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**AUGUSTA GERALDINE ALMEDA: EMILY BRONTË'S  
GOTHIC ANTI-HEROINE**

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The genre of the Gothic fantasy is one which almost solely appears in narrative, novelistic fiction. Early classic examples of this narrative form are Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. These works fit neatly into William Patrick Day's definition of the Gothic fantasy; they feature protagonists who "find themselves in a world created by the circle of their own fears and desires, in a state of enthrallment, both thrilling and destructive, to the Gothic world."<sup>1</sup> Day goes on to explain how a style of fiction writing begun in the late eighteenth century could endure into the nineteenth; he remarks that the "fear, anxiety, terror, and dread that are both the subject and effect of the Gothic are not, then, free-floating thrills but reflect the essential insecurities of nineteenth-century readers" (*GF*, 5). He further clarifies the three conventions into which works produced in the Gothic tradition divide: character, atmosphere, and plot. The main characters in traditional Gothic pieces are the heroine and the hero; or, as Day labels them, the heroine and the anti-hero. The heroine is quite obviously a victim. She exists almost only for her victimization at the hands of the anti-hero. She is "well-bred, passive, and respectable" and possesses a virtue that "makes [her] prey to villains" (*GF*, 16). The chief reason, in fact, for Gothic heroines making such perfect victims is that "[t]heir conceptions of themselves and of proper behavior render them passive in the face of terror" (*GF*, 17).

The anti-heroes of Gothic fiction are just as formulaic in their creation as the heroines. Day defines the Gothic anti-hero as "a version of the Faust character, an overreacher seeking power, pleasure, even godhead," a protagonist with "qualities of egotism and monomania" (*GF*, 17). He adds, unequivocally, that these anti-heroes "seek to dominate their world, rather than accommodate themselves to it as the female characters do" (*GF*, 17). The enthrallment to which both male and female protagonists surrender themselves is also traditional: "Each [protagonist] approaches the Gothic world, whether voluntarily or not, with a heightened apprehension and a restless curiosity about what may lie beyond conventional reality in its underworld. . . . Yet. . . , the possibilities of the Gothic world, the prospect of infinite desire infinitely satisfied, proves an illusion" (*GF*, 23). This necessary, yet fearsome, journey into the Gothic underworld is really a descent into the

self, Day argues, and this early variety of literary psychoanalysis is externalized in the Gothic atmosphere of these narrative fantasies. Gothic atmosphere may be defined as "the sense of mystery, suspense, and fearful anticipation, the sense of being in the presence of the strange or different that marks all Gothic fantasies" (*GF*, 27) as well as a form of fiction in which "[h]orror abounds: one may expect a suit of armor suddenly to come to life, while ghosts, clanking chains, and charnel houses impart an uncanny atmosphere of terror."<sup>2</sup> Gothic atmosphere, then, eliminates the realities of normal space and time and forces the protagonist, male or female, as well as the reader, into a nightmare world of chillingly unsubstantiated happenings.

All this information on the formulaic patterning of the Gothic fantasy provides essential background material for a careful examination and classification of Emily Jane Brontë as a Victorian poet. She wrote poetry for a good deal of her life, beginning the Gondal saga in early adolescence. Thus, she made it easy, or at least comparatively easy, for her biographers and critics by separating these creative works into two volumes, one comprising the poems of the Gondal saga and the other poems of a more personally emotive nature. Many of the Gondal poems appear, even with just a cursory glance, to have a markedly Gothic atmosphere. The connection, though, between Brontë's Gondal poems and the Gothic fantasy tradition is even more striking. A close reading of a sampling of the Gondal poems which directly involve, either as narrator or as subject, Augusta Geraldine Almeda demonstrates that Brontë is really producing in her heroine Augusta an inversion of the archetypal Gothic fantasy heroine. This Brontë heroine is, in fact, so unlike her narrative predecessors that she may be termed an anti-heroine, as Day characterizes the Gothic hero an anti-hero. The connection, then, between Brontë's lyric poetry and the normally narrative genre classification "Gothic" is strongly fused by her original, and even early feminist, heroine, Augusta Geraldine Almeda.

The question of why Brontë should choose to create an anti-heroine of the Gothic type in her lyric poetry must, naturally, be asked and answered. Any reader of her poetry must surely recognize that her use of Gothic traditions was, almost certainly, unintentional. The only possible answer, then, in her responding to the tradition enough to devise an anti-heroine, Augusta, is that she unconsciously absorbed the tradition through her reading of literature and responded against the stereotypes she saw replicated again and again. Works such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Monk Lewis's *The Monk*, the ever-popular *Castle of Otranto*, the novels of Radcliffe, and even the Gothic-parody *Northanger Abbey* enjoyed both widespread success and notoriety. The consciousness of the traditions of Gothic literature was common; obviously, Jane Austen knew enough of the stereotypical character,

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atmosphere, and plot to design a send-up of the genre, especially of the heroine, in the form of Catherine Morland of *Northanger Abbey*. Feasibly, Brontë could have responded unknowingly to the ubiquitous genre; she may also have wanted to create a heroine who celebrates her feminine independence rather than concedes it to a domineering male. Mary K. DeShazer notes that Emily Brontë calls forth a powerful persona "in the person of [Augusta], the fiendish-angelic monarch of a complex imaginary world. This cold, willful queen serves as a shadow figure, a potent alternate self to whom Brontë gives birth . . ."<sup>3</sup> If this vision of Augusta is an accurate one, then Brontë's depiction of an anti-heroine is both a redefinition and expansion of the Gothic heroine into a more complex female characterization and an exploration of Brontë's, in fact the woman poet's, feminine self. It is outside the scope of my study to analyze here Brontë's Augusta from a feminist perspective beyond noting that it is highly possible Brontë meant to create a character of more feminist power than the traditionally passive figure could ever be.

The Gondal poems chosen all focus on Augusta's sexuality and soul, not on her maternity. Fannie E. Ratchford's arrangement of the poems as an epic of Gondal<sup>4</sup> is convenient, except where more modern scholarship, for instance in labelling Augusta and Rosina Alcona, R.A., as separate identities, offers sensible alternatives. The first few poems taken, in order, from Ratchford's chronology, seemingly depict a quintessential Gothic heroine. In No. 23, the heroine meets "the glorious star of love" (line 8) and the reader may assume that this heroine-narrator is on her way to becoming a typical, female Gothic figure.<sup>5</sup> The poem's narrative voice delineates the internal atmosphere of the onset of love, the "throb[-bing]," the "gush[-ing]," and the "musing," that seem also to be the exaggerated emotion of the average Gothic internal landscape. Brontë certainly depicts her heroine as being awakened to love in a traditional manner. The heroine remains personally inexperienced; she has not yet had the opportunity to display her external conflict or action with a particular lover.

Augusta gets this chance with Alexander of Elbë, her first husband or lover. In a poem recounting years later Alexander's death, Augusta describes his end by Lake Elnor in perfectly Gothic terms: "His red blood dyed a deeper hue, / Shuddering to feel the ghostly gloom / That coming Death around him threw— / Sickening to think one hour would sever / The sweet, sweet world and him for ever" (9.30-34). The atmosphere is incontrovertibly Gothic; Death is personified as a dark figure that throws a cloak of "ghostly gloom" around the shoulders of its victim. At the same time of Gothic atmosphere and death, however, even the bloody near-corpse Alexander recognizes the developing nature

of Augusta; he warns that she will forget him and leave only the heath to mourn his passing: "For you'll forget the lonely grave / and mouldering corpse by Elnor's wave" (9.67-68). Alexander knows that his lover is not the mildly passive Gothic heroine, though neither he nor Brontë distinguishes Augusta specifically yet from this type.

Augusta is not quite as immediately independent and forgetful as Alexander may suppose. Many times in her early poems, she mourns for him and wishes he could have stayed with her. She even suggests tenaciously holding onto his soul so that it does not fly out of this earthly world and into a spiritual one. She speaks to him, encouragingly: "It is not Death, but pain / That struggles in thy breast; / Nay, rally, Elbë, rouse again, / I cannot let thee rest!" (180.25-28). Her macabre exclamation sounds like verbal grave-robbing; she will not let his soul rest in peace because she wants him on earth with her so urgently. Augusta's response to Alexander's imminent death is not at all the behavior of a passively Gothic heroine. In fact, Augusta's stridently active demand, she later labels it a "prayer," for him to stay alive, alarms Alexander so that "One long look, that sore reproved me / For the woe I could not bear— / One mute look of suffering moved me / To repent my useless prayer" (180.29-32). The traditional Gothic sex roles seem here to be reversed; Alexander is silently reproving, Augusta is actively dictating. She does manage to calm herself, especially since it is what Alexander wants. She enforces her own inactivity, "Not a sign of further grieving / Stirred my soul that awful day" (180.35-36). It is clear to the reader, however, that Augusta is a vibrantly active character existing within the framework of Gothic atmosphere but outside of the passively receptive characterization of the stereotypical heroine.

Poem 15, about Augusta's time in prison directly after Alexander's death, is important in showing for the reader precisely what the demarcation is between Brontë's use of genuine Gothic atmosphere and her manipulation of Gothic female characterization. Most of the poem is taken up in detailing the "phantom horrors" (line 67) of Augusta's imprisonment. She remembers the despair of imprisonment: "The tossing and the anguished pining; / The grinding teeth and staring eye; / The agony of still repining," (15.10-12) and the dreams of "the arch of heaven divine, / The pure blue heaven with clouds of gold" (15.47-48) with which she fortified herself against the nightmare of prison. Juliann E. Fleenor notes that "The Gothic world is one of nightmare and that nightmare is created by the individual in conflict with the values of her society and her prescribed role."<sup>6</sup>

Augusta is, first, a victim of external, political conflict; she is serving a sentence in the Gondal prison. She is also, and more important, suffering the sort of nightmarish internal conflict Fleenor

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suggests. Augusta is being forced to remain inactive and woefully celibate within her prison. She is not passively content with her self-sacrificing role as a genuine Gothic heroine would be; she eagerly awaits her freedom and celebrates it when it comes: "It's over now—and I am free" (15.21). The "It" which is over is her imprisonment and her mourning for Alexander. Augusta suffers the physical, atmospheric Gothic punishment of being imprisoned; she does not take the utterly passive course a true heroine would take.

The free Augusta advises turning one's back on passive mourning; she commands: "Shake off the fetters, break the chain, / And live and love and smile again" (15.71-72). Augusta knows that regeneration for her means living in the future, not in the past. She recommends forgetting "The waste of youth, the waste of years" (15.73) and actively rejoining the living band of unfettered beings. Brontë has her heroine move stoically past mournful inaction so that she can establish an identity separate from that of her husband. Augusta's behavior is remarkably feminist.

Another poem peculiarly Gothic in atmosphere is, really, just that, a Gothic atmosphere set-piece. Poem 74 is a physical description of the Hall of Elbë in its ruined and lonely state: "Chambers roofless, desolate, where weeds and ivy grow; / Windows through whose broken arches the night-winds sadly mourn; / Home of the departed, the long-departed dead" (74.3-5). The implication, though it remains unstated, is that while Alexander's Hall falls to ruin, Augusta cannot possibly be expected to become emotionally desolate as well. Although the poem does not have an obvious narrative voice, it seems to be sympathetic to Augusta's cause; Alexander is the "long-departed dead," which implies that it is time for Augusta to come out of psychological decay now that Alexander has been gone awhile. The winds may still mourn through the ruins of Alexander's estate, but Augusta does not see herself, nor does Brontë, nor indeed does the reader, as an inanimate object that should crumple into ruin at the lord's death. Augusta is not a lifeless part of the landscape meant to be buried alive in best Gothic tradition because of her lover's death.

Poem 50 seems to have a psychic connection with No. 74; both poems center on Alexander's dwelling places. While No. 74 examines the decayed state of his temporal, worldly home, No. 50 focuses on his "dwelling dank and cold" (50.3), his grave. This discussion of Alexander and his resting places may appear to have very little to do with Augusta; it does, actually, have quite a lot to do with her characterization as an active anti-heroine. The narrator of No. 50 is explicitly Augusta in the first person. She makes the suggestion in this quatrain-length mood poem that the dead lover "Once more [come] to visit me" (50.4). The gruesome, overtly Gothic picture of a corpse

freeing himself from his dank grave and paying a visit to Augusta is not detailed in the poem; nineteenth- and even twentieth-century readers who have been steeped in the Gothic tradition would have no trouble visualizing this macabre and horrible spectacle.

The important point here is, once again, Augusta's strength of character. She initiates the possible encounter and does not sit back and passively mourn her lost lover. In fact, the first two lines of the quatrain describe a heroine actively, tauntingly cultivating attention from her dead love: "O come again; what chains withhold / The steps that used so fleet to be?" (50.1-2). Chains, the symbol of powerless imprisonment, do not daunt Augusta. She flirtingly hearkens back to a time when Alexander swiftly, probably slavishly, obeyed her slightest, barely-issued command. Augusta is markedly in control of this relationship and was equally as firm when Alexander was still alive. This active anti-heroine would never allow her own selfhood to be limited by death so she cannot concede that Alexander could allow it. Augusta is a character driven powerfully by the concept of the will.

The Victorian fascination with the dynamics of will is in opposition to the stereotypical characterization of the Gothic heroine. Day writes, on the formulaic patterning of the Gothic fantasy, "[t]he will for power conflicts with the will for virtue, because masculine power must be illegitimate, seized by the man himself, . . . while the feminine can submit only to legitimate authority" (*GF*,132). By this definition of roles, Augusta possesses the masculine Gothic trait of craving a will for power. She does not virtuously and meekly submit herself to authority; she chafes at the physical limitations of having to be in prison, the cosmological limitations of the dead having to remain entombed, and the traditional, sociological limitations of having to remain in mourning. Augusta is a forceful, dominating female character very much outside the usual Gothic stereotype and inside the contemporary Victorian mindset.

The last poem chosen from the Augusta-Alexander series of the Gondal poems is a pivotal one, if, once again, just a quatrain, where Augusta decides not to be buried alive in her passive grief now that Alexander is well and truly dead. The poem reads: "Here, with my knee upon thy stone, / I bid adieu to feelings gone; / I leave with thee my tears and pain, / And rush into the world again" (No. 49). Augusta describes herself as genuflecting on Alexander's grave stone. She does not, though, explicitly state that she is praying; it seems rather that she is kneeling *on top of* Alexander's tomb. In this kneeling position, she admits that she is saying good-bye to feelings that are already gone. Brontë has Augusta save until the last word of this line the truly important fact of the statement; the feelings are *gone* so Augusta is really only putting herself through the formal, expected leave-taking

traditional society demands from a widow. Augusta is still in control. In the next line she continues the divorcing of herself from her past; even though her feelings for Alexander are gone, she still has tears and pain, and these two possessions she would like to leave with her dead lover rather than carry off with her. She is economically jettisoning any excess emotional baggage, not bowing to the dominant role of the male. The verb used by Brontë, and meant by Augusta, in the final line of the poem is much stronger than those of the previous two lines; "rush" connotes more urgency than either "bid" or "leave." Augusta is actively and energetically striking out to continue with the rest of her life, just as Alexander predicted at the end of No. 9 that she would one day do. He knows Augusta's nature and recognizes that it is most certainly not of the weak, quintessentially Gothic variety.

Once Augusta finishes with the Alexander phase of her life, she becomes involved with Lord Alfred of Aspin Castle. She has an affair with the boy Lord Alfred's daughter adopts and, in poem 112, dismisses him. The poem has a cautionary tone; Augusta is the experienced woman who is trying to convince the nameless boy that life is not solely composed of days like "this bright day" (112.1). Her very characterization is once again dramatically opposite to that of the conventional Gothic heroine; Augusta knows life through experience. She is not the sweetly virginal, untutored maiden of the average work of Gothic fantasy. She understands the cosmically commercial business relationship between herself and "this world's warring wild" (112.12); she tells the boy that "Bliss like thine is *bought* by years / Dark with torment and with tears" (112.3-4, emphasis mine). She acknowledges at the beginning of stanza three that she loves the boy; yet, by dismissing him later in the poem, she recognizes that love is not the only criterion of any romantic relationship. This is a recognition far beyond the mental capacities of most ordinary Gothic heroines. Augusta's understanding of the crass business exchange portion of any relationship as well as her dismissal of the boy are just two examples of her controlling this emotional encounter. By labelling her loved one a "boy" and a "Darling enthusiast" (112.11), she underscores her position of dominant power in this pairing. She concludes her poem by commenting on the fickleness of human nature and adding "All [humans] doomed alike to sin and mourn / Yet all with long gaze fixed afar, / Adoring virtue's distant star" (112.26-28). If Augusta were, indeed, an example of the formulaically perfect Gothic heroine then virtue would not be a far-distant trait, it would be embodied within her own intrinsically good character. Augusta represents her own unique nature, a blending of the dominating woman who can patronizingly label a boy a "holy child" (112.11) with an "angel brow" (112.15) and a person stoically accepting the harshly Gothic atmosphere of a world



“Dark with torment” that, through “hopeless, endless mourning” (112.8), produces a vast conglomeration of persons suffering “Hell-like in heart and misery” (112.14).

Another poem in which Augusta is resolving a relationship to her own satisfaction is poem 169, in which she is most likely ending her romantic association with Alfred and contemplating the beginning of her alliance with Julius Brenzaida. The tone of this poem is quite a bit like the tone of No. 49; Augusta is the stridently active character who will not let the heavenly judgment of peace or damnation stand in the way of her desire to bid Alfred farewell. The third stanza of this poem is bluntly confessional yet not very contrite: “I know that I have done thee wrong— / Have wronged both thee and Heaven— / And I may mourn my lifetime long / Yet may not be forgiven” (169.9-12). She categorically acknowledges that she has wronged him, but then she uses conditional verbs in explaining what punishments will be doled out to her. She concedes that she “may mourn” for a lifetime and that she “may not be forgiven” by the ethical heavenly spirit. The very fact of her not knowing what punishments she will receive for her treatment of Alfred argues that she does not care overly much about the consequences of her action. She wants to “rush” away from her relationship to Alfred just as she wanted to “rush” away from Alexander’s tombstone. Augusta is knowingly doing wrong in leaving Alfred, a conscious action impossible for the typical Gothic heroine. In stanza four, she sounds both stoic and fatalistic; she says that although she may shed “Repentant tears” (169.13) over the dissolution of their relationship, “But for no grief can I recall / The dreary word—Adieu” (169.15-16). She accords herself absolute control over her own fate, here; she has the *ability* but not the desire to recall her farewell which serves as the initial incident in a string of fateful events. Augusta remains supremely in charge of her own self; she does not recant her rejection of Alfred. Even though she knows she will have to endure, at least on this earth, an endless remorse and the punishment given to a person with “the heart to sin” (169.19), she still has the courage to end her liaison with Alfred and to pronounce that by evening he must be “far away” (169.4). Augusta, the Gothic anti-heroine, cares more for her will to end the entanglement with Alfred just when she wants than for the eternal damnation of her soul. Her character forms a marked contrast to the true Gothic heroines’ who allow terrible fates to dictate their lives without even offering a token resistance. Augusta would rather risk the possibility of an afterlife in which her remorse cannot die (line 24) than a mortal life in which her life is not irrevocably her own.

In the poem entitled “F. DE SAMARA TO A.G.A.,” De Samara, on his deathbed, tries once more to convince himself that Augusta feels at least some love for him. This poem serves as a perfect example of

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the format used for Brontë's Augusta poems of the Gondal saga; it has a richly Gothic atmospheric backdrop against which is spotlighted the wonderfully atypical, vividly active heroine, Augusta. De Samara, full of bravado, declares that he is dying, "My hand is streaming wet; / My heart's blood flows to buy the blessing—To forget!" (85.21-22). Yet, the "dark decline" (85.24) which obsesses him is not his physical death but rather his emotional agony over Augusta. He has a dying vision which shows her quite clearly to be of the *femme fatale* tradition rather than of the pedestrian Gothic female tradition: "Do I not see thee now? Thy black resplendent hair; / Thy glory-bearing brow, and smile, how heavenly fair! / Thine eyes are turned away—those eyes I would not see; / Their dark, their deadly ray, would more than madden me" (85.17-20). He knows that madness lies the way of thinking about Augusta; he would do much better to concentrate on his wound, his "death-cold brow," (85.33) and his isolation in the middle of a "desert moor [so] dark" (85.9) than on his unresponsive, uncaring lover. De Samara cannot purge himself of his love for her, though. As his internal anguish intensifies, so the external anguish of the tormenting, raging Gothic environment heightens. De Samara exclaims in his narrative voice, "How gloomy grows the night!" (85.29) while he is trying to learn to endure Augusta's patently obvious rejection.

The final stanza is perhaps the most fascinating from the anti-heroine reading of the Gothic atmosphere perspective of this poem. De Samara stops himself short in his picture of her smiling "in careless pride and utter scorn" (85.40) at him: "And yet for all her hate, each parting glance would tell / A stronger passion breathed, burned, in this last farewell" (lines 41-42). He cannot relinquish his obsession; he hopes that all her scornful parting glances will show her just how passionate he is during his dramatic, bloody, Gothic demise and that she may, then, love him. This final, masochistic return to his obsessive love for her prompts the last two desperately confessional lines of the poem, "Unconquered in my soul the Tyrant rules me still; / *Life* bows to my control, but *Love* I cannot kill!" (lines 43-44). He is at the mercy of the Tyrant, or Augusta, who has control over his love. Brontë's use of the name Tyrant for a man would be perfectly in keeping with the Gothic tradition; but, her use of this title for a woman is radically unusual. Augusta does dictatorially tyrannize over the men in her life; she deserts Alfred for Julius and scorns Fernando. She accepts, as in poem 169, that she must pay eternally for her domineering and demanding personality. De Samara has a much more difficult time than she in accepting his responsibilities; the love which he has not got the will to kill is going to be manipulated by the object of his love. Augusta is obviously the victor in this match of wills; she leaves the relationship with her self-esteem intact while De Samara is

left with only the “vain, frenzied thoughts” (85.37) of obsession and submission.

A direct plot result of Augusta’s unceasingly active, ambitious, and strident behavior is her reascension to the Gondal throne after Julius’ assassination. Poem 28 is an excellent examination of the contrast between expected behavior and the way in which Augusta behaves. The first stanza of the poem is a dramatically Gothic touch; the lamps glow richly while triumphal ascension music plays and everyone ignores the recently dead monarch, Julius Brenzaida. The second stanza describes only Augusta: “Those haughty eyes that tears *should* fill / Glance clearly, cloudlessly; / Those bounding breasts, that grief *should* thrill, / From thought of grief are free” (28.5-8, emphasis mine). Brontë’s double use of modals underscores for the reader just how unconventional and radical is the new queen’s behavior. As another example of an already familiar pattern, Augusta does not act like the helpless, dependent mate mourning the loss of her lord. She capably and magnificently asserts herself as the new, clearly-gazing ruler. Brontë, through her anonymous narrator, gives the reader to understand that the subjects feel at ease in the hands of the unconventional queen, not a “single sigh” (28.11) was breathed above Julius’s tomb nor did one “shade of feeling swell” (28.14) up from the crowd. All eyes are focused on Augusta; her absolute lack of passivity and her possession of intelligence and political decisiveness not only show how opposite she is in character to the Gothic stereotype but also emphasize this woman’s sheer ability to be an excellent monarch. The subjects of Gondal have no choice but to be gender-fair in loyalty to their ruler; Augusta is the most resilient, active woman for the position.

Brontë’s character Augusta does not die a contented queen. She is plagued by loneliness and a restlessness of spirit: “Old feelings gather fast upon me / Like vultures round their prey” (120.7-8). She wishes to purchase oblivion for all her past woes, but she is not, really, materially changed. She says that, if she were given another chance for her self and for her soul, she would want “Another summer [to] gild my cheek, / My soul, another love” (120.23-24). She would continue with her regenerative, fecund behavior; she would not reform herself into a stiffly passive, male-dominated Gothic heroine.

The last poem which directly focuses on Augusta is No. 143, “THE DEATH OF A.G.A.” This final poem about the doomed Augusta is different from nearly every poem preceding it; she is here the surprised object of blunt and malicious action rather than the initiator of it. Angelica, the evil cast-off friend of Augusta who hires Douglas to assassinate the queen, echoes and expands upon the negative qualities of Augusta so that she functions as a doppelgänger to the positively zealous and active monarch. Angelica’s murderous action is spiteful

and revenging; "Assist me with thy heart and hand / To send to hell my mortal foe" (143.131-32). Angelica even looks a great deal like Augusta, the younger woman notable for her "sullen frown, / [And] lip of cruel scorn" (143.13-14); both beautiful women use their intelligence and beauty to flout the conventionally passive, truly Gothic-heroine behavior in favor of a more decisive, thoroughly controlling pattern of command.

Angelica commands Douglas, holding her love out as a delicious incentive, to murder Augusta. Her conniving behavior follows in the pattern already established by Augusta. After the queen is murdered, Angelica will presumably carry on the new characterization of the female as inventive, assertive, and independent. Meanwhile, Augusta does not fade from the Brontë saga with the whimper of a persecuted, weak-willed Gothic heroine. She fights tenaciously against Douglas; she is such a vibrant character that, although she has felt the isolation inherent in the business of reaching for power and stripping herself of useless loved ones along the way, she cannot die without a furious, brilliant struggle. She boldly confronts the "Murderer's gaze" (143.240), actually taking strength from the death she sees registered in his eyes: "Her own [gaze] scorched with a sudden blaze— / The blood streams down her brow; / The blood streams through her coal-black hair— / She strikes it off with little care" (143.241-44). She concentrates all her considerable energy to repel this final intruder's effort to destroy her self. She fails, however, in this attempt, but manages to die the death of a strong-willed, individual heroine. She does not endure until the end of the saga, dwindling into an even more ineffectual shadow of her already pallid self as the quintessential Gothic heroine would, but dies bravely and well.

The final comment on Augusta, and really a last juxtapositioning of her character against that of the shallow, easily replicated, passive Gothic heroine, is made by Lord Eldred, a nobleman mourning her gory murder. He soliloquizes, grief-stricken: "For what thou wert I would not grieve, / But much for what thou wert to be— / That life so stormy and so brief, / That death has wronged us more than thee" (143.333-36). He admits that he cannot grieve for the actual character of the dead queen, but he also asserts that the potential for growth in Augusta was powerful. He recognizes, intrinsically, that she is a complex, maturing person; she had to grow through her stormy and brief youth before she could develop into a stable, giving monarch. A typical Gothic heroine does not develop and mature; she begins the narrative virtuously passive and ends it cloyingly subservient to her domineering lord. Augusta Geraldine Almeda begins her saga as a curious initiate of love and ends it as a complex, three-dimensional woman who knows how to wield power and to integrate all personal and state affairs. Emily Brontë's

heroine escapes the easy and limiting title of standard Gothic heroine. Augusta transcends the type and creates, as well as epitomizes, her own category of passionate, actively energetic femininity.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy* (Chicago, 1985), p. 4; hereafter cited in the text as *GF*.

<sup>2</sup>C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* (New York, 1986), p. 225.

<sup>3</sup>*Inspiring Women: Reimagining the Muse* (New York, 1986), p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>Taken from C. W. Hatfield, *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë* (New York, 1941), pp. 17-19. All subsequent references to Brontë's poetry are from this source and are cited in the text.

<sup>5</sup>Hatfield's numerical ordering of the poems will be used throughout this study.

<sup>6</sup>*The Female Gothic* (Montreal, 1983), p. 10.