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## On the Fringes: the Monsters, the Voiceless, the Abominations, and the Exiled

Virginia Davis Wyeth  
*Bowling Green State University*, [vwyeth@bgsu.edu](mailto:vwyeth@bgsu.edu)

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On the Fringes:  
The Monsters, the Voiceless, the Abominations, and the Exiled

Virginia Davis Wyeth

VWyeth@bgsu.edu

A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green  
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the requirements for the degree of

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with a specialization in  
Teaching English

July 27, 2018

Dr. Lee Nickoson, First Reader  
Ms. Kimberly Spallinger, Second Reader

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Virginia Davis Wyeth

Analytical Narrative

28 July 2018

On the Fringes:

The Monsters, the Voiceless, the Abominations, and the Exiled

In retrospect, it makes sense that the first substantial piece I wrote for the MA in English program was a teaching meta-unit on monster theory, how it represents our fears of Others and our fear of other within ourselves. My undergraduate education was spent learning mainstays of literature and of theories about that literature – learning the traditional mainstream narrative about the prevailing philosophies and concerns of any given literary period. But time and teaching in a diverse high school environment have made me more aware of and interested in the alt-narratives – forgotten or buried writers, texts whose message didn't fit neatly into the party line. I began to read texts with less traditional approaches, even if I didn't necessarily teach them that way. By the time I began my graduate program I was gravitating toward characters on the fringes of the text or main characters with unusual attributes, attributes seemingly irrelevant to the primary plot. What I found is that these peripheral characters/characteristics frequently serve to highlight the problematic societal situation of marginalized groups.

Though I now see the common theme running through my work, it was only after I reread, revised, and sorted the works that I noticed that theme. Initially I chose my pieces because they represent my best work in researched literary analysis, my main area of interest. The division of pedagogy versus discipline here very much reflects my two minds professionally. Many of us teaching in the secondary classroom become highly focused on pedagogy and abandon work in our discipline once our own formal education ends. I have to work to keep my

feet in both worlds. It is important to me to continue work in literary analysis, with an eye toward eventual publication, that has nothing to do with my own curriculum. It seems obvious that continual learning would enhance my teaching; however, such translation is not easy to trace and rarely recognized in the secondary teaching field.

I begin with “Walk This Way’: Monsters as Way of Seeing and Doing,” my monster theory teaching unit, because this is where my program began; it was the first cumulative assignment for my first class in the program. The unit also represents the most straightforward examination of Otherness. I have arranged the literary analysis papers that follow by complexity, which also happens to coincide with a more or less chronological order of the primary texts analyzed. My second paper “Romanticizing Rousseau from Barbauld to Blake to Wordsworth: The Education, Subsumption, and Appropriation of the Child” is a solid analysis paper, though it treads over well-covered ground. I can see this information showing up in my class lectures, however. I am interested in expanding the queer analysis that I began in “Dueling Personas and Double Standards: Oppression and Hypocrisy Exposed by *Lady Audley’s Secret*” for eventual submission for publication, and I have more immediate plans to do so with the Marxist analysis of *Rebecca* in “*Last Night I Dreamt I Went to Manderley Again: The Nightmare of the Interwar Era Landed Gentry.*” I end with that paper because I believe my analysis of *Rebecca* is my most complex and original researched work.

I had wanted to develop a lesson or some type of lecture on monster theory for use in my senior English classes for years, but I never found the opportunity to put in the kind of time it would take to create it. I teach several pieces that have real or metaphorical monsters, and I knew intuitively that archetypally monsters must represent the antithesis of all the things a hero represents for his culture, but I wanted something more concrete, in the manner of Joseph

Campbell's work. So when Dr. Nickoson assigned a teaching unit as a cumulative project for English 6040: Graduate Writing during the fall of 2015, that was my opportunity. I started by researching and filtering the work of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and David Gilmore. Their work provided me a pretty great single lesson plan. I was trying to figure out how to incorporate the lessons on the monster archetype across several texts without simply saying, "Here's a monster. This is probably what that monster represents," over and over again. Then I came across Melissa Bloom Bissonette's "Teaching the Monster: *Frankenstein* and Critical Thinking." That was the turning point. Her work on using the monster as "alienation effect," as I describe in the project narrative, provided me the practices for using monsters to provide students with reading purpose and to evoke more complex examination of all the applicable texts. I developed a meta-unit to include *Frankenstein*, *Beowulf*, and *Wuthering Heights*. I created narrative syllabi for all three texts based on Bissonette's research and strategies. I planned to incorporate online discussion boards and eventually add more texts to the meta-unit. But then reality set in.

I have already used this unit in my Advanced Placement Literature class and a modified version in my English IV class for the last two years. The revisions to the monster theory unit reflect the changes that were necessary for practical implementation in a real classroom. They also reflect a shift in my teaching practices. When AP Lit enrollment started to decline I had to reevaluate my classroom practices. I have become more committed to work/life balance for my students and for myself. I have decided that it is better to do fewer texts and create lasting positive associations with the ones we read. I also had to bow to the reality of what I could actually expect of myself with regard to grading, etc.

With the exception of the *Wuthering Heights* unit, where part of the reading is done over the winter break, I got rid of the online discussion requirement. The students didn't genuinely

engage, and there was no way I could keep up with the reading and grading while also grading in-class work. I also shortened the winter break part of the *Wuthering Heights* reading assignment, to support student family life. Plus, I had to build in more scaffolding for some of the literary criticisms I assigned because students simply struggled with comprehension. There were also no additional texts added to the unit; once students learned to apply the archetypal analysis to the monsters, to continue was to belabor. Aside from the original three texts, we now only briefly discuss how the monster archetype is represented in other texts. Those were the ways that I scaled back the unit, but what I got in exchange for that was a research project that profoundly changed the tone of my AP course. I fully fleshed out the *Wuthering Heights* researched analysis project and expanded it to culminate into an academic colloquium. The students' work and sharing of their work created confident academics, and the level of discourse in class skyrocketed. My colleague also teaches this unit with success, so I have affected more students than the ones in my classroom. I am pleased with the unit's pedagogy and especially proud of the final project.

In the spring of 2017 there were no on-line literature classes offered at BGSU, but I happened to hear of a graduate level course in Romanticism being offered at the University of Central Arkansas about thirty minutes away. This proved to be serendipitous. Dr. Jellenik, the class instructor, now provides my students the lecture on adaptations of *Frankenstein*. The cumulative project for English 6304: Seminar in Romanticism was to track a theme or issue across the historical moment of the Romantic period. I was intrigued by the differences in Wordsworth's and Mary Robinson's depictions of children and childhood, but I had already written a shorter paper on that. I did my undergraduate honors thesis on Anna Barbauld and knew of her work in children's literature. Then in my research I discovered that Blake's work

was often in conversation with Barbauld's. It made sense then to examine the subject in light of Romantic thought as imagined by Rousseau, who also wrote extensively about child development and child rearing.

When I began my revision process I concentrated on more explicitly connecting each poet's work with the philosophies of Rousseau. My revision notes from Dr. Nickoson suggested that I provide more framing for the arguments. As I reread my paper I realized that the class had provided context that did not exist outside of it. The majority of my revisions were to establish that context. Dr. Nickoson's suggestion has given me insight into necessary revisions for future publication efforts on other papers.

I wrote "Dueling Personas and Double Standards: Oppression and Hypocrisy Exposed by *Lady Audley's Secret*" for Dr. Lapinski's English 6800: 19th Century Women Writers in the summer of 2016. The novel's plot is centered on the narrator and protagonist Robert Audley's investigation of his uncle's wife for bigamy and murder, but as I read the novel I became intrigued by his peripheral homosexual or at least homosocial attraction to George Talboy, Lady Audley's first husband. Others have recently written on this aspect of the novel, though I did manage to tease out some new textual and historical evidence, but my original contribution was showing that the author Elizabeth Braddon equates Robert's marriage to a woman to Lady Audley's being committed to an asylum. Originally I had thought this paper would need quite a bit of work, but rereading it after some time away showed that I was in better shape than I thought. My own revisions and my revision notes from Dr. Nickoson were largely the same as before. I worked on making my connections more explicit, and she said I needed to provide additional framing. Obviously these are two things I need to work on with all my writing.



I wrote “*Last Night I Dreamt I Went to Manderley Again: The Nightmare of the Interwar Era Landed Gentry*” for another one of Dr. Lapinski’s 6800 seminars, this one on haunted women during the summer of 2017. I was at an advantage this time because I had read the Daphne du Maurier *Rebecca* years before for pleasure, so I wasn’t distracted by plot. My new insights into the novel came out of my somewhat recently acquired knowledge of the novel’s historical moment, and – I’m embarrassed to admit this – that came from my having been a devout fan of *Downton Abbey*. Researching the period revealed that my understanding of the time was correct, and I also saw that relatively little had been written on the class conflict at what I feel like is the heart of the novel, and almost no real exploration of Maxim de Winter exists in that context. This is the one paper I received initial feedback on. Dr. Lapinski commented, “A really excellent paper; I’m impressed by the historical and contextual research and the nuanced close reading. Loved it. You should present this at a conference or work it up as an article. For sure.” I am satisfied with the paper as written and have only made some copyediting changes. My next revisions will hopefully be in preparation for publication.

I hadn’t been a student in nine years when I began the program, and my writing and academic reading skills were rusty and creaked under the load. There were some growing pains, but those pains renewed my empathy for my own students. Overall, the program, and the literature and criticism courses especially, required that I really step up my game. I am now more comfortable with demanding reading, and I am writing more sophisticated arguments. Reflecting on my writing for selection and revision has revealed my specific writing shortcomings in explicitness and framing, but it has also shown me that my practice of revise-as-I-write serves me well. I feel overwhelmed and frustrated as my organization seems to unravel when I have to do heavy lifting to correct a major shortcoming, so I’ll be incorporating checks on

connections and context during future composition. The reflection process has also revealed the research and writing niche I have unknowingly carved out for myself, and I find that inexplicably satisfying.

Virginia Davis Wyeth

Meta-Unit (Pedagogy)

27 July 2018

“Walk This Way”: Monsters as Way of Seeing and Doing

1. Problem Defined

The AP Literature course that I teach is a British Literature survey course. My objectives for the course are twofold: to engage students with works of literature that they would likely never self-select to show them that “old stuff” can be “good stuff.” I also want to introduce them to the type of dense academic texts they are likely to encounter in college. Students in my AP Literature class are advanced high school seniors who come from extremely diverse socioeconomic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. It is not at all unusual for me to have students from five or six countries in a single class. Many students are from some of the most affluent families in Central Arkansas, and many others are on the free and reduced lunch program. What my students all have in common, however, is that they are intelligent and have shown a good deal of success in English classes up to this point. Despite their intelligence, though, AP Lit students often do not see the value in examining a text from a particular perspective. Additionally, they have little experience with texts prior to 1900 (the curriculum in our district from ninth to eleventh grades is heavily American and Modern/Post-Modern), and frustration levels are high, especially at the beginning of the year.

There are some recurrent frustrations in my class for me and for my students. I am often frustrated that students are either not reading the assignments, especially the literary criticisms, at all or are not reading with any real engagement. The students voice frustrations that they read the assignments but still cannot pass a reading check quiz. And they fail these quizzes even when the questions cover the most obvious arguments of the texts. Causal to

lack of student reading engagement, students do not see value in literary criticism. In the past I have introduced secondary level appropriate essays that explain different schools of critical theory, but that strategy has been only moderately successful. Students are confounded by what they feel are the mysteries of writing literary analysis and feel that improving their analytical writing from one score to the next is usually a matter of luck, and they see no connection between critical perspectives and their own analyses.

## 2. The Pedagogical Goals and Strategies

This project seeks to accomplish three major goals:

1. Increase student engagement in primary texts as active critical thinkers.
2. Increase student comprehension of and engagement in ancillary academic texts.
3. Facilitate students' application of scholarly processes on literature for their own academic writing.

I seek to accomplish these goals by synthesizing literary and pedagogical theories.

First, I have designed a thematic meta-unit to run throughout the course of the school year. This unit is based on Monster Theory, greatly influenced by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's work, but the unit also incorporates a good deal from David Gilmore. While not every text I teach is applicable to the theme, which would be tiresome for all involved, many of the course's anchor pieces naturally fit into the unit, so that the theme is recurrent though not constant. I have also incorporated Melissa Bloom Bissonette's classroom strategies, outlined in "Teaching the Monster: *Frankenstein* and Critical Thinking," of having students read with particular purposes in mind by asking them to focus on issues surrounding the monster/monstrous in the primary texts. Bissonette, citing the work of Bertolt Brecht, discusses using the monster as a mechanism for the "Alienation Effect":

The Alienation Effect... keeps the spectator in two minds simultaneously, the one taking pleasure in story, music, or character, the other taking note of what

the play is doing, what its author is saying. The more the spectator is aware of the play as artifice and provocation, the more she is aware, too, of her fellow-playgoers and of her role as a part of a particular collective. (107)

Bissonette explains that “the alienation that ... teaching the monster enables finds its purpose in the awareness of the audience or class” and that by “keeping the monster in ‘sight’ at all times, we can draw attention to the paradox rather than [just]choosing sides” about the monster’s nature (110-111). I apply the monster as “alienating experience” across several texts (110).

As a second part of my meta-unit, I have reversed my class structure from literary criticism homework reading assignments, followed by in-class quizzes and class discussion to in-class small group collaborative reading and discussion of literary criticisms and then high school level theory explanations with corresponding application questions as homework. This reversal, as well as the incorporation of Monster Theory, is based on Bissonette’s classroom strategies that use the artifice of the classroom environment and its teacher-student power dynamic to a pedagogical advantage, rather than a disadvantage. The guided in-class collaborative reading synthesizes Bissonette’s strategies with Marné B. Isakson’s “Five Keys to Helping Students Read Difficult Texts” as transparent instruction. And before each of the in-class readings, students read for homework essays that describe an appropriately chosen school of literary criticism. The essays, written by Tim Gillespie for high school students, are short and accessible, so students have an experience of success in reading academic writing, as well as having preloaded demystifying background knowledge when they walk into class.

The final goal is for students to become competent independent readers of academic texts. So to that end, after several of these in-class collaborative reading opportunities, I move to providing students with copies of my own annotated academic texts, as well as a narrative describing my thought processes, making the experienced engaged critical reader

processes transparent to them by model. Eventually students do academic reading on their own, including selecting texts and establishing reading purpose(s) for themselves.

Finally, the lesson for each primary text includes a reflective writing assignment where students evaluate the applicability of theory to their own writing and narrate a plan of incorporation. On some, but not all, texts there is a final writing assignment based on released College Board essay prompts. Students must move beyond the particular discussion that has happened in the classroom (about monsters) and move to using the critical thinking strategies and literary lenses that enabled those discussions.

### 3. The Unit Introduction: Monster Theory

The first lesson is straightforward to provide our frame. The lecture begins with an anticipatory discussion of several horror and cartoon monsters while I ask questions designed to engage students. This is followed by a PowerPoint lecture with accompanying notes. The lecture is mostly based on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's discussion of Monster Theory, but I have drilled it down, eliminated small elements, changed the order to something more applicable to my purposes, and added some discussion from David Gilmore's work. Monster Theory serves as the unifying idea, purpose, and Alienation Effect for student reading of the primary texts.

### 4. *Frankenstein*

The first text offers a challenge in implementing the Alienation Effect. An important element of this strategy, one which Bissonette repeatedly stresses, is to provide purpose (in this case focus on the monster) *before* students read the text. Our program assigns *Frankenstein* as summer reading to our incoming AP Literature students, and attempting to direct their reading is impractical, as is reordering the curriculum of several teachers. As is so often the case in the classroom, I must bow to the practical realities, even if I know that

another plan might be optimal. I could not apply this preloading strategy to the primary text; I could, however, apply this concept to students' reading of the literary criticisms.

Students should come into class already having read *Frankenstein* and having watched a documentary on the life of Mary Shelley. On the first day, I provide students with an extensive handout. The handout is meant to function as combination assignment sheet, procedure explanation, and syllabus for the duration of our study of *Frankenstein*. Students are able to look ahead and see the questions they will be asked about a reading, thus establishing purpose. They can look ahead and see the trajectory of the lessons so that they can understand the overall purpose as well.

The homework consists of light academic reading on biographical and gender theories and accompanying primary text application questions. Students are able to see the next day's assignment so they can see the purpose of their homework. On the next class day students are asked to read in collaborative groups and discuss questions. Readings are selected biographical and feminist literary criticisms. An instruction guide for their reading is part of their handout. As discussed above, the habits of critical reading of dense texts are provided as directed method.

Students follow the above procedure for the remainder of the novel study, culminating in a formative reflective writing assignment and then a summative in-class timed writing assignment based on released open-ended essay prompts from College Board. After the summative assignment, we take a field trip to a local university where the students participate in a college lecture on adaptations of *Frankenstein*. This has proven to be invaluable in setting a positive academic tone for the school year. Students are excited to see what life will be like next year, and they feel empowered because they are prepared to engage with the professor on a collegiate level. At the end, students write a more extensive reflection

of their entire experience with *Frankenstein* – from engaging with the text without support through engaging with it at the college level.

### 5. *Beowulf*

The lesson for *Beowulf* seeks to build on the knowledge and practice gained from our analysis of *Frankenstein*. Because *Beowulf* immediately follows, the lesson procedure largely stays the same. There are only three important changes. First, because *Beowulf* has three monsters, one of which is female, this lesson naturally combines the gender theories students worked with for *Frankenstein* with the historical criticism I introduce here. Second, the handout adds a narrative element. This narrative talks students through the metacognitive process that I went through while reading the literary criticisms for the purposes of these lessons. Thus the goal is that students will begin to model such processes. In fact, I specifically state as much. At first, I had a lofty goal that the annotations and the narrative would be enough to lead students, but the Tolkein essay proved too difficult (and dry) for small group reading. My colleague Amber McCuien developed reading questions that serve as guideposts to get them through that criticism. Last, students are given more discussion questions, each of which is slightly more complex than those for *Frankenstein*. This means that many questions will be discussed in the group as before, but some will have to be answered individually for homework, thus (hopefully) weaning them from their dependence on peer feedback.

### 6. *Wuthering Heights*

There is a challenge with incorporating the Alienation Effect by giving students purpose before reading and, at the same time, working to increase student literacy with regard to academic texts. I want to expose students to ideas and points of view before they begin reading, but reading a literary criticism before reading the primary text obviously creates confusion for students. My solution with this unit of study was to (1) expose students to



Monster Theory and various literary critical theories, (2) ask students to bear these ideas in mind while reading the primary text and form some opinions, and (3) give them critical texts to support, expand, and challenge their own ideas. This order of approach was impossible with *Frankenstein* because of the practical restrictions already explained, and the approach was problematic with *Beowulf*, since the excerpts are short and there are three distinctly different monsters. *Wuthering Heights*, however, offered me an opportunity to follow the plan more closely. In addition, students read the novel over the winter break at the end of the first semester/beginning of the second semester. By this time they are better readers and more accustomed to the rigors of a college level environment. Unfortunately, they also have a serious case of senioritis, but that is beyond the purview of this paper and likely beyond the skill-level of this teacher to completely overcome. I have, however, modified the pacing to require less of the novel reading be done over the winter break.

To introduce students to *Wuthering Heights*, I have once again relied on Gillespie's essays, this time on archetypal criticism. I also have a perfect opportunity here to connect to ideas students are comfortable using. Students who have been in the AP track since their sophomore year have all read Thomas Foster's *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, a high school level discussion of various archetypes, in the writer's own words, "watered down Northrop Frye." Students, not surprisingly, did not realize that they were reading (a) a particular school of thought out of many such schools of thought and (b) concepts that were not original to Thomas Foster. Indeed, I have to frequently remind my students that "according to Foster" is not an appropriate phrase in their papers. After reading Gillespie's essay, I send them to their *How to Read* book to read the chapter "Nice to Eat You" on vampire archetypes in literature. Not surprisingly, Foster mentions Heathcliff and *Wuthering Heights* in the chapter. Bronte's novel is the first text that the students encounter in which there are no literal monsters. With background knowledge in hand, I ask the students to read

the novel looking for monsters, specifically but not limited to vampires. Once again, monsters provide the Alienation Effect. In addition, students are asked to develop theories on the monster(s) as they go. For the first time, students are establishing their own purposes. To that end, students are asked to annotate the primary text with their purpose in mind.

Annotation is another frustration of high school students. They claim that they never know what and how to mark, and in a previous lesson not described in this paper, I have given students primary texts with my own annotations, in addition to highlighting. Annotation for a particular purpose illustrates to students, in an organic way, that annotations are directly related to purpose, thus helping students understand the need for planning before reading and for keeping purpose in mind while reading.

During their reading of *Wuthering Heights*, students are asked to respond to questions on the class discussion board and to begin to posit theories regarding the monstrous. By the end of the novel, students should have chosen a particular line of thinking that interests them, and to reflect that line of thought in the discussion threads where they concentrate their conversation. In-class collaborative groups begin to shape around these discussion threads. All of these requirements and the metacognitive process behind them are clearly outlined in the handout. Another change in this lesson is that I provide students with longer academic texts and more of them. In fact, the amount of text is more than students can be expected to read in their entirety. Students must skim, select, and reject whole and partial texts. It is in the discussion and in-class collaboration groups, which have become one in the same by this point, that students think aloud and discuss their thought processes on selection.

The lesson culminates with an individual presentation that asks students to imagine an academic project. The assignment product consists of a class PowerPoint or Prezi presentation to include a rhetorical précis, an abstract, a brief narration of the way they would use their chosen academic texts for support, and an explanation of critical theories they have

utilized in developing and supporting their theories. All of this information is provided in a project explanation handout. Students are able to work through academic processes they will need at the university level – skimming and reading while developing ideas, combined with investigation, selection, and utilization after ideas have been developed. No paper is ever required. The product is the project proposal in the form of an academic colloquium. The projects have proven to be a real turning point in the school year. From this point class discussions tend to be more complex and innovative. Additionally, when the senior capstone project is assigned students are more prepared than past classes have been for the requirements of a longterm research project and a culminating university level academic paper.

#### 9. Goals for the AP Literature Program

Since a colleague and I redesigned the AP Literature program five years ago we have seen the AP Literature Exam scores improve dramatically. In just two years time, our student pass rate on the exam has more than doubled. In 2015 we had an 86% pass rate, compared to the national pass rate of 56%. Unfortunately, at the same time we have had a sharp decline in enrollment. Every year AP Literature has been reduced by one or more sections. My colleague and I believe that we can attribute both of these outcomes to the increased academic rigor we have brought to the program. It does no good to “improve” the program if fewer and fewer students are benefitting from it. On the other hand, it does no good to increase the participation if we have to lower the standards to appease the unmotivated. We have been brainstorming ways that we can genuinely improve the program in both student achievement and in student participation. Reversing the traditional class structure has decreased student frustration, while also supporting student engagement with college-level texts more effectively. Topics like Monster Theory have generated interest in the texts and provided purpose through Alienation Effect has proved to empower student. Additionally, I

have added academic (and fun) field trips to the curriculum, and those field trips have provided alternative context for the literatures we read. In two year's implementation of the changes, we have a tentative 75% increase in enrolment for the 2018-2019 school year.

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Through the eyes of  
**MONSTERS**



Based on the work of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen  
in *Monster Theory*



# A MONSTER IS TIED TO ITS CULTURE



- *Monere*
- *Monstrum*
- *Monstra*

(Gilmore)

# THE MONSTER DEFIES CATEGORY





# MONSTERS AREN'T LIKE US



## Fear of the Other





# THE MONSTER IS BORDER PATROL

- Law
- Controlled
- Chaste
- Religious

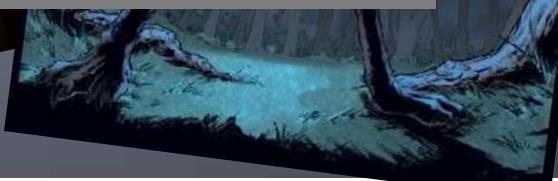
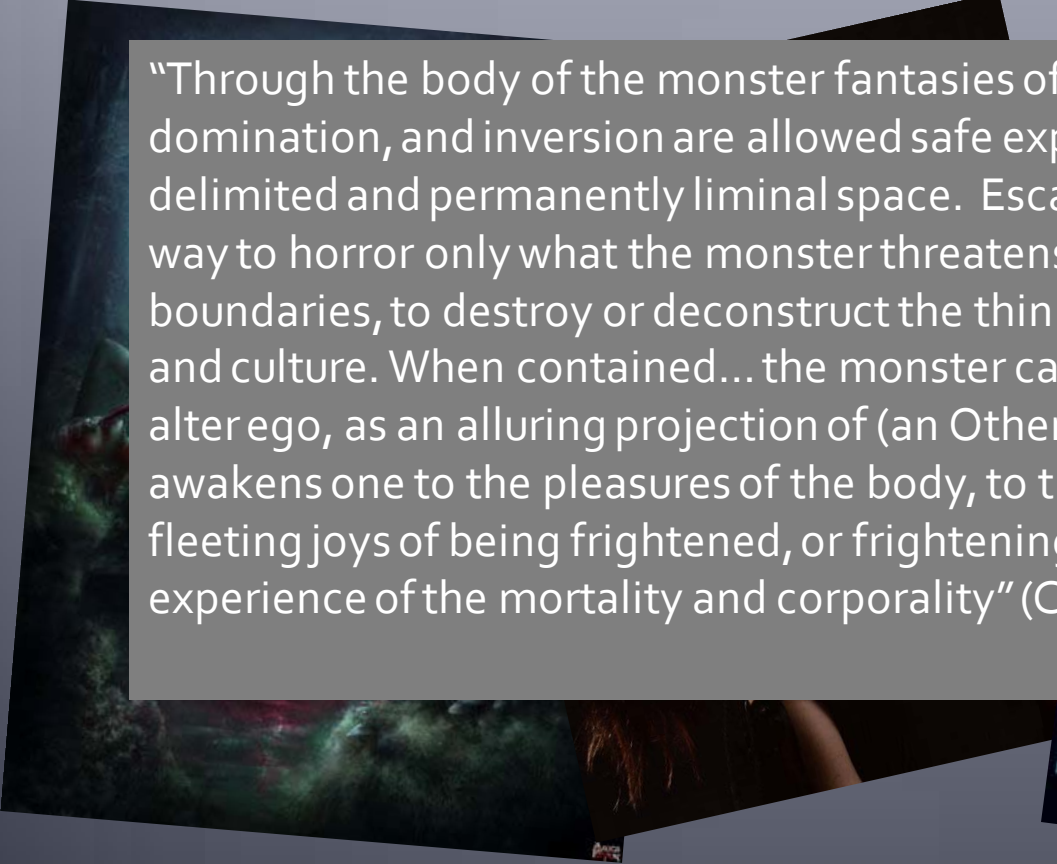
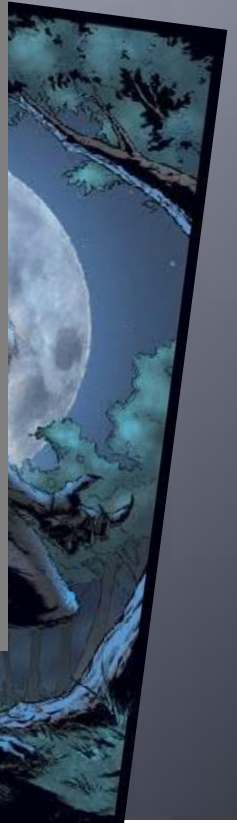


- Lawless
- Violent
- Promiscuous
- Heathen

NO! NO! NO!  
YES! YES! YES!



“Through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space. Escapist delight gives way to horror only what the monster threatens to overstep these boundaries, to destroy or deconstruct the thin walls of category and culture. When contained... the monster can function as an alter ego, as an alluring projection of (an Other) self. The monster awakens one to the pleasures of the body, to the simple and fleeting joys of being frightened, or frightening – to the experience of the mortality and corporality” (Cohen 17).





# MY ! WHAT BIG TEETH YOU HAVE !



(Gilmore)

# THERE'S ALWAYS A SEQUEL



or  
“Why won't this damn monster die?!”



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## Through the Eyes of Monsters: Monsters As A Way of Seeing

### I. A Monster is Tied to Its Culture (Cohen 4)

- The word “monster” derives from the Latin word *monstrum*, which means a portent or omen.
- The root of *monstrum* is *monere*, which means to warn.
- Romans used the word *monstra* to mean, not just monsters, but any “abnormal phenomena regarded as warning or omens of the will of the gods.”
- So from the beginning, monsters have been “divinations, metaphors, messages, indications of deeper meaning or inspiration” (Gilmore **page**).
- As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen says: “A monster’s body is a cultural body.” What that means is that monsters are inextricably tied to a certain place and time. Just as heroes do, monsters reflect the culture that invents them. Heroes represent what a culture prizes. Monsters represent what a culture fears.

### II. The Monster Defies Category (6-7)

- Humans tend to crave order. We categorize. We label.
- But we also resent order, categories, and labels (more on this later).
- Monsters defy categorization by their very nature. That is why they are monstrous. The most simple example would be a monster like a griffon: head, talons, and wings of an eagle, body of a lion. Other monsters are less obvious at first glance, but just as difficult to categorize. Vampires and zombies are not quite living, and not quite dead.

### III. Monsters Aren’t Like Us (9-12)

- The monster is Other. This maybe a difference of culture, politics, race, economy, or sexuality.

- Connecting this to the last point, dual-sexed people and conjoined twins have been labelled monsters and persecuted for their lack of category as well as their position as Other.
- When humans encounter a group they perceive as different, especially if they are at odds with that group or want something that group has, we highlight their differences. Often this means that we turn the Other into a monster.
- By extension: According to René Girard, “Monsters are never created (out of nothing), but through a process of fragmentation and recombination in which elements are extracted ‘from various forms’ (including – indeed, especially – marginalized social groups) and then assembled as the monster, ‘which can then claim an independent identity” (Cohen 11).
- It seems, then, that monsters are or can be an exaggeration of the differences one culture sees in another. In other words, monsters represent our fear of Other.

#### IV. The Monster is Border Patrol (12-16)

- The monster is a warning against moving outside of what is accepted “(intellectual, geographic, or sexual)”
- You could be attacked by the monster or become one yourself.
- Lycaon violated the guest-host rules by feeding a servant to a disguised Zeus, and he was cursed into being a lycanthrope – he did not behave as a proper human, therefore, he was monstrous.
- Sea monsters may have been inventions to keep other traders from using their waters.
- “Every monster is ... a double narrative... one that describes how the monster came to be and another, ... what cultural use the monster serves” (13).

- Monsters often come from places that are lawless and/or chaos. This promotes the structure of law and civilization.
- Relating back to the last point of monsters as Other, monsters control and keep people from intermingling with Them.
- Don't go into the wilderness because the monstrous savages (Native Americans) want to kidnap and take white women for their wives.
- People who intermingle become monsters themselves: witches are women who have had "congress" with the devil, or more likely, they were women who were a little too independent.
- "The monster is transgressive, too sexual, perversely erotic, a lawbreaker; and so the monster and all that it embodies must be exiles or destroyed" (16).

V. No! No! No! / Yes! Yes! Yes! (16-20)

- Because the monster is linked to the taboo, it also attracts us. We are curious about and drawn to what is forbidden.
- There is an escapist quality about the monster – the freedom from the restraints, labels, categories, etc. of civilized life.
- "This simultaneous repulsion and attraction at the core of the monster's composition accounts greatly for its continued cultural popularity." "We distrust and loathe the monster at the same time we envy its freedom..." (17).
- "Through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space. Escapist delight gives way to horror only what the monster threatens to overstep these boundaries, to destroy or deconstruct the thin walls of category and culture. When contained... the monster can function as an alter ego, as an alluring projection

of (an Other) self. The monster awakens one to the pleasures of the body, to the simple and fleeting joys of being frightened, or frightening – to the experience of the mortality and corporality” (17).

- The places that the monsters live (outerspace or “The Dark Continent”) are not just frightening places of danger, they are places of liberation. They are places of other sexual habits, freedom from religious or moral restrictions, and unbridled aggression.
- Sometimes the attraction to the monstrous is manifested by turning it into the comedic and/or adorable.
- Cookie monster doesn’t live with the restrictions of eating a healthy diet. Monsters Inc. neutralizes the fear of what’s under the bed or in the closet.

VI. My What a Big Mouth You Have! (Gilmore 174-180)

- Monsters are, for the most part, giant. They loom huge over humans. These fears threaten to overwhelm us.
- Monsters have a huge or at least a terrifying type of mouth. While David Gilmore sees this as some type of Freudian oral fixation and even a latent desire for cannibalism (!), I believe the mouths of monsters are more simply a metaphor of a fear of being devoured. Devoured by another culture, by the chaos we barely keep at bay. Or devoured by our own lust, greed, aggression, heathen tendencies.

VII. There’s Always a Sequel (Cohen 4-6, 20)

- Joseph Campbell (whom you know from the Hero’s Journey theory) noted that there is a repetitive and predictable cycle:
  - the monster mysteriously appears from some shadowy place, but at first people don’t believe it or ignore it.

- Then there is great destruction and carnage so it can no longer be ignored.
- Finally, the community reacts and a hero vanquishes the monster.
- The monster (or its kin) returns later, and the cycle repeats. (Gilmore 13)
- Killing the monster is a way of vanquishing the evil it embodies. Frequently, though, the monster (or another similar) returns. As we have no end to our fears, so too there is no shortage of monsters.
- We see monster “types” appear and reappear at different times in the same culture and across different cultures (Cohen 4-5).
- As the monster represents the individual fears of individual cultures, it morphs. This is why it can never be completely vanquished. Because a culture always has fears.
- Likewise the interpretation of a monster is not static. In order to analyze and interpret a particular monster, we must analyze and interpret the situation that created it (4-5).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Frankenstein: Whose Monster Is It?***

### **I. A Culture's Monster**

#### **In Class:**

Monster Theory PPT lecture. Take notes!

#### **Questions:**

- How do you see Cohen's theses represented in Frankenstein's monster?

### **II. Mary Shelley's Monster**

#### **Homework:**

Read Gillespie's essay on biographical criticism *and take notes*. Note the questions that biographical critics ask.

#### **Answer the following questions in your notes:**

- How is the *Frankenstein's* monster Mary Shelley's monster?
- How do Cohen's theses connect to a biographical approach with regard to *Frankenstein's* monster?

#### **In Class:**

Read Moer's essay "The Female Gothic" and answer the following questions. (See protocol for in-class reading of dense texts)

#### **Questions:**

- What would Moer say the monster represents?

- Moers implies that there are many “births” causing and also coming out of Frankenstein and Frankenstein’s monster. How does Moers (and how do you) perceive this motif of birth (both inside and outside the novel)?
- Closely examine the passages where the monster is “made” and the passage of his animation. What elements of MS’s language would you say support Moers’ assertions?
- Where do you think that Moers’ analyses oversimplify or at least fail to acknowledge complexities of the monster (as a representation of personal and/or cultural fears)?
- Where did you and Moer overlap? Where did you diverge?

### III. A Gender Issues Monster

#### **Homework:**

Read Gillespie’s essay on feminist/gender criticism and take notes. Note the questions that gender critics ask.

#### **Answer the following questions in your notes:**

- What is the difference in a “feminist text” and approaching a text from a feminist/gender lens? Can all/nearly all texts be analyzed from a feminist lens? Give an example of how one would do so?
- Thinking specifically of *Frankenstein*, how do biographical criticism and gender overlap? Is it possible for the two to be separated? If you were to try and separate the biographical influence from the gender issues (in *Frankenstein*), what issues/elements of the novel would be affected; i.e., what issues might belong squarely to one but not the other?



#### IV. Mary Shelley’s “Hideous Progeny”

##### In Class:

Read Mellor’s essay “Possessing Nature: The Female in Frankenstein” and answer the following in your groups.

##### Questions:

- How is Frankenstein’s monster a feminist monster?
- Frankenstein’s monster doesn’t have a “gaping maw” nor does he eat/bit his victims. IN fact, he is a vegetarian. He strangles all his victims. What do you make of that in light of Cohen’s and Gilmore’s theories on monsters?

##### Homework:

Read and annotate Mellor’s essay on “Which Text to Teach.”

- Go to <http://knarf.english.upenn.edu/Colv1/ftitle.html> and use the handout to help you compare and contrast the 1818 and 1831 editions of Frankenstein (be prepared to discuss interesting differences, including the issues they raise for students and teachers)
- WRITE a bulleted discussion (about a page) on one significant/interesting difference. Analyze/discuss the possible reasons and/or the effects of the change on the text.

#### V. Frankensteining It Together (You see what I did there?)

##### In-Class:

Socratic Seminar

**Homework:**

Write a 500-650 word informal response to the following:

Many students argue that a text “isn’t feminist literature.” Explain how one applies gender criticism to a work not inherently feminist. Justify the benefits. Explain how the lens will benefit you personally in your own analytical writing.

**VI. Assessment**

**In-Class:**

Timed Writing

**VII. Epilogue**

**In-Class:**

Field trip to UCA for Dr. Jellenik’s lecture on adaptations of *Frankenstein*.

## VIII. Reflection

### Homework:

#### ***Frankenstein* Reflective Essay:**

There's a good deal of research (beginning with John Dewey, if you're curious) that says that reflection is a critical part of learning. Pausing to think about and put into words the new knowledge and connections you have made helps to transform your thinking, and, by extension, transform you. A reflective essay is personal and much less formal than a "regular" essay. You should talk about yourself in the first person. The essay is about you, your process, your transformation, not so much about the literature. This first essay should be 2-4 pages, double-spaced, and it should use MLA formatting for the heading and the page header (look them up and don't get it wrong).

Use the following to guide your essay (don't answer these like short answer questions). You don't have to discuss all the criticisms, but you should discuss multiple criticisms. For each part be as specific as possible. Refer to the texts (no quotes necessary, but not prohibited), but don't summarize them. Rather, use them to discuss your own thoughts and feelings. Really think about what you were thinking *and* feeling. Learning is actually highly affective (related to the feelings):

1. What did you think about *Frankenstein* before you started the novel, and how did that make you feel?
2. What did you think about the novel during your reading (what were your difficulties, frustrations, happy surprises, etc.), and how did that make you feel?
3. What did you think about the novel when you were finished, and how did that make you feel?
4. How did Ellen Moers' criticism change your thoughts about the work? What resonated with you? Did you have any disagreements? How did it change your feelings?
5. How did the first Mellor essay change your thoughts about the work? What resonated with you? Did you have any disagreements? How did it change your feelings?
6. How did the second Mellor essay change your thoughts about the work? What resonated with you? Did you have any disagreements? How did it change your feelings?
7. How did Dr. Jellenik's lecture on adaptations of *Frankenstein* change your thoughts about the work? What resonated with you? Did you have any disagreements? How did it change your feelings?
8. How have your thoughts and feelings changed since before you began studying *Frankenstein*? Don't just limit your discussion to the novel here? You can go broader.

### **Protocol for In-class Reading of Dense Texts in Groups or Pairs<sup>1</sup>**

1. Look over the text for a general idea of the topic. This should be brief, but everyone should generally agree before moving on.
2. Look over the purpose or questions you have been given for the text.
3. Read in sections & synthesize as you go.
  - a. As you are reading, highlight/annotate parts that pertain to your purpose.
  - b. When you can tell that a new point, argument, idea, etc. is starting, stop (generally, people will be reading at about the same pace). At every section, stop and discuss the takeaways from that section.
  - c. Identify which question or purpose that section addresses (don't spend time answering yet).
4. Once you have finished, quickly discuss and summarize the big ideas.
5. Answer the questions you were given.

### **Protocol for Individual Reading of Dense Texts**

See above, but do these steps without a partner. ☺

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Isakson, Marné B. "Five Keys to Helping Students Read Difficult Texts." *Center for Teaching & Learning*. Brigham Young University, n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2015.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### The Monster Trinity of *Beowulf*

#### I. **Beowulf**

Beowulf is an archetypal hero, that same guy that Joseph Campbell taught us all about. It stands to reason then that he would fight an archetypal monster. The problem, though, is that he fights three monsters. Are they all the same? Grendel and his mother are certainly similar, but they have an important difference. Grendel's mother is, of course, female, and that difference seems important. And what about that dragon? He is different from both of the others and comes at the end of Beowulf's life. In fact, the dragon kills Beowulf. Something must be going on.

#### **Homework**

Read the excerpts from *Beowulf* through the battle with Grendel (stop at the section on the Monster's Mother). Also read the short Gillespie essay on historical criticism.

#### **Questions:**

- What is your initial reaction to Grendel? Bring your understanding of monster theory and your background knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons to bear on your observations.
- What connections/observations/considerations do you make about *Beowulf* based on the historical background you read about the Anglo-Saxons? Also note and give examples of specific literary devices that have been recently introduced to you.

#### II. **Grendel and Beowulf's Other Monsters**

##### **In-Class**

Let's start with a seminal work of literary criticism by an important literary figure: "*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*" by J.R.R. Tolkien. I have marked the applicable excerpts for you (page 114 to end). In addition, you will see my own highlights that reflect which elements are particularly salient (it's an SAT word – look it up) to our purposes. Speaking of purposes, be sure you use the guide for reading texts that I gave you for in-class collaborative reading. Your questions ( i.e. your "purpose") are listed below.

[Read "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" by J.R.R. Tolkien]

**Questions:**

1. Tolkien discusses at length the particular cultural place in time in which this poem is situated. What is that particular place? How does he say that Grendel (and the other monsters) reflects/is tied to that cultural moment? Note JRRR's lengthy discussion of the unusual/critical moment in history.
2. What does the character of Beowulf tell us this culture valued?
3. Synthesizing Tolkien's commentary and Cohen's theses, what would you say Grendel represents? What lines from the poem support your answer? Use direct quotes from your monster theory notes.
4. What does Tolkien make of Grendel's mother? Do you see any problems or deficiencies in his discussion of her?
5. What does Tolkien make of the dragon? What conclusions of your own would you draw based on all the reading you have done thus far?

**Homework:**

Answer any unfinished questions. Read the excerpts from *Beowulf* on the Saga of Finn from the point of view of Hildeburh, the account of Wealthow, and battle with Grendel's mother.

**Questions:**

- What comparisons would you make among the three female characters?
- Bearing in mind what you know about monster theory and using what you have learned about gender criticisms, how might you analyze Grendel's mother?

**In-Class:**

**III. Grendel's Dam**

Next, let's look at Grendel's dam. For this we are going to jump 60 years past Tolkien.

A note on the selection: I have stricken passages that I feel are inapplicable to our study. I have marked out sections with references to Freudian or other psychoanalytical theories. I did this simply because they don't really apply to our discussion, and mostly I do not want you to get bogged down with the reading. I have also marked out sections of background information on traditional Norse literature that Acker uses to support his theories. I have marked sentences within these sections that I do want you to note. The deleted sections are still readable, so if you doubt his scholarship or are just particularly

curious, please feel free to read them! Also, don't overlook those endnotes. There are some pretty interesting pieces of information. **My marks and deletions reflect something you must learn to do with your own reading: establish (based on your purpose) which sections of text need to be read and reread carefully and which sections can be skimmed.**

Before you start, look up and define the word **abject**: \_\_\_\_\_

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[Read "Horror and the Maternal" by Paul Acker]

**Questions:**

1. Where do Acker and Tolkien come together, and where do they diverge?
2. Explain how Acker's analysis fits into historical criticism. Be specific. Use quotes from your Gillespie essay to explain what historical critics do.
3. Justify Acker's historical approach. How is it beneficial for him to take this approach in order to analyze Grendel's dam?
4. Explain how Acker's analysis fits into feminist/gender criticism. Be specific. Use quotes from your Gillespie essay to what feminist/gender critics do.
5. Justify Acker's feminist approach. How is it beneficial for him to take this approach in order to analyze Grendel's dam?
6. Synthesizing Acker's commentary and Cohen's theses, what would you say Grendel's mother represents? What lines from the poem support your answer?

**Homework:**

Finish any unanswered questions.

Read the final excerpts of *Beowulf*.

**IV. The Dragon**

After Beowulf enjoys a long and successful reign, he dies in a final battle with a dragon. Look first as a short essay from Arthur E. DuBois. I believe he makes the most complete argument for seeing the dragon's symbolism contextually. In other words, the *Beowulf* dragon is not a symbol that exists outside of the poem; in order to understand what it symbolizes, you must look at this *particular* dragon in this *particular* text. He never gets around to explaining the dragon, by the way, only says how someone might do so. I have highlighted the passages I would like you to read.

[Read "The Dragon in Beowulf" by Arthur E. DuBois]

**In-Class:**

About 25 years later someone did get around to explaining the dragon using the criteria that DuBois laid out. Please do not act as if 1981 is ancient history. Some of us were alive then. I would like for you to read this entire essay, but I have done you the favor of scanning my own marked up copy to show you the elements that I thought were interesting and/or important as I was reading.

[Read "The Dragon in Beowulf Revisited" by Thomas L. Keller]

**Questions**

1. What overlaps do you see among the criticisms that you have read now? What stark differences do you note?
2. Explain how Keller's analysis fits into historical criticism. Be specific. Use your Gillespie essay to refresh your memory about what historical critics do.
3. Justify Keller's historical approach. How is it beneficial for him to take this approach in order to analyze the dragon?
4. Synthesizing Keller's commentary and Cohen's theses, what would you say the dragon represents? What lines from the poem support your answer?



**V. Reflection**

**For Homework:**

Write a 500-650 word informal reflective response to the following:

- How has what you've done with *Beowulf* been an example of historical analysis? How did you incorporate other critical approaches? What insights about *Beowulf* and about the study of literature did you have that you can attribute to this approach? Be specific in explaining not just what but how?

**OR**

- Write an informal reflective response (on our study of *Beowulf*) that you develop yourself regarding your process, including application of monster theory and various schools of criticism, and the insights you obtained about *Beowulf* and about the study of literature.

Read AND TAKE NOTES on the Middle Ages background and Chaucer biographical information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **The Soul Suckers of *Wuthering Heights***

You will read most of *Wuthering Heights* over the winter break. I have broken up the reading into sections for you; however, I haven't put due dates on anything but the last reading section. You may work around your holiday plans at your own pace ("pace" does *not* mean attempting to do everything on the last night).

After the first section, you will need to respond for subsequent sections to questions and to each other on the discussion forum. Obviously, you must explain/elaborate on your answers. I hope this encourages you to manage your reading and balance your holiday. I will check in with the discussion forum periodically and note any problems or comment on particularly interesting posts.

You need to read your discussion questions before beginning your reading assignment to establish purpose and guide your annotations. By the time you finish the novel you should have developed a few theories, and that should be reflected in where you concentrate your conversations in the discussion forum. By the time you return to school, I expect to see some natural grouping to occur based on your online conversations. Those will be groups that continue into class. Read this handout all the way to the end before you begin. That will give you an overall purpose and help you direct your reading and thinking.

#### **I. Introductory Materials**

1. Read the short essay from Gillespie on archetypal criticism. Remember *How to Read Literature Like a Professor?* Thomas Foster wasn't inventing theory. He was just explaining largely accepted critical theory. Foster's book is really based on the work of a guy named Northrop Frye. Be sure and note the questions that archetypal critics ask, and especially

note the information about the Shadow Other (sometimes called “doppelganger,” “daemon,” or even “the uncanny”).

2. Read the short chapter from *HTRL* on vampires. Make yourself a list of elements that you need to look for when identifying archetypal vampires.
3. Look over the list of elements of Gothic Literature.
4. Review the seven theses of monster theory.

## II. Chapters 1-8

Prepare **written answers** for the following questions:

1. What elements of Gothicism do you see (creating the perfect environment for a vampire/monster to come along)?
2. How do you see Shadow Other manifested in this section?
3. Do you see anyone situating him/herself to be a vampire/monster? A victim?
4. *Briefly* answer 1 and 2 using *Frankenstein*.

## III. Chapters 9-17 (over the break)

Discussion Forum Questions (Discussion forum is on turnitin.com. ***See Grading Guidelines at the end of this packet***):

1. How do you see Shadow Other manifested in this section? Continue with an idea you had in the last section, or discuss something else if your reading has led you in a new direction.
2. What symbolic vampiric/monstrous elements (events, people, objects, places) do you see? Continue with an idea you had in the last section, or discuss something else if your reading has led you in a new direction.
3. Respond to one additional post (or respond to a response) about anything from chapters 1-17.

#### **IV. Chapters 18-25 (over the break)**

Discussion Forum Questions:

1. How do you see Shadow Other manifested in this section? Continue with an idea you had in the last section, or discuss something else if your reading has led you in a new direction.
2. What symbolic vampiric/monstrous (events, people, objects, places) do you see? Continue with an idea you had in the last section, or discuss something else if your reading has led you in a new direction.
3. Respond to one additional post (or respond to a response) about chapters 1-25.

#### **Chapters 26-34 (Due by the SECOND day of class after the break – 1/5)**

Discussion Forum Questions:

1. Discuss the Shadow Other in the novel? Continue with an idea you had in the last section, or discuss something else if your reading has led you in a new direction.
2. Who/what is/are the vampire(s)/monster(s) of the novel? Continue with an idea you had in the last section, or discuss something else if your reading has led you in a new direction.
3. Does *Wuthering Heights* have a happy ending? Explain your reasoning.

#### **Once You Return from Your Break**

#### **V. Informed Conversation!**

**In Class:**

I'd like you to see just how much better a class discussion can be when students bring their own ideas (instead of being passive receptacles!). Our second day back we are having a completely student driven Socratic seminar. The annotations, ideas, observations, perspectives and theories you have had (are in the middle of forming) should make this a fun way to jump back into school routine. *Hey, a teacher can hope.*

**Homework:**

In 4—20 sentences, articulate an idea/perspective/theory you have and would like to pursue. Post it to the discussion forum. Provide feedback on the submissions of two other students. After reviewing comments on your own, make any changes you would like, and **bring a hard copy to class.**

**VI. Sifting, Skimming, Selecting, & Studying**

**In Class:**

You will work in groups loosely formed around areas of interest that have developed in your discussion forum conversations. While you will be in groups, you will be working toward an individual goal. You may read quietly by yourself and then just use the group environment to bounce ideas around. You may read things together and then stop and discuss sections. Make the group work for you. The one thing you may *not* do is divide the texts up.

For the next two classes and for the homework for those classes you will be studying (some people would call this “researching”) what other critics have said. You have developed some kind of working idea (some people would call this a “research question”). Using your working idea as *purpose* study the literary criticisms I have provided. You have a small mountain of paper in front of you. So what are you going to do?

The same thing I do.

1. You will skim, select, and reject whole and partial texts.
2. You will identify what parts you want to read and reread.
3. You may very well look for other literary criticisms on your own (I’m happy to help you figure out where to look).

4. You will follow the procedure for reading difficult academic texts outlined in the “Protocol for In-class Reading of Dense Texts in Groups or Pairs” handout at the end of this packet.
5. Go to JSTOR and look for your own criticisms:

Go to: [jstor.org](http://jstor.org)  
Username: lrcentralhigh  
Password: coursework

**Homework:**

Keep on doing what you’re doing!

**Final Project**

**A 6 minute PowerPoint or Prezi Presentation that consists of the following:**

- a. A rhetorical précis.
- b. A 250-350 word abstract
- c. A narration of the way you would use your chosen academic texts for support.
- d. An explanation of what schools of critical thought you have utilized in developing and supporting your perspective on *Wuthering Heights*.

### Grading Protocol for Discussion Forum Responses

1. Discussion forum responses will be worth a total of 100 points. You must respond to all questions for full credit. The additional questions are meant to clarify, guide, inspire, frame, etc.
2. In order to be awarded full points, your answer should be thoughtful, not superficial and/or obvious (ex: “Heathcliff is mean because of the way he was treated.”), and you cannot repeat what someone else has said.
3. **You can fulfill any post requirement by making an original post OR by responding to someone else’s post on the subject** in the following ways:
  - Expanding
  - Complicating
  - Qualifying
  - Opposing

### **Protocol for In-class Reading of Dense Texts in Groups or Pairs<sup>1</sup>**

1. Look over the text for a general idea of the topic. This should be brief, but everyone should generally agree before moving on.
2. Look over the purpose or questions you have been given for the text.
3. Read in sections & synthesize as you go.
  - a. As you are reading, highlight/annotate parts that pertain to your purpose.
  - b. When you can tell that a new point, argument, idea, etc. is starting, stop (generally, people will be reading at about the same pace). At every section, stop and discuss the takeaways from that section.
  - c. Identify which question or purpose that section addresses (don't spend time answering yet).
4. Once you have finished, quickly discuss and summarize the big ideas.
5. Answer the questions you were given.

### **Protocol for Individual Reading of Dense Texts**

See above, but do these steps without a partner. 😊

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Isakson, Marné B. "Five Keys to Helping Students Read Difficult Texts." *Center for Teaching & Learning*. Brigham Young University, n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2015.



## ***Wuthering Heights* Project**

### **Précis**

Your précis should include all of the following in no particular order:

1. Author
2. Genre
3. Title
4. **The What:** The author/work/character/setting/whatever does (use a good appropriate verb here “creates,” “represents,” “establishes”) **what?**
5. **The How:** What is the mechanism? Through \_\_\_? With \_\_\_\_\_?
6. **The Result:** What is the purpose?

Here are a couple of examples:

Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* tracks the self-destruction of a man who let his lust for power destroy his own soul. One of the tragedy’s most famous elements are the supernatural forces, including the infamous weird sisters. These dark forces not only serve as a plot device to spur Macbeth to commit progressively worse and worse acts of violence, they mirror and represent the darkness inside him. The play is a dramatic psychological study of a man who became a monster.

The main character in Zora Neale Hurston’s novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* casts a light on gender roles and sexuality. Janie’s story is a quest for personal power, and she finds that power in her own sexuality, beginning with a pubescent awakening and eventually culminating in a relationship of mutual and equal sexual pleasure. It is after that final acquisition of power that Hurston sets her character free to live on her own as the master of her own life.

### **Abstract**

Your abstract should begin with a definitive statement of the project. Its purpose, scope, and limit. Then, as concisely as possible, describe research methods, major findings, the significance of the work (if appropriate), and conclusions.

### **Research Sources**

Basically a very short (3-5 sources) annotated bibliography.

1. Citation (MLA)
2. Summary description of the source
3. How this material supports/would be used in your project

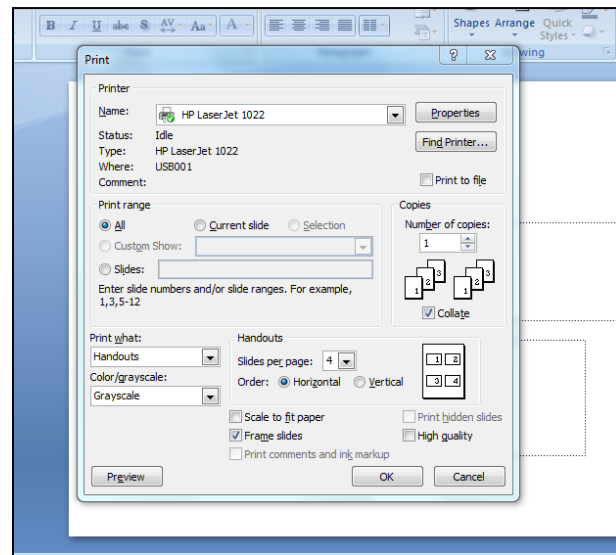
## Schools of Literary Criticism

Identify what critical lenses you have used in your analysis. I expect that you will have used several. Explain that this element of your analysis is using a feminist critique, while this other element is an archetypal analysis, for instance.

## Final Presentation Format

PowerPoint or Prezi presentation of about 6 minutes. Your slides will be text driven. We don't need bells and whistles. We're more interested in your ideas.

Print out 1 copy of your slides for me. I am not sure about how Prezi does printing, but in PowerPoint you have the option of printing your presentation as a handout with multiple slides per page. Just print it so that the text is large enough for your old half blind English teacher to read.



**\*You must have slides for all of the above, but the only thing you have to read aloud to us is your precis**

**In fact, don't read us your slides – that's awful. Read important quotes, but mostly *talk* to us about your potential project.**

**You won't have time to share everything you learned. Think about how you want to concentrate your time during your 6 minutes. You are *proposing* a project and convincing us that it is worth pursuing.**

Virginia Davis Wyeth

Romanticism

27 July 2018

Romanticizing Rousseau from Barbauld to Blake to Wordsworth:

The Education, Subsumption, and Appropriation of the Child

Protecting the innocence of childhood is a relatively modern phenomenon. Inspired by the Calvinist philosophy of original sin, children were historically viewed as miniature adults, and the children's literature reflected this view. To truly appreciate the severity of this attitude, one only needs look at some of the children's literature of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, such as the popular *Day of Doom* from 1662. In this charming narrative, unbaptized infants pleading for mercy are told:

You sinners are, and such a share  
As sinners may expect  
Such you shall have; for I do save  
None but my own elect.  
Yet to compare your sin, with theirs  
Who lived a longer time  
I do confess yours so much less  
Tho' every sin's a crime.  
A crime it is, therefore in bliss  
You may not hope to dwell

But unto you, I shall allow

The easiest room in Hell. (qtd in Clabaugh 7)

While this idea of children as mere adult chrysalises perpetuated for hundreds of years, there did begin a growing belief that childhood was fundamentally different from adulthood, and in the Age of Enlightenment John Locke famously proposed that children were born *tabula rasa* and needing to be written (7). It was with Jean Jacques Rousseau, however, and specifically with his publication of *Emile*, that childhood came to be viewed as a time of innocence. In fact he warned against “the desire to make men of [children] before their time” (qtd. in Scholz 396). He argued that, in direct opposition to the Calvinist views, children were born naturally good but were eventually corrupted by the world.

Rousseau’s treatise on the proper guiding of a child became more than an educational guide for children; his philosophies were the underpinning of what would be defined as Romantic thought, and it is because of this dual influence that children eventually became little more than symbols in Romantic literature. Though early Romantic poet Anna Laetitia Barbauld adopted Rousseau’s Romantic philosophies for children’s education, William Blake created children who would speak quite like adults, and by the time William Wordsworth was writing *Lyrical Ballads*, the children in his poetry were little more than otherworldly imps or reflections of the speaker’s own idealized memories. What begins as a promising trend in children’s literature is eventually subsumed and appropriated by the patriarchal and elitist.

When Anna Laetitia Barbauld published *Hymns in Prose for Children* in 1781, she was not only a well-respected poet of her time, she was a teacher and a highly popular writer of children’s literature. For the most part, retrospect has not been kind to Barbauld, painting her as a “didactic, conventionally pious writer and teacher bent upon blighting the imaginations” of

children (Bailey 606), but such accusations began during the Romantic period itself and were levied by those who were waging something of a political war. As argued by Jeanette Sky, many of those arguing for fairytales were actually “tending towards conservative views on social and political affairs,” and “Romantics’ idealisation of imagination and childhood were... more a conservative reaction,” while the “so-called moralists were urging... educational literature that would help children become rational individuals” (366). Besides the political convictions, many of the detractors, like Charles Lamb, were competing for the same market (Austin 76). In a letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lamb famously complained:

*Goody Two Shoes* [published by John Newberry, the originator of children’s books] is almost out of print. Mrs. Barbauld[’s] stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery; & the Shopman at Newbery’s hardly deign’d to reach them off an old exploded corner of a shelf, when Mary ask’d for them. Mrs. B’s and Mrs. Trimmer’s nonsense lay in piles about. Knowledge insignificant and vapid as Mrs. B’s books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the *shape of knowledge*, & his empty noodle must be turned with conceit of his own powers... instead of that beautiful Interest in wild tales, which made the child a man... Science has succeeded to Poetry no less in the little walks of Children than with Men. – : Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with Tales and old wives fables in childhood, you had been crammed with Geography & Natural History.? **Damn them.** I mean the cursed Barbauld Crew, those **Blights & Blasts** of all that is **Human** in man & child. (Lamb Letters 80-84)

The vociferous blast reveals a couple of things: Barbauld's crimes were, first, that she was too popular, and second, that her instruction was based in science and not imagination. As to her popularity, that much is true. The number of published editions of *Hymns in Prose for Children* is impressive even by today's standard – more than fifty editions between 1801 and 1905 at 1,000-2,500 copies per printing (Bailey 1). But of the second crime, Barbauld is not guilty. Though *Hymns* is written in prose, it is absolutely a work of imagination – or rather – it is a work that utilizes imagination and feeling, as well as Nature (Lamb's "science"), to instruct. In fact, Barbauld adheres to the tenets of Rousseau's *Emile* in ways that none of the other Romantic writers will do.

In "Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children*: Christian Romanticism and Instruction as Worship," Peggy Dunn Bailey analyzes the way that *Hymns* is meant to instill reverence, not just for God, but for the natural world, and she demonstrates how this children's book is, in fact, a work of Romantic imagination (607). In her preface to *Hymns* Barbauld makes clear her intention "to impress [a child] by connecting religion with a variety of sensible objects; with all that ... affects his young mind with wonder or delight" and "to [show] the Creator in the visible appearances of all around" (qtd. in Bailey 607), reflecting Rousseau's maxims that Nature and children's own curiosity should be the educational guide (Scholz 396). Though the period is often interpreted as secular (605), religious content does not preclude a work from adhering to Romantic ideologies. As Bailey argues, Barbauld herself had rejected Calvinist ideologies and gloominess, aligning herself rather with the more liberal minded dissenters, and she herself "desired a greater respect for the role of emotions in devotional practice" (608). So then, when creating a work for children, Barbauld brings all her Romantic sensibilities to bear on the lessons; "it is... highly Romantic [to] focus on the spiritual significance of and potential

relationship between Nature and the individual human mind, especially the mind of a child” (609).

Each of Barbauld’s hymns is a lesson that describes several natural phenomena and then makes the connection of each to the believer and a benevolent God. “Hymn II” describes the way new flora is protected as it first begins to bud and bloom, and then the hymn moves to the same idea for young animals. These lessons in nature lay the groundwork for the lessons of “Hymn III,” which tells the child that “the Shepherd of the flock, he taketh care for his sheep,” then asks “But who is the shepherd’s shepherd?” and answers “God is the shepherd’s shepherd.” The idea moves to a child cared for by the mother and mirrors the lines before with the question “But who is the parent of the mother?” which is similarly answered with “God is the parent of the mother” (Barbauld). Lessons in the hymns continue on in this way, explaining such ideas as beauty, strength, rest, and even death.

Far from staid, Barbauld’s poems for children are quite progressive. Several of the hymns border on the pantheistic. “Hymn VI” tells the child that “God was among the fields... amongst the trees; his voice founded in the murmur of the water... God was in the storm,” concluding that “God is in every place; he speaks in every sound we hear; his is seen in all that our eyes behold.” Barbauld even introduces the argument against slavery in Hymn 8, with the “Negro woman, who sit[s], pining in captivity, and weep[s] over [her] sick child.” The speaker assures her that “though no one seeth thee, God seeth thee; though no one pitieth thee, God pitieth thee ... call upon him from amidst thy bonds, for assuredly he will hear thee” (Bailey 610). The hymn instructs the child that the same God is god over all the kingdoms of the world: “some are black with the hot sun; some cover themselves with furs against the sharp cold. ... All are God’s family” (611).

Just as Rousseau gave Emile liberty to follow his own curiosity and trusted Nature to teach all that Emile needed to know, Barbauld's *Hymns* uses a child's own observations and curiosity to teach about God and morality. The difference is that Emile was a fictional child, and Barbauld's children were real.

Interestingly, unlike Barbauld's Romantic contemporaries, children do not figure highly into her mainstream poetry, but when they do, they sound much more like real children than the ones featured in Blake's or Wordsworth's verse. "Petition of a Schoolboy to his Father" begins with the humorous lines:

Most honour'd Sir, I must confess

I never liked a letter less

Than yours, which brought this new receipt

To prove that poets must not eat. (Barbauld, McCarthy, and Kraft 92)

And for several stanzas the child continues to enumerate the many classic poems on which he cannot concentrate because he is preoccupied with thoughts of sweet butter, fresh eggs, fruit, and cake. Anyone who has spent time with adolescent boys knows just how realistic this young man's preoccupations are. Another poem, a fragment "As the Poor Schoolboy," is about a typical boy, who has not been a very faithful student but who longs to go home at the end of the year and feels sure his father will be glad to see him despite his shortcomings. In this poem Barbauld draws a metaphor of the schoolboy as the imperfect believer looking toward eternity, but the discussion of the sheepish child himself is all too realistic (179). Even when looking



back at her own childhood, Barbauld resists the Wordsworthian romanticizing of childhood. In “Washing Day” she recalls taking shelter with her indulgent grandmother while her cross mother did the most hated household task. Her last lines do, though, reflect some of that Romantic sensibility:

Then would I sit me down, and ponder much  
Why washings were; sometimes through hollow hole  
Of pipe amused we blew, and sent aloft  
The floating bubbles; little dreaming then  
To see, Montgolfier, thy silken ball  
Ride buoyant through the clouds, so near approach  
The sports of children and the toils of men.  
Earth, air, and sky, and ocean hath its bubbles,  
And verse is one of them — this most of all. (135)

Still, clearly it is the inner child of the adult poet who plays in “Washing Day.” Barbauld’s children sound and behave like children. When Blake wrote *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, his children’s verse and the children in them are designed to mirror Barbauld’s, but both sound quite different from Barbauld’s, and as such, they depart from Rousseau’s vision of children and of childhood.

In “From Anna Barbauld’s *Hymns in Prose* to William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Thomas Kennedy examines the way Blake mimics the children’s literature of the time, particularly mirroring Barbauld. Blake’s *An Island in the Moon*, an unfinished prose satire, which produced “Holy Thursday,” “Nurse’s Song” and “Little Boy Lost” in *Songs*, mirrors several of Barbauld’s hymns. In Blake’s version, however, the children are not the silent audience of the instructive adult; the children themselves speak. I include one of Kennedy’s most salient paragraphs in its entirety:

Thus Barbauld’s “The little birds have ceased their warbling, they are asleep on the boughs, each with his head behind his wing” and “The sheep rest upon their soft fleeces, and their loud bleating is no more heard amongst the hills” become Blake’s antithetical “Beside in the Sky the little birds fly / And the hills are all covered with sheep,” with a transference of the description from the adult voice of Barbauld to the voices of Blake’s imploring children. Also, Barbauld’s further description, “There is no sound of a number of voices, or of children at play,” becomes Blake’s final “The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh’d And all the hills echoed.” (*Hymns* 26-28, E463 qtd 362)

Again, as a Romantic, the child has been situated as an angel of nature, and certainly the child’s liberty is respected. But, though Kennedy claims that “Blake transcends the limitations of Barbauld’s vision,” one should take a closer look at the adult speaker, the children’s nurse Mrs. Nannicantipot (363). Many critics identify Nannicantipot as representing Barbauld herself. And as Jeannette Sky points out, one trope of children’s fairy tale literature is the nursemaid as storyteller (365), because women, “no longer, children... were nonetheless thought to be closer both to the world of imagination, childhood and nature;” thus, these works of imagination

infantilize the female speaker. Patronizing sexist trope aside, Blake does give the children a voice, but what kind of voice do his poetic children possess?

Blake, mirroring Barbauld's "Hymn VIII," also takes on the issue of slavery, but this time the child and mother speak themselves. "The Little Black Boy" opens with the child saying:

My mother bore me in the southern wild,

And I am black, but O! my soul is white;

White as an angel is the English child:

But I am black as if bereav'd of light. (1-4)

Hardly the words of an African child, the poem uses Western values and metaphors to assert Blake's own values.

William Blake addresses a social crisis directly involving children in "The Chimney Sweepers" in both *Songs of Innocence* and in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Orphaned boys take on the role of accusers in these poems. In the poem from *Songs of Innocence*, the little child was orphaned when his mother died and his father sold him into servitude as a chimney sweeper before he could even pronounce the word "sweep." The boy tells the story of another little boy Tom who had a dream

That thousands of sweepers...

Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black;

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,

And he open'd the coffins & set them all free;

Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they run,  
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun. (11-16)

And from this dream the boys learn the lesson: “And the Angel told Tom, if he’d be a good boy,  
/ He’d have God for his father & never want joy” (19-20). The poem criticizes this use of religion to control the underprivileged. Such misuses of Christianity don’t just control the oppressed, they benefit the entire community. Someone has to sweep the chimneys after all.

And in the poem, the religious subjugation works:

And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark  
And got with our bags & our brushes to work  
Tho’ the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;  
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm. (21-24)

The child will almost certainly die, but the community doesn’t have to feel guilty. The child knows he’ll get his reward in Heaven. Four years later, Blake published an even more stinging condemnation of England’s child slavery trade, and the role of the Church and government in it.

The *Songs of Experience* “Chimney Sweepers” again has a child speaker, though this time the boy was sold by both of his parents and “clothed... in the clothes of death” (7). There is no promise of hope in the afterlife in this poem, however. This poem calls out everyone. The boy’s parents have left him and “gone to praise God & his Priest & King, / Who make up a heaven of [their] misery” (11-12). The poem holds the parents, the church, and the government accountable for what is being done to London’s disposable children. The Church and community are not only ignoring the children, they are causing the problem. And at the root of their hypocrisy is the romanticizing of what is a deadly crisis.

Thomas Kennedy may claim that “the religious theme [in “The Chimney Sweepers”] is expressed, not by an adult voice giving religious instructions to children, but instead by one of the children” (372), but the children in these poems hardly sound like real children. The first poem uses either the most pious or the most naive child slave who has ever lived to shine a light on the horror of a system that promises “*Arbeit macht frei!*” The boy of the second poem is somehow sophisticated enough to see beyond his immediate circumstances and understand that religious institutions and the government are responsible for his plight. Blake takes liberties with the child’s voice in his poetry, but at least his purpose is socio-political. For Wordsworth, the child is the mouthpiece for nostalgic recollections of his own childhood or his own Romantic philosophies.

Like Rousseau’s *Emile*, Wordsworth’s children were children of nature and of liberty. His own memories of his childhood self were that “like a roe [he] bounded o’er the mountains, by the sides / Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams, / Wherever nature led: more like a man / Flying from something that he dreads, than one / Who sought the thing he loved” (“Tintern Abbey” 67-72). As Linda Austin remarks in “Children of Childhood: Nostalgia and the Romantic Legacy,” for Wordsworth, “childhood was movement without memory” (85). Nowhere does Wordsworth state this more overtly than in “Intimations of Immortality,” most particularly in Stanza 5, where he begins with a description of infancy:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
 Hath had elsewhere its setting  
 And cometh from afar;  
 Not in entire forgetfulness,

And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Then Wordsworth describes the inevitable weight and weariness of life that systematically descends on the child, eventually robbing him of the blissful innocence of childhood. As Jeanette Sky notes, “Such notions of childhood presuppose complimentary notions of the adult [who is] a person divorced from nature, a person who is rational, logical and scientific” (369).

Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day. (58-76)

Of course the *negro child* and the *chimney sweepers* didn't experience childhood in this way. They were all too aware of “the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world” (“Tintern Abbey” 39-40) And Barbauld would not have agreed that the children she was teaching already owned the secrets of the universe. Perhaps the Barbaulds and the Nannicantipots of the world are precisely what Wordsworth had in mind when he said:

The homely nurse doth all she can  
To make her foster-child, her inmate, Man,  
Forget the glories he hath known,  
And that imperial palace whence he came. (“Intimations” 81-84)

He certainly seems to be speaking to them in “Influence of Natural Objects in Calling Forth and Strengthening the Imagination in Boyhood and Early Youth”:

By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn  
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human soul;  
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man;  
But with high objects, with enduring things,  
With life and nature; purifying thus  
The elements of feeling and of thought (5-11)

But as Jeanette Sky points out “The so-called liberation of children’s literature should more precisely be understood as an aesthetic and religious *idealisation* of fantasy and imagination” (366). And Wordsworth’s poems (that feature children) are dependent on this idea of children possessing an otherworldly wisdom. Poems such as “Pet Lamb” and “Lucy Gray” position children as nymphs or supernatural. Each of Wordsworth’s children imparts some kind of knowledge to an adult listener.

In “We Are Seven” a “little cottage girl” tells the adult narrator that there are seven siblings in her family, though two “in the church-yard lie. / Beneath the church-yard tree.” The speaker responds, “Then ye are only five.” The girl then responds that she plays and has meals near the little graves, and when the narrator asks again “How many are you, then... if they two

are in heaven?”, but “Quick was the little Maid’s reply ‘O Master! We are seven.’” Once again the narrator tries to argue, but realizes “Twas throwing words away; for still/The little Maid would have her will, / And said, ‘Nay, we are seven!’” In the poem the more spiritual child reveals a truth regarding the permanence of love and kinship that lasts even beyond the grave through imagination. Meanwhile, the less sensitive adult is unable to comprehend such a notion. Of course, even during Wordsworth’s lifetime people noted his unrealistic picture of children. Mary Robinson famously responded to Wordsworth’s romanticized version of childhood loss with the all too realistic hungry, cold, and lonely orphan of “All Alone.” The lasting image of childhood from the period, however, is the Wordsworthian one, which clearly has nothing to do with real children or real childhood. As Sky says, “The *idea* of the child was more important for the Romantics than the real child itself” (366). Moreover, “writers after Wordsworth would use the child to objectify personal memory in place of remembering and all the while retain its social function as a specific object or motive of nostalgia” (Austin 94).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s philosophies are the bedrock of Romantic thought, and, especially as presented in *Emile*, they represent a shift in the way the West saw childhood. “Rousseau prioritised *experience* of the world or interaction with the environment by children” (Saha 54), and this philosophy influenced writers of children’s literature like Anna Laetitia Barbauld who sought to use Romantic philosophies to teach Reason to children. But the Nature of Rousseau, and therefore the Romantics, was not really nature, the natural world of science and Natural Law. Rather Nature was true self and where passion lived (Wilkins 666-667). So then, the child’s voice is subsumed in Blake’s passionate cries for social justice for children. As Blake perceives the child as the Rousseauian innocent requiring and deserving protection, his children speak with adult voices. He gives voiceless children the voices that adults will heed. Because



Rousseau represents the child as closer to the true self, Wordsworth takes Rousseau's concepts of the natural state of liberty, passion, and innocence and appropriates the child as a stand-in for those ideas. Thus, the enduring Romantic concept of the child and childhood has nothing to do with real childhood and eventually left children behind altogether.

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Virginia Davis Wyeth

19<sup>th</sup> Century Women Writers

27 July 2018

Dueling Personas and Double Standards:

Oppression and Hypocrisy Exposed by *Lady Audley's Secret*

When *Lady Audley's Secret* was first published the novel and its femme fatale elicited strong reactions from both readers and critics alike. The novel was wildly popular, but critics, who echoed the sentiments of readers, were highly critical of Braddon's depiction of such an amoral imposter, especially one who roused such sympathy in the reader. In more modern times, critics have examined the novel as a successful feminist critique of the Victorian socio-political constraints on women, viewing Lady Audley as a pragmatist working within a patriarchal system to achieve agency. Still more recently, the story's protagonist and narrator Robert Audley, especially his sublimated homosocial and likely homoerotic desires, have been the subject of critical analysis. Both the feminist and queer readings of *Lady Audley's Secret* imply Braddon's ambivalence – ambivalence about social mores, ambivalence about women's issues, and ambivalence about homosexuals. But when these readings intersect, a rage against hypocrisy and against oppression of Others begins to emerge. Significant passages identify the similar suffering of two systematically marginalized groups.

*Lady Audley's Secret* is a sensation novel that relies on suspense created by Robert Audley's unraveling the secret identity(ies) of Lady Lucy Audley. Originally Helen Maldon, she marries George Talboys in order to escape poverty, but when Talboys' father disinherits him and George abandons her and her child to seek a new fortune in Australia, Helen Talboys, having no idea that George plans to return, abandons her son with her father, fakes her own death, and

creates the new identity of Lucy Graham. As a young governess, Lucy Graham catches the eye of wealthy widower Lord Michael Audley, who offers her marriage and a life of privilege.

Robert Audley, nephew of Lord Audley, comes into the picture when he runs into his old school friend George Talboys, fresh off the boat from Australia. Grief stricken over the death of his wife, George accompanies Robert on a visit to Lord Audley's estate in the countryside. During that visit, George goes missing, and Robert fears him dead. Circumstances point toward Lady Audley's involvement, and Robert becomes obsessed with proving Lucy Audley's true identity and guilt. Though Robert is obsessed with finding the truth, he fears what the truth will do to his uncle and to his family's reputation. Robert Audley's obsession and simultaneous reluctance become as integral to the suspense as uncovering the real identity of Lady Audley.

The original critics of *Lady Audley's Secret* were most particularly offended by the character's falseness, especially while portraying herself as the paragon of Victorian domesticity. W. Fraser Rae dramatically referred to Lady Audley as a "Female Mephistopheles" because of her "unnatural embodiment of femininity" (qtd. in Voskuil 614). Margaret Oliphant called her "a piece of imposture" (qtd. 614). She particularly "faults Braddon [herself] for creating an imposter," and as for being "the inventor of the fair-haired demon of modern fiction" (qtd. 615). And there is every indication that building that degree of imposture was absolutely intentional. Not only is Lucy Audley a literal imposter; she is a cultural imposter, seeming to embody every physical and personality attribute of Victorian idealized femininity, at the same time that she is an aggressive liar, bigamist, and possible murderer. Even before the character appears as Lucy, George Talboys describes his wife Helen as a "childish beauty," and describes her hair as a "pale golden halo you see round the head of a Madonna in an Italian picture." The word "halo" is used repeatedly to describe her hair, as are "childish" and "child-like" to describe

her beauty, her laugh, her charm, and her personality. Lucy's pale skin and huge innocent blue eyes attract both men and women alike. The subterfuge does not just stop with her appearance.

Below is the reader's first full introduction to the future Lady Audley:

Wherever she went she seemed to take joy and brightness with her. In the cottages of the poor her fair face shone like a sunbeam. She would sit for a quarter of an hour talking to some old woman, and apparently as pleased with the admiration of a toothless crone as if she had been listening to the compliments of a marquis; and when she tripped away, leaving nothing behind her (for her poor salary gave no scope to her benevolence), the old woman would burst out into senile raptures with her grace, beauty, and her kindness, such as she never bestowed upon the vicar's wife, who half fed and clothed her. For you see, Miss Lucy Graham was blessed with that magic power of fascination, by which a woman can charm with a word or intoxicate with a smile. Every one loved, admired, and praised her. The boy who opened the five-barred gate that stood in her pathway, ran home to his mother to tell of her pretty looks, and the sweet voice in which she thanked him for the little service. The verger at the church, who ushered her into the surgeon's pew; the vicar, who saw the soft blue eyes uplifted to his face as he preached his simple sermon; the porter from the railway station, who brought her sometimes a letter or a parcel, and who never looked for reward from her; her employer; his visitors; her pupils; the servants; everybody, high and low, united in declaring that Lucy Graham was the sweetest girl that ever lived. (11-12)

Braddon goes out of her way to signal to her reader that she is pushing the masquerade to the limits, and she doesn't stop there. Braddon also provides as contrast a legitimate Victorian gentlewoman who paradoxically has the appearance of an interloper. Robert's cousin and

expected future bride, Alicia Audley's appearance is referred to twice as "gipsy-like." Her dark hair, dark complexion, and ruby red lips are mentioned just as often as Lucy's cherubic features. Alicia Audley's personality doesn't reflect her class ideals either. She is outspoken, irascible, and tomboyish. Attention is drawn to the contrasts between the two women:

The black curls (nothing like Lady Audley's feathery ringlets, but heavy clustering locks, that clung about [her] slender brown throat), the red and pouting lips, the nose inclined to be retrouse, the dark complexion, with its bright crimson flush, always ready to glance up like a signal light in a dusky sky, when [she] came suddenly upon [her] apathetic cousin—all this coquettish espiegle, brunette beauty... (63-64)

Certainly not coincidentally, it is only Alicia (and her dog) who consistently sees through Lucy Audley's false persona. It seems clear that Braddon not only wanted to create the ultimate in false Victorian femininity; she wanted to draw attention to the falseness – to the imposture. It would seem that she *wanted* to disturb Victorian sensibilities. When Oliphant accused "that this new and disgusting picture of what professes to be the female heart, comes from the hands of women... [it] is not in any way to be laughed at," perhaps that is exactly what Braddon had in mind (qtd. Schroeder 90).

Twentieth Century critics were more sympathetic toward Lucy Audley. On the heels of groundbreaking feminist theorists like Ellen Moers, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, and Elaine Showalter, *Lady Audley's Secret* came to be viewed as an example of female rage, and Lucy was reimagined as a woman forced by an oppressive patriarchal culture into devious acts in a quest for agency. In 1988, heavily influenced by Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, Natalie Schroeder examined the original criticisms of the novel and reanalyzed it from a modern feminist perspective. Though the basis for some of her analysis relies heavily on now somewhat



outmoded interpretations of Victorian sexual and moral expectations, “Feminine Sensationalism, Eroticism, and Self-Assertion: M.E. Braddon and Ouida,” is still representative of modern interpretations that “Braddon’s ... novel[] reflect[s] Victorian women’s attempts to rebel against the conventional feminine ideal” of the “essentially artificial, supposedly passionless [Victorian] age that encouraged women to worship their youthful beauty and to become passive, angelic child-wives, perfectly innocent and sexless” (90). Such interpretations see Lucy’s aggression, rather than the evil actions of a demon or a lunatic, but rather as an attempt to exercise power where there is none granted. As Lynn Voskuil noted in “Acts of Madness: Lady Audley and the Meanings of Victorian Femininity,” “Lady Audley matter-of-factly relates the intertwined difficulties of poverty and womanhood. ... Her culture, she recognized, suggested a good marriage as an escape from the horrors of poverty, a union that would let her win the world’s great lottery” (423).

Moreover, such Twentieth Century interpretations are in keeping with what Braddon herself expresses through her character Dr. Mosgrave, called in to assess Lucy’s sanity once she has been exposed:

There is no evidence of madness in anything she has done. She ran away from her home, because her home was not a pleasant one, and she left in the hope of finding a better.

There is no madness in that. She committed the crime of bigamy, because by that crime she obtained fortune and position. There is no madness there. When she found herself in a desperate position, she did not grow desperate. She employed intelligent means, and she carried out a conspiracy which required coolness and deliberation in its execution. There is no madness in that. (370)

This is one of two passages that seem somewhat out of place in the novel which, at the very least ring thematically significant. Here, Dr. Mosgrave defends Lucy's sanity and makes the precise argument that feminist critics will make over 100 years later. Of course, later the doctor declares that though "the lady is not mad... she is dangerous!" (372). Lucy is subsequently put away in a *maison de santé* – a prison that is not quite a prison, an asylum that is not quite an asylum, where she eventually dies. Contemporary audiences and critics, of course, found this ending to be the only proper one for such an imposter – a feminine and maternal deviant. If Braddon was going to create such a Lilith, it was only forgivable if she punishes by banishment and death. For Schoeder and other Twentieth Century feminist critics it is another disappointing defeat of an assertive woman by a dominant male: "Robert Audley... defeats his female adversary" and "Braddon makes a pessimistic statement about marriage and the fate of women who try to exercise their strength for the own ends rather than their husbands'" (98-99). But does Lucy Audley's end really mean Robert Audley's triumph? And if not, what statement might Braddon have been making?

In the 1990s and 2000s, critical attention turned to Robert Audley, specifically to his homosocial and homoerotic attraction to George Talboys and to his possibly identity as a homosexual. There are several elements to such a discussion. The primary element is whether or not the text bears up to reading Robert's same sex attraction. Next, how transparent did Braddon make such characteristics to her readers? If there is merely the suggestion, perhaps Robert's ambiguous sexuality was merely meant to titillate, but if the coding were transparent to her readers, that would mean Braddon was making his sexuality a distinct plot element. And finally, if Braddon intended Robert Audley's sexuality to be a plot element, what statement might she have been making, if any?

As a hero, Robert Audley is somewhat lacking, at least originally. While he is technically a barrister, he has never made even a perfunctory appearance of working in his field. Rather, supported by his annual inheritance, he spends his time in self-indulgent silly pleasures like canaries, flowers, German pipes, Turkish tobacco, and French fiction. As Richard Nemesvari notes, “Braddon begins her text by providing a hero who is in need of some kind of moral reform” (519). Clearly Audley hasn’t accepted the social responsibility of an Englishman of his class, but there is more to his amorality than a lack of motivation, and Braddon’s readers would have recognized her coding. Relying heavily on the seminal works of queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Nemesvari notes “Robert’s style of dress, his mannerisms, and his attachment” to pleasures already mentioned and also that he “tends towards a laconic, drawling irony in his speech” would not have gone unnoticed by the Victorian reader. Sedgwick claimed, though with reservations and caveats about the depth to which one might read into such things, that “by 1865, a distinct homosexual role and culture seem already to have been in existence in England... It seems to have constituted a genuine subculture”<sup>1</sup> and that it was strongly associated with “effeminacy, transvestitism, promiscuity, prostitution, continental European culture, and the arts” (qtd. in Nemesvari 519). Certainly Robert Audley did not participate in the most flagrant of these behaviors, but “Braddon has associated him with a recognizable aristocratic type possessed of, by this historical moment, clear homosocial/homosexual overtones (519-520). And the continual focus on these counter-masculine habits indicates that Braddon wanted these characteristics at the forefront of her readers’ minds by the time she (re)introduces George Talboys into Audley’s life.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this, see Richard A. Kaye’s “‘Oh God, There is No Woman in This’: *A Marriage Below Zero*, the Somerset and Russell Scandals, and the Sodomitical Threat to Victorian Marriage” and Joseph Cady’s “‘What Cannot Be’: John Addington Symonds’s *Memoirs* and Official Mapping of Victorian Homosexuality.”

There are three noteworthy elements to the narration of Robert Audley’s chance reunion with George Talboys in the salient excerpts from the two page below [underline added]:

[Robert] was loitering at the corner of the court, waiting for a chance hansom to convey him back to the Temple, when he was almost knocked down by a man of about his own age, who dashed headlong into the narrow opening.

.....

“What!” exclaimed the stranger, reproachfully. “You don’t mean to say that you’ve forgotten George Talboys?”

“*No I have not!*” said Robert, with an emphasis by no means usual to him; and then hooking his arm into that of his friend, he led him into the shady court, saying, with his old indifference, “and now, George tell us all about it.”

.....

They could have a bit of dinner, and talk over those good old times when they were together at Eton. But George told his friend that before he went anywhere, before he shaved or broke his fast, or in any way refreshed himself after a night journey from Liverpool by express train, he must call at a certain coffee-house in Bridge street, Westminster, where he expected to find a letter from his wife.

Then I’ll go there with you,” said Robert. “The idea of your having a wife, George; what a preposterous joke.” (37-38)

By the time the chance encounter occurs, Robert’s self-indulgent and indifferent personality is so well established that his reaction is jarringly out of character and conspicuous. This is by far the most excited he ever acts toward any other character in the novel. But, more importantly, this

incident is followed with a reference to their “good old times” at Eton. This is not the last time Braddon brings up Eton. In fact, Eton is mentioned by name six times in the novel.

In the late 1850s and early 1860s public education and most specifically Eton was under investigation by the Clarendon Commission. Building on the work of Richard Dellamora, Jennifer Kushnier’s “Educating Boys to be Queer: Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*” makes use of primary documents, official inquiries, to reconstruct the circumstances of Robert and George’s public school experiences. Along with poor conditions in the schools, the Commission uncovered disturbing practices, including “the system of ‘fagging,’ or the enslavement of younger boys by seniors, and the boys’ utter lack of supervision during the evenings” (62). Additionally, the strict Greek and Latin only curriculum led to pervasive Platonism that, according to one former Etonian student of the 1850s, meant that “homosexuality was ‘taken for granted’” (qtd. 63). There was an “unofficial but powerful cultural framework” in which “homosexuality and homoeroticism were, if not encouraged, indeed condoned” at Eton (64). Robert Audley and George Talboys would not only have studied at Eton during these highly publicized controversial years, they would have been young adult men during the time of an emerging homosexual subculture (62)<sup>2</sup>. By repeatedly mentioning Eton, “Braddon was accomplishing more than merely placing Robert in the upper echelon socioeconomically. She was signaling to her readers that this school was instrumental in creating the homosocial-homoerotic Robert Audley they would encounter in the novel” (62).

Of course Eton and other public schools were not cultivating and graduating thousands of adult homosexuals. According to Kushnier and Card, homoeroticism and homosexual activity were seen as a temporary *activity* of youth. One might be a *sodomite* in such a Platonic environment, but a boy was expected to outgrow that phase and become a “normal” heterosexual

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

once he left school and entered manhood. After reviewing firsthand accounts of former Eton students, Tim Card concluded in *Eton Renewed* that this “homosexual phase little matter[ed] provided heterosexual attitudes [were] later established” (qtd. 63). So this connection to Eton not only establishes Robert’s same-sex attraction; his enthusiastic nostalgia about his time there, as well as his non-heterotypical personality, establish that he has resisted moving past his adolescent same-sex attraction and into his adult heterosexual socially responsible role. And here in George Talboys is someone Robert knew well at Eton, someone to whom he says, “The idea of your having a wife... what a preposterous joke” (38).

After this reintroduction to George, Robert, previously completely uninterested in the company of others and content to smoke his tobacco and read his French novels in solitude, insists on being George Talboys’ constant companion. When Talboys learns of his wife’s (apparent) death, Robert accompanies him and subsequently insists, at times quite forcefully, that George will live with him for an indeterminate time while he works through his grief. Robert even takes Talboys for on holiday to his uncle’s country estate. But when George’s encounter with Lady Audley, unbeknownst to Robert Audley, leads to Talboys’ disappearance, “Robert is forced into the role of reluctant detective, and into a confrontation not only with Lady Audley but also with his own suppressed feelings” (Nemesvari 521). Robert’s obsession becomes evident immediately:

If any one had ventured to tell Mr. Robert Audley that he could possibly feel a strong attachment to any creature breathing, that cynical gentleman would have levated his eyebrows in supreme contempt at the preposterous notion. Yet here he was, flurried and anxious, bewildering his brain by all manner of conjectures about his missing friend, and, false to every attribute of his nature, flaking fast.

“I haven’t walked fast since I was at Eton,” he murmured. (84)

Robert is “flurried,” “anxious,” bewilder[ed]” and “false to every attribute of his nature.” A conflicted and confused Robert hurries after George. He hasn’t felt that way since Eton. From this point forward, ever gaining more evidence about Lady Audley’s identity, Robert will repeat the idea that some invisible force is pushing him forward to find the truth, at the same time he dreads doing so for fear of bringing scandal and shame to his family. The more Lucy twists under the scrutiny of Robert Audley, the more Robert Audley is himself in knots. Certainly he dreads hurting his uncle, but there seems to be something more personal going on. From this point forward, one could even explain Robert Audley’s behavior in Sedgwick’s term, *homosexual panic*, and the people around Robert notice (qtd. Nemesvari 523).

When Robert, near panic, announces George’s disappearance to his cousin Alicia Audley, she finally betrays her jealousy of George: “What a dreadful catastrophe!” said Alicia maliciously, “since Pythias, in the person of Mr. Robert Audley, cannot exist for half an hour without Damon, commonly known as George Talboys” (87). Alicia’s, or at least Braddon’s, choice of allusion here is no accident. While the myth of Pythias and Damon never specifically described their relationship as gay, their intimate friendship and the Greek origins of the story have long connected Pythias and Damon to representations of homoerotic or homosexual love. And it is noteworthy that Alicia Audley is the one person in the novel who consistently saw through Lady Audley’s façade. But it is not just Alicia who notices Robert’s unnatural preoccupation with George Talboys. Once in the midst of a prolonged reverie about George – of George “hurrying down to Southampton,” of George “as he had often seen him, spelling over the shipping advertisements,” and then shuddering at an image of George dead – Lucy Audley asks him what he was thinking about (90). When Robert answers truthfully, Lucy responds “Upon

my word, you make me quite uncomfortable by the way in which you talk of Mr. Talboys” (90). A reader might pass this off as Lucy’s guilt and paranoia, but the images that Robert had been daydreaming over would seem more in keeping with those about a lover.

While Robert Audley continues his investigation of Lady Audley’s falseness, his lack of interest in typical male pursuits are continually highlighted. He has no real interest in fishing, though he has enjoyed lying on the banks with George Talboys under the pretense of fishing. He would rather stay at home with the ladies and his lapdogs than go out riding with the men. He abhors the hunt, even going so far as to say that he cannot stand being there for the kill. And apparently he does not ride well anyway. When spurned, Alicia Audley’s hypermasculine would-be suitor complains bitterly:

“Don't say that [Alicia loves Robert], Sir Michael,” interrupted the fox-hunter, energetically. “I can get over anything but that. A fellow whose hand upon the curb weighs half a ton (why, he pulled the Cavalier's mouth to pieces, sir, the day you let him ride the horse); a fellow who turns his collars down, and eats bread and marmalade! No, no, Sir Michael; it's a queer world, but I can't think that of Miss Audley. There must be some one in the background, sir; it can't be the cousin.” (131)

And while “queer” doesn’t have the direct usage that it does today, the word has a long history as a polite euphemism for homosexual, as do words like “decadent” and “eccentric.” The latter word shoes up over and over again, especially as the impostures of Lady Audley and Robert Audley finally intersect with Robert’s confrontation of Lucy.

For the entire novel and the entire pursuit of the truth about Lady Audley, Robert’s inner conflict simultaneously compels him forward and holds him back. His concern about causing his family disgrace keeps him from moving forward, but then a single event finally makes up his



mind to expose the Lady's crimes. This event is meeting Clara Talboys, George's sister. Robert's very first observation of Clara is that "she was like George Talboys" (189). From that moment on, nearly every mention of Clara includes a comparison to her brother – her brown eyes are like George's, her penmanship is like George's, she is "so like the friend whom he had loved and lost" (203). He imagines spending time with George or his sister, as if they are interchangeable. As Richard Memesvari concludes, "Clara provides Robert with the perfect object of transference and offers him the opportunity to turn his 'illicit' homosocial desire for George into a socially acceptable direction" (524). And it is only after safely transferring his affections that Robert has the courage to commit to the investigation's end and to confront Lady Audley.

Not surprisingly, Lucy Audley is prepared to fight exposure to the very end. When Robert confronts her, she threatens to tell his uncle Lord Audley that Robert is insane, and she does just that. What follows that accusation is a narration of Michael Audley's inner thoughts about the matter, and then his thoughts are followed by commentary by the narrator itself. Like the doctor's monologue that will condemn Lucy Audley to banishment, this passage stands out as unusual in the novel – in content, structure, and length. This passage, which has not been included in its entirety, goes on for over two pages. The first section here is Michael Audley's thoughts:

The longer he thought of the subject [of Robert's possible insanity] the more it harassed and perplexed him. It was most certain that the young man had always been eccentric. He was sensible, he was tolerably clever, he was honorable and gentlemanlike in feeling, though perhaps a little careless in the performance of certain minor social duties; but there were some slight differences, not easily to be defined, that separated him

from other men of his age and position. Then, again, it was equally true that he had very much changed within the period that had succeeded the disappearance of George Talboys. He had grown moody and thoughtful, melancholy and absent-minded. He had held himself aloof from society, had sat for hours without speaking; had talked at other points by fits and starts; and had excited himself unusually in the discussion of subjects which apparently lay far out of the region of his own life and interests. Then there was even another region which seemed to strengthen my lady's case against this unhappy young man. He had been brought up in the frequent society of his cousin, Alicia—his pretty, genial cousin—to whom interest, and one would have thought affection, naturally pointed as his most fitting bride. More than this, the girl had shown him, in the innocent guilelessness of a transparent nature, that on her side at least, affection was not wanting; and yet, in spite of all this, he had held himself aloof, and had allowed others to propose for her hand, and to be rejected by her, and had still made no sign. (326-327)

Lord Audley notes first that his nephew has always been “eccentric,” never enjoying the pastimes of other gentlemen of age and class. Second he notes that Robert was obsessed with George Talboys. Finally, he notes that Robert has never taken notice of his pretty cousin, who has made her interest clear and who would be an excellent match. Michael Audley knows his nephew is homosexual.

At a time when homosexuality was seen as mental illness and a crime, this is a dangerous revelation. But Robert Audley had already protected himself. By transferring his affections to a stand-in for George and laying aside his true identity for the masquerade of heterosexuality, he had secured the safety of his future, protected his family's honor, and given a gift to George.

Robert Audley marries Clara and lives with her, their child, and his brother-in-law George in a “fairy cottage,” secluded in the country -- a prison that is not quite a prison, an asylum that is not quite an asylum. When he sent Lucy to the *maison de santé*, she declared, “You have used your power basely and cruelly, and have brought me to a living grave.” He replied with a statement that he could have just as well been making to himself: “I have done that which I thought just to others and merciful to you.... I should have been a traitor to society had I suffered you to remain at liberty” (384).

But what of Braddon’s opinion of her hero and even of homosexuals? Does she offer such an opinion? There is some clue in the same passage referenced above which includes Michael Audley’s inner thoughts. The narration moves outside of Sir Audley’s character, and this time Braddon (though still speaking in heteronormative terms) does not hide behind her character. With surgically precise of language, the narrator speaks.

There are men who go their ways unscathed amidst legions of lovely and generous women, to succumb at last before some harsh-featured virago<sup>3</sup>, who knows the secret of that only philter which can intoxicate and bewitch him. [Sir Michael Audley] had forgot that there are certain Jacks who go through life without meeting the Jill appointed for them by Nemesis<sup>4</sup>, and die old bachelors, perhaps, with poor Jill pining an old maid upon the other side of the party-wall. He forgot that love, which is a madness<sup>5</sup>, and a scourge, and a fever, and a delusion, and a snare, is also a mystery, and very

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<sup>3</sup> virago, late 14c., “man-like or heroic woman, woman of extraordinary stature, strength and courage,” from Latin virago “female warrior, heroine, amazon,” from vir “man” (from PIE root \*wi-ro- “man”).

<sup>4</sup> Nemesis, goddess of retribution for evil deeds.

<sup>5</sup> “that love is...” but also “**that** love (homosexual love) is a madnes...”

imperfectly understood by everyone except the individual sufferer who writhes under its tortures.

.....

He ignored all those infinitesimal differences in nature which make the wholesome food of one man the deadly poison of another. How difficult it is to believe sometimes that a man doesn't like such and such a favorite dish. If at a dinner-party, a meek looking guest refuses early salmon and cucumbers, or green peas in February, we set him down as a poor relation whose instincts warn him off those expensive plates. If an alderman were to declare that he didn't like green fat, he would be looked upon as a social martyr, a Marcus Curtius of the dinner-table, who immolated himself for the benefit of his kind. His fellow-aldermen would believe in anything rather than an heretical<sup>6</sup> distaste for the city ambrosia of the soup tureen. But there are people who dislike salmon, and white-bait, and spring ducklings, and all manner of old-established delicacies, and *there are other people who affect eccentric and despicable dishes, generally stigmatized as nasty* (emphasis added). (327-328)

Mary Elizabeth Braddon knew that her contemporaries would damn Ludy Audley for her imposture to gain power over her own circumstances. She knew just as well that her culture would demand that Robert Audley live his life as an imposter for the same reasons. And so Braddon sent them each to their respective *maison de santés*. When the character parallels are viewed together, the novel's conclusion appears less ambivalent. In fact, the parallels create a condemnation of the unhampered subjugation of two large populations.

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<sup>6</sup> Heretical/deviant/sinful

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Virginia Davis Wyeth

Haunted Women

(Research and Analysis)

27 July 2018

*Last Night I Dreamt I Went to Manderley Again:*

The Nightmare of the Interwar Era Landed Gentry

“Those are nice-looking woods over there, I suppose they’re private... My husband says all these big estates will be chopped up in time and bungalows built.”

(*Rebecca*, Daphne du Maurier)

Though we are never given a time period for *Rebecca*, the descriptions put the story during the approximate time period that Daphne du Maurier wrote the novel, circa 1936. Most Western nations were in a depression. World War I was still a recent memory. England was on the precipice of World War II, and the so-called Phoney War was in progress. Domestically, the English way of life revolving around the country homes of the landed gentry had been in decline for about a hundred years already and was, by the 1930s, taking its last dying breath. Descending from medieval manorialism, English country estates had been the source of and the recipients of their own income. Tenant farmers worked the land owned by the estate, thus supporting the tenant farmer and the country house itself. The house employed often hundreds of servants. Each estate was its own self-contained village.

By the 1800s, however, the financial stability of the country estate was already shaken by the first real taxation on these large estates. Service workers were harder to find and keep as they moved into the cities to find better paying positions with more independent futures. By the beginning of the Twentieth Century many estates were being sold off in pieces, and in attempts to keep their estates solvent, the landed gentry were taking other more unorthodox measures,

including marrying untitled (often American) heiresses and opening their country homes to public viewing.<sup>1</sup> So Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* is not just a gothic romance with the country home as its backdrop, as it was popularly received in its time (Wisker 85). Rather, the declining way of life of the country estate is the focal point of the novel. But the novel is also not the Marxist triumph of the middle-class over the landlord class, as critics like Roger Bromley and Bernhard Frank imply. Instead, the novel is an ambivalent and at times even sympathetic look at the fears the aristocracy and others felt about the end of this English era. As Frank expressed,

If we address the fact that the focal point of the novel is neither the titular, impossibly beautiful Rebecca, nor the starchy Maxim de Winter, nor the assiduously unnamed narrator, but rather its magnificent centerpiece, Manderley, then an entirely new subtext is revealed: a political allegory that, though it may not seek to do so, foretells the future.

(239)

*Rebecca* situates the country house as the focal point of the novel by beginning with that famous circuitous dream about Edenic Manderley, a paradise from which the narrator is initially barred:

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter, for the way was barred to me.

There was a padlock and chain upon the gate. (1)

In fact, the entire first chapter is the detailed dream sequence leading to Manderley. The serpentine narrative journey up the drive is replete with threatening imagery: “The woods, always a menace... crowded, dark and uncontrolled,” while “squat oaks and tortured elms... straggled cheek by jowl... and... thrust themselves out of the quiet earth, along with monster

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete discussion of the decline of the country houses, see David Cannadine's *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* and *Lords and Landlords: The Aristocracy and the Towns, 1774-1967*

shrubs.” “The drive... [was] choked,” and “gnarled roots looked like skeleton claws” (1-2).

More importantly, however, within this sinister description are metaphors that reveal the novel’s class conflict. There is a tension between the cultured attributes of Manderley and the untamed world around. The hydrangeas, “things of culture and grace” had “gone native... tearing to monster heights... black and ugly as the nameless parasites that grew beside them” because “no hand had checked their progress” (2). And the deeper into the dream we are led, the more specifically does the conflict reveal itself to be about unequal class in marriage. First, “branches intermingled in a strange embrace, making a vault above [the narrator’s] head like the archway of a church,” creating the image of a wedding chapel (1). Then, once the narrator finally arrives at Manderley, the tension between the cultured and the vulgar becomes even more pronounced and evocative of unnatural coupling:

The rhododendrons stood fifty feet high, twisted and entwined with bracken, and they had entered into alien marriage with a host of nameless shrubs, poor, bastard things that clung about their roots as though conscious of their spurious origin. A lilac had mated with a copper beech, and to bind them yet more closely to one another the malevolent ivy, always an enemy to grace, had thrown her tendrils about the pair and made them prisoners. Ivy held prior place in this lost garden, the long strands crept across the lawns, and soon would encroach upon the house itself. There was another plant too, some half-breed from the woods. (2)

Thus, *Rebecca* begins with tension between the aristocratic and the commoners, and it all centers on the image of the country house. The end of the chapter reveals just how the novel as well as the aristocracy will end. The Manderley of her dream was finally “a desolate shell, soulless at



last, unhaunted, with no whisper of the past about its staring walls. The house was a sepulcher... There would be no resurrection.” “Manderley was no more” (3-4).

Just as the dream sequence begins the novel with the end of Manderley, the second chapter reveals the conclusion of the (anti)romance of the novel. Rootless and in a self-induced exile, the narrator and Maxim de Winter live a life of banality. The narrator describes:

Granted that our little hotel is dull, and the food indifferent, and that day after day dawns very much the same, yet we would not have it otherwise. We should meet too many of the people he knows in any of the big hotels. We both appreciate simplicity, and we are sometimes bored - well, boredom is a pleasing antidote to fear. (6)

The exiled aristocrat Maxim de Winter, the narrator reveals, is often pained by memories of what he has lost. The narrator is nostalgic for a position she might have held but was never able, as a member of the middle-class, to truly reach.

That Mrs. de Winter desired the position of mistress of a great country home, there is little doubt, despite her obfuscations. Her flashback begins when she is under the employ of Mrs. Van Hopper. Chapter Three begins with the pithy statement, “I wonder what my life would be to-day if Mrs. Van Hopper had not been a snob” (12). Whatever the narrator’s previous experience in life, her time with her employer made her acutely aware of class, and while her claim that she did not know who Maxim de Winter was might have been true, she certainly knew from Van Hopper’s behavior that he was wealthy and notable. The narrator’s first impression is revealing of both herself and of Maxim:

He belonged to a walled city of the fifteenth century, a city of narrow, cobbled streets, and thin spires, where the inhabitants wore pointed shoes and worsted hose. His face was arresting, sensitive, medieval in some strange inexplicable way, and I was reminded of a

portrait seen in a gallery, I had forgotten where, of a certain Gentleman Unknown. Could one but rob him of his English tweeds, and put him in black, with lace at his throat and wrists, he would stare down at us in our new world from a long-distant past - a past where men walked cloaked at night, and stood in the shadow of old doorways, a past of narrow stairways and dim dungeons, a past of whispers in the dark, of shimmering rapier blades, of silent, exquisite courtesy. (15)

Even at the first meeting, the novel asserts the waning days of the aristocracy through the narrator's description of Maxim. For all the romanticism of the description, Maxim de Winter is an anachronism.

Like a Cinderella, the lower class young woman is caught up a quick courtship, and whisked away to live in a castle. Right away she has misgivings, and before she even begins life as an aristocratic wife, these misgivings are given voice by the hyper class conscious Mrs. Van Hopper who remarks disdainfully, "I rather wonder what his friends will think" (58). Her echoes of the narrator's own fears foretell the all too real future:

"You will have your work cut out as mistress of Manderley. To be perfectly frank, my dear, I simply can't see you doing it."

Her words sounded like the echo of my own an hour before.

"You haven't the experience," she continued, "you don't know that milieu. You can scarcely string two sentences together at my bridge teas, what are you going to say to all his friends? The Manderley parties were famous when she was alive. Of course he's told you all about them?"

I hesitated, but she went on, thank heaven, not waiting for my answer.

“Naturally one wants you to be happy, and I grant you he’s a very attractive creature but - well, I’m sorry; and personally I think you are making a big mistake - one you will bitterly regret.” (59)

It is an unkind and ominous warning as this Cinderella is about to marry her Prince Charming, but once they arrive at Manderley, what happens after “happily ever after” is all too grounded in caste reality. And unlike the fairytale Cinderella, this young maiden was not secretly nobility.

The new Mrs. de Winter struggles unsuccessfully to make the leap to landed gentry. Du Maurier uses key plot elements to illustrate the second wife’s incompatibility with the privileged class. First, there are the domestic spaces that are foreign and frightening. Her very first day alone in the house the second wife literally does not know where to go after breakfast. Each room is inappropriate for her, leading to further and further embarrassment in front of the staff. The frightening and humiliating event culminates in her literally becoming lost in the enormous house, reminiscent of her dream at the beginning of the novel (but later in the timeline) when she found the “path [to Manderley] led but to a labyrinth... and not to the house at all” (3). There are spaces she is literally or figuratively cut off from due to her class. The morning room and its writing desk reflect a social network she does not understand and cannot navigate; she does not know to whom she would write or what she would write about (Wisker 19). The west wing is completely cut off from her, as Maxim had them set up in the less opulent east wing. Both areas are marked by, not just the first Mrs. de Winter’s presence, but by her ownership as a member of the elite. In the morning room Rebecca’s correspondences, with their confident capital “R,” mark her appropriateness in this space, as do the furnishings all selected and arranged by someone of breeding. The beautiful west wing bedroom is still filled with her decadent furnishings and clothing. The second Mrs. de Winter not only does not own such fine things, she

has no idea how to select or obtain them. Even her underclothes are a source of humiliation for her, but even in her shame she notes that her lingerie are objects of practicality rather than excess, something of which she is also keenly aware.

Another way in which we see the narrator's inability to assimilate is in her awareness of waste and lack of industry. In the former problem of spaces we are led to sympathize; with regard to excess, we are led to judge. One of the reasons for the decline of the country homes was that the middle and working classes were suffering from the depression, and there was not much public sentimentality over the great country homes while the aristocracy, commonly called the *leisure class*, were spending their time hosting and attending lavish parties. The narrator repeatedly notes how much waste there is at Manderley – tea time with more pastries than a dozen people could eat, dinners with more food left over than eaten. She wonders what happens to the food, if it is all thrown out, but she knows it would be inappropriate to ask. It would expose her as gauche. Closely related is the waste of time. She is constantly at a loss for what to do. As the mistress of a great country home, she must only manage the servants and pursue hobbies. The one expectation of her is that she make social calls. Unlike Rebecca, who was comfortable and adroit with such expectations, the second wife finds the custom awkward and pointless, and she eventually gives them up altogether. And always, with every failing and awkwardness, the narrator finds herself judged and sabotaged by her servants.

According to Judy Giles in “A Little Strain with Servants,” middle-class women feared the inability to control their house servants, and the second Mrs. de Winter's inability to manage her servants plays upon that fear, as well as marks her as ill-equipped to the duties of a home, especially an English country home. In this context Mrs. Danvers, the conniving and disingenuous head servant, is an especially frightening figure for the novel's original audience.

Of all the characters in the novel, Mrs. Danvers is the most acutely aware of her role in maintaining the status quo of the current socioeconomic class system. As she sees Mrs. de Winter trying to upset the status quo, she does everything to prove and ensure that she is unsuccessful in that role. It is Mrs. Danvers who continues to assert Rebecca as the rightful mistress (and class). Danvers who undermines every order the new wife gives. Danvers who vicariously luxuriates in the excesses of her former mistress. It is ironic that a member of the proletariat would be so invested in maintaining the status quo, except that as a plot device that makes her all the more transgressive. Much like the cruel native task masters in slave systems, such a betrayal of another member of the lower class makes her all the more contemptible. It is also the saboteur Mrs. Danvers who brings the class conflict to a crisis.

The struggles of the second Mrs. de Winter all come to a climax at the masquerade party. As Roger Brumley notes,

A considerable section of the narrative is... marked by a series of references to charades, theatricals, disguises, masquerades etc., all activities characterized by their being designed to simulate action and to produce the illusion of movement [in opposition to the reality of the leisure class's lack of meaningful function]. (174)

Continuing, Brumley points out that the masquerade ball is an attempt "to recover some of the traditional functions of the country house," and that Mrs. de Winter is attempting to simulate one of the aristocratic ancestors, while unknowingly also impersonating the former Mrs. de Winter, thereby making a final attempt to change classes. Further, Brumley points out that Maxim does not wear a costume, as he is about to "resume his 'real self,'" which he will do when his wife sheds her aristocratic disguise and joins him as her real self and they greet their guests together side-by-side (174). Shortly after the climactic party, Maxim reveals the true nature of his

relationship with Rebecca, as well as his guilt in her death. As Judy Giles notes, once he reveals that his marriage was a sham, a necessity of survival from the beginning and a terrifying threat of scandal later, the relationship between him and his second wife changes to that of equals, as marked by their markedly different sexual interaction afterwards:

Then he began to kiss me. He had not kissed me like this before. I put my hands behind his head and shut my eyes... He went on kissing me, hungry, desperate, murmuring my name. (268)

Shortly after, she tells him, "We've got to be together always, with no secrets, no shadows" (268). From that moment forward, the action no longer languishes but rather careens. Mrs. de Winter is no longer insecure and submissive. She is as capable as Rebecca. The next day she realizes just how easy it is to be "severe" with the house servants, and chastises a maid and even confronts Mrs. Danvers (289). (Giles 39)

One interesting element of the novel with regard to class analysis is the way that Maxim's character has been interpreted. In his brief Marxist analysis of the novel, Bernhard Frank largely ignores Maxim. When Bromley and Wisker discuss Maxim de Winter it is in the context of his murdering Rebecca, or as he is representative of his class and synonymous with Manderley. But what is his role in supporting or subverting the narrator's attempt to exceed the boundaries of her class? What is his part in the overall class conflict? For the most part, Maxim, who has grown up as landed gentry, does not really comprehend that there are advantages of social education which were afforded him (and Rebecca and his sister Beatrice) but which were not afforded his second wife. He does not realize that she cannot just step into this system. In that way, Maxim does not take part in the class conflict. He is a passive member of the conflict,

and as a seemingly unaware – or underaware – member of the elite, he does not understand how to navigate the conflict.

As Bromley observes, Frank Crawley is the intermediary between aristocratic Maxim and his middle-class wife. In this way Crawley is the foil to Danvers. The narrator does not understand the upper class expectations nor her upper class husband. Maxim does not understand that she does not understand. Besides, he is too preoccupied with his fear over his crime to be fully present in their relationship. Their relationship must be “mediated by the agent [Frank] who handles [Maxim’s] estate in his absence, and her personal relationship in his metaphorical absence through distraction” (170). From a metaphorical perspective, we can see Danvers representing resistance to change in the country estate system and Crawley representing adaptability that might allow for its survival. We do not see Maxim *actively* participating in either the resistance or in adaptation (except, notably, that he did choose a middle-class second wife). What we do see, interestingly, is the way that Maxim suffers as a result of this socioeconomic system.

While Maxim de Winter is not really a focal point of Marxist critiques, he is a primary focus of many feminist criticisms. In such criticisms he is generally recognized as an oppressor or, at least, as representing patriarchal oppression. However, in “Patriarchal Hauntings, Re-reading Villainy and Gender in Daphne du Maurier’s ‘Rebecca,’” Auba Llompart Pons challenges the idea that Maxim be read as a gothic villain. She asserts, “Maxim de Winter, the patriarch himself, ...has emerged as the new villain in *Rebecca*, but has been very much left at the margins of criticism at the same time” (72). While resolutely holding Maxim accountable for murdering Rebecca, Pons still sees him also as a victim of patriarchal expectations. Further, she contends that “du Maurier’s portrayal of villainy in *Rebecca* is not directly related to gender, but

rather to the patriarchal abuses of power by those characters who find themselves in powerful positions, in terms not only of gender but also of class" (72). However, Pons does not concentrate on the way in which these patriarchal expectations are built on a socioeconomic system. The system is patriarchal in that land was passed *entail*, exclusively to male heirs, but it is the socio-class constraints that victimize the characters and that torture Maxim de Winter. Maxim is a victim of a system, but rather than being a victim of hypermasculine expectations, as argued by Pons, he is a prisoner of his social class and of the English country estate system. When he finds out about Rebecca's purposeful and unapologetic infidelity, he sacrifices his own male ego.

I would sacrifice pride, honour, personal feelings, every damned quality on earth, rather than stand before our little world after a week of marriage and have them know the things about her that she had told me then. She knew I would never stand in a divorce court and give her away, have fingers pointing at us, mud flung at us in the newspapers, all the people who belong down here whispering when my name was mentioned, all the trippers from Kerrith trooping to the lodge gates, peering into the grounds and saying, "That's where he lives, in there. That's Manderley." (273).

His statement about sacrifice of pride is significant, as is his connecting the shame to Manderley. It is not just his male ego that he must protect. In fact, he tells Rebecca that he does not care what she does in London, as long as she does not bring it to Manderley. He could not let this scandal happen because it would disrupt the entire county and an entire community that was dependent on that estate. This is not to say, of course, that he was morally justified in murdering his wife, nor that he was thinking of his lower class dependants when he murdered her; rather, his desire to protect Manderley and the system was more instinctual than that. Pons is correct



when she claims that Maxim is afraid of being unable to fulfill his patriarchal duty. However, it is not that he is somehow inherently weak that makes him unable to do so; it is the changing political moment. His days as a landed gentry at the head of the estate socioeconomic system are numbered. From the Marxist perspective, his murder of Rebecca was his desperate attempt to hold onto his class and his class system.

And what of Rebecca? As the titular character who haunts the novel's heroine, she is at the core of the plot's conflict. She tortures the narrator in death, and tortured Maxim de Winter in both life and in death. Audiences during the novel's time labeled her a villainess. Later, "reading Maxim as a gothic villain seems to automatically imply that Rebecca is a feminist heroine, 'a woman whose worst crime... was 'simply that she resisted male definition, asserting her right to define herself and her sexual desires'" (Wood and Nigro qtd in Pons 71). This, of course, does not stand up to scrutiny. We know that Maxim is telling the truth about Rebecca's duplicity because Mrs. Danvers unintentionally corroborates his story. With that in mind, feminist assertions of Rebecca's heroism fall apart. True, a woman should be able to own her own sexuality, but infidelity and cruelty are clearly transgressive from nearly any perspective. Murder aside, the novel does not support the reading of Maxim as an oppressive patriarch. From a feminist perspective it would seem that Rebecca was acting from a place of female rage. Effectively forced by a patriarchal class system into an unwanted marriage, Rebecca lost agency as well as her property. As a victim of this system, naturally her rage was directed at the personal face of that system in the character of Maxim de Winter. At the same time, Rebecca is not blameless. Her excesses are precisely the types of behaviors that the middle-class judged and resented the privileged leisure class for. As Pons affirms,

Rather than any specific character, the ultimate gothic villain in Daphne du Maurier's novel is the haunting presence of an old-fashioned, strict patriarchal system, represented by Maxim's mansion, Manderley, and understood as a hierarchical system. The novel portrays the characters' inability to fulfill the highly demanding gender roles imposed by this system, which leads them towards hypocrisy, hysteria and crime. (71)

There are no good characters in *Rebecca*. All are villains and victims. Even Ben, the simple-minded son of a tenant, knowingly and purposely participates in the cover-up of the murder and the protection of the system.

So where does *Rebecca* side on the class warfare of du Maurier's lifetime? In the end, there is only ambivalence about the end of the aristocracy. Rebecca, representative of the aristocratic decadence, has a diseased womb. Not only does she die, she could not reproduce. "Rebecca's determination to restore Manderley, to recreate the aristocratic ethos, marks her as unregenerate" (Bromley 172). Unwilling to adapt to a changing time, the ancient form of aristocracy cannot propagate.

[The] emphasis [in *Rebecca*] is on the adaptive, and the assimilation into changing class structures... Rebecca [is] the bearer of aristocratic-feudal residues in an industrial-democratic world [and must] be extirpated as the root of all evil; she is the unrepentant, profligate aristocrat likely to waste the inheritance. (172)

As Rebecca was never pregnant before her illness and the second Mrs. de Winter never became pregnant, there is an implication of impotence in Maxim, reinforced by his having been cuckolded by Rebecca. While he does marry a middle-class woman, the text makes it clear that he never adapts to middle-class life. Their attempts to make a life at Manderley represent an attempt to return to the golden age of the English country estates, but this attempt fails. In the

end, his middle-class wife become the motherly dominant partner. “The relationship is like the times. Unable to face up to cold truths, they are punished with rootlessness, a rather vacuous dull marriage of exile and guilt. In their imaginative lives they are haunted by nightmare visions of a lost Eden” (Wisker 94). Unable to thrive or to reproduce, he and his class are doomed to wither and be assimilated into the bourgeois. And of course, there is the fate of Manderley. The enduring image of Manderley burning is the most iconic of the novel.

“It’s funny,” I said. “It looks almost as though the dawn was breaking over there, beyond those hills. It can’t be though, it’s too early.”

“It’s the wrong direction,” he said, “you’re looking west.”

“I know,” I said. “It’s funny, isn’t it?”

He did not answer and I went on watching the sky. It seemed to get lighter even as I stared. Like the first red streak of sunrise. Little by little it spread across the sky.

“It’s in winter you see the northern lights, isn’t it?” I said. “Not in summer?”

“That’s not the northern lights,” he said. “That’s Manderley.”

I glanced at him and saw his face. I saw his eyes.

“Maxim,” I said. “Maxim, what is it?”

He drove faster, much faster. We topped the hill before us and saw Lanyon lying in a hollow at our feet. There to the left of us was the silver streak of the river, widening to the estuary at Kerrith six miles away. The road to Manderley lay ahead. There was no moon. The sky above our heads was inky black. But the sky on the horizon was not dark at all. It was shot with crimson, like a splash of blood. And the ashes blew towards us with the salt wind from the sea.

Presumably Manderley is destroyed by Mrs. Danvers with accomplice Jack Favell. The novel's powerful emblem of the aristocratic English country home is destroyed by a member of the proletariat, but she is hardly a hero as she is simultaneously a character who attempted to defend the class status quo. The traitorous proletariat is assisted by a character who, like Rebecca, represented the excess and depravity of the privileged notables. The destruction of Manderley is described as a dawn, a dawn with splashes of blood, like a new day brought about by revolution.

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