



---

**Universidad de Valladolid**

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

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

The Gothic element in Victorian Female Narrative

Raquel Conejo Husillos

V<sup>o</sup> B<sup>o</sup>

Tutor: Berta Cano Echevarría

2013-2014



## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to explain the elements from the gothic genre which appear in the narrative written by the Brontë sisters and Elizabeth Gaskell. The first section focuses on the characteristics of Gothic fiction and how it influences in subsequent authors. This part will be divided in two subsections. The first subsection offers an explanation about the introduction of the first gothic elements by Horace Walpole whereas the second subsection deals with the rise of Female gothic through the works of Ann Radcliffe and its differences with traditional male Gothic fiction. The second section focuses on the analysis of works written by female authors in the Victorian period: two novels written by Charlotte and Anne Brontë respectively, and two short stories written by Elizabeth Gaskell. The final section offers a more detailed analysis of the novel *Wuthering Heights* written by the novelist Emily Brontë.

Gothic, Victorian, female, Brontë, Gaskell, narrative

El propósito de este trabajo es explicar los elementos del género gótico que aparecen en la narrativa escrita por las hermanas Brontë y Elizabeth Gaskell. La primera sección se centra en las características de la narrativa gótica y en su influencia en autores posteriores. Esta parte está dividida en dos subapartados. El primer subapartado ofrece una explicación sobre la invención de los primeros elementos góticos creados por el escritor Horace Walpole mientras que el segundo subapartado trata sobre el nacimiento del Gótico Femenino gracias a los trabajos de Ann Radcliffe y las diferencias de éste con el gótico escrito por hombres. La segunda sección está centrada en el análisis de obras escritas por mujeres durante el período Victoriano: dos novelas escritas por Charlotte y Anne Brontë respectivamente y dos historias cortas de Elizabeth Gaskell. La última sección ofrece un análisis más detallado de la novela *Cumbres Borrascosas* de Emily Brontë.

Gótico, Victoriano, mujer, Brontë, Gaskell, narrativa



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

➤ Introduction.....	6
➤ Definition of Gothic	
- Origins of Gothic Fiction: Horace Walpole.....	7
- The rise of Female Gothic: Ann Radcliffe.....	12
➤ The Gothic in Victorian Female narrative.....	15
- Gothic elements in Victorian Female novels.....	16
1. <i>Jane Eyre</i> by Charlotte Brontë.....	16
2. <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> by Anne Brontë.....	18
- Gothic elements in Victorian Female short story: Elizabeth Gaskell	
1. <i>Lois the Witch</i> .....	21
2. <i>The Old Nurse's Story</i> .....	23
➤ Gothic elements in <i>Wuthering Heights</i> by Emily Brontë.....	24
➤ Conclusion.....	34
➤ References.....	36

## **Introduction**

In this essay, I will discuss the gothic elements which are present in novels and short stories written by women during the Victorian period. During this period, women become interested again in Gothic Fiction, which arose during the Romantic Movement. However, they do not follow the same pattern imposed by traditional gothic novels, which were written mostly by men authors, who wrote stories about weak female characters being pursued by villains. On the contrary, these writers narrate the fears that women feel about being powerless under the dominating power of men and, to a lesser extent, by the society of that period. However, they also take some elements from old Gothic written by men.

For the elaboration of this study, I have chosen three novels written by Charlotte, Anne and Emily Brontë respectively and two short stories written by Elizabeth Gaskell. Taking the writer Ann Radcliffe as their role model, they give prominence to the figure of women in their narrative by transforming them into the heroine and one of the central characters in their stories.

Victorian society gives main importance to marital harmony. During this period, women have to stay at home doing household tasks and taking care of their children. The Brontë sisters and Gaskell want to rebel themselves against a patriarchal society dominated by powerful men. In order to achieve this aim, they write stories about heroines who escape from the villain that maintains them locked in the house and, from social conventions through two ways: escape or death.

In regards to the usage of Gothic machinery, they tend to borrow many elements from gothic tradition such as the gloomy gothic building, the wild and dark surroundings and supernatural elements such as ghosts or eerie dreams as a way of imposing terror on the readers just as old Gothic fiction did.

To conclude, these novels and short stories represent very accurately the fears of Victorian women about their negation to freedom and reflect their inner strength to overcome these difficulties.

## **Definition of Gothic**

### **Origins of Gothic Fiction: Horace Walpole**

The term Gothic is usually associated with the Goths, a German tribe who invaded the Roman Empire and spread throughout the United Kingdom in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century. During the Middle Ages, the term Gothic comes to mean archaic, barbarian and savage as it is related to those tribes and their wild architecture. Even in subsequent centuries, the term is associated with the poetry and the chivalry of the Middle Ages. However, in the eighteenth century, with the rise of the Romanticism, the term gothic is transformed into a more positive connotation. The gothic culture from the Dark Ages increases its value and the past is considered to be superior to the present. (Ellis, 23)

Gothic fiction appears in the late eighteenth century in England as an aspect of The Romanticism. During the Romantic period, the main idea from the neoclassical period which stated that reason could control everything is refuted. The Romanticism gives more importance to the emotions and feelings experienced by human beings. Romantic writers let their imagination run free. Consequently, physical laws are violated and the supernatural becomes a central characteristic of the Gothic period. There is a general fear about the unknown, due to the belief that reason is not able to comprehend all the aspects of human mind. As a result, Gothic fiction is focused on the dark and sinister aspects of life. Writers use Gothic architecture as a reference point to impose the impression of fear and glory. "The Gothic Novel is a conception as vast and complex as a Gothic cathedral. One finds in them the same sinister overtones and the same solemn grandeur". (Varma, 16)

The Gothic explores the protagonist's thoughts and feelings in order to exploit the emotions of the readers. In this period, the aspect of the sublime comes to light as an important component of both gothic and romantic works in literature. By the depiction of sublime sceneries, readers are expected to experience pleasure caused as a consequence of terrible events. Moreover, Gothic fiction makes use of realistic elements and supernatural features without mixing them. According to gothic writers, fear scenes

must avoid a close approach to ordinary experience to achieve the effect of delightful terror so typical of this genre.<sup>1</sup>

Gothic novels are always settled in a distant past and in exotic or medieval locations and they usually incorporate myths or legends. Moreover, many authors express the savageness of gothic buildings in the portrayal of haunted castles, dungeons, convents, subterranean vaults, lonely towers and ruined piles. (Varma, 17). Gothic cathedrals or castles have the power of carrying the reader's mind to a glory past while imposing a sentiment of nostalgia. Many Gothic novels like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe are settled in a castle situated in a lonely place, with dark and lonely rooms, impenetrable walls, doors that close with a scratchy sound, roofs in ruins and phantoms.

Authors write stories about knights in armour, villains and damsels who are surrounded by an atmosphere of supernatural events. Soon more elements are joined to the gothic tradition such as caverns, banditti, dark forests, evil monks, black magic and witches, specters, ghosts, vampires and other creatures. (Varma,17). The story of the gothic villain who pursues the heroine outside the gloomy castle into the dark forest becomes a repeated plot in gothic works. The villain always remains united to the old castle because he keeps a horrible secret inside its ruinous walls.

The use of architectural ruins leads to the appearance of the term "picturesque". On the one hand, ruinous castles, convents and cathedrals create sublime landscapes that symbolize the decay of a glorious past full of greatness. Gothic writers want to picture the savage power of nature against the creations of men as something beautiful and sublime to impose a feeling of terror and awe on readers. On the other hand, atmospheric conditions, such as stormy nights and strong winds, create a supernatural and a mysterious background. Gothic stories are usually located in gloomy forests, with a ray of moonlight penetrating the woods, trees with broken branches caused by thunders, and mysterious noises like the uncanny murmur of owls. By the usage of all this machinery,

---

<sup>1</sup> For a study on the sublime see Varma Devendra P. *The gothic flame: being a history of the gothic novel in England: its origins, efflorescence, disintegration, and residuary influence*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966.



authors expect to give the story a romantic setting replete of superstition. (Varma, 19-21)

*The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole is considered the first Gothic novel and the starting point for following novels on this genre. The plot narrates the story of Manfred, the usurper prince of Otranto, who is threatened by an ancient prophecy. The only way to protect his throne is to marry his ill son to the beautiful Isabella, who is the daughter of the Marquis of Vicenza, the real heir of Otranto. However, in the day of the wedding, his son dies when a mysterious huge helmet covered with black feathers falls over him. Blinded by rage, Manfred decides to marry Isabella himself but as she does not love him, she escapes thorough a subterraneous passage.

Later on, a peasant named Theodore discovers that the helmet is similar to the one which was missing in the statute of Alfonso the Good and he is imprisoned. Meanwhile, some supernatural elements arise: the feathers of the helmet start moving with no wind, the leg of a giant is discovered in a chamber of the castle, and a portrait leaves its panel. Isabella encounters Theodore and they fall in love. Then, Isabella's father arrives to Otranto with an army of soldiers who bare a huge sword that burst from their hands to position itself next to the helmet. At the end, a thunder traverses the sky and the figure of Alfonso appears to reveal that Theodore is the true heir of Otranto.

Walpole mixes three main motifs which give rise to the creation of the first gothic novel: gothic devices including settings, machinery, and plot, an atmosphere of suspense and terror, and finally, romantic characters. (Varma, 57)

The Gothic castle is considered for many authors to be the main character of the novel, the setting where all the actions take place. The lonely castle, with its ruined towers, its dark and deserted rooms; its windows with iron grates which light cannot pass; its gloomy subterranean passages and its desolated spiral staircase are the perfect ingredients to give a Gothic atmosphere of horror to his romance. (Varma, 57)

The novel is located in the south of Italy in a remote past. The desire for foreign and distant places illustrates the Gothic desire of escaping from the dullness of ordinary life.

Following novels such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe or *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis take the example of Otranto and are settled in foreign countries.

Among Walpole's inventions, there are two key elements which have success among subsequent gothic writers such as Clara Reeve in *The Old English Baron*: "the ancestral portrait" and "the time-yellowed manuscript". (Varma, 59). The mysterious scroll, wrapped with a faded ribbon, is usually found by the hero or the heroine in a secret drawer and contains a confession of a murder committed in the past. With regard to the ancestral portrait, Walpole gives it the ability of moving and leaving its frame. The idea of recalling the past is still present in succeeding novels, where there are always portraits hanging on the walls of the castle to commemorate venerable ancestors.

At that instant the portrait of his grandfather [...] uttered a deep sigh, and heaved its breast [...] Manfred [...] unable to keep his eyes from the picture, which began to move [...] when he saw it quit its panel, and descend on the floor with a grave and melancholy air. (Walpole, 26)

Walpole also creates the Gothic archetypical characters such as the tyrant, the persecuted heroine, the "noble peasant" hero, the monk, or the ghost-scared servants. (Varma, 60). The figure of the villain, or the Byronic hero as it is later called, is represented by Manfred in his novel and imitated by later authors such as Radcliffe's Montoni or Emily Brontë's Heathcliff. The tyrant of Gothic novels is always a mysterious, evil, dark, and handsome man who seems to be very attractive to women. The virtues of the Gothic heroine are exaggerated until the point that her personality reaches an impossible perfection. The damsel in distress is always persecuted by the villain through the castle or any subterranean passage. The scene in which Walpole's heroine Isabella tries to escape from her marriage to Manfred becomes very popular in later novels.

The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters[...] An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which, grating on the rusty hinges, were re-echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness. Every murmur struck her with new terror. She trod as softly as impatience would give her leave, yet frequently stopped and listened to hear if she was followed. In one of those moments she thought she heard a sigh. She shuddered, and recoiled a few paces. In

a moment she thought she heard the step of some person [...] she was going to advance, when a door that stood ajar, at some distance to the left, was opened gently: but ere her lamp, which she held up, could discover who opened it, the person retreated precipitately on seeing the light. [...] she approached the door that had been opened; but a sudden gust of wind that met her at the door extinguished her lamp, and left her in total darkness. Words cannot paint the horror of the Princess's situation. [...] It gave her a kind of momentary joy to perceive an imperfect ray of clouded moonshine gleam from the roof of the vault [...] (Walpole, 27-28)

In the paragraph mentioned above, Walpole mixes several gothic elements to maintain the readers in suspense: the young damsel escapes through an obscure subterranean passage from the evil villain who wants to make her his prisoner. Moreover, the anguish that she feels by thinking that Manfred is near to capture her increases with the strange noises that resound in the walls of the passage. Suddenly, a slight blast of wind coming out of nowhere extinguishes her lamp leaving her in complete darkness. By describing in great detail the escape of Isabella, Walpole expects to locate the readers in the same terrifying situation in which she is involved.

Since the publication of Walpole's novel, the elements of the moon emerging from behind a grey cloud and the gust of sudden wind which extinguishes the lamp that are present in the quotation become recurrent devices used to create a nocturnal atmosphere riddled with fear, mystery, sadness and fantasy. In later Gothic novels, the moon appears at the very moment when the villain is in the middle of some obscure deed. Additionally, the wind that causes creaking and eerie sounds develops the duty of warning of the arrival of a ghost. (Varma, 59)

All Walpole's characters serve as role models just as the main plot of his novel did: an unknown heir recovers all the properties which belong to him by right thanks to a supernatural individual as a representative of divine justice. (Varma, 60). This idea serves as an example for Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in which the heroine Jane discovers that she is the legitimate heiress of a great fortune. However, in the case of *Jane Eyre*, there is no supernatural agent in charge of restoring the fortune to her.

Among the following writers who take Walpole's work as a role model, I would like to highlight the authors who I am going to explain later in this research: the Brontë sisters

and Elizabeth Gaskell. On the one hand, Emily Brontë is the writer who is most inspired by Walpole's work since the similarities between her novel *Wuthering Heights* and *Otranto* are more than notorious. The narrative of both novels depends on the story between two families: the families of Manfred and the Marquis of Vicenza and, The Earnshaws and The Lintons. Moreover, her villain Heathcliff has many characteristics in common with Manfred. Both force a marriage between their corresponding ill sons and the young lady to become the owners of the heroines' properties. However, just as Heathcliff, Mr. Rochester and Huntingdon are based on the character of Manfred too because they also maintain a female character imprisoned under their power. On the other hand, Elizabeth Gaskell borrows some gothic devices created by Walpole such as the supernatural or the gloomy gothic landscapes to give a feeling of terror to her short stories.

### **The rise of Female Gothic: Ann Radcliffe**

During the late eighteenth century, women start to feel interested about Gothic literature which leads to the expansion of women's professional writing. Ann Radcliffe is the precursor of Female Gothic, which depicts women's fears and offers fantasies of evasion from them. Ellen Moers introduces the term Female Gothic for the first time in 1977 and defines it as "the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (Moers, 90). As opposed to traditional male Gothic fiction in which the heroine is a minor character in the story, in Female gothic the central character is a young woman who is a persecuted victim and a brave heroine at the same time.

Radcliffe is the first female author who combines a Gothic plot with some aspects of domestic fiction, a mixture which is later explored and developed by female authors belonging to the Victorian period, such as The Brontë sisters. As previous Gothic novels, Radcliffe's works are located in the past and in exotic locations, such as the south of Europe. However, the protagonist of the story is always a female character. This kind of Gothic represents the fears of women about the private domestic life which

serves as a refuge and prison at the same time. Moreover, the feeling of confinement imposes a sentiment of power in the courage of the heroine.

In her novels, Radcliffe wants her readers to consider the importance of the status of women (Ellis, 50). Her heroine Emily St Aubert from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) may be viewed as the typical damsel in distress of previous Gothic novels. She describes her as a young and innocent woman who possesses the qualities of humbleness, chastity and modesty. She is raised in an idealized environment of protective paternalistic society in which she lives blind to the world outside. This type of life develops the quality of sensibility in her personality which is represented as determined by an excess of imagination and an unstable temperament.

After her father's death, she is forced to live in the castle with her aunt and her uncle-in-law Montoni who portrays the typical tyrant of Gothic novels: a handsome and self-tortured man consumed by ambition and dark purposes, Emily's inheritance. The castle does not only represent a Gothic atmosphere of terror *per se* but a figure of patriarchal power out of law. The ancient gothic castle with its decaying grey walls, dark rooms and desolate surroundings acts as a prison for the heroine.

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle [...] the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper [...] From those, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity [...] (Radcliffe, 226-227)

Moreover, her sensibility and naivety creates an imaginary terror in her mind. Montoni has a group of cavaliers to protect his castle who, according to Emily's innocent mind, are banditti who want to abuse her sexually. The concept of banditti emerges as a new device of Gothic novels in the late eighteenth century. The banditti were outlaws who usually lived in the mountains of the south of Italy and they came to represent a picturesque example of Italian manners. (Ellis, 58)

Emily's sensibility makes her feel threatened by the idea of rape or murder when Montoni confines her and her aunt after discovering that someone has poisoned his wine. However, she manages to escape from the castle thanks to one of her secret admirers and recovers her legacy.

At the beginning of the novel, Emily is protected by her father in a domestic enclosure but when this life is destroyed, she is drawn into gothic terror. However, in the end, she demonstrates to herself that Montoni's authoritarian power exists only until the point that she stops believing in it.

On the one hand, Radcliffe represents the beginning of the feminine Gothic in which the innocent heroine is forced to leave her protective domestic life to start a new one ruled by patriarchal power in a desolate castle, and, on the other hand, she also introduces a new principle to Gothic fiction: the domestication of the supernatural, or as she calls it, the supernatural explained (Ellis, 66-67). This principle is characterized by the fact that all mysterious or superhuman events have a rational explanation. The supernatural explained becomes a characteristic type of writing in the late eighteenth century with writers such as Regina Maria Roche and Eliza Parsons.<sup>2</sup>

The subsequent paragraph could serve as an example of how Radcliffe uses her innovative principle to create an atmosphere of terror which maintains the readers in a continuous suspense. The heroine Emily is horrified at the image of a lifeless body which lies behind a black veil inside a dark chamber. Nevertheless, she later discovers that the imagined corpse is a wax statue.

It may be remembered, that, in a chamber of Udolpho, hung a black veil, [...] that had overwhelmed her with horror; for, on lifting it, there appeared, instead of the picture she had expected, within a recess of the wall, a human figure of ghastly paleness, stretched at its length, and dressed in the habiliments of the grave. What added to the horror of the spectacle, was, that the face appeared partly decayed and disfigured by worms, which were visible on the features and hands. [...] Had she dared to look again, her delusion and her fears would have vanished together,

---

<sup>2</sup> For more information about these authors see Frank Frederick S. *Gothic Gold: The Sadleir- Black Gothic Collection*. The Johns Hopkins University Press. 1997

and she would have perceived, that the figure before her was not human, but formed of wax.  
(Radcliffe, 662)

Anne Radcliffe influenced later female writers of the Gothic such as the Brontë sisters and Elizabeth Gaskell as we shall see in what follows.

### **The gothic in Victorian female narrative**

During the Victorian period, literature experiences some important changes. Romanticism gives way to Realism, which becomes the hegemonic literary genre of this epoch. However, along with the realistic novel, there are other types that do not lack importance. This is the case of the Gothic fiction which experiences a revival in literature. With regard to the theme in novels belonging to nineteenth century fiction, the romantic spirit of the weird and the eerie is blended with the spirit of realism (Varma, 199).

In what follows, I will focus on two aspects of Victorian Gothic. On the one hand, I am going to discuss the trend of revisiting romanticism that is developed mostly by women writers, such as the Brontë sisters. These authors write novels settled in a realistic or domestic frame. Additionally, they use elements from the eighteenth century Female Gothic which depicts women's fears about domestic enclosure. Moreover, they have the figure of Ann Radcliffe as their role model. However, these writers change some aspects of the traditional gothic such as the figure of the heroine who sets aside her innocent personality to overcome her fears with strong determination.

On the other hand, I will discuss two gothic short stories written by the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, who is considered one of the main women writers of the nineteenth century. Although her work may be also influenced by Radcliffe's legacy of Female Gothic, her short stories are based on traditional gothic too. However, the main plot of her short stories does not follow the same general narrative pattern of old gothic novels: the damsel is persecuted by the villain through the castle that is haunted by ghosts or other supernatural creatures. She manages to create the same effect of fear thanks to the mixture of myths, legends and ghosts.

## **Gothic elements in Victorian female novels**

### ***Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë**

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) results from the union of Realism, with the depiction of everyday life activities, and romance elements such as the extraordinary and the supernatural. Jane's story, an orphan raised by her cold-hearted aunt in law who sends her to an authoritarian charity school where her best friend dies because of an epidemic causes sympathy on the readers (Sherry, 51). At the age of eighteenth, she becomes the governess of an illegitimate child at Thornfield House, Mr. Rochester's manor, a mysterious an older man with whom she falls in love. Then, he asks her hand in marriage but at the day of the wedding, she discovers that Rochester is already married to his mad wife who is imprisoned in a chamber of the house.

During Jane's childhood, there are moments of fear and tension which transport the audience to a gothic atmosphere. Gateshead Hall, Mrs. Reed's mansion, represents a prison for her due to a series of continuous mental and physical abuses from her aunt and cousins: her aunt accuses her to be a liar, her cousin John hit her head with a book, and her cousins Eliza and Georgiana treat her with indifference. However, her most frightful experience lies in the red room scene when her aunt locks her in a chill and silent room as a way of punishment. According to Rebecca Sterne "light in many Gothic novels is instrumental in creating fear by making visible the threats that hover in a novel's darkened passages". She explains that the mediation of light in Jane's moment of fear confirms the uncanny. Her subconscious leads her to believe that the room is haunted by the ghost of her dead uncle. (Sterne, 29)

At this moment a light gleamed on the wall... while I gazed, it glided up to the ceiling and quivered over my head...but then, prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated. (Brontë, 14)

Charlotte Brontë introduces us to a superstitious heroine who believes in myths, legends and tales of fairy beings when she sees a figure in the distance and thinks of a "Gytrash", a spirit which torments lonely travelers or when she heard a "demoniac



laugh—low, suppressed, and deep—uttered” (Brontë, Charlotte, 130), her imaginative mind makes her think of a goblin standing near to her bed. However, Jane does not represent the conventional virgin type heroine of traditional gothic novels, whose sensibility maintains her away from the real world. She depicts a courageous Gothic heroine when she extinguishes the intentioned fire of Rochester’s bed or when she takes care alone of Mr. Mason’s arm “almost soaked in blood” (Sherry, 52). Moreover, Jane portrays a kind of heroine who is able to make her own decisions. This is notorious when she rejects to be St. John’s wife because she does not love him as a husband.

The only instance of the supernatural lies in the telepathic communication scene between Jane and Rochester. Jane hears his voice calling her even when they are separated by a great distance: “The feeling was not like an electric shock, but it was quite as sharp, as strange, as startling” (Brontë, Charlotte, 369). However, she does not relate this supernatural fact neither to deception nor to witchcraft but to the work of nature.

According to Robert B. Heilman, Charlotte Brontë manages to achieve new patterns of feeling by mixing traditional gothic conventions with new elements introduced by her. As opposed to the traditional Gothic whose characters are afraid of supernatural facts, Charlotte’s New Gothic explores in depth the psyche of her characters through their thoughts and dreams. Jane’s dreams about a little child and a ruined Thornfield depict the anxiety and nervousness that she feels before her wedding. Moreover, he suggests that Charlotte’s gothic is undercut with her later usage of comedy elements in some passages such as the arrival of guests to Thornfield. After Mrs. Rochester’s attack to Mason at night, the ladies “in vast white wrappers were bearing down on him like ships in full sail so he orders them not to pull [him] down or strangle [him]”. (Heilman, 120)

Mr. Rochester could be seen as the Byronic hero who enchants Jane. However, behind his chivalrous manners, there is a self-tortured man who is trying to escape from his turbulent and mysterious past. In some way, Rochester breaks with the archetypical figure of the gothic villain since he is not handsome: “He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow”. (Brontë, Charlotte, 99)

Bertha Mason, Rochester's mad wife, is presented as a wild beast and a non-human creature. Even the good natured Jane describes her as a fearful and ghastly creature.

'It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back [...] It was a discoloured face—it was a savage face [...] the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes [...] of the foul German spectre—the Vampyre. (Brontë, Charlotte, 249-250)

However, she is the only one who feels sorrow for her situation when Rochester addresses to her as a monster: “you speak of her with hate—with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel—she cannot help being mad”. (Brontë, Charlotte, 265)

I would like to remark that the characters of Bertha and Jane could be viewed as counterparts. On the one hand, Bertha represents the madwoman in the attic, who cannot live in a domestic environment due to her wild nature, and on the other hand, Jane pictures the angel in the house, that is, the perfect femininity ideals. Nevertheless, Peter Grudin suggests that the figure of Bertha carries symbolic meaning by representing Jane's inner fears about what she may become. (Grudin, 153)

It is also significant that Radcliffe has a visible influence on Charlotte Brontë. Radcliffe's second novel *A Sicilian Romance* serves Brontë as a reference point to create the character of Bertha Mason. She is inspired by the figure of Lady Mazzini, who is imprisoned by her husband in a chamber of the castle because of his desires to marry a younger woman. All the inhabitants of the manor heard strange sounds and moans at night which make them be terrified of the presence of a ghost. Just as Lady Mazzini, Bertha Mason is also locked by her husband in a room on the upper floor of Thornfield House.

### ***The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë**

*The tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) contains few Gothic elements in comparison to her sisters' novels and other works belonging to this period. The lack of the supernatural locates *The Tenant* in a more realistic type of novel. However, the main pattern of

Female Gothic is patent in the narrative of the plot. The protagonist, Helen Graham, is tormented by a miserable marriage with her tyrant husband Arthur Huntingdon from whom she finally decides to run away in order to find a merrier life with her son. The Tenant gives rise to a chorus of criticism from Victorian society in which the image of marital harmony was very well established in the mind of the population (Ward, 2).

The arrival of a widow and her little child to an uninhabitable and gloomy manor and her mysterious past awakens all kinds of rumours and gossip among the inhabitants of the little territory of Linden-Car. The venerable and picturesque Wildfell Hall is located at the top of a hill surrounded by desolate and rough fields. Its walls made of grey stone, its thick stone mullions and tiny latticed panes together with its isolate and unsheltered situation makes readers remind of the ancient castles of traditional Gothic stories. Nevertheless, in spite of its cold and dark aspect, Wildfell Hall represents for Helen a happy household far away from her cruel husband.

The narrative of the novel is written in an epistolary form by Gilbert Markham, the main narrator, who is telling the story to one of his friends. He acts as a mediator to make her story known to the readers. Moreover, Helen's diary plays an important role because the narration of her failed marriage is included in the whole narration of the plot. The idea of finding an old and faded manuscript as a way of revealing a secret to discover the truth is a common device of Gothic fiction (Gordon, 720). The difference resides in the fact that in this case is Helen herself who gives her diary to Gilbert to make him know all the truth about her turbulent past.

Helen is a young and inexperienced heroine who falls in love with the handsome Arthur Huntingdon. His aristocratic background and his good looks and manners attract the innocent Helen in spite of the warnings coming from her astute aunt who advise her to "let [her] eyes be blind to all external attractions, [her] ears deaf to all the fascinations of flattery and light discourse.—These are nothing" (Brontë, Anne, 183, vol. 1). However, Helen ignores her aunt's advice and finally marries Huntingdon.

As soon as she starts to know Arthur's real nature, she starts to suspect that "his very heart, that [she] trusted so, is less warm and generous than [she] thought it" (Brontë,

Anne, 261, vol. 1). Arthur is a cruel man who only looks after his own interests without caring about the people who surrounds him: he incites his wretched friend Lowborough to take refuge in drinking; he does not allow Helen to profess her faith; he conceals from his friend that Anabella Wilmot only wants to marry him because of his fortune and he calls his wife a “confounded slut” (Brontë, Anne, 302, vol. 1). Nevertheless, it is not until the eighth week of marriage that she recognizes that she was wilfully blind in relation to Arthur’s selfishness. He is a villain who maintains Helen imprisoned in the house under an absolute power from which Helen cannot escape.

As soon as mental and emotional abuses increase due to his “predilection for the pleasures of the table” (Brontë, Anne, 18, vol. 2), she sees herself dragged into a kind of Gothic horror (Ward, 155). Arthur is a sexist man who seems to be married for the purpose of exhibiting her as a demonstration of the perfect feminine behaviour. According to him, a woman must take care of the house and please all the desires of her husband. For example, when he travels to London to enjoy drinking with his friends, Helen must remain at home to act as a nurse after his excesses. Finally, his evil nature is undermined by his premature death: he is powerless to destroy his innocent son and he cannot drag his friends to death with him because they manage to reform by their own will. (Thormählen, 840).

Grassdale Manor is a house of perversion and lack of moral principles. Helen suffers all kinds of domestic and sexual abuses from her husband and the hosts of the house. When Arthur claims that he has no wife and offers Helen to any of his friends, Mr. Hargrave, by taking his words seriously, proposes Helen to become her guardian and lover. Moreover, she soon discovers the extramarital relationships between Huntingdon and Anabella Wilmot who is as ambitious and shameless as Arthur. As opposed to Helen, who is a good- hearted heroine, Anabella represents the figure of the gothic villainess who makes use of her unscrupulous temperament to achieve her purposes. (Varma, 192).

After Anabella’s departure, their conjugal life can be summarized as “two persons living together, as master and mistress of the house, and father and mother of a

winsome, merry little child, with the mutual understanding that there is no love, friendship, or sympathy between them” (Brontë, Anne, 96, vol. 2). In addition to this, his addiction to wine and his temperament worsen until the point that he treats Helen with despise as if she was not a human being.

Everything I did was wrong; I was cold-hearted, hard, insensate; my sour, pale face was perfectly repulsive; my voice made him shudder; he knew not how he could live through the winter with me; I should kill him by inches. (Brontë, Anne, 96-97, vol. 2)

The domestic cruelty and coldness in which she is imprisoned represents her fears about what the future holds for her only child if he is still under the influence of his evil father. Finally, she makes use of her hidden courage and decides to depart from the gloomy domestic prison who maintains her and her son under the power of a selfish and abominable man.

## **Gothic elements in Victorian female short story: Elizabeth Gaskell**

### ***Lois the Witch***

In *Lois the Witch* (1861), Gaskell takes the example of traditional gothic novels and sets her story in a distant place. However, as New England was at that time a new continent with little ancient history, there are no gothic castles or cathedrals to settle the narration of the plot. As a result, she develops and mixes elements of superstition, legends and witchcraft to achieve the same feeling of terror. *Lois the Witch* narrates the story of a young girl who is forced to travel to New England after the death of her parents. Her uncle accepts her at his house in Salem, whose inhabitants live in fear of superstitions, witches and black magic, and Indians. Moreover, the village seems wild and dark in comparison to her former home place in England: the darkness of the nights, the strange sounds or the white drizzle are elements which create a gothic atmosphere.

Salem was, as it were, snowed up, and left to prey upon itself. The long, dark evenings; the dimly-lighted rooms; the creaking passages, where heterogeneous articles were piled away, out of the reach of the keen-piercing frost, and where occasionally, in the dead of night, a sound was heard, as of some heavy falling body, when, next morning, everything appeared to be in its right place [...] the white mist, coming nearer and nearer to the windows every evening in strange shapes, like

phantoms [...] the distant fall of mighty trees in the mysterious forests girdling them round; the faint whoop and cry of some Indian seeking his camp [...] the hungry yells of the wild beasts approaching the cattle-pens - these were the things which made that winter life in Salem[...]strange, and haunted, and terrific to many. (Gaskell, 95)

Soon after her arrival, her uncle dies leaving Lois with her cousins and her strict puritan aunt who does not feel any sympathy for her. One day, an Indian woman is accused for having bewitched two young girls who suffer strange convulsions. Immediately, all the inhabitants start to organize gatherings to pray for their condemned souls. Prudence, Lois' little cousin, whose innocent mind is replete of myths about witchcraft due to the stories told by their Indian servant, accuses Lois of having used a spell upon her. She proclaims her innocence but no member of her family comes to her aid. Finally, she is sentenced to death.

The plot of the story revolves around the Salem witch trials carried out during the seventeenth century. Gaskell pictures a community of people who believes in myths and legends which create a feeling of generalized terror among the puritan inhabitants of the village. As the community is little and they know each other, the arrival of a stranger with different customs and beliefs, for she is Anglican, terrifies them. Even Grace Hickson, her cold aunt, treats Lois with suspicion after her first year in Salem: "a stranger like this girl" (Gaskell, 98). Therefore, an innocent girl dies because the unfounded fears of the whole population.

The figure of Grace is gothic in herself. She represents the cold aunt in law who does not try to feel sympathy for her good natured niece. Gaskell could have been based on Mrs. Reed, Jane Eyre's aunt, to create a similar character type. Both represent two proud women that feel indifference towards their respective kind nieces when they most need their help: Jane's confinement in the charity school of Lowood and Lois' sentence of death.

The element of the supernatural is present in the mind of Manasseh, Lois' cousin. As she is a young and beautiful woman, he is quickly enchanted by her pretty looks. Moreover, due to his passionate desire of having her as his partner, he sees the vision of two spirits who warn him of Lois' death if she does not marry him: "the colour of the

one was white, like a bride's, and the other was black and red, which is, being interpreted, a violent death" (Gaskell, 97).

Finally, several years after Lois' hanging, Prudence recognizes that she had not told the truth concerning the supposed link of Lois to witchcraft. As a result, the hunts against witches are put to an end.

### ***The Old Nurse's Story***

In *The Old Nurse's Story* (1852), Gaskell makes use of the element of ghosts and apparitions along with dark family secrets that are so common to old gothic novels. The plot is narrated by an old nurse who tells a story that took place many years before. She is in charge of Miss Rosamond, a child who, after her parent's death, is protected by her uncle Mr. Henry. The great and desolate Manor House, with its dark and gloomy hall, its darkened windows due to the growth of ivy, the antique organ which is placed in the living room and its three wings of which the east one always remains closed, produces fear on the newcomers. The inhabitants of the house are composed by Mr. Henry, the elder Miss Furnivall and several servants.

During the stormy nights in winter, the nurse hears the terrifying sound of the great organ and relates it to the strong wind. However, one of the servants affirms that the phantom of Mr. Furnivall plays the organ every night as he usually did when he was alive. One snowy night, Miss Rosamond says that a little girl took her to the woods where there was a young woman crying but her nurse does not believe her since there are only two footprints in the snow. However, several days after, the nurse sees with her own eyes the terrifying image of a pale little girl who is trying to enter the house.

I turned towards the long narrow windows, and there, sure enough, I saw a little girl, less than my Miss Rosamond [...] crying, and beating against the window panes, as if she wanted to be let in. She seemed to sob and wail, till Miss Rosamond could bear it no longer, and was flying to the door to open it, when, all of a sudden, and close upon us, the great organ pealed out so loud and thundering, it fairly made me tremble [...] I had heard no sound of little battering hands upon the window-glass, although the phantom child had seemed to put forth all its force. (Gaskell, 18)

Thanks to the little phantom, the dark secret of the old Miss Furnivall is discovered. According to Jennifer Bann, the spectral hands of the little ghost carry a symbolic meaning. The sound of “little battering hands upon the window-glass” helps discover the cruelty of the family and their dark secret. (Bann, 671)

She and her sister were in love with the same man. He fell in love with Miss Furnivall’s sister and they escaped together. However, he left her some time after having a child. Her cold hearted father and her jealous sister did not give her shelter and therefore, she and her little child died in the snow.

The final of the story remembers to Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, when the figure of Alfonso appears in the sky after a clap of thunder. Gaskell uses the same device to describe the apparition of the deathly characters of Mr. Furnivall and her sorrowful daughter.

All at once, the east door gave way with a thundering crash, as if torn open in a violent passion, and there came into that broad and mysterious light, the figure of a tall old man, with grey hair and gleaming eyes. He drove before him, with many a relentless gesture of abhorrence, a stern and beautiful woman, with a little child clinging to her dress. (Gaskell, 22)

Mr. Furnivall cold behaviour in relation to his daughter makes him the villain of the tale. This short story goes closer to the tradition of Female Gothic in which women stand under the authoritarian and superior power of men. In this case, a young girl and her son die because of the lack of protection from her unconcerned father.

### **Gothic elements in *Wuthering Heights***

Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) combines elements from the eighteenth century Gothic novel and the realist mode introduced by Domestic fiction, which was already patent in Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic works. Moreover, its highlight on passions, its usage of the ballad, folk and myths, the fantastic and the supernatural, its melancholy view of childhood and the exploration of selfhood and individualism connect the novel to Romanticism. (Pykett, 73)



The plot of the novel is mostly settled in Wuthering Heights, family Earnshaws' manor, which is located in the isolated and vast moorland of Yorkshire in the north of England. The wild surroundings of the house and the weather represent a Gothic atmosphere of gloom and terror.

The weather in those lands is characterized by strong winds and heavy snow during the winter as the narrator Mr. Lockwood states many times during the beginning of the novel “‘Wuthering’ being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather” (Brontë, Emily, 20); “YESTERDAY afternoon set in misty and cold” (Brontë, Emily, 23). However, Wuthering Heights, with its isolation and mystery, represents the Gothic element par excellence. Mr. Lockwood describes the architecture of the ancient and ruined house as grotesque “the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones” (Brontë, Emily, 20) which gives an air of suspense and mystery to the novel.

It also pictured the glorious past of the ancestors of the Earnshaw family “Before passing the threshold, I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque carving lavished over the front, and especially about the principal door; above which, among a wilderness of crumbling griffins and shameless little boys, I detected the date ‘1500,’” (Brontë, Emily, 20). The interior of the house also represents an ambience of darkness and gloom.

Above the chimney were sundry villainous old guns, and a couple of horse-pistols: and, by way of ornament, three gaudily-painted canisters disposed along its ledge. The floor was of smooth, white stone; the chairs, high-backed, primitive structures, painted green: one or two heavy black ones lurking in the shade. In an arch under the dresser reposed a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies; and other dogs haunted other recesses. (Brontë, Emily, 20-21)

The Heights could be compared to the desolate gothic castle which contains family secrets, ghosts, appearances and strange events. As the tradition of Female Gothic, it symbolizes a prison for the characters of Isabella, Cathy and even the effeminate Linton

Heathcliff. Moreover, the visit of Lockwood, Isabella and Cathy represents the gothic convention of the arrival of a stranger to a desolate house.

The gothic atmosphere of the manor intensifies with the cold behavior of the inhabitants. Lockwood's first encounter with the occupants reveals violent manners among the members of the uncommon family. From the very beginning, the tyrant Heathcliff is described by Lockwood as a cold man of few words.

'Thrushcross Grange is my own, sir,' he interrupted, wincing. 'I should not allow anyone to inconvenience me, if I could hinder it - walk in!' The 'walk in' was uttered with closed teeth, and expressed the sentiment, 'Go to the Deuce:' even the gate over which he leant manifested no sympathizing movement to the words. (Brontë, Emily, 19)

Cathy's youth and beauty dazzles Lockwood, who compares her admirable form, her exquisite little face, her golden ringlets and her irresistible eyes to the aspect of a fairy. At first, he erroneously believes that Cathy must be the spouse of either Heathcliff or Hareton which leads to the conclusion that, from his point of view, she is a fragile damsel in distress who needs the protection of a strong man. However, despite her fairy tale appearance, her personality is cold and depressed: "She looked at me, leaning back in her chair, and remained motionless and mute [...] she never opened her mouth. I stared - she stared also: at any rate, she kept her eyes on me in a cool, regardless manner, exceedingly embarrassing and disagreeable." (Brontë, Emily, 24). *Vinegar-faced* Joseph, the religious servant, is the character who adds a touch of humour to the plot due to his continual references to the Bible and his regional accent. Finally, Hareton, Cathy's cousin, is an illiterate and stubborn young man due to Heathcliff's abusive behaviour in relation to him.

The structure of *Wuthering Heights* reminds very much of earlier gothic novels in which the main narration was introduced by letters or diaries read by the narrator of the plot. Similarly, the innovative narrative frame introduced by Brontë presents us two main narrative levels. The central narrative is introduced by an outsider, Lockwood, who, at the same time, is transmitting Nelly's narration of the facts. Lockwood's narrative is very important because the gothic horrors pictured by him are partly

corroborated by his own point of view about culture. According to Lyn Pykett, “his own views of marriage and of women, shown in his romantic fantasies about Cathy and from his flirtation with the young lady reveal this genteel commentator to be just as manipulative and selfish as the apparently demonic Heathcliff”. (Pykett, 79)

The exaggerated sadism and violence which appears throughout the whole novel is also a nod to earlier Gothic works: Hindley, Catherine’s brother, threatens Nelly with a carving-knife, Heathcliff hangs Isabella’s beloved dog, slaps Cathy, throws a knife at Isabella; Hareton hangs a litter of puppies from a chair. However, unlike previous novels, there are no murders.

The use of the supernatural is pictured by the representation of ghosts or apparitions. Brontë’s excellent usage of the supernatural in moments of high tension represents the interior traumas experienced by her characters (Oldfield, 84). Brontë not only borrowed the gothic feature of the supernatural to construct her novel but also developed this aspect through the convincing mixture of supernatural aspects with reality within everyday life common situations. Mr. Lockwood’s nightmare is the best example of the predominance of the supernatural in the novel: little Catherine’s ghost tries to enter into her room through the window and he fights with her in order not to let her in.

My fingers closed the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand! The intense horror of nightmare came over me: I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed, ‘Let me in - let me in!’ ‘Who are you?’ I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself. ‘Catherine Linton,’ it replied, shiveringly [...] ‘I’m come home: I’d lost my way on the moor!’ As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child’s face looking through the window. Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes... (Brontë, Emily, 36)

The moment of anguish that Lockwood experiences in Catherine’s room and the later passionate response of Heathcliff make this passage mysterious and exciting.

He got on to the bed, and wrenched open the lattice, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears. 'Come in! come in!' he sobbed. 'Cathy, do come. Oh, do - ONCE more! Oh! my heart's darling! hear me THIS time, Catherine, at last!' (Brontë, Emily, 39)

The Gothic is very characteristic of the first generation plot, Catherine and Heathcliff, whereas the plot of the second generation moves towards the Domestic as soon as the story reaches an end. However, the gothic continues to be evident in the character of Heathcliff. His figure gathers all the ingredients which characterize gothic heroes. He is a gipsy child who is rescued by Mr. Earnshaw from the streets of Liverpool and taken with him to Wuthering Heights as a new member of his family. Nobody knows where he comes from or who his parents are. His mysterious origin and his unknown parentage make him very attractive to Mr. Earnshaw to the extent that he asks his family for a nice behavior towards the child "though it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil". (Brontë, Emily, 45)

From the very beginning, Heathcliff starts to change the customs of the Earnshaw family. With his arrival, the behavior of the inhabitants of the house turns into unfriendliness and hatred. (Sherry, 120). Young Catherine spits at him, Hindley sees him as a usurper who is stealing his father's affection, and Nelly leaves him in the landing of the stairs. Moreover, when she is narrating the facts that happened that night, she names Heathcliff with the personal pronoun *it* as if he was not human. However, he soon initiates a relationship with Catherine, who sees him as a playfellow since both are mischievous.

After Mr. Earnshaw's death, Hindley takes the control of the manor and, as he had always felt antipathy for Heathcliff, he starts to treat him as a servant. Thus, he pretends to separate her sister from him. However, Catherine only realizes the existence of a great difference between them after her arrival from Thruscross Grange, the manor of the Linton family. Therefore, she decides to marry Linton because he is rich, handsome and young and, as she tells Nelly, she loves him. Their marriage provokes Heathcliff's escape who, mysteriously returns totally transformed in appearance and manners. Nevertheless, Catherine and Nelly know that his inner nature has not changed and that "he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man [...] avarice is growing with him a besetting sin"

(Brontë, Emily, 98). He does not even hide his revenge plans to become the landlord of both manors. He only thinks about taking revenge to those who had treated him with cruelty and separated him from Catherine. His cruel and violent disposition becomes even darker while executing his plans.

Heathcliff not only directs his revenge towards the taking of both properties but also to the social degradation of the people who are around him. (Sherry, 122). He depraves Hindley by encouraging him to gamble and drink until his death; he also degrades the innocent Isabella after their marriage and turns her love for him into hatred; he makes Hareton an illiterate and a rude man just for the pleasure of destroying his noble personality. He wants to destroy all love connections just as he was separated from Catherine. Because of his vengeance, Linton loses his wife, his sister and his daughter. His evil deeds convert him into a fiend to the extent that his own wife Isabella doubts about his humanity: "He's a lying fiend! a monster, and not a human being!" (Brontë, Emily, 136). However, although Heathcliff is a proud and self-tortured man, he is still capable of feeling love. He feels anger towards Catherine for despising him but he desires to be with her because she represents his past and his person.

'Are you possessed with a devil,' he pursued, savagely, 'to talk in that manner to me when you are dying? Do you reflect that all those words will be branded in my memory, and eating deeper eternally after you have left me? You know you lie to say I have killed you: and, Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you as my existence! Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell?' (Brontë, Emily, 142)

When Catherine dies, the wicked Heathcliff develops into a demonic figure. The day after Catherine's funeral, he opens her tomb to see her face for the last time and assures that he felt her presence by his side. He is now the owner of Wuthering Heights which has turned into a setting of hatred, violence, and depravation. On the contrary, Thrushcross Grange represents the civilized and polite world which he also wants to destroy. The cruelty with which he treats his own son Linton is near the limit of inhumanity. Heathcliff forces Linton to deceive Cathy to take control of the Grange and when his son's health deteriorates, he disregards him.

The critic James Twitchell suggested that Emily Brontë could have based the character of Heathcliff on the vampire stories. Vampirism became an important subject matter in folklore by the end of the seventeenth century. Vampires were creatures which drank blood by sinking their long teeth in their victims. Moreover, they usually slept in the mornings with their eyes wide open. Heathcliff vampirizes Catherine in the way that neither of them can survive without sustenance from the other. When Catherine dies, Heathcliff goes every night to visit her tomb for nourishment. Brontë gives the readers some clues which can identify Heathcliff with a vampire. One hint is Isabella's description of him: "His hair and clothes were whitened with snow, and his sharp cannibal teeth [...] gleamed through the dark" (Brontë, Emily, 155). However, as time passes, the dead body of Catherine becomes bloodless and therefore Heathcliff does not have any subsistence. Finally, when Nelly finds his dead body, his eyes are open, and his teeth are gleaming. (Twitchell, 360-362)

I tried to close his eyes: to extinguish, if possible, that frightful, life-like gaze of exultation before any one else beheld it. They would not shut: they seemed to sneer at my attempts; and his parted lips and sharp white teeth sneered too! (Brontë, Emily, 277)

One important innovative contribution of *Wuthering Heights* is the existence of three gothic heroines: Catherine, Isabella and Cathy who allow Brontë to represent women's power to decide over their own happiness. As opposed to the virgin-type heroines of previous gothic novels, who always need the help of a brave hero, Brontë's female characters achieve a happy ending by means of willpower.

Catherine is wild and untamed just as *Wuthering Heights*. She lacks the feature of sensibility which characterized previous gothic heroines. Heathcliff and she become good friends due to their similar personality; she is the only person in the house who seems to comprehend him. Moreover, the presence of Heathcliff turns her wilder. They disappear the whole day playing on the moors, they disobey Hindley and they are always causing some kind of mischief. However, when she returns from her stay in Thrushcross Grange, her behavior is that of a lady. She now prefers the company of Edgar and Isabella rather than the company of Heathcliff, who according to her, knows and says nothing. When Edgar asks for her hand in marriage, she finds herself divided

into her two lovers. “My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it... as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I AM Heathcliff!” (Brontë, Emily, 81).

However, when she decides to marry Edgar, she knows that he is the wrong choice but marrying Heathcliff would degrade her social status. Her confinement in the domestic atmosphere of Thrushcross Grange softens her wild personality but at the same time, it represents a prison for her. When her health starts to deteriorate, her imprisonment restricts itself to her chamber which she describes as a “shattered prison” (Brontë, Emily, 143). She feels misunderstood by society that fails to comprehend her affliction.

I'm tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there: not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart: but really with it, and in it. (Brontë, Emily, 143)

She wants to escape to her own glorious world in which social conventions do not exercise power over her and therefore, she can have a quiet life with her true love Heathcliff. However, as she fails in her purpose, the only thing she can do in order to find peace is to die. After her death, she becomes a ghost that wanders on the moors.

Isabella is the character who is most linked to the archetypical type of gothic heroine. As opposed to Catherine, she belongs to the domestic atmosphere of the Grange. Her refined manners and her excess of sensibility make Isabella a naïve girl and exclude her from the outer world. When Isabella meets Heathcliff, she immediately falls in love with his apparent gentlemanly manners to the extent that she does not believe Catherine when she tells her that he is a cruel and avaricious man. She believes in a world of fantasy distant from reality and that is the reason why she pictures Heathcliff as a hero of romance.

However, when she marries him, she soon realizes that he is not a good natured man as she thought. This is clearly stated when she asks Nelly: “Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?” (Brontë, Emily, 124). Wuthering Heights

represents the imprisonment of Isabella in a violent absolutism ruled by the villain Heathcliff. The physical and mental degradation that Isabella suffers shows the hidden violence of her personality which enables her to escape from her prison.

Many similarities might be found between Emily St Aubert from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Isabella Linton which leads to the conclusion that Emily Brontë takes Ann Radcliffe's work to create her female character. Just as Emily, Isabella Linton is raised in a domestic environment which makes her develop an excessive innocence and naivety that isolates her from the outer world. When she decides to marry Heathcliff, she is imprisoned in the desolate house under the authoritarian power of the villain. *Wuthering Heights* and *Udolpho* represent a prison for their respective heroines since both places symbolize the final stage of their safe domestic lives. Their innocence and sensibility impedes them from making their own decisions and leaves them vulnerable to aggressive tyrants. However, both heroines manage to surpass the barrier of sensibility when they demonstrate their strength to overcome the villain's absolutism.

Both Catherine and Isabella differ from the archetypical figure of gothic heroines who experience a happy ending with her lover. They are tie to the same man in different ways. Whereas Isabella wants to escape from her infernal marriage with the demon Heathcliff, Catherine dies to be spiritually by his side.

Cathy, just as Isabella, is raised by her father in the Grange. However, she is not as innocent as Isabella although she grows up within a domestic atmosphere. Cathy is courageous and curious but as she lives in a genteel environment, she thinks that everyone is pleasant and good natured. Even when Edgar advises her not to go near *Wuthering Heights*, she disobeys him because she wants to visit the weak Linton. When Heathcliff forces her to marry his son, she is imprisoned in Linton's room since he is dying and nobody cares about him. However, as she is kind, she takes care of Linton and does not bear a grudge against him. The mental pain which she suffers changes her joyful disposition. "He's safe, and I'm free," she answered: "I should feel well - but," she continued, with a bitterness she couldn't conceal, "you have left me so long to struggle against death alone, that I feel and see only death! I feel like death!" (Brontë,



Emily, 245). When her husband dies, she is compelled to remain under Heathcliff's dominant power in the Heights as he is now the landlord of both houses. In contrast to Isabella, who has to be brave to escape from her prison, Cathy has to learn to soften her temperament to go close to her cousin Hareton and thus, she can find a true happy ending.

## Conclusion

Gothic Fiction encompasses a wide period in literature since its birth during the Romantic Movement in the late eighteenth century until its revival in the Victorian epoch. In the Romanticism, the interest of artists in human beings goes beyond human reason. As a result of this change of mentality, emotions and feelings become more significant. Moreover, Gothic literature wants to cause pleasurable terror by the representation of terrible events.

*The Castle of Otranto* by the renowned Horace Walpole is considered the first gothic work. Moreover, it establishes the pattern for following novels on this genre thanks to an innovative mixture of machinery, devices and romantic characters created by him. Generally speaking, a Gothic novel is settled in a distant past and in a exotic location; the main plot usually takes place in a gloomy gothic building, such as a castle or a cathedral, surrounded by a dark forest; the gothic castle is haunted by ghosts or apparitions; the virginal damsel in distress is persecuted by the evil villain throughout the obscure passages of the castle which are only bathed by the moonlight; and the characters are involved in supernatural events.

During the late eighteenth century, Ann Radcliffe leads the movement known as Female Gothic thanks to novels such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. These writers depict the fears of women of being enclosed in a domestic atmosphere ruled by dominant villainous men. Furthermore, they mix elements from the old gothic tradition started by Walpole with domestic fiction. The story of Radcliffe's Isabella St. Aubert serves as a pattern for following female gothic writers during the Victorian period, such as the Brontë sisters.

In the Victorian period, the Gothic fiction experiments a revival against the rising of the realist novel. As a result, realistic elements are put together with the romantic spirit.

On the one hand, the Brontë sisters write novels which have a visible strong influence from Radcliffe. Their respective heroines are forced to remain inside of the gloomy

house under the power of the villain. However, in contraposition to Radcliffe's heroine, they are strong enough to overcome their problems by themselves.

On the other hand, Elizabeth Gaskell takes the example of old gothic tradition to write her short stories which narrate a plot mainly about ghosts, myths, legends or witches. However, she also is influenced by Female Gothic since her female characters lay also under the authoritarian power of men or in the case of *Lois the Witch*, under the whole population.

Finally, *Wuthering Heights* is considered a masterpiece of the Victorian Female Gothic. Emily Brontë manages to create an atmosphere of domestic terror for her female characters. However, her major contribution to the tradition of gothic is the figure of her villain Heathcliff who torments the other characters by his evil deeds until his death.

To conclude, during the Victorian period, women writers use Gothic fiction as a way of representing women's fears about being imprisoned and powerless under the power of dominating men.

## References

- Alexander, Christine. "That Kingdom of Gloom: Charlotte Brontë, the Annuals and the Gothic". *Nineteenth -Century Literature*, 47, 1993: 409-438. Print.
- Bann, Jennifer. "Ghostly Hands and Ghostly Agency: The Changing Figure of the Nineteenth Century Specter". *Victorian Studies*, 51, 2009: 663-686. Print.
- Brontë, Ann. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Edinburgh: Thornton Edition, 1907. Print.
- Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., A Norton Critical Edition, 1971. Print.
- Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994. Print.
- Ellis, Markman. *The History of Gothic Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000. Print.
- Frank, Frederick, S. "Gothic Gold: The Sadleir- Black Gothic Collection". *The Johns Hopkins University Press. Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 26, 1997: 287-312. Print.
- Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Gothic Tales*. London: Penguin Classics, 2000. Print.
- Gordon, Jan, B. "Gossip, Diary, Letter, Text: Anne Brontë's Narrative Tenant and the Problematic of the Gothic Sequel". *ELH*, 51, 1984: 719-745. Print.
- Grudin, Peter. "Jane and the Other Mrs. Rochester: Excess and Restraint in Jane Eyre". *A Forum on Fiction, Tenth Anniversary Issue: II, 10*, 1977: 145-157. Print.
- Heilman, Robert. B. Charlotte's Brontë New Gothic. In Rathburn, Robert C. & Martin Steinmann, *From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad: essays collected in memory of James T. Hillhouse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958: 118-133. Print.
- King, Jeannette. *Jane Eyre*. London: Open University Press, 1986. Print.
- Moers, Ellen. *Literary women*. London: W.H. Allen, 1977. Print.
- Oldfield, Jenny. *Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights: A Study Guide*. London: Heinemann Educational, 1976. Print.
- Pykett, Lyn. *Emily Brontë*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989. Print.

- Radcliffe, Ann. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, The World's Classics, 1980. Print.
- Sherry, Norman. *Charlotte and Emily Brontë*. London: Evans Bros, 1969. Print.
- Stern, Rebecca F. "Gothic Light: Vision and Visibility in the Victorian Novel". *South Central Review*, 11, 1994: 26-39. Print.
- Thormählen, Marianne. "The Villain of "Wildfell Hall": Aspects and Prospects of Arthur Huntingdon". *The Modern Language Review*, 88, 1993: 831-841. Print.
- Twitchell, James. "Heathcliff as Vampire". *Southern Humanities Review*, 11, 1997: 355-362. Print.
- Varma, Devendra P. *The gothic flame: being a history of the gothic novel in England: its origins, efflorescence, disintegration, and residuary influences*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1966. Print.
- Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., The World's Classics, 2008. Print.
- Ward, Ian. "The Case of Helen Huntingdon". *Criticism*, 49, 2007: 151-182. Print.