Orra, the heir of the kingdom, and he is actually the main character interested in that union, and thus, the trigger of the plot. We could say that Hughobert is a clear representation of the patriarchy, since he uses violence, in this case, threatening, to achieve what he wants: he locks Orra in a castle after expelling her from the kingdom to convince her to marry his son.

Then, the persecution is executed by all the main male characters in the play, but the one that depicts it in the clearest way is Rudigere. He is a bastard of the branch of the Aldenberg family, who lusts after Orra's position and wealth and desires her in a physical manner. His first intervention, when he suggests Orra's fatal punishment to Hughobert, and his latter displaying of his true intentions with the princess show his rotten nature: he plans to court Orra during her captivity and, what makes him more undesirable, he plans to use Orra's passion for fear against herself in order to weaken her and make her more easy to handle (1812, 19). If his intentions are not enough to convince the audience about his perverse motivations, Baillie offers some other clues, making Rudigere appear most of the times from behind, as if hidden ("Rudigere, who has apperar'd during the last part of the above scene, at the bottom of the stage, half concealed", [Baillie 1812, 41]) as a symbol of his dark arts.

3.3. Female power through pretended weakness.

When Orra chooses to be locked in a castle and be expelled from the community, she is adopting a martyr-like, passive-aggressive, even masochistic attitude to triumph over the system imposed by Hughobert. She will not give him what he wants (i.e. the marriage with Glottenbal), and if she has to sacrifice herself in order to achieve that "victory", she will. This could be seen as a true revolution against the power using self-destruction. Nevertheless, Hoeveler argues that this technique of acquiring power is a double-edged

sword, since “such a celebration of passivity has a deleterious effect on feminism by encouraging women to see themselves as victims as a means, paradoxically, of gaining empowerment” (quoted in Smith and Wallace 2004, 4).

This image of the defenceless, victimized woman is very clearly depicted when Baillie creates one of the last and most powerful images in the play, which perfectly sums up the Gothic tradition: Theobald, when trying to save her, surprises Orra in such a fatal way that she faints. The vision of a “dead” woman in the arms of her lover, who unintentionally killed her is the gothic ideal as a norm, as perfectly summarized by E. A. Poe: “the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world” (Poe 2011). According to Hoeveler, this is accentuated by Baillie’s quiet “fixation on the abjected human body, both male and female” (Hoeveler 2001, 2). This image could be seen as an indicator of the author’s curiosity, as Poe’s, on the inert bodies of the characters, an undeniably Gothic characteristic.

Nevertheless, this victimization of Orra is not complete during the whole play, only showing it at certain points of the plot, and what is more important, it is not constructed by her: she only resigns when she is left with no other option. Even when her most important actions and decisions operate in accordance with the principle of pretended weakness (accepting Hughobert’s decision of expelling her to a confined castle), Orra’s personality is the opposite. Although she is a “gentle-woman” (Baillie 1812, 18), she is free, “untamed” (Baillie 1812, 10), and she has no owner. Her nature responds to bravery because she is conscious of her power and position, and she does not lose any opportunity to remind it to Glottenbal, who regards himself as superior to her. The fact that she does not “smile” when she is told to do so (Baillie 1812, 15) could be seen as a reflection of the impossibility of influence he has over Orra. But this defiance is not restricted to Glottenbal, who as a nobleman may be at her same level. Orra also challenges characters who are in a higher social rank than her, as Hughobert, his tutor. An example of this is her refusal to marry Glottenbal, by remarking several times: “I will not”, “Again I say I will not” (Baillie 1812, 36, 40). She does not accept the proposal even when she is coerced by her dead father’s will (Baillie 1812, 37), but she is conscious of her power and rights as an heiress. This

double nature can be also found in the novels of Ann Radcliffe, whose protagonists are usually “a young woman who is simultaneously persecuted victim and courageous heroine” (Moers 1985, 91).

However, the development of the story makes a victim out of Orra: it does not matter how much she opposes the imposed social order and the desires of the characters who are in control of that system, the only way of acquiring some power is to accept her victim role and to use it against the system itself. Thus, as Hoeveler argues, in *Orra* it can be found a clear vision of the “indestructible patriarchy, a phallic power that cannot, indeed will not die, that persistently resurrects, that feeds on itself” (Hoeveler 2001, 3). This feedback system of the patriarchy is reinforced by the coerced witnessing of the feminine figure and its consequent abjection as a character, in which the masculine subject and the feminine object “push each other away, confront each other, collapse and start again” (Kristeva 1982, 27), contributing to the continuous fight that inspires this evacuation of the female character into the Gothic world.

4. The “mad beast.”

This term refers to the final outcome of the oppression executed on Orra: she loses her mind and transforms herself into a beast. Both madness and monstrosity are important characteristics of the Female Gothic.

4.1. Madness.

Madness is understood as a departure from the conventional, as a natural outcome that results from the oppression upon women within the domestic sphere (Adams 2018). In *Orra* this characteristic is obviously fulfilled at the end of the play, when she wakes up and it is found out that she has lost her mind, a circumstance crucial for the creation of tragedy not only in the scene but in the whole play. But behind those dramatic and terrifying images there is an underlying message: through horror, imagination and the Gothic, Orra is able to maintain her fierce spirit (Baillie 1812, 91). The play shows that the natural outcome of the

usage of these elements is the exteriorization of the inner passions Orra had inside her and which were suppressed mainly by the male characters.

Nevertheless, this consequence is not seen as something negative, but as a liberation from social pressures as it enables the protagonist to escape from marriage (Coupková 2012, 4). Coupková claims that Orra loses her obtained power through the whole play when she loses her mind. But this could be arguable since it could be seen as the culmination of Orra's freedom, obtained only after the sacrifice of her mind and reasoning, a price she is willing to pay.

4.2. Monstrosity.

Monstrosity refers not to real monsters, but to the behaviour adopted by women that is not accepted by the society. This has a double echo in the sides of the feminine character: the feminine self and the monster side. The feminine self is the “positive” part of the woman, that which adheres to society and shows itself as submissive and passive. By contrast, the monster side reflects exactly the opposite, the “negative” side from the point of view of the society, since it shows the inner compulsions of the woman (Adams 2018). This dichotomy is perfectly depicted in *Orra* through the protagonist since her internal struggle between the feminine self (what society, in this case the men, want her to be like, that is, a passive, obedient wife) and her monster side (which reflects her true nature, what Orra actually is a free, “untamed” woman) is constant throughout the whole play, with a final victory of monstrosity over femininity that can be understood as a liberation.

In the last scene of *Orra*, the concepts of madness and monstrosity are so deeply intermingled that it is almost impossible to distinguish one from the other. It is clear that the “monster” is born as a consequence of the brutal madness that Orra suffers, which only accentuates the tragedy of the play. The transition from “insane” into “beast” begins when she wakes up. In fact, the first sign of life on the part of Orra after fainting is a shriek from the outlaws' cave, where she is (Baillie 1812, 90). This situation automatically redirects the thought of the public to associate Orra with an untamed, even dangerous animal that hides in a hole without the necessity of seeing her. The testimony of those who have seen her

confirms this theory: Orra is no longer “she”, but “it”; it is not only madness that haunts the princess, but, from Theobald’s mouth, a “heaven infliction; let us call it so” (Baillie 1812, 91).

Orra is depicted then as “wild” and “fierce” (Baillie 1812, 91), terms which do not necessarily carry negative connotations because they can be also applied to brave characters, and thus, strengthen the idea of monstrosity and madness used as a mean of self-expression and freedom. Nevertheless, this positive message is blurred by some animal, even obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) behaviour only some lines later which denotes her wild nature: she bends her ear to the ground making repetitive animal sounds and is haunted by her own ghosts: she sees and hears things that are only inside her head. While this is taking place, her acquaintances and friends are watching her losing her mind, terrified and powerless, which adds the counterpoint to the scene: the pain of those who love her and cannot do anything to help her.

One of the most decisive indicators of the madness and consequently monstrous nature of Orra is clearly represented when she does not recognize Eleanora. She has forgotten her own “mother”, but even then, there is something that sounds familiar to her:

Eleanora: My gentle Orra! Hast thou then forgot me?

Orra: ‘tis like an old tune to my ear return’d.

(Baillie 1812, 93)

Even when Orra has turned into a beast, Eleanora is capable of talking to her and making her respond in a somehow coherent way. In the dark, the only thing Orra hears is her mother’s voice.

Nonetheless, Orra’s insanity increases and darkens as it becomes more similar to a possession: she threatens Urster, the confessor, after one of his few interventions in the play by saying “I know thee well enough” (Baillie 1812, 93); Eleanora is terrified by Orra looking at them while she reminds the princess that “these are the voices of thy loving friends that speak to thee” (Baillie 1812, 93, 94), as if trying to remind her that they are not

the enemy, but when she tries to reach Orra, she reacts as if she were the touch of something sacred. Not only Orra has turned into a beast, but also she seems to be dangerous, as she rejects love and pushes those who care for her away. She is not a fearful, weak animal: "I'm strong and terrible now: Mine eyes have looked upon all dreadful things" (Baillie 1812, 94). All this would not be so tragic if Orra would have reacted in a different way in front of Hartman, Theobald's friend, who dares to look her in the eye. She cannot stand it and shows a submissive attitude. She even kneels before him, just as the evil beings cannot stand their opposites. All these elements, unquestionably dark, could be seen as a metaphorical exorcism, to which the chaos and the commotion on stage would contribute to. This is truly defining in *Orra*: everything is taking place at the same, culminating point. Theobald's love declaration, the realisation of Glottenbal's death and Orra's madness, Rudigere's suicide and Cathrina's runaway develop in the last act after a total of twelve scenes. The previous acts, whose main objective is to prepare the plot for this last situation, the explosion, completely contrast with this tragic ending scene, almost like a vaudeville act.

5. Depiction of terror.

Moreover, it is necessary to study now the treatment of terror in the play since it is not a case of plain, Gothic terror. The imagination could be regarded as the starting point of the creation of the dreadful atmosphere in Baillie's work, as the trigger that, along with other motors, puts the plot into operation. The treatment of consequent fear as such is also defining, for it focuses on a deeper, psychological side that does not only adjust to the classical ghost story. In this section, I will analyse imagination and fear, two of the most influential elements in the depiction of terror in *Orra*.

5.1. Imagination.

The imagination plays a decisive role in the construction of terror in *Orra*, since (ironically) it is the only real element that causes Orra's insanity. The imagination is approached as a bifocal tool that leads Orra towards madness but at the same time helps her to find her freedom as a woman, being the key of the ambiguity that reigns over the whole

play. This double nature is appreciated also by Brewer, who states that “imagination can be both a liberating and debilitating power” (quoted in Coupková 2012, 4). This dark side of imagination is “personified” by Count Hugo, the ghost that supposedly haunts Orra, but the truth is that “there is no ghost of the dead knight in *Orra*, rather it is a real person, and the ghost exists only in Orra’s vivid imagination” (Coupková 2012, 7).

Imagination is not only related to fear, but also to one of the most important concepts in the Romantic and Gothic literature: the sublime. This notion is understood in *Orra* as a strong aesthetic experience that develops while fear transforms the character and the imagination makes Orra vulnerable and manipulable, which will unconsciously lead her to her own destruction.

Taking all this into account, it could be said that the imagination is directly connected with fear, transforming courageous protagonists as Orra into insane characters that “lead themselves towards extinction by their fearful imagination, losing their ability to function in the world of the living, obsessed by their visions of the world of the dead” (Brewer 2018).

5.2. Fear

In every Female Gothic story there is a clear predominance of fantasy over reality, of the strange over the commonplace, of the supernatural over the natural, with the main intention that defines the subgenre: to scare the readers. *Orra* reflects this as deep psychological fears that may haunt young ladies who are forced to marry, something real from which they cannot escape. It is even more terrifying because it is real, the ghosts are flesh-and-blood characters that greed her. This mixture between tragedy and fear results in a more horrific narration than a ghost story would be.

Fear is one of the main components of the plot in *Orra*, since it leads the protagonist to her perdition. This, in turn, is a consequence of the imagination, as previously said, which is so uncontrollably strong that causes an intense feeling of panic, even hysteria (Brewer 2018). Thus, fear is defined not as an attitude, but as a factor with consequences in the

formal, stylistic and social aspects (Punter 1996, 18). Nonetheless the terror, far from being regarded as something to be feared, is viewed as a drug, as something that creates addiction. Baillie chooses to show the delight Orra feels when hearing horror stories rather than showing her internal decline as she is being consumed by this passion (Baker 2006, 81). This contributes to one of the characteristics that differentiates *Orra* from other Female Gothic works: sympathy. The capability of empathising with the character even when the public is sceptical is a truly manoeuvre, but, as Baker writes, “we sympathise with Orra, not because she is overwhelmed by her passion of fear, we sympathise with her because she has no real control over any portion of her life” (Baker 2006, 82). Orra is human, and that helps the public (or the reader) to identify with her.

In the general history of literature, especially the Gothic, women have been the chosen ones to be more affected by fear, probably because they have been thought to be weaker not only physically but also mentally, and consequently they are supposed to be more affected by terror stories and superstitions. Baillie defies this statement by making two plays on fear in which the first one is a female character (*Orra*) while in the second a male one (*The Dream*). The author herself explains the reason for this choice in her preface of the plays, “To the reader”, when saying that she was “unwilling to appropriate this passion in a serious form to my own sex entirely, when the subjects of all the other passions, hitherto delineated in this series, are men” (Baillie 1812, 5-6). This innovative intention of levelling the roles in her works is truly rebellious and unusual, which transforms Baillie’s plays on fear into something different from what had been done inside the genre.

However, one exception that against the norm is the terror Orra feels towards the male body: Orra does not experiment a sexual liberation (at least, explicitly) as most of the other works inside the Female Gothic do: Orra is terrified by the male body, of that “bony touch” which represents the oppressing male power that she rejects in every possible aspect. This idea is emphasized by Baillie to the point of renouncing to the sexual liberation, a very empowering characteristic for the protagonist, for the sake of the condemnation of the established system.

Another important issue on fear is made by Baillie in the same prologue, which focuses on the general nature of fear in her play. She explains why she chose fear for her last three plays: it “has been supposed to be less adapted to dramatic than any other [passion]” (Baillie 1812, 3). Two of those three plays are in the form of tragedy, which is opposed to a previously stated idea in the same text about the incapability of sympathy of the public in this genre. However, Baillie disagrees with this statement, as she defends fear as a universal passion capable of being made in the tragic drama (Baillie 1812, 4). Concentrating on *Orra* as such, the author mentions that it deals with a specific kind of the passion: superstitious fear, which, she defends, “is so universal and inherent in our nature, that it can never be eradicate from the mind, let the progress of reason or philosophy be what it may” (Baillie 1812, 4). In order to construct a credible character, Baillie chose Orra to be “lively, cheerful, buoyant character”, a young lady “who possess strong imagination, quick fancy, and keen feeling” (Baillie 1812, 5), since these are the characters that seem to be more easily affected by fear.

If the universality of this subject is not enough to be used as a justification, Baillie also adds her point of view on one of the characteristics of Female Gothic, the explanation of the supernatural, or in the case of *Orra*, the unmasking of ghosts as human-caused. In *Orra* the fact that there is no actual ghost (i.e. Count Hugo exists only in the stories Orra is told) transforms the play from being a horror, “classical” gothic story into a much more psychologically deep plot: what scares Orra so much is explained to the audience with the underlying message that we are the ones who create all the ghosts. In other words, society is responsible of Orra’s madness (Smith and Wallace 2004, 3). Baillie elaborates on this subject by defending the universality of fear: even when the public does not believe in ghosts they can feel fear since it is possible to extrapolate the feeling without actually believing on supernatural events of any kind. Simultaneously, this supports the empathetic power that Baillie defends of being one of the bases of this play. It is also important to note that the supernatural fear is not the type of fear that is displayed in Baillie’s third volume of *The Passions*, since there is an important presence of the natural fear to death. This passion will find its place in the following drama inside the compendium, *A Dream*.

6. Pathological love and ambiguous happy ending.

According to DeLamotte and Williams, the Female Gothic is technically characterized as something that “resists an unhappy or ambiguous closure” (quoted in Smith and Wallace 2004, 3). However, this concept can be very subjective. If we read the play superficially, *Orra* does not have a happy ending, rather a tragic, devastating one, in which every single character is destroyed, dead, or ruined. But it could be questionable if it is worse for Orra to lose her mind or to be imprisoned in an undesired marriage with Glottenbal, being abused by Rudigere and losing her friend Theobald. Definitely, she has too many things to lose if she remains in her reality, so her madness can be regarded as a satisfactory outcome. The ambiguity of this happy or unhappy closure depends much on the interpretation of the play, but this “quixotic” defence of mental freedom over physical integrity could perfectly be seen as the best possible ending in the play.

In the Female Gothic, and thus, in *Orra*, “the idea of female empowerment becomes defined as horrific” as Smith and Wallace have indicated (2004, 5). Orra is constantly seen through the eyes of men (Theobald, Glottenbal and Rudigere), who have sentimental, economical or physical interests on her. All of them depict a relationship in which one of the parts expects something from the other, even when nothing has been actively offered. Because of this, when Orra turns into a beast (this is, when she liberates herself), all those who had any interest on her are destroyed (psychologically or physically, even dead). They will not get what they want from Orra, and, as a result, the liberation of the woman implies the negation of men’s desires.

Having considered these issues, I will now analyse the main male characters who, one way or another, want to benefit from Orra by exploring the pathological love they feel towards the protagonist, as it is one of the triggers of the plot. These characters are Glottenbal, Rudigere and Theobald.

Glottenbal, the son of Hughobert and suitor to Orra, is moved not by love but by economic interests. Glottenbal does not understand and, which is more relevant, does not accept that Orra is not interested in him in any way, which leads to an argument (Baillie 1812, 39) and various accusations towards Orra. This and the fact that he instantly accepts Rudigere's plan show that he has no ethic whatsoever, facing the commander only after his true intentions are shown, since he turns into an opponent, as something that is interposing between him and the power.

Secondly, Rudigere, as Theobald, is a bastard of the branch of the Aldenberg family and a commander of one of the Free Companies, which reflects its unreliable nature. Rudigere is depicted as a "devil", as the "bad side" of Hughobert, who gives him the idea of expelling Orra to convince her to accept the marriage with Glottenbal, a recommendation which can be considered the seed of the plot (Baillie 1812, 18). This apparently brilliant advice shows the true nature of this character: Rudigere has the hidden purpose to court Orra when being expelled and, what makes him more undesirable, he plans to use Orra's enthusiasm for horror stories against herself in order to manipulate her (Baillie 1812, 19).

Finally, Theobald is a count and co-burgher, who also tries to court Orra. His bastardy and his friendship with some characters of dubious reputation make him inferior to both Glottenbal and Orra, whom he is in love with. Even when Orra has no romantic interest on him, as he states "She ne'er hath honour'd me with word or look such hope to warrant" (Baillie 1812, 7), Theobald is the most suitable suitor for the princess whilst he values her as a person and not as an investment of any kind. Theobald does not regard himself as superior to her, quite the opposite, as we can see when he states "I am not worthy" (Baillie 1812, 9). Regarding the psychology, Theobald is not depicted as a perfect character, but as a human one: he feels passion and love but is able to control it precisely because his feelings are pure and true, as it can be seen from his reaction towards Orra's madness and his love declaration (Baillie 1812, 91, 95). He does not love Orra as an heiress, but as a woman, so when she loses her mind, his feelings are no different: he loves her and loves her free, untamed as she is:

Hartman: There must be some control

Theobald: O none! None, none! But gentle sympathy and watchfulness of love

(Baillie 1812, 96)

Thus, Theobald is the only representation of true romantic love in the play.

These three characters and their respective intentions reveal their moral system, creating three different sides regarding the issue of pathological love. Glottenbal could be considered as a mere extension of Hughobert's interests, since he only seeks economic and social benefit. But the comparison between Theobald and Rudigere is, at least, noteworthy. Another different dichotomy could be constructed between these two characters, which resembles that of the female assistant figure comprised by Cathrina and Eleanora, as I explained above. In this case they can be classed as "bastards", as it is the feature that links both characters and makes them differ from Glottenbal, since the three of them are suitors to Orra. The main opposing differences between them reside in their attitude: while Rudigere does not accept his bastardy, Theobald does. Another important difference is the way in which each of them treats Orra: for Theobald, she is inferior (and thus, he has license to trying to force her into a relationship), but for Theobald, she is an equal worthy of respect. Both are rejected by the princess, but while Theobald accepts it, Rudigere decides to insist and push on her since the beginning of the play. Another interesting opposing idea is defended by Hoeveler when she claims that, while Glottenbal belongs to the "mercantile world" Theobald represents the "embodiment of an earlier rural/green world, the same world represented by the murdered and dispossessed hunter-knight" (Hoeveler 2001, 8-9), as if he could be the only possible receiver of Orra's love as the horror stories are. Thereby, the concept of pathological love is depicted through the characters, as being exemplified as what it is. From the analysis of these three male characters and this dichotomy, it is stated the difference between mean and selfish love, professed by Rudigere and Glottenbal, and true, free love, represented by Theobald.

Taking all this into account, it could be said that if the concept of pathological love is adapted when analysing the play, it would change the view of what a "happy ending"

implies: to be what they want Orra to be or to be what she is, a free woman who desires not to be married to any man, even if that means to lose her reason.

Finally, a considerable distinction should be mentioned regarding the general spirit of the play. *Orra* cannot be considered to be an optimistic Female Gothic that follows the norm, not only because of the gender and class struggle tragedy inside the plot, but also because of what Orra's madness means: the destruction of every character caused by themselves and the patriarchal system they have accepted and reinforced by "placing women ultimately outside meaning" (Hoeveler 2001, 14), by constructing a system in which women have no place as they are continuously abject, always being observed and expected to behave in a specific way, incapable of expressing themselves as what they are: women. This is why the play has some tragic yet rebellious connotations, mostly by means of Orra's interventions, who defends the power of saying "no", the defiance to the masculine privilege. It is precisely in this latter sense why *Orra* could be seen as having a happy ending: "the power of saying no, the staging of defiance and madness, the negative stance that puts the lie to all the compromised postures women are forced to assume in this system of barter and exchange" (Hoeveler 2001, 14). The play is not only about lost reasoning, but about earned freedom, and here lies the ambiguity of Baillie's closure.

CONCLUSION

After analysing the play and establishing its main characteristics, it is clear that, as I have stated at the beginning of this paper, it would be correct to say that *Orra* can be framed in the Female Gothic subgenre. This thesis has been supported by the presence of features such as the “monstrous madness”, which is based on the acquisition of freedom only through madness. This trade of freedom in exchange for power is merged with the concept of monstrosity, referring to the less classically feminine side, what the protagonist actually is. This double relationship is especially illustrative at the end of the play, in which it becomes tragically retroactive, for the monstrosity feeds madness and *viceversa*.

The triangular relationship between imagination, fear and freedom is also distinctive of the play. Orra’s fertile imagination provides the starting point for the creation of the supernatural atmosphere that promotes the development of the plot, and, at the same time, this imagination is the only real element in the protagonist’s insanity. It is also the key of the ambiguity of the play, since it is the element that links madness and freedom. Regarding fear, it is important to note that it is not understood as a classical supernatural fear because there is no actual ghost. This is one of the most important notions in the play since it reveals a much more psychologically deep message: ghosts are a creation of interests.

Finally, another important characteristic of the play is the relation of power established between the female figures and their male oppressors. The female figures in *Orra* receive a very special treatment because they are not depicted as extreme or typical characters; there are passive and active female characters, offering several visions and testimonies. This is reinforced by the concept of female power through pretended weakness, a typical Female Gothic characteristic that is depicted through the character of Orra. The opposing roles between genders create a constant fight between male and female characters, which gives movement to the play. Male oppression is depicted through toxic relationships, and this is an essential difference between *Orra* and other works belonging to the subgenre. The typically “happy ending” is broken, since it is questionable if madness is

something negative which destroys Orra and those surrounding her or, instead, it represents a liberation that denies the male desires.

Orra is not only special because it belongs to the Female Gothic, it is a play about fear—one of the most unusual subjects for theatre—and it was written by an influential woman in the nineteenth century to be read instead of being represented. It is a unique play for its depiction of destruction and individuality, for having been written from a female perspective and for treating fear as a terribly human reality.

WORKS CITED

- Adams, Bonnie J. 2018. "What Does the Term 'Female Gothic' Mean?" Class materials, University of West Georgia. Accessed March 25, 2018.
<http://www.westga.edu/~bjett/new%20resources/.../The%20Female%20Gothic.update.doc>
- Baillie, Joanna. 1812. *A Series of Plays: in Which It Is Attempted to Delineate the Stronger Passions of the Mind (vol. III)*. London: Strahan and Preston.
- Baillie, Joanna. 1812. *Orra: A Tragedy, in Five Acts*. London: Strahan and Preston.
- Brewer, William D. 1995. "Joanna Baillie and Lord Byron." *Keats-Shelley Journal* 44: 165-181. *Jstor*. Accessed February 16, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30212998>
- Brewer, William D. 2018. "Utopianism and Joanna Baillie: The liberating and debilitating imagination in Joanna Baillie's 'Orra' and 'The dream'." *Romantic Circles*. Accessed May 15, 2018. <https://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/utopia/brewer/brewer.html>
- Coupková, Eva. 2012. "A Joy in Fear." *The Passion of Fear in Joanna Baillie's Plays Orra and The Dream*. Zlín, Czech Republic: Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně.
- Hoeverler. 2001. *Joanna Baillie and the Gothic Body: Reading Extremities in "Orra" and "De Monfort"*. Marquette University: Manchester University Press.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mellor, Anne K. 1994. "Joanna Baillie and the Counter-Public Sphere." *Studies in Romanticism* 33(4): 559-566. *Jstor*. Accessed November 30, 2017.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25601086>
- Moers, Ellen. 1985. *Literary Women*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. 2011. *The philosophy of composition by Edgar Allan Poe*. Edited by the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore. Accessed June 1, 2018.
<https://www.eapoe.org/works/essays/philcomp.htm>
- Punter, David. 1996. *The Literature of Terror*. London: Longman.
- Showalter, Elaine. 1994. *Sister's choice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Andrew, and Diana Wallace. 2004. "The female Gothic then and now." *The female Gothic - Nc State University*. Accessed March 25, 2018.

<http://www4.ncsu.edu/~leila/documents/TheFemaleGothic-ThenNow.pdf>

Stevens, David. 2000. *The Gothic tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, Anne. 1995. *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Woolf, Virginia. 2000. *A room of one's own*. London: Penguin Classics.