
Kick

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EDITORIAL

Dr. Ljubica Matek, Assistant Professor

> "Fantasy is hardly an escape from reality. It's a way of understanding it." – Lloyd Alexander

The second issue of *Kick*, a journal of students of English at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, is dedicated to topics related to fantastic literature. Some of the papers were written by students as a requirement to complete the elective course *The Fantastic in English and American Literature* (EL110); others are a result of the students' personal interest in all matters fantastic and the subsequent research they have conducted on their own in order to explore this particular interest from a more scholarly perspective.

From my experience, one of the greatest challenges for the twenty-first century literature professor is to get their students to read. In an environment that fosters distraction, a life marked and modified by the use of digital media that thrive from our shortened attention span and always wish us to click elsewhere, it is indeed challenging to get someone to focus for a prolonged period of time on a story that is offered to them in print; a story that is still and silent on the page of a book (or an e-reader). However, fantastic genres – fantasy, science fiction, Gothic literature, and myths of all kinds – have qualities which make them appealing even to the contemporary readers. These stories thrive with action and ideas. Supernatural features and characters, and extreme or liminal plots stimulate the readers' imagination and account for a suspenseful reading experience. More importantly, however fantastic the events and characters may seem, they are always and inevitably echoes of humans and their struggles. In that sense, fantastic texts and, consequently, the papers available in this issue that analyse and interpret them ponder on complex issues

such as identity, gender, hope, good and evil, capitalism, education, and religion, all of which determine and inform our everyday lives.

Although the journal publishes student papers, the range of topics and the way the students have treated them in their papers point to the conclusion that their literature classes successfully result in the achievement of important learning outcomes such as being able to critically read and interpret texts (or other media), to make connections between literature, literary theory, literary criticism and everyday life, and to write in proper English and within the framework of strict requirements of academic writing and research.

Significantly, the papers also point to the versatility of the fantastic genre when it comes to its representation in the media. Fantastic stories have been adapted or (re)invented in various formats: as graphic novels, films, and video games. Indeed, the major percentage of today's video games (the most popular and most lucrative medium at the moment) are based on fantastic stories – old or new, and two of the papers included in this issue of *Kick* show how literature and video games (or publishing and digital media) co-exist and thrive as one adapts the other, and vice versa.

Importantly, in addition to academic papers, the second issue of *Kick* also contains a creative writing section. We are kicking it off (pun intended!) with a single story, but I hope the journal's editors will pursue this in the future by encouraging their colleagues to publish more of their creative work. Like their academic work, this, too, is a result or a consequence of their love of literature and their love of English, and it makes me proud to be able to say that, for however short a time, I took part on their journey towards loving, understanding, and creating literature.

Hope as the Main Driving Force of Humanity in the Grimdark Universe of *Warhammer 40,000*

Marcel Moser

Warhammer 40,000 is a dystopian universe set in the "grim darkness of the far future" (6th Edition). It shows how, in the wake of its conquest of the Milky Way Galaxy, humanity gets beset by foes from all sides. The main human faction, the Imperium of Mankind, is in a perpetual war with aliens, mutants, heretics and all others who seek to destroy it. Due to several factors, its technological advancements have stagnated and, in many ways, even regressed – giving it a sinister, gothic appearance which brings to mind the Dark Ages from our own timeline. This imagery also reflects its decadent society which is intensely paranoid, god-fearing, and cruel. Combined with the scope of its world building, it produces a brutal and often over-the-top universe which stands as the ultimate antithesis to the utopian future that we sometimes imagine. At the same time, it shows humanity's stubborn defiance in the face of utmost futility. Therefore, to make sense of it, it is necessary to explore the driving forces that keep it from collapsing under such horrid conditions. This essay will propose *hope* as the main incentive that lies at the heart of their struggle. It will rely on several sources as neither one of them can give a full perspective of the universe and its subject matter.

To put things into perspective, it is important to note that the universe of Warhammer 40,000 is seemingly represented as utterly hopeless. Most of the novels start with the same preface which sums up everyday life in the 40th millennium:

> To be a man in such times is to be one amongst untold billions. It is to live in the cruellest and most bloody regime imaginable. These are the tales of those times.

> Forget the power of technology and science, for so much has been forgotten, never to be re-learned. Forget the promise of progress and understanding, for in the grim dark future there is only war. (Abnett 8)

To make matters worse, while life in the Imperium is a threat on its own, life outside of it is hardly imaginable. Many of Mankind's enemies are brutal beyond all measure; Warriors of Chaos commit acts of diabolic cruelty and destruction to satisfy their Dark Gods, Orks require war as much as food, Tyranids devour every world they overrun, that is to name only a few of them ("The Warhammer 40,000 Universe"). Other – more civilized – races would gladly see the fall of humanity due to the millennia of mutual hatred. Even in death human souls are in danger of falling prey to the Chaos Gods, damning them forever. Therefore, it "seems that the end of days must surely be nigh. Traitors, mutants and heretics rebel in unprecedented numbers" ("The Warhammer 40,000 Universe"). And yet, in spite of such odds, humanity has stood its ground for more than ten thousand years.

According to Alexandra Samuel, dystopian science fiction helps us "imagine the possible futures we may soon inhabit" not only as a warning, but in order to "inspire … innovation in social as well as technological terms." In that sense, hope emerges as a crucial factor because without it innovation and survival are impossible. Strictly speaking, the survival of humankind has been ensured by the countless soldiers of the Imperial Guard. While formidable in their own right, they are still mere mortals who often face foes that would leave most people paralyzed with fear ("Explore the Factions"). Due to that, they are often the first ones to lose hope and fall to humanity's truest enemy – the Chaos Gods who are the manifestation of the people's darkest impulses. While they grant many gifts to their servants, they make them selfish and cruel – gradually stripping them of all humanity and leaving them incapable of any good at all. Often, the only thing that prevents this from happening are their beliefs and the basic sense of camaraderie which reminds them of what they are

fighting for. This is well shown in Richard Williams's novel *Imperial Glory.* The novel describes the thoughts of one of the characters, Major Stanhope:

> By the God-Emperor, they were showing the enemy how hard a Guardsman could fight. But one by one they fell and, as each one succumbed, Stanhope felt another part of his soul cut from him. He knew when the last was extinguished there would be nothing left inside him. (11)

Despite not having homes of their own (Williams 11), these men gladly give their lives for the freedom of others (Lyons 11). Their sacrifice allows others to have hope, steeling the hearts of lesser warriors and lending strength to their conviction (Thorpe 14). Therefore, the idea is that human survival depends on our ability to "truly connect" and "see our own potential contribution to building a world in which the possibilities for good overtake the opportunities for disaster" (Samuel).

Being behind the front lines, however, does not always guarantee an improved quality of life. This usually comes down to the world someone is born on. Due to the immense size of the Imperium, there are several classes of planets – each having a different role in their service to the Emperor. Many planets are entirely dedicated to the production of one thing – be it food, weapons, soldiers or machines. This means that: "Endless billions labour in the fire-lit confines of factory worlds, entire generations living and dying without ever seeing the sky" ("The Warhammer 40,000 Universe"). While many of its citizens serve the Imperium faithfully, they are still simple humans and as such, it is not surprising that their "existences are naught but toil and sorrow" ("TheWarhammer 40,000 Universe"). There are planets where people have fairly normal lives, working regular jobs, making art and enjoying their free time, as described in Dan Abnett's novel *Pariah* (9-12, 35, 47, 157, 162-170). However, as shown in the story, they too are sombre and still far from safe. Thus, to maintain unity and fancy a notion such as a better tomorrow, people need to

retain some sense of hope. For most people, this hope comes solely in the form of Emperor of Mankind (Dambski-Bowden 61).

The worship of the God-Emperor, known as the Imperial Cult, is the only official religion and the most important institution in the Imperium. At the same time, it stands as the main indicator of humanity's decadence and a show of its desperation. To maintain the spirits of its people, it uses fear and manipulation, teaching them that it makes them strong (Swallow 26), while believing that: "One single slip and even the most devout will fall, and open the way to the warp!" (Swallow 3). This paranoia pushed humanity into a dark age, halting all progress. Ironically, due to the conditions surrounding the Imperium, this same religion is, perhaps, the only source of hope, unification, law, and purpose (Dembski-Bowden 66). It venerates the Emperor as an immortal and omnipotent protector of all of Mankind. Such blind reverence is in direct contrast with the Emperor's teachings, considering that he had envisioned a secular state – "The empire of humanity, enlightened and saved by the truth" (Dembski-Bowden 48). However, this is not far from the truth as even his son Lorgar tells him that he is a god in all but name (Dembski-Bowden 49).

Despite the Imperial Cult's lies and exaggerations, the Emperor truly is vital for the survival of humanity – both in the spiritual and material sense. Namely, his vigilance atop the Golden Throne lights the so-called Astronomican – a beacon which allows space travel for humanity. Moreover, he wages an eternal psychic war against the Chaos Gods who want to conquer the whole galaxy and twist it into their own sick image. Finally, he protects human souls after their death – keeping them safe from the dangers of the Warp. He does all these things while slowly decaying atop of the life support system that is the Golden Throne, described as "a rotting carcass writhing invisibly with power from the Dark Age of Technology" ("The Warhammer 40,000 Universe"). Such an image clearly mirrors the entire state of the Imperium, but also shows the enormous willpower and audacity that humanity possesses. Before being put unto the Golden Throne, The Emperor was said to have possessed a belief in a greater

way of life and a desire to raise humanity to achieve its greatest potential (Dembski- Bowden 63). As such, the Emperor is the absolute embodiment of humanity's hope and willpower and a symbol which serves as a focal point to all those who follow him – pushing them beyond all sensible limits. All of this is summed up quite well in the *Warhammer 40,000 3rd Edition Rulebook*:

> The Emperor is our guiding light, a beacon of hope for humanity in a galaxy of darkness. As we serve him, he is our greatest servant. As we pray to him, his thoughts are only for us. And in the dark when the shadows threaten, the Emperor is with us, in spirit and in fact. (112)

To conclude, the universe of Warhammer 40,000 shows a future where humans have not overcome all of the given obstacles. In it, they are not living in harmony with other species and are instead struggling in a corrupt and backward society, fighting a perpetual war with anyone who threatens their dominance. However, when compared to their antithesis that is the Chaos, we see that they are not driven by bloodlust and hate. Instead, they cling onto a hope for a better future which, in turn, provides them the unity and willpower necessary to persist in those dark times. They embody this hope in the form of the Emperor as he, in many ways, plays a vital role in realizing that better future. And while such beliefs are often forced unto the citizens of the Imperium, they are probably their only means of survival. Those that give up on them succumb to their selfish desires and abandon their humanity and everything positive that comes with it. Therefore, even though humanity lacks the technology of the Eldar, the strength of the Orks, or the cruelty of Chaos, it possesses immense willpower which allows them to face all of these combined. Even if driven by "mere" hope, this remarkable trait has allowed us to weather the darkest periods in our own time.

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A New Approach to Religion in the Fantasy Genre

Juraj Gerovac

Religion has undoubtedly been an inspiration for numerous works of the fantasy genre, often because authors are either religious or because their works deal with religion in some way. According to Weronika Łaszkiewicz, "the genre greatly relies on the world's mythological heritage . . . [and] certain mythic patterns have even become standard within the structures of fantasy, e.g. the cosmic struggle between good and evil, the figure of a saviour." When using these themes in their works, authors add themes of religious and spiritual significance. Some authors make obvious symbols of their characters so that it becomes easy to liken the characters to figures such as Jesus Christ, Satan, the Wandering Jew, and so on. In other cases, authors simply use the idea of religion to create their own religions which have no connection to actual ones other than being systems of faith and worship. Despite a large number of works inspired by religion, there are very few works which tackle actual religious figures, most prominent examples probably being John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Dan Brown's novels featuring Robert Langdon. It is likely that the fear of accusation of blasphemy or heresy prevents authors from referring to actual religious figures. The purpose of this paper is to consider the role of religion as a basis for works of fantasy literature in the example of the fictional universe of *Vampire: The Masquerade*. In this fictional universe characters are not symbols of religious figures but rather they are religious figures who play the roles of protagonists and antagonists, because the authors wanted to explore the untold stories in religious texts and use them to craft an entirely new fictional universe without resorting to another allegory or fictional religion.

It is important to first mention some works of fantasy literature that have been inspired by religion. J. R. R. Tolkien's works are ex-

cellent examples of works filled with Christian symbolism and influence. Numerous authors have examined the role of Christianity in Tolkien's works, and a number of those essays can be found in Paul E. Kerry's *The Ring and the Cross: Christianity and The Lord of the Rings*; as a result, the role of Christianity will not be examined here. For the purpose of this paper, it suffices to mention Michelle Morris who states that "John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was profoundly religious" (1) and that "Roman Catholicism would play a very significant role in Tolkien's upbringing and life" (12). Morris also notes that "both Edith [Tolkien] and C. S. Lewis would be converted to some form of Christianity because of Tolkien, evidencing the strength and centrality of religion in his life" (13).

Considering the importance of religion in Tolkien's life, it is not surprising that numerous researchers tried to find religious symbols in his works, despite Tolkien's well-known aversion to allegory. The focus is usually on *The Lord of the Rings* since that is by far Tolkien's most famous work, but arguments for Tolkien's religious inspiration can be found in *The Hobbit* as well. *The Hobbit* is a children's fantasy novel as well as "the first instalment of his legendarium and is, by virtue of being first, quite different from *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy" (Friedman 24). As a children's novel, *The Hobbit* is certainly not as complex as the trilogy, but a clear argument for religious inspiration can still be extracted from the book. Simply put, "his novel is written with a Catholic world view, and thus defines the notions of good and evil through that lens" (Friedman 23). The novel has a very basic view on good and evil, which is certainly due to it being a children's novel, but also because of Tolkien's religious inspiration since for him "the actual writing of the novel was . . . inherently spiritual as every act in his life was" (Friedman 24).

There are two possible reasons why Tolkien's works are merely inspired by religion instead of tackling religion directly. The first reason is his strong faith which could have led to him considering any writing about religious figures offensive. The second reason is Tolkien's aversion to allegory in any form. According to Kerry, Tolkien

explicitly claimed that *The Lord of the Rings* was not an allegory for anything, which would seem to preclude religious allegory as well (18). In Tolkien's case, it is likely that both reasons played a part, and neither should be excluded, even though it is rather easy to subsume the second reason under the first, which may indicate the first's greater importance. Regardless of the reasons, Tolkien is definitely an example of an author who was inspired by religion, but there are other authors which use religion in a different way.

According to Łaszkiewicz, fantasy authors always tackle religion indirectly by inventing their own secondary religions which then have varying levels of significance in their works, and even when the authors are criticising real-world religions, they do so through criticising their own secondary fictional religion. There is another way to use religion and that is using religious figures themselves. One example of a contemporary work of fiction which uses figures from real-world religions is the *World of Darkness*, a fictional universe originally conceived by Mark Rein-Hagen and further developed by White Wolf Publishing. *World of Darkness* started with, and is most famous for *Vampire: The Masquerade*, a tabletop role-playing game created in 1991, with dozens of books published to support it to this day. In the universe of *Vampire: The Masquerade* vampires originate from Cain – styled Caine in the fictional universe – the firstborn of Adam and Eve. The basics of the universe are best described in an in-universe, diegetic book called *The Book of Nod*, which has also been published by White Wolf Publishing. *The Book of Nod*, as it appears within the universe of World of Darkness, was written by a scholar named Aristotle de Laurent and it contains Caine's retelling of biblical events as well as prophecies for vampires. The book is written in the style of real-world religious texts and prophecies. The Bible does not describe Cain's life after leaving Eden since Seth is a far more important figure in Christian canon. Cain's story ends in Genesis after listing some of Cain's descendants:

> So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain made love to his wife and she became

> pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch. To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech. Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. (*Bible: New International Version*, Genesis 4.16-19)

The uncertainty around Cain's fate left more than enough room for authors to write their own stories. In the Bible, Cain is afraid of his punishment: "My punishment is more than I can bear" (*Bible: New International Version*, Genesis 4.13). In *The Book of Nod,* after being banished to Nod, Caine is offered several chances at redemption by God's archangels and he quickly rejects each of them, still angry at God for banishing him. As he rejects the archangels, each curses him with a weakness: Michael curses Caine with a weakness to flames, Raphael curses him with a weakness to sunlight, Uriel curses him with an undead existence and a thirst for blood (Chupp and Greenberg 30-33) which effectively turns Caine into a vampire. Caine is a fleshed out character compared to Cain; his importance does not pale to that of Seth, who is considered to be the father of humankind both in the Bible and in *The Book of Nod*. He refuses God's forgiveness and wants to live on his own merits; he is a prideful and spiteful character. Despite being a crucial character in the universe, Caine is never portrayed in a fully positive light, and neither are the vampires created by him. Vampires are still monsters who prey on humans, so, as an extension of the biblical Cain, Caine remains the symbol of evil. Thus, when considering the question of whether "books containing magic, witches, demons and generally 'the supernatural' [are] suitable for religious (Christian) people" (Łaszkiewicz), in the case of *Vampire: The Masquerade* a strong affirmative argument can be made in that the original religious message has been preserved.

Besides Cain/Caine, *The Book of Nod* also uses other less prominent biblical characters such as Enoch, Irad, and Zillah. Caine's progeny are not his actual children; they are vampires he created after being asked to do so by Enoch:

> And so, it came to pass that Caine beget Enoch and, so doing, named the First City Enoch. And, so doing, did Enoch beg for a brother, a sister, and Caine, indulgent Father, gave these to him, and their names were Zillah, whose blood was most-favoured of Caine, and Irad, whose strength served Caine's arm. (Chupp and Greenberg 49)

Caine's children eventually create other vampires despite Caine forbidding them from doing so. They have their own motivations and roles in the fictional universe; they fight each other and rule over humans. Simply put, they are more than just names in a long line of descendants; they are characters in a story. The city Cain built according to the Bible is expanded upon in the novel, and it eventually plays a role in causing the great flood:

> The city stood for many ages, and became the centre of a mighty Empire. Caine grew close to those not like him. The children of Seth knew him and he, in turn, knew them. But the world grew dark with sin. . . . Caine read the signs in the darkening sky, but said nothing. Then came the great Deluge, a great flood that washed over the world. The City was destroyed, the children of Seth with it. Again, Caine fell into great sorrow and went into solitude. And he left us, his Progeny, to our own ends. (Chupp and Greenberg 49-50)

After Caine's disappearance vampires created their own societies and continued their existence fearing Caine's eventual return. Various books set in the universe describe lives of vampires, and players can assume roles of vampires in dozens of different clans which all come from Caine. Most role-playing games are set in modern times where vampires hide from humanity due to technological improvements which could easily wipe them out. *Vampire: The Masquerade* is considered a gothic-punk version of the modern world, because it uses vampires, dark aesthetics, and generally dark and disturbing storylines set in the modern world, but it is impossible to ignore the role of biblical characters in the fictional universe: "As a result, fan-

tasy literature can be treated as a modern form that preserves the sacrum once found in mythology," since the "growing readership of fantasy . . . can be treated as a sign that modern people, who have surrounded themselves with high-tech devices, still want to read about good winning over evil, still want to . . . find spiritual sustenance (the forgotten or dismissed sacrum)" (Łaszkiewicz).

In conclusion, it can be said that religion can be used not just as an inspiration but as a foundation on which to build a new fictional universe, without resorting to allegories and indirect references. Religious figures can be humanized and used as actual characters with strengths and flaws which lead to storytelling twists and turns. Using religious figures as characters and treating them as people inspires the readers without "ruining" the figure. The universe of *Vampire: The Masquerade* neither discredits nor promotes religion, it just tells a story using religion's unexplored aspects. Caine remains a figure of evil just as much as in the Bible, if not even more so. Caine's descendants become the reason for humans turning evil and society becoming corrupted, which eventually results in the great flood that wipes away civilization as they knew it. Biblical events and characters are successfully expanded upon and given a greater role in the story. As a result of imaginative authors exploring the unexplored and unfinished religious texts, the universe of *Vampire: The Masquerade* has been in print for almost twenty years.

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A Capitalist Future in *The Time Machine*: A Social Statement and the Representation of the Bourgeois and the Proletariat

Robert Đujić

The Time Machine is Herbert George Wells' 1895 science fiction novella. Wells, whose works cover the entire spectrum of science fiction themes, is credited with the popularization of the science fiction genre, and even viewed as one of its "fathers" (along with Jules Verne and Hugo Gernsback). *The Time Machine* deals with the idea of time travel as the main protagonist, known only as "The Time Traveller," embarks upon a journey through time. He "lands" in the distant year of 802,701 A.D. and comes upon what seems to be the downfall of human civilization. He soon begins to ponder over what could have caused such unusual social circumstances, concluding that it was a consequence of the inequality and subsequent class struggle between the working class and the aristocrats. The aim of this essay will be to uncover the underlying theme of ideological struggle, specifically between capitalism and communism, in order to suggest that *The Time Machine* serves both as a statement against the continuation of industrial capitalism as well as possible propaganda for the adoption of socialist ideals. In keeping with the theme of class inequality, the sub-human descendants of the Victorian people, representing the parties most affected by class struggles, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, will be analysed in order to further demonstrate how Wells' text acts as an ominous warning against the dangers of social inequality.

To be able to travel into the distant future, the Time Traveller uses the titular time machine – his own invention. Prior to his journey, he demonstrates the prototype version of the machine to a group of

on-looking Victorian men, explaining to them the mechanisms of the apparatus. After an ecstatic journey, he arrives in future-day London and is soon greeted by the first group of Victorian descendants, the Eloi:

> In a circular opening, high up in the wall of the nearer house, I saw a group of figures clad in rich soft robes. They had seen me, and their faces were directed towards me. . . . In another moment we were standing face to face, I and this fragile thing out of futurity. (Wells 16)

After the initial encounter with the Eloi, he starts further analysing the frail little creatures, and concludes that he has stumbled upon a perfect communist utopia. Specifically, "in this utopia, the ideal form of government was that none was needed. There were no quarrels because the Eloi were simple minded people without any ambitions or complex wants that couldn't be fulfilled" (Frankel).

Having examined the surrounding landscape from a terrace, he is further convinced of the accuracy of his theory. Namely, he notices that there are no small households, which were typical of Victorian England, and in their places stood "palace-like buildings" (Wells 20). For him, the lack of family houses signalizes the dissolution of the family as the central unit of society; instead, people live together in big communal structures. Although the image of a communist utopia he envisioned in his work appears very vivid, it should be noted that Wells' imagination was not influenced by communist ideology. According to Taunton, Wells was more moderate in his attitude: "H. G. Wells was a committed socialist and also a scientist with an active interest in evolution. His literary visions of the future were frequently shaped by both of these concerns." Taking this into consideration, it becomes clear that the Time Traveller's initial encounter with the distant future was not supposed to function as propaganda for the adoption of communism. On the contrary, a further inspection of the two sub-human species will make it apparent that what might have come off as communist propaganda, or propagation of socialist ideas was in fact a warning against industrial capitalism.

The first of the two sub-human species the Time Traveller encounters are the Eloi. They are child-like, possessing the mental span of a five-year-old. Furthermore, they live in "[a] peaceful society, they eat only fruit and live in the slowly deteriorating buildings of the past, which they seem to have no capability or desire to fix. The Time Traveller notices that they have little worry in their lives except for darkness" (Coppotelli). The Time Traveller does not hide his disappointment with the way the human race has (d)evolved, and states that he is befuddled by the loss of mental capacity apparent in these creatures (Wells 17). According to Coppotelli, the loss of mental capacity might be caused by insufficient exertion:

> Marxist ideas of labour revolt are seen in conjunction with the popular idea of Lamarckism of the day, which states that traits gained during one's lifetime can be passed down to the next generation. So, as the Eloi adapted to a life of luxury in which they were not required to have any physical strength or mental capacity, so too have Morlocks adapted to life underground.

The Eloi are clearly representatives of the bourgeoisie, the wealthy class which holds the majority of the means of production. With time, the bourgeoisie had gotten so used to their luxurious way of life that they, as stated by Coppotelli, lost the need for pronounced physical strength and mental capacity. But this puzzles the Time Traveller even more. If the society he comes upon appears to be a communist utopia, how can the Eloi be the representatives of the bourgeoisie? It would be greatly ironic to consider that the very same class the communists despised and blamed for social and economic inequality, would ultimately establish the kind of utopia that the communists strived towards. Rather, it seems that what he initially perceives as a communist utopia is, in fact, something else entirely.

This point is confirmed by the realization that the distant future features representatives of two classes. While he sees the Eloi as the representatives of the bourgeoisie, another group appears to him as the representatives (or, rather, the descendants) of the proletariat.

They are the sub-terrestrial Morlocks, successors of the Victorian working class. Due to the amount of time they spent in the darkness of the underground, their bodies adapted, and they evolved into the species the Traveller encounters on his journey (Frankel). The representation of Morlocks as creatures adapted to life in the darkness testifies to the fact that Wells was not only influenced by socialist ideas, but also by the work of Charles Robert Darwin and his theory of evolution:

> The Time Traveller suggests that "the exclusive tendency of richer people. . . and the widening gulf between them and the rude violence of the poor" was to blame for this diverging of the human species along class lines, combining the influential analyses of Charles Darwin and Karl Marx, both of whom Wells had read. (Taunton)

The Eloi live a care-free life, their only concern being the darkness in which the Morlocks dwell. That concern, or fear, is well justified, as the Traveller soon comes to find out that the Eloi are the main source of food for the Morlocks: "These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon – probably saw to the breeding of" (Wells 44). Everything thus far has been leading up to this point. We can assume now, that what the Traveller came upon in the year 802,701 A.D. is not a communist utopia that Wells' contemporaries desired. It is not a classless system with no need for government, where the means of production are public property and wealth is distributed equally. It is also not a straightforward continuation of capitalist relations. Rather, it is a terrible consequence of an industrious capitalism allowed to run its course and deepen the divide between the social classes in such a way that the roles have only become reversed:

> The Time Traveller concludes, in fact, that "the old order was . . . in part reversed" (Ch. 7): the dystopian future that Wells imagines is not capitalism itself, but a monstrous inversion of

> capitalism – a socialism gone wrong, where the cannibalistic proletariat prey on the effete aristocracy. (Taunton)

One might think that the representation of the proletariat in *The Time Machine* is actually propaganda against the class most affected by social and economic inequity. After all, they are presented as man-eating, monstrous creatures who have evolved from the Victorian working class as it adapted to the darkness it was condemned to by the rich. Now they dwell in the deepest bowels of London's underground system and prey on the poor, defenceless Eloi. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie, the Eloi, are seen as a parody of communists and their ideas, as it was the bourgeoisie who, ironically, managed to establish a perfect utopia, while becoming weak and frail at the same time.

Ultimately, it can be established that *The Time Machine* is neither propaganda nor a parody; rather it is an ill-fated warning. Wells, a socialist himself, implemented this warning in the guise of a science-fiction novella focused on the theme of time travel. What he tried to warn his readers about were the dangers of unchecked industrial capitalism, and the consequences the deepening divide between the social classes could have. These consequences are presented in the form of the Eloi and the Morlocks, who represent the exaggerated consequences of the development (evolution) of the class divide imagined through the lens of Darwin's theory of evolution.

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Voldemort or Grindelwald: Who Takes Place as the Number One Villain?

Nikolina Maligec

The immensely popular series of fantastic novels about Harry Potter has introduced one of the most recognizable villains in modern times. According to the novels' mythology, his name should not be mentioned out loud, but people who are unaware of Lord Voldemort's name are few and far between. Harry Potter's worst enemy has been frightening little children since the very beginning of the twenty first century, and even today he cannot be disregarded as a valid Halloween costume. Because of the terrible genocide he committed, Voldemort is often compared to one of the most infamous political leaders in history, Adolf Hitler. However, during the past several years, the *Harry Potter* fandom has been introduced to another villain from the *Harry Potter* universe in more detail. His name is Gellert Grindelwald, and he is the main villain of two most recent films: *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016) and *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* (2018). According to the *Harry Potter* novels and the two latest films, Grindelwald's crimes occurred almost fifty years before Voldemort took Grindelwald's place as the most dangerous wizard of all times. Even though Voldemort's crimes cannot be overlooked, the aim of this paper is to suggest that Grindelwald, as a more realistic villain, is more frightening and dangerous than Voldemort.

Firstly, Grindelwald predominantly uses manipulation and relies far less on physical violence than Voldemort. However, the situation seems to have been the opposite in the early stages of their magic studies. An excerpt from a biographical book about Albus Dumbledore referred to in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* states that

Grindelwald was expelled from his school due to performing violent and despicable experiments on his fellow students. Voldemort tortured other children in his orphanage in various ways, but once he entered Hogwarts, he resorted to manipulation in order to get his teachers to feel compassion for him:

> However, if he was frightening or impressing fellow Slytherins with displays of Parseltongue in their common room, no hint of it reached the staff. He showed no sign of outward arrogance or aggression at all. As an unusually talented and very good-looking orphan, he naturally drew attention and sympathy from the staff almost from the moment of his arrival. He seemed polite, quiet, and thirsty for knowledge. Nearly all were most favourably impressed by him. (Rowling 300)

Later on, their approaches change. Voldemort stays manipulative but becomes more violent, abusive, and disrespectful towards his followers since he constantly disregards them and their abilities. Unlike him, Grindelwald pretends to treat his companions with abundance of respect. He makes them feel special and needed, but in the core of his behaviour stands the desire to use the talents of others for his own gain. In this way, Voldemort's evil intentions are more obvious and, consequently, it is easier to stay clear of him in order to avoid his malice. Contrary to this, Grindelwald's malevolence remains hidden for longer, making it difficult for others to defend themselves from him.

As time passes, Voldemort turns into more of a classic villain similar to those in other fantasy novels or even fairy tales. Voldemort's world is, quite conventionally, black and white, and permits two perspectives: from his point of view, the Muggles are an inferior species and should be exterminated, whilst from Harry Potter's perspective Voldemort is the obvious villain and the world must be protected from or rid of him. On the other hand, the historical context of Grindelwald's time (1920s) provides a different perspective on his crimes. Another world war was in preparation and many wizards were afraid

of losing their families and friends again due to the Muggles' ridiculous and dangerous ideologies. In this constellation, the Muggles cannot be viewed as innocent nor the struggle against them completely unjustified.

Additionally, Voldemort's outer appearance resembles that of classic villains with his terribly white skin, terrifying red eyes, hands with fingers like spider legs, and a snake as a companion; he is utterly dehumanized in his appearance in order to make any identification or compassion impossible, or at least very difficult. Grindelwald, however, is represented as a handsome, charming man, with terrific rhetorical skills and a noble cause to save the wizarding world. Keeping his looks and skills in mind, it seems much easier to give in to Grindelwald's manipulation and believe in his "noble cause" for the "greater good" than to join Voldemort's army against the inferior species, although their cause is essentially the same.

What further testifies to their similarity is another trait that both Grindelwald and Voldemort share with other villains from science fiction TV shows, such as *Doctor Who* or *Star Trek*, or from classic fantasy novel series (*The Lord of the Rings*): their tendency to work alone. Their self-sufficiency and self-absorption are similar to "individualism" as understood by Saint-Simonians. As Mike Alsford states:

> The desire to recreate the world in one's own image is a powerful motif in the characterisation of the villain. Characters such as Saruman from *The Lord of the Rings*, Magneto from the *X-Men* and the White Witch from C.S. Lewis's Narnia novels all seek to establish what might be called a new world order. Each one wishes to structure a world that is a reflection of their own individual value system, to use force to create a world that is essentially an extension of their own will. (97)

This succinctly explains the psychological side of Voldemort's and Grindelwald's deeds. Both had a value system radically different from the majority, and both had a vision of interpolating that system into

the already existing society. Even though both Voldemort and Grindelwald have their own armies of followers, they always remain just that – a group of people fighting for someone else's ideology – never coming close to being considered close friends.

In fact, Voldemort's army is another aspect that makes him less realistic, and more similar to fairy tale villains. Namely, Voldemort's closest followers all fall under the same category: evil men who belonged to the Slytherin house during their time in Hogwarts (with Bellatrix Lestrange as a notable exception). In *Half-Blood Prince* they are described as a mixed group, but when one examines them thoroughly, they are not that different from one another: "They were a motley collection; a mixture of the weak seeking protection, the ambitious seeking some shared glory, and the thuggish, gravitating towards a leader who could show them more refined forms of cruelty" (Rowling 301). Some of Voldemort's Death Eaters may be described as ambitious or thuggish, but essentially they can all be seen as "the weak seeking protection." Voldemort's Death Eaters do not feel any kind of affection for him; rather, they are afraid of him, or they may even despise him. In spite of this, they continue to follow him in the hope of obtaining certain personal gain or simply because they were taught to perceive Voldemort as a godlike creature. Even when they start to think for themselves, they are too afraid to leave: "Perhaps his most fanatic adherent, Beatrix [sic] Lestrange, fears him and craves his regard, but none of his Death Eaters like him or love him. They follow him in search of advantage for themselves" (Rothman 203). Furthermore, Voldemort filled his army with non-human magical creatures (giants, inferi, acromantuals, and so on) which additionally determines him as a classic fantasy villain. Unlike Voldemort, Grindelwald accepts every wizard in his army, and, to add more contrast, the fantastic beasts fight on the side of the hero, not the villain. This acceptance, again, makes Grindelwald more likeable and relatable, so it is not hard for wizards to fall under his influence and fight for his cause, no matter how dreadful his methods turn out to be.

The ease with which Grindelwald attracts his followers emanates from his apparently noble aim, and that is to save the wizarding world from another world war started by the Muggles; ironically, he starts one between the wizards themselves, and it occurs in parallel to the Second World War. To anyone who hears at least one of Grindelwald's speeches, his intentions seem reasonable and acceptable due to his exceptional rhetorical skills which he uses to cover the truth with less terrifying phrases: "It is said that I hate Les Non-Magiques. The Muggles. The No-Maj. The Can't-Spells. I do not hate them. I do not. For I do not fight out of hatred. I say the Muggles are not lesser, but other. Not worthless, but of other value. Not disposable, but of a different disposition" (*Fantastic* 1:45:57–46:38). Moreover, the social context contributes to the appeal of his words as many wizards are, understandably, afraid of losing their loved ones to an unnecessary, ridiculous, and completely useless war. It is no wonder then that to them Grindelwald's proposals seem appealing and rightful. Voldemort, on the other hand, craves and amasses power because of his personal issues and he does not try to disguise his plans or justify them by presenting them as noble. He sees the Muggles as inferiors and wants to conquer them simply because they are Muggles. The root of his hatred goes back to the very beginning of his life when his Muggle father abandoned the family. Voldemort is an example of a villain with a tragic backstory who hates an entire race because of only one agent from his tragic past: "He showed only a death-and-destruction-loving will to power and thirst for vengeance against anyone believed to have thwarted him" (Rothman 204).

Unfortunately, Voldemort's groundless violence attracts as much followers as Gindelwald's skilfully presented project; the "destruction-loving will" and "thirst for vengeance" seem to be enough for Voldemort to gather followers and commit a terrible genocide of the Muggles. Thus, his deeds are frequently compared among the readership and the critics to one of the most tragic disasters in the entire human history – the holocaust performed during the Second World War (see, for example, "The Parallels of Lord Voldemort and Hitler"). However, when one looks into Grindelwald's personality and

manipulation methods, it is possible to draw a much clearer parallel between him and Adolf Hitler. At first it seemed as if both had a chivalrous goal with which they attracted the masses. Grindelwald blamed the Muggles for all the destruction happening at that time, for making the wizards fight unnecessary wars, and for great losses of loved ones. When one looks into the history of Second World War, the latter sounds very familiar. Hitler blamed the Jews when Germany lost the First World War, and wanted to give the power back to the German people: "He held them responsible for Germany's terrible suffering and vain sacrifice in the First World War. A second war would reverse that disaster and bring about Germany's revenge. That was his thinking" (Kershaw). Also, there is no historical evidence that might prove that Hitler did any of his "dirty work" on his own:

> What is surprising, then, is that Hitler never visited a single concentration camp, let alone death camp. He kept himself aloof from the dirtiest work of his regime. He did not speak about the 'Final Solution', even to his closest entourage, other than in vague terms. (Kershaw).

There is a similar scene in *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald* where Grindelwald invades a family home in Paris and lets his followers kill the Muggle family, while he stands in the next room, making sure he cannot be connected to the crime. Grindelwald spoke in a well-mannered way, charmed and attracted the masses, and although the blame for deaths of countless Muggles and wizards is placed on him, he always kept his own hands clean.

To summarize, there are several arguments that support the suggestion that Grindelwald is the most dangerous villain in the Harry Potter universe. First of all, there is a difference between Voldemort's and Grindelwald's personalities. Most of the time, Voldemort uses physical and mental abuse to control his victims and followers, while Grindelwald relies on basic manipulation through which he is able get others to do what he wants them to do. The second difference can be seen in their armies. Voldemort has a group of stereotypi-

cal villains on his side, whereas Grindelwald easily attracts masses of diverse people. Additionally, in each of these cases, fantastic beasts fight on different sides. Furthermore, the attraction of the masses occurs in a way that is reminiscent of the behaviour of an infamous historical person– Adolf Hitler. Even though Voldemort could easily be compared to him due to the terrible genocide they both committed, Grindelwald, like Hitler, never did any of his own "dirty work" nor did he fight for a certain cause simply because he wanted to be evil or powerful; like Hitler, Grindelwald gathers people to fight for his cause by making them think they are helping their people. Grindelwald ostensibly fights for the greater good in order to right all the wrong that has been brought on his fellow wizards. He is more dangerous because he presents himself as a hero that is desperately needed by the wizarding nation. His true nature is hidden behind an attractive appearance, whereas Voldemort is disfigured and repulsive at first glance, so that everyone is aware of his evil nature and intentions. In this way, Grindelwald is a reminder of malevolent historical figures who wreaked havoc in their time, and a warning against potential individuals that may be threatening us in the present moment without anyone being aware of the toxic influence, without anyone being aware of the time when they may rise to power and strike again.

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Man is not Truly Two, but Three: Psychoanalytical Approach to Personalities in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Katarina Stojković

The mystery revolving around the split personality of Dr Jekyll, portrayed by Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, relates to studies of several esteemed psychoanalysts, with emphasis on Sigmund Freud. He was the first to present a probable hypothesis on human subconsciousness. Moreover, he found patterns in human behaviour and its causes which are foreshadowed in Stevenson's 1886 novel. In his work, Stevenson reflects upon late Victorian society through the actions of an individual – Dr Jekyll, and marries science and literature in an attempt to provide a better understanding of both the human psyche and the dangers of unchecked science. Drawing upon ensuing psychoanalytical studies, with the emphasis on Sigmund Freud's theory, this paper will analyse how Dr Jekyll's psyche is directly affected by the setting, that is Victorian society, which provokes his craving for the unknown, the subliminal and the forbidden.

In order to better understand the subliminal layer of Stevenson's novel, certain parts of Freud's study must be explained. Freud's vision of subconsciousness is commonly described through an image of an iceberg. The iceberg, floating in the sea of existence, has a small part above the surface called the conscious, and the remaining ninety percent of the iceberg consists of the preconscious near the surface, with the unconscious far below. Furthermore, he introduces three terms: *id*, *ego*, and *superego*, which are strategically positioned on the iceberg. Firstly, id represents basic human instincts and drives that are genetically inherited, and work on "the pleasure principle which

reigns unrestrictedly" (Freud 19). Therefore, it is placed deeply underwater on the iceberg scheme. Secondly, the ego serves as an intermediary between id's needs and the rational ability to satisfy them. Having in mind the intermediary role, the ego is found in both the conscious and the preconscious on the iceberg scheme (8). Thirdly, the superego serves as the moral ideal (30); it strives to perfection. Unlike the id, which is inherited among human beings (genotype), the superego develops from phenotype – social interaction (31). Being a model for one's morality, certain parts of the superego can be found in all three layers of an iceberg, but mostly in the unconscious. This theory will be applied to the characters of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in order to elucidate their motivation, which is their desire to be free from social constraints.

Undeniably, Victorian values play a major role when it comes to Dr Jekyll's scientific conduct. The Victorian era is a time of suppression and conservatism when all deviations from the standard are ostracized, which is why Dr Jekyll develops his polarity. Strict social rules provoke discomfort within his own ego: "Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life" (Stevenson 69). In the final chapter, Dr Jekyll also touches upon religion as an influence on his state of mind, which furthermore helps instate the newly born ideas of his suppressed sexuality. Homoerotic love was considered a taboo and it may be claimed that suppression of one's sexual drive could lead to "unstable" or non-masculine behaviour. In fact, "[t]he term male hysteria was a topic of considerable scientific interest in 1886. The term refers to men who acted effeminate" (Traylor). Since Dr Jekyll was brought up in a stiff hierarchical family, he was met with many expectations and rules which prevented him to express his true self. Thus, it seems that his transformation into Hyde serves as a way for him to "come out of the closet."

In fact, the possibility of Jekyll's homosexuality is hinted at through certain discrete details that helped Stevenson to introduce a controversial topic. Significantly, Freud and his less known colleague Wilhelm Fliess, who "'argued that all human beings were bisexual'" (qtd. in Stiles 882), follow in their later research the same parallel between the society and its influence on shaping one's sexuality. In the context of Victorian society, Hyde's ape-like behaviour can serve as a metaphor for the intrinsic homoerotic and animalistic desires of highbrow men. Moreover, Hyde's appearance draws the attention of modern critics who believe that "by reading Hyde as a figure for, variously, the perverse violence of male sexuality, the necessarily preterited pleasures of homoeroticism, or the frightful blurring of conventional gender categories" (Williams 413) serves to show "repressed historical referent" (413). Even the fact that he was constantly surrounded by his dear male friends supports said thesis. The experimentation can be seen as his way of fixing his own deviation and a way to uphold the societal standards. When it comes to exploring one's deeper levels of self, the unconscious and subconscious, Freud also finds great use in interpreting one's dreams. Freud's theory can be easily connected with the words of Mr Utterson: "If he be Mr Hyde… I shall be Mr Seek" (Stevenson 21), which point to the fact that parts of Jekyll's identity are hidden or repressed and can only be found in Hyde. With this in mind, the actions of Hyde are dream-like to Dr Jekyll; they allow him to reflect and, in the end, feel shame for leading a life of duplicity.

However, his duplicity is a part of his nature. Although Jekyll falsely believes that "the moment [he] choose[s], [he] can be rid of Mr Hyde" (27), this is not the case because Hyde is a part of his personality. More generally speaking, such an alter ego is inherited by every human being. It was he who gave this instinctive creature within the ability to get a physical, "troglodytic" (23), hardly human form. When he says that he is in control, he could be talking about the right to take his own life and therefore Hyde's too, but in the context of the paper, it is apparent that he believes that he has control over this adventurous addiction to the impulses coming from his unconscious.

It is biologically predetermined that the *id* is buried deep in the unconscious, but thanks to Jekyll's experiments designed to release his repressed side, Hyde is freed and appears in Jekyll's consciousness: "The fellow had a key; and, what's more, he has it still" (15). Similarly to Marvel Comics' the Beast, also known as Henry McCoy, who believed to have created a cure for his mutation but with it only enhanced his abilities, with every dose Dr Jekyll takes, Hyde's power grows. Understandably, giving in to one's desires and having experienced forbidden pleasure makes it more difficult to stop or control one's impulses.

Following Hyde's instances of authority, Poole mentions that they all had to obey Hyde (24). Metaphorically, everyone is a slave to their own physical needs and so Hyde (id) rules over both Poole and the Soho staff. The simplest example of id in action is the murder of an MP, Sir Danvers Carew. In ape-like nature, Hyde kills just to satisfy his aggressive needs. It would be possible to extend the argument and suggest that rather than viewing Carew's death as random, a reader might see intention in Hyde's violent act, or to see it as symbolic. Namely, as an MP, Carew may be considered to be a pillar of the Victorian community and someone who stands for the rules and restrictions which have prevented Jekyll for so long to get in touch with his hidden desires. Once Jekyll released them, they turned out to be beyond his (or anyone's) control and they were directed against those who prevented his freedom.

In the final chapter which contains Dr Jekyll's written confession, Stevenson shows the limits of Victorian science. He concludes "that man is not truly one, but two" (70). However, Jekyll senses that his polarisation of mind and duplicity of life is not the complete answer, so he follows the previous with a disclaimer that in the limits of his mind he cannot comprehend more, but there could be more (70). Thus, fiction foreshadows scientific development and, indeed, in his later work Freud concludes that the man is actually three. Dr Jekyll ends his life in pain, shame, and despair with no legacy or documents that may advance scientific research. What he achieved appears to

have markings of devolution, rather than evolution. In fact, when Mr Utterson describes Hyde, he uses the term "troglodytic" (23), which evokes early evolutionary forms of humans – cavemen. Like a wolf in sheep's clothing, Hyde is often, after transformation, found in Dr Jekyll's oversized outfits. Hyde is the wolf in the metaphor, he is the "self-destroyer" (56) who pretends, hides, and wears a mask (Jekyll's clothes). Ironically, id's only desire is to preserve its existence, but because it becomes overpowered, its natural balance is corrupted. Hyde, seemingly a herald of liberation, turns out to be Jekyll's Armageddon, Doomsday, and a false god. Dr Jekyll realises this too late: "I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger… If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also" (42). The blurred resolution which Dr Jekyll meets cannot change the past; "pedeclaudo" (25) – the punishment comes limping. The little devil that he summoned, now uses his body as his finite form.

To conclude, Dr Jekyll can be seen as an introvert who needed a boost to his social life and an up-tight Victorian with repressed sexual desires, but the extroverted, overly liberated creature he created was more than he could handle. The psychological breakthrough that he undergoes at the very end is the key part of his self-discovery. Like Mephistopheles, the path he started on was affected by the society which prevented him from being his true self and made him desire the forbidden. With a clever use of science, Stevenson created a complex novel which is far more than a supernatural story; *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* stands as both a predecessor and literary homage to psychoanalytical studies.

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Nature vs. Nurture in the Case of the Monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*

Nera Martinović

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus is a nineteenth century Gothic novel written by Mary Shelley. It is also considered to be a novel representing the beginning of the science fiction genre. The novel tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a scientist, who created a creature from dismembered body parts of human beings in an unorthodox scientific experiment. The Monster, or the Creature, kills many people while aimlessly looking for Frankenstein. The aim of this paper is to explore the influence of nature and nurture in shaping the character of the Monster in the novel.

The influence of nature and nurture on the individual has baffled scientists and philosophers since the ancient times. Many philosophers argued that the influence of nature is insignificant because the human mind is a blank canvas in the moment of birth, and it develops thoughts and opinions only due to the influence of various environmental factors. The most prominent term related to this theory is the term *tabula rasa*. It was first mentioned in the works of Aristotle, who refers to it as the "unscribed tablet"; the Stoic epistemology claims that the mind starts blank, but gradually acquires knowledge through experience from the outside world (Bardzell 18-9). The most significant contribution to this concept seems to be *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by the English philosopher John Locke. By using the term *white paper*, Locke explains that there are no ideas in our mind when we are born, but that the mind collects data through sensory input and creates the rules for processing the acquired data:

> Our understandings derive all the materials of thinking from observations that we make of external objects that can be perceived through the senses, and of the internal operations of our minds, which we perceive by looking in at ourselves. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from which arise all the ideas we have or can naturally have. (Locke 18)

Locke further explains this by stating that our knowledge of various things can be explained "through our ordinary abilities to come to know things" (Locke 3). Similarly, Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau briefly discusses this topic in his treatise Émile; or, Concerning Education, claiming that everything we need as adults, which is not given to us at birth, is given to us by education (Rousseau 11). He also explains that there are three types of education and that one of those is, in fact, nature:

> The internal development of our faculties and of our organs is the education nature gives us; the use we are taught to make of this development is the education we get from other men; and what we learn, by our own experience, about things that interest us, is the education of circumstances. (Rousseau 11)

Locke's views are often compared to the views of philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who actually opposes Locke's idea of tabula rasa, by saying that human beings inherit a part of their nature before birth, particularly selfishness.

However, there are some positive sides of the concept of tabula rasa that Locke emphasizes. According to Locke, we are all "free-born human beings" (Mester 72). Thus, given the fact that the mind is born blank, the individual has the freedom to build his or her own soul and character. The only thing that cannot be altered is the biological identity of a human being, but everything else is open to the influence of an individual's education and personal growth. Scientists are still researching this phenomenon, since here is no conclusive evidence to support either the theory that only nature plays a signif-

icant role in the individual's character and behaviour or the theory that it is defined by the environment in which the individual grew up.

Realizing the relevance this issue has on understanding human nature, Shelley incorporated the concept of tabula rasa in her novel making it one of the novel's central concerns. This idea is being discussed through scientific morality and the creation and destruction of human life, where a man wants to assume the role of God (Lima and Cicovacki 34). While reading *Frankenstein*, the reader is conflicted and torn between thinking that the Monster is evil and a murderer, and thinking that he is actually humane and only resorts to murder because people around him made him do it. One feels either disgust and fears the Monster or sympathises with him, which points to the dichotomy of reading Shelley's Monster. The feeling of fear and disgust is evoked by the Monster's frightening appearance: "its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy daemon, to whom I had given life" (Shelley 60). In addition, the Monster is feared because it is perceived as evil and a murderer.

This brings the paper to its central concern; although he killed William, Henry and Elizabeth, the question is whether he was created, "born," evil or whether the world made him that. It seems that, to a certain degree, the Monster's case actually confirms John Locke's theory. The role of nurture, that is the society around him, seems to be significantly greater in shaping his character and determining his behaviour than the role of nature. The role of nature is minimal, practically non-existent, since the Monster came into being as a result of an unorthodox experiment that defies the laws of nature. Victor Frankenstein created him by stitching together body parts belonging to dead bodies of various people, and since he does not have parents, he cannot inherit anything from them. One could speculate that, in theory, he could inherit certain personality traits from the person whose brain was transplanted into him, but brain transplants are still a matter of science fiction rather than medicine and science, and it is hard to argue that he really "inherited" anything.

Moreover, the Monster possesses a childlike innocence, and has no understanding of the world surrounding him. At first, he considers everyone a friend, but he soon realizes that that people fear and reject him. Having witnessed the barbarity of men, he is forced to become hostile in order to protect himself from them, knowing that they would kill him if they had a chance. He explains to Victor the reasoning behind his murders and how the way people treated him changed his behaviour and made him evil:

> Believe me, Frankenstein, I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity; but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn and hate me. . . . These bleak skies I hail, for they are kinder to me than your fellow beings. If the multitude of mankind knew of my existence, they would do as you do, and arm themselves for my destruction. Shall I not then hate them who abhor me? I will keep no terms with my enemies. I am miserable, and they shall share my wretchedness. (Shelley 78)

The Monster has natural human desires; all he wants is to be loved and appreciated. He wants friends, or at least someone to talk to. He thinks he will be able to have such a relationship with the old man De Lacey, but he soon realizes that the only reason why the old man is not scared of him is because he is blind. After De Lacey's son chases the Monster out of the house, he becomes filled with rage towards mankind and his creator, Victor Frankenstein: "No; from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery" (Shelley 105). He senses the same disappointment and rage once again after he demonstrates his humanity by saving a little girl from drowning, and, in return, people attack and injure him, frightened by his appearance:

> This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and as a recompense I now

> writhed under the miserable pain of a wound which shattered the flesh and bone. The feelings of kindness and gentleness which I had entertained but a few moments before gave place to hellish rage and gnashing of teeth. Inflamed by pain, I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind. (Shelley 108)

So, rather than testifying to the Monster's cruelty, the novel highlights his "natural" humanity and contrasts it to the cruelty of mankind. For example, he gathers wood for the De Laceys and leaves it at their front door in order to help them. Also, after he realizes that that they suffer because he has taken some of their food, he stops and feels remorse (Shelley 86). Moreover, the Monster shows his benevolence towards mankind after suggesting that he will leave to a secluded place and never return again, if Frankenstein makes him a partner. When Frankenstein decides not to fulfil his wishes, the Monster decides to punish him and murders Frankenstein's wife. Finally, after Victor's death, the Monster not only expresses his remorse for all the evil things he has done, but also explains that it was the society, that is the way men treated him, that made him evil:

> Do you think that I was then dead to agony and remorse? 'He,' he continued, pointing to the corpse, 'he suffered not in the consummation of the deed. Oh! Not the ten-thousandth portion of the anguish that was mine during the lingering detail of its execution. A frightful selfishness hurried me on, while my heart was poisoned with remorse. Think you that the groans of Clerval were music to my ears? My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy, and when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change without torture such as you cannot even imagine.' (Shelley 167)

All things considered, one can conclude that nurture, rather than nature, played a significant role in shaping the character of the Monster in the novel. More specifically, it can be noted that although his initial, "natural" impulse was to socialize with people, and to inte-

grate into the society by helping them in various ways, it was the barbarity with which he was treated, and which he learned from, that shaped the Monster the most, affecting both his behaviour and the development of the story.

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"Where Am I in This M ST": Decoding the Heroic Identity and Maturity of Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*

Zvonimir Prtenjača

"Because," she said, "when you're scared but you still do it anyway, *that's* brave." (Gaiman 69)

During a literary career spanning almost three decades, Neil Gaiman has managed to position himself as a prodigious architect of modern fiction writing which exudes a particularly recurring structural pattern. Gaiman allows his prose to dance jovially both to the beats of the traditional and the unconventional, and his 2002 multi award-winning dark fantasy novella, *Coraline*, outlines the same trajectory. As a result, the titular tale transcends the boundaries of juvenile fiction under which it is generally categorised and yields itself to multilateral examinations, one of which this paper purports to tackle. It also aims to retrace the titular heroine's adventure by applying Joseph Campbell's theoretical framework offered in his seminal mythological study, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), and ultimately aspires to decode Coraline's process of maturation by examining several developmental stages of her sense of self.

To start with, the author's outset towards shaping the titular heroine can be traced to his meditations on the very essence of myths, published a few years ahead of *Coraline*. In just a few impactful and resonating lines, Gaiman reflects on the general notion that "horror and fantasy are often seen simply as escapist literature 'which produces' quick catharsis, a plastic dream, an easy out", and then proceeds to challenge it by stating that "if we are lucky, the *fantastique* offers a road-map – a guide to the territory of the imagination, for it is the function of imaginative literature to show us the world we

know, but from a different direction" (Gaiman, "Reflections on Myth" 80). It is exactly this wayward path that Coraline chooses to tread, and she does it because her motivation does not arise from an epic Beowulfian quest to slay the dragon and subsequently bathe in its riches and glory, but from two peculiarly entangled mechanisms: boredom and curiosity.

Having explored all there is to explore in and around the very old house her family moved into, and after reaching the exact same spot where her bold escapade began, the 12-year-old Coraline Jones "sets forth from her common-day hut" embroidered in a fabric of monotony and "voluntarily proceeds to the threshold of adventure" (Campbell 227). This initial stage of her soon-to-be heroic adventure corresponds with her internal metamorphosis. The relationship with her parents, though abundant with care and love, is partially also related to an ever-working husband-wife dyad which results in the occurrence of rifts in Coraline's identity. For example, she asserts her sense of uniqueness very early on in the tale, namely by yearning for "some Day-Glo green gloves," the like of which *nobody* in her school owns, but her mother refuses to fulfil her wish and instead opts for "gray blouses and a dark gray skirt" (Gaiman 29), which is the basic dressing code shared by "everybody." Moments like these cause Coraline to feel neglected and devoid of any fulfilment, and also serve as "a signal that . . . she is in a transitional state, a state where . . . she is developing a separate sense of self, a need to assert . . . her desires over and against the desires of the mother" (Coats 86).

It is exactly because of this evolving separate sense of self that Coraline willingly shifts from simply "exploring the garden and the grounds" (Gaiman 6) to examining the family heirloom of the vacant drawing room in which "there were no knickknacks on the mantelpiece, no statues or clocks; nothing that made it feel comfortable or lived-in" (Gaiman 32). As she unlocks the heavy wooden portal and realizes that the bricked barricade situated in front of the behind-the-door passage is gone, Coraline slips away from being burdened by the usual commonalities of her life, that is the family-neighbours-house

triad, and embarks on an adventure. According to Saravia and Saravia, "[a]ll these perceptions act as catalysers so that Coraline starts looking for a way to escape from her reality. That action of escaping, paired with that of an alternative, unknown reality is a vital part of both children's literature and Gothic works" (82).

This new reality, or rather an unexplored sphere, is actually walled into a non-shifting continuum when Coraline realizes that she "hadn't left" and that she had once again arrived "in her own home" (Gaiman 33). It is "beyond this threshold" that Coraline "encounters the shadow presence" (Campbell 227) of her Other-Parents, the grotesque copies of her real-life parents whose eyes are replaced by big, black shiny buttons. They seemingly allow Coraline to have whatever she chooses for the price of having her eyes replaced and remaining in their clutches forever. Even though this Other-Realm abounds with talking toys and purple hills which undoubtedly spur her imagination and affinity, Coraline sees through the Other-Parents' charade and decidedly rejects their promises "to only cater to her desires … embracing the liberating unpredictability of her real parents" (Oziewicz 92). Gaiman thus employs not only a typical tool of heroic growth, but also activates a narrative mechanism of "the accurate depiction of the ordinary world illustrated in realistic fiction in order to lessen the effects of defocalized[1] narration" (Hosseinpour and Moghadam 92).

Deploying such a narrative technique in structuring Coraline's tale leads one to infer that Gaiman intentionally calls upon some refurbished tropes of an (unconventional) heroic quest. Firstly, as Coraline crawls through the "night-black underground darkness" (Gaiman 55) to reach the safety of her home and her parents' grasp, she becomes aware of the Other-Mother's evil intentions and, through this process, grows. When she peers into the mirror as a

1 Faris uses the term "defocalization" to refer to the co-existence of two paradoxical perspectives: whereas the realist fiction depicts a factual description of the normal world, that is, definable phenomena or "focalizations," the magical realist fiction presupposes that the origin of the incidents is equivocal (43-44).

window into the Other-Realm and realizes that her real parents have been imprisoned, she initially feels just as "sad and alone" (Gaiman 63) as they do, but in actuality, she draws motivation from this newly created "atmosphere of detachment and insecurity" (Saravia and Saravia 83). Secondly, when she resolves to return to the Other-Realm and save her parents, she reminisces about an incident during which her father sacrificed himself and allowed himself to be bitten by wasps to provide her with enough time to escape to safety. While performing such an act to shield his child, he dropped his glasses somewhere amid the wasteland, but later returned to retrieve them. Gaiman uses such a mundane, yet powerful act as an integral part in shaping Coraline's notion of bravery: "[W]hen you're scared but you still do it anyway, that's brave" (Gaiman 69). Now a proper heroine with her father in mind as a role-model, Coraline sets off on a singular quest to save her loved ones. She latches onto her newfound strength of bravery and sacrifice, overcoming the debilitating effects of fear and "the idea of abandonment" which ultimately leads her "to self-discovery . . . and to questioning the world" (Saravia and Saravia 83) she had boldly chosen to enter.

This simulacrum of her real world, or the Other-Realm, proves to be "a near-literal manifestation of the *unheimlich*:[2] a home that is familiar but unknown" (Gooding 394), initiating a complex interplay of literary elements relating both to juvenile literature and Gothic fiction. However, this interplay also moves on the edges of a heroic fantasy, namely because a hero/heroine is usually moulded in and by his/her immediate surroundings. As she "journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces" (Campbell 227) with the aim of regaining the souls of the three ghost children who helped her survive the night in the Other-Realm, Coraline successfully battles the Other-Mother's army of minions. While performing these

2 As defined and further explored by several psychoanalysts (Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, to name a few), "das Unheimliche" or "the uncanny" relates to the psychological experience of encountering a familiar thing in an unsettling context, that is, outside of one's familiar perceptions.

Herculean tasks, she defeats the "two horribly unformed plasticine people" (Gaiman 119) who represent the monstrified version of her next-door neighbours, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, blinds the horrendously disfigured, "grub-like thing" (Gaiman 132) resembling her Other-Father, and chases away a score of malevolent rats.

However, in doing so, she is aided not only by the aforementioned ghosts, but also finds a Carrollian helper in the shape of an anthropomorphic black cat which rescues her from the rats by decapitating them, guides her through the mist of the Other-Realm, and ultimately advises her to play her strengths while challenging the Other-Mother to a game of exploring. This is also where Coraline's greatest skill, her wit, plays a vital role, namely because she is not protected by a legendary armour or armed with epic weaponry. Rather, she outsmarts the "beldam" (Gaiman 101) and her unyielding desire to devour herby arming herself with an "apple" (Gaiman 74) and by changing back into "her pyjamas, . . . dressing gown, and . . . slippers" (Gaiman 116). Such a revised (or reversed) mechanism of a hero/heroine's dressing is then furthered by a prototypical instigator of his/her success – the central talisman. Interestingly enough, this powerful aid is, at a first glance, just a "pebble, a nondescript brown stone" (Gaiman 113) with a hole in its centre and given to Caroline by her real-life, kind neighbours, Misses Spink and Forcible. In hindsight, however, when pointed into the mirror, this powerful aid "glimmers like an emerald" (Gaiman 113-114) and lifts Coraline's disorientation by allowing her "to frame this realm" in which "the regularities of time and space don't signify" (Rudd 164).

Moreover, the sheer physicality of performing these tasks serves to emphasize that Coraline also defeats herself throughout the entire process. Gaiman displays her internal growth by using the technique of psycho-narration,[3] namely in the passages in which she claims not only that she *will be* brave, but reassures herself (and later proves)

3 According to Doritt Cohn, psycho-narration is a narrative technique which allows the author or the narrator to represent the character's interiority (14), that

that she already *is* brave. By repeating this axiom every time she takes another step forward with the aim of rescuing her parents, Coraline negates the essence of fear by which she was previously burdened and, even though "her heart beat so hard and so loudly she was scared it would burst out of her chest", she "closes her eyes against the dark" (Gaiman 55) and overcomes both the perils of the Other-Realm and the trepidations of her inner realm. When she finally retrieves the souls of the three ghost children and her real parents imprisoned in a snow-globe, she arrives at "the nadir of the mythological round" where she has to "undergo a supreme ordeal" (Campbell 227). As the black cat jumps on the beldam and wounds her, the ghosts imbue Coraline with their power, bolstering her just enough to tug the heavy portal behind, as well as forever imprison the Other-Mother in a dilapidating world of her own creation.

However, Coraline's heroic venture is prolonged when the three ghost children inform her during their parting picnic that the beldam swore by her right hand not to let any of them roam free. Their words prove insightful as Coraline realizes that she has to literally break free from the Other-Mother's clutches in order to restore the normality of her world. She once again asserts her wisdom, trickery and bravery over the imposing force of the Other-Mother's "five-footed, crimson-nailed, the colour of bone" (Gaiman 175) monstrosity and, as she lures her by placing the key to the Other-Realm over a trap table-cloth laid out over an endless well, feels relief when she sees "the other mother's right hand . . . tumbling down into the darkness of the well", followed by "a muffled splash coming from a long way below" (Gaiman 189). As her heroic journey is finalized, Coraline completely extinguishes the discrepancies between the fragmented abnormality of the Other-Realm, and the soothing regularity of her family-neighbours-house triad. This is also a pre-climactic point of her growth as she not only refuses "to cease to exist" or "to be possessed", but successfully "negotiates the space between these two realms" (Rudd 164).

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is, it allows the reader to follow what a character thinks or feels at a particular point in the story or over a longer period of time.

This negotiation of realms "intrinsically serves an expansion" of Coraline's "consciousness and therewith of being" (Campbell 228), and Gaiman furthers this expansion to position her as a proper heroine whose true identity and personality are now evoked. The desires she previously asserted over her parents' subsequently shift to a more mature understanding: "Coraline sighed. "You really don't understand, do you?", she said. "I don't want whatever I want. Nobody does. Not really. What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I ever wanted? Just like that, and it didn't mean anything. What then?" (Gaiman 143). Out of this understanding arises Coraline's comprehension of "the boon" which "restores the world" (Campbell 228) to its normal outline and simultaneously leads to the fulfilment of her final task: after the journey, the "child is compelled to give up its childhood and become an adult – to die, you might say, to its infantile personality and psyche and come back as a responsible adult" (Campbell and Moyers 152).

To synthesize, the convergence of all the genres Gaiman chooses to play with and evoke, namely juvenile literature, Gothic fiction and (heroic) fantasy, is certainly in the service of the protagonist's characterization. The titular heroine thus represents a modernized version of the archetypal character that sets off on a refurbished heroic quest through a phantasmagorical world of the Other-Realm, wherein she not only finds her parents, but also (re)discovers herself and her values. Within this conquest of fears, unfulfilled desires and immaturity lies a more noteworthy, but simpler treasure. Gaiman uses an unconventional hero embodied in a little girl to provide voice for all the children in search of themselves, allowing them to find their "I's in their own respective M STs". Therefore, what one can infer from such notion is that Gaiman's fantasy is most magical when it is real, and that being allowed to witness a child's maturation may just be magical in itself.

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Representation of Women in Stoker's *Dracula*

Iris Koščević

The portrayal of female characters in the novel *Dracula* reflects the former, very traditional, perception of women. Namely, the novel was written during the Victorian period when women were expected to be the obedient servants to their husbands, and this paper will show that, when it comes to the representation of women, *Dracula* is saturated with Victorian ideas and ideals. Characters such as Mina and Lucy illustrate that women's destiny used to be dictated by their adherence to, or refusal of, traditional gender roles.

One of the main characters in the novel, Mina Murray, embodies the perfect example of the Victorian woman. She is a beautiful, gentle, and chaste woman who firmly supports her fiancé Jonathan throughout the entire novel: "Mina represents the virtuous woman, who struggles to remain pure" (Muskovits 2). While Jonathan is on a business trip in Transylvania, she stays at home and waits for his letters anxiously: "27 July.—No news from Jonathan. I am getting quite uneasy about him, though why I should I do not know, but I do wish that he would write, if it were only a single line" (Stoker 132). She is not only faithful to him the whole time he is away, but also completely uninterested in other men. Certainly, Mina's character embodies every Victorian man's fantasy: "She is one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist" (Stoker 338).

Another aspect which shows the influence of the Victorian values on the representation of women is indeed Mina's role in the novel. She is presented as a helper to her husband, an assistant who collects the available information about Dracula and shares them with

the male "vampire hunters." In fact, Fleissner highlights "Mina's role as the gatherer, organizer, and interpreter of the information about Dracula" (qtd. in Kuzmanovic 412). This way, she is standing aside, enabling her husband Jonathan to actively embody the role of a dominant Victorian man: "In contrast to women, men were seen as active inventors, decision-makers, and conquerors and, therefore, those holding absolute and apparently unshakeable power" (Krucon 43). So, despite the fact that Mina, too, has knowledge about the vampire, she is considered fragile and weak, and thus ineligible to participate in the vampire hunt. Moreover, it is clear that she needs to be protected and that men are the ones who can provide such protection:

> We men are determined, nay, are we not pledged, to destroy this monster? But it is no part for a woman. Even if she be not harmed, her heart may fail her in so much and so many horrors and hereafter she may suffer, both in waking, from her nerves, and in sleep, from her dreams. (Stoker 423)

Equally important, Mina is also portrayed as controllable and submissive in her relationship with Dracula. In fact, many situations such as the one when she allows Dracula to drink her blood without any resistance, reveal her passivity and obedience: "I was bewildered, and strangely enough, I did not want to hinder him. I suppose it is a part of the horrible curse that such is, when his touch is on his victim" (Stoker 520). Contrary to this, Dracula is portrayed as a dominant male figure who dictates his orders, and therefore, represents a preeminent Victorian man who easily manipulates her: "But as yet you are to be punished for what you have done. You have aided in thwarting me. Now you shall come to my call. When my brain says 'Come!' to you, you shall cross land or sea to do my bidding" (Stoker 521). In fact, in Stoker's novel, Dracula is never represented as drinking the blood of men, which emphasizes men's strength and women's weakness.

Even more significantly, the Victorian standards seem to refer to vampire women too. During his captivity in Transylvania, Jona-

than is being "tortured" by the three female vampires who, unlike the chaste, fragile, and weak Mina, are marked by pronounced voluptuousness and intense desires. Such qualities are titillating to Victorian men, as exhibited by Jonathan's eagerness to engage in "kissing": "'He is young and strong. There are kisses for us all.' I lay quiet, looking out from under my eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation" (Stoker 69). Although clearly desirable to Jonathan who "felt in [his] heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss [him] with those red lips" (Stoker 69), their unhinged sexuality is represented as monstrous because women were not allowed to express their (sexual) desires. But despite their liberty in this respect, the vampire women are still subordinate to Dracula – the male vampire, whom they must obey: "'How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him, or you'll have to deal with me'" (Stoker 71).

Unlike Mina and similar to the female vampires, the character of Lucy Westenra represents an opposition to the traditional Victorian woman. She is perky, dominant, and open about her sexuality, and according to Muskovits, "Lucy's and the vampires' wantonness is against the Victorian moral code" (2). She finds it hard to choose between the three men who want to marry her and "she expresses her regret for not being able to marry her three suitors at the same time" (Muskovits 4). In this way, her intense sexual desire and openness to the possibility of having more than one lover make her "monstrous" – literally, because she first acts like and then becomes a female vampire, and symbolically, because she defies the Victorian code of behaviour. Indeed, she is portrayed as a dominant New Woman (Lukić and Matek 86) whose behaviour jeopardizes the dominant position of the Victorian man: "Lucy turns into a female beast who drains the essence of manhood of her suitors" (Muskovits 5).

Using Lucy's transformation, Stoker openly shows the tragic destiny of women who behave like her. Because of her rebellion against the traditional female role, she is symbolically turned into a vampire

and damned to live an eternal life with roughshod and heartless personality: "The sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness" (Stoker 378). Certainly, there is a sharp shift in representation of her character – instead of the blissful look that she used to have in her eyes, she now resembles a devilish creature: "Lucy's eyes in form and colour, but Lucy's eyes unclean and full of hell fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew" (Stoker 379). Lukić and Matek agree that "Lucy's actual defiance occurs only after her encounter with the vampire" (86), and according to Leatherdale, this change in characterization confirms the conservative attitude of the Victorian men who were ready to punish any woman's transgression: "The men represent the 19thcentury male, who wanted to destroy the desirable, and in their mind, dangerous New Woman" (qtd. in Magnúsdóttir 13).

Indeed, the degree of outrage against Lucy's "inappropriate" behaviour is visible in the fact that the men end up killing her in the most gruesome way. Because of her immoral, seductive behaviour, she is no longer worthy of love or compassion, but merely deserves to be killed: "At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing. Had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight" (Stoker 379). The brutal, ritual killing entails having her head cut off and her heart stabbed through (Stoker 387-388). Symbolically, the act of killing marks the punishment for her disrespect towards the Victorian traditional demeanour, and a recovery of men's dominant position: "After all, the image of strong and stable masculinity, which can oppose and defeat even the most dangerous and/or perverse adversities is, at least in the surface layer of the plot, present in *Dracula*" (Krucon 44). In fact, after she is killed, or rather punished, Lucy's innocence seems to be restored: "There, in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that we had so dreaded and grown to hate . . . but Lucy as we had seen her in life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity" (Stoker 389).

To conclude, Stoker's novel *Dracula* is an example of how a period in which the work is written dictates the representation of its

characters. More specifically, the portrayal of women in Stoker's novel is influenced by Victorian values. The author represents Mina as an example of an ideal Victorian woman, chaste and subservient. On the other hand, Stoker portrays Lucy as an example of a woman whose liberal-minded behaviour causes her demise because it departs severely from the Victorian ideal, and, as such, it is severely punished.

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Female Characters in Selected Works of Edgar Allan Poe

Iva Romić

The sublime world of Edgar Allan Poe arises from the imaginative part of Poe's troubled soul filled with fear and terror that serve as an inexhaustible source of the main themes found in his work of the imaginary and horror. The grotesque atmosphere created in Poe's work helps in defying structured and normative characteristic of female characters in general, giving the reader an insight into different types of female behaviour and the purported obscurity of their soul. The female characters of Poe's numerous short stories and poems enable the exploration of the role of women in the Gothic. The aim of this paper is to explore and examine the female characters presented in "Ligeia," "Annabel Lee," "Lenore," and "The Oval Portrait" in order to show that Poe represents women as beautiful objects of art who can only be adored and admired through the narrators' memory of them.

When observing Poe's style and form of expressing and writing, one can surely recognize that many of Poe's characters tend to be either physically or morally dominant, whereas their male or female counterpart possesses the contrary traits, making them dependent on each other. For example, the unknown story-teller in "Ligeia" is physically stronger and more dominant than Lady Ligeia, but her morality, exceptional intelligence and uncorrupted soul haunt him, making him feel obliged to praise her beauty and uniqueness, even after she is long gone: "My memory flew back, (oh, with what intensity of regret!) to Ligeia, the beloved, the august, the beautiful, the entombed. I revelled in recollections of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty, her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous love" (Poe 131). Although the woman complements the pair and makes the

narrator's life happy, the reader nearly always gets to read about the period of happiness only after it has passed.

To be sure, the fact that the narrator *recollects* the qualities of the beloved woman is a recurring one. In fact, his plots revolve around the death of a young woman, which enables the narrator to reflect on the present and the past at the same time, combining and intertwining them. The action is shaped and provoked by the past events entirely, and by adding the uncanny elements, which form an unexpected twist and evoke fear, as is the case with the shocking transformation of the dead Rowena into Ligeia:

> Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head, unloosened, the ghastly cerements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long and dishevelled hair; it was blacker than the raven wings of the midnight! (Poe 136)

The contrast between the fair-haired Rowena and dark-haired Ligeia is representative of the contrast between women in his poems and those in the stories:

> "Lenore" is one of the many poems that celebrate the fairness of the beloved, in hair, skin, or eyes. When the poetic women are described, they are often fair, with "hyacinth" or yellow hair ("Eulalie", "To Helen") and light eyes; they are never described as having the black hair and eyes of the "Dark Ladies" of Poe's tales. (Weeks 152)

Nevertheless, it can be said that Poe's female protagonists share certain traits. For instance, their skin is pale and flawless, emphasizing the purity of their soul. Combined with their blond hair and crystal-clear blue eyes, their whiteness symbolizes immaculate purity captured in a moment, but cherished and adored forever. More importantly, their fair complexion and innocence is reminiscent of angels, which only highlights their otherworldly features. In that sense, lady Ligeia serves as a departure from the common, as she is

dark-haired, black-eyed, and described as having an unprecedented intelligence. But – although dark – she is still slender and with skin resembling "marble" and "ivory" (123-125), suggesting both morality and purity, but also her otherworldliness.

Similarly, the eponymous protagonist of Poe's "Lenore" symbolises freedom and deliverance from the sins and evil of the earthly life. Her impeccable soul is saved and proclaimed to be reunited with the Creator. The grief derived from the loss is shared among the male characters in "Ligeia," "Lenore," and "Annabel Lee," leaving them empty and enraged, unable to find beauty in the present or the future, constantly reviving the memories by living in melancholy and the past. According to Fisher:

> [T]he speaker [of "Lenore"] is utterly beset by grief, and that, as is suggested in many other creative works of Poe's, his is the loss of an ideal, symbolized in Lenore, who may have been no actual physical woman, but an emotional force that has nurtured the speaker's own emotional wellbeing. (44).

Quite plausibly, the female protagonists all seem to be representations of the desirable but unattainable abstract ideals and virtues.

In fact, Poe's Romantic concept of unconditional love beyond the grave confronts the reader with the idea of one true love that transcends time and space, forcing the surviving lovers to forever mourn the woman's departure and aspire an imminent reunion. Moreover, it gives more weight to relationships ruined by death and bequeathed to the afterlife, than those marked by requited, long-lasting love on Earth. Lost love is hard to challenge or compare to any earthly relationship which makes the lovers' recollections of love lost incontestable. For instance, in "Annabel Lee," the poet states that their love was stronger than any force that neither the human kind, nor the angelic beings could have ever experienced: "But we loved with a love that was more than love — / I and my Annabel Lee -" (Poe 9-10). Upon reading the poem the reader can sympathize with the sorrow of the poet, whose feelings are universally recognizable, marked with the

memory of loss which forces one to constantly – and futilely – search for the escape from the unbearable reality, and intoxicating one with the paradox of complexity found in the human soul. According to Kopley and Hayes, the black raven – but speaking more broadly all of his poetry too – represents "Poe's ceaseless memory of those he loved and lost – and, indeed, our own unending memory of our own lost loved ones. Although there may be no 'surcease of sorrow,' this poem does help to create, over time and around the world, a community of shared sorrow" (195). The idea is that a woman has to be somehow untouchable, unavailable in order to be adored, and death is the ultimate way to make someone both unavailable and closer to heavenly ideals.

In line with this, in "The Oval Portrait," the author highlights this perspective in the representation of women. Poe's lady is voiceless and submissive to her husband, so much so that she is both an object in life – a model for the painter, and in death:

> And he would not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sat beside him. […] And then the brush was given, and then the tint was placed; and, for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, 'This is indeed Life itself!' turned suddenly to regard his beloved: - She was dead! (Poe 707)

The artist literally draws life out of the woman, killing her in the material world, but immortalizing her through his art. Poe's understanding of beauty and death as irrevocably connected and mutually dependent suggests that life is meaningless without the art and vice-versa. In his "The Philosophy of Composition" Poe famously states that "the death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover" (5).

In conclusion, the female characters in Poe's literary opus share similar physical and psychological traits, making them susceptible to short but deadly diseases that are responsible for their demise. All things considered, the purpose of the poems is to astonish the reader by sublimity and tragedy found in the brevity of their lines, whereas the short stories build the suspense around the uncanny events in a story-telling manner. The male characters indicate gradual transition from denying to gradually accepting death, whereas the female characters show purity of their soul until the very last moment of their earthly life. By observing the constant correlation between life and death, the reader can notice that Poe's characters do not fear death, but rather see it as a means to transcendence. The narrators glorify it, believing that true love, unlike any other thing or emotion, can never cease to exist and is only intensified and sanctified through death. The female characters are represented as objects of love, abstract representatives of ideals and virtues that the narrator desires and admires. As such, they are better suited to the afterlife than to the earthly life from which they are taken in their youth.

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Creative Writing

Voice Box

Tomislav Berbić

* * *

I sat reclining behind my desk when the door knocker struck twice in quick succession. Slowly, listless still from yesterday's work, I rose to my feet to answer. With the creak of the door appeared Malcolm, the postman. He seemed regular in his appearance, exactly as I was accustomed to, but there was something peculiar about his countenance – his lips trembled faintly and his lashes bat twice as much and half as lightly than usual. The air around him was thin, while the thick mist formed in the cobbled streets at his back, setting down a dreary morning. Thinking little of it, I politely received the letter he was handing me, and we peeled off to our tasks, both now equally distressed. Opening the fine paper, I read my brother's name on the envelope's cover. It was written in thin strokes, tidily with structured spacing. A driven message, I surmised. Contained within was a brief letter:

Dear Kaspar,

I have grown lonesome and wanting of your presence. The past two years have diminished in misery, and I have missed your company. As abrupt as this is, the invitation is not without reason. In fact, it is a serious matter that requires your presence to be resolved. I will spare you the details in writing as truth and ferocity tend to lose their way in the lines of letters, and I shall wait for your arrival, but I must be clear: I fear that I might be in serious peril to my spirit and mind. I believe that there is little time left before the deaf tones of death take me, and the night rules supreme. Please, for the sake of our kindred bond, visit soon.

Your brother, Wilhelm.

Wilhelm was right, a rift had formed between us, causing me to brim with reminiscence while reading his words. I immediately put up a notice to my customers and packed swiftly. I would have plenty of time to finish my vignettes and other orders come the end of my visit – I had other work to do. The car arrived within the hour, and I ordered the driver to make haste and spare not the horses.

* * *

My polished brogans landed on the obsidian gravel; I had arrived at my destination. Taking in a deep breath, I surveyed the courtyard as I traversed the forecourt. The manor stood tall in the backdrop of the setting sun, its diminishing rays grazing the décor and outlining an old wooden structure shrouded in dark emerald haze of the coming winter twilight. It was traitorous, suspicious; its charming serenity drawing me in with its deceitful tendrils. A decrepit and stained threshold of granite greeted wayward guests, flanked by odoriferous shrubbery and tall cedar and spruce trees starting at the corners of the house, as if to demarcate some unsaintly abode; lines of them extending along the manor's length. The very outer layer of Wilhelm's dwelling was inhospitable and lonely, save for an enticing visage of an odd-looking vine scaling the wall adjacent to the entrance, and a bright green herb huddling next to its base. I walked towards it, tilting my head aside to see it more clearly, as if the angle would make a difference. The stark contrast of the gravel against the dark earth and the morose kobicha of the manor in the afternoon produced sensations of care and alertness within me, akin to those of animals who are in tune with tacit danger lying in wait, which only added to the appeal: I must inspect the plant to satisfy my curiosity, despite the underlying risk. A childish sense of interest took over me as I crouched down, the trimming of my trousers trailing across the earth. I was utterly fascinated by the pleasant fumes emanating from the beautiful herb, so I quickly picked a leaf from it in my fit of amazement and kept it on my person, folding it gently into the crease of my breast pocket. The wavering waves of the beautiful fragrance agreed with me, and

their frequency announced a different mood. My mind was made up to keep it close for its redolent company and its relief.

The doors opened, swinging their wings wide to receive the fraternal visitor. To the left, and first to meet my eyes, was the butler. An innocuous looking man, seemingly plain in every respect, save for his odd height and thin figure. His long fingers in white silken gloves prying open the entrance, I noticed my brother emerge from the room to the right prefaced by a studded door, which I assumed was his office. He hurried to the entrance and proceeded to welcome me: "Twelve years. You have changed… maybe it is the way your hair parted. No… it must be the way you carry yourself." He extended his arm, the customary greeting of gentlemen, but when our palms met, his hand travelled immediately and clasped the upper portion of my arm, drawing me in and waking in me a sensation of compassion, not only for his weakened strength, but also for his heartfelt welcome which irradiated gratefulness for my arrival. Even upon first glance and this brief exchange, it was clear that this light façade was to hide a malevolent circumstance. He was drained, well beyond the point of healthy or prosperous, easily persuading me that his plea in the letter was grievous. The state I arrived at was exceptional, and his performance was likely there to calm the help and assure our company that this visit is benign. I had no doubt: it was a guise to cover a terror. Having exchanged the usual pleasantries and brotherly remarks of a visit long awaited, we took to the inside of the manor.

* * *

With my first foot planted flat on the hard wooden floor, Wilhelm stood to the side, his back leaning against that leather door, and began to utter an invitation to join him – but the gesture is quickly interrupted by the butler, asking "if the gentleman," his hand opened flat pointing at me, "would join him for a stay at the table, to afford himself refection." Before I could answer, I looked at my brother, his brows clenched tight together in surprise. "I like to allow my guests the convenience of possibility – the luxury of having a

choice," exclaimed Wilhelm to dispel the insecurity, feigning he must have important work to attend to nonetheless. "Will you not join me, Wilhelm?", I inquired. "Share my company as I have a meal before addressing pressing matters?", I prodded him, visibly on edge, teetering over anger. "I must finish my day's work in urgency before you are ready," he replied. "I intend to allow you the rest of my time for today afterwards." In a single motion, he turned and disappeared into the room. The butler, still standing there with a forced smile, proposed that I take a moment of rest and sit at the table to enjoy a simple supper. I took to the table and sat at its head. As lonesome as it was, it provided a skewed view of the niche from which the kitchen had an entrance, and I could scan the butler each time he would move in and out of the discreet doors. I took this opportunity to scrutinise his person. At first, he withdrew to the kitchen to arrange what would be a three-course meal in small portions. He emerged in short notice, carrying a lukewarm plate of dark green soup. The liquid moved about like the weeds in it had a life of their own, likely trying to escape their habitat as it was beyond foul, failing only due to the viscosity of the concoction. "Lady Kyler shall meet you later, or perhaps tomorrow," explained Alder in a deep voice. "She is not feeling well and has momentarily asked for peace as she recuperates. I hope this does not offend you, Sir." I waved him off in a friendly motion: "Not at all, Alder. The quietness of this place produced a notion of business and seriousness." I tried the soup, keeping to my best manners, but the taste offended me more than the appearance, which was grisly in its own right. Setting the plate aside, I saw one of the butler's eyes disappear behind the closing door. He returned momentarily, to my dismay, carrying now a small silver platter of exceptionally dark meat. The smooth and agile fashion of his movement between the kitchen and the dining room, along the chairs and between their spaces indicated clearly that he knew every inch of the manor, every cranny and its little bends and ridges. Halting at my right side, he lowered the platter for me to enjoy. By all accounts, the main course was grim. The meat looked dishevelled, torn apart savagely, and the sides were somehow darker than the meat. It was putrid, unworthy

of even trying. Before he could produce his next insane invention, I sharply announced that I have lost my appetite and that I shall not finish the course. I have no doubt that, had it continued, every meal would have proven more revolting than the previous. If I had not known better, I would have assumed he was trying to make me sick. Turning to leave the dining room, his hand landed on my back, resting heavily on my shoulder blade: "Mind your step about the manor, Sir. The home has far more dangerous artefacts than loose boards or broken windows." Stopped in my tracks, my neck alone turning at its roots to meet his eyes, I asked: "Is there something amiss, servant?" He flinched, not expecting to receive a retort, struggling now with swallowing his pride. "Are there any other guests in the manor?", I riposted to pry out an impulsive but sincere statement. Holding back, he proceeded: "None that I know of, Sir. But there are wandering sins in the night." "Nothing," I thought. "There was no give to this man, he offered nothing for me to learn." Then he spoke again, this time more ominous: "We must all sometimes be agents of entropy, Sir. Surely you understand that sometimes chaos must make its home for us to be at peace." Riddle after riddle, subtle threat after another, the man continued to vex me with his concerning comments. They led nowhere, amounted to nothing, but still kept me silent – I wanted, I expected more. But the point never came, it all calmed at a verge of something worthy, something true. I could not force myself to scold him for his behaviour and audacity, and I cannot fathom why. His unusual and off-putting liberty in speech made me uneasy, inducing a bilious sensation following his cuisine. Patting myself over my chest as I lurched forward to escape the lunatic, I felt that green leaf dangling, and I was calm. From this encounter, I did however learn where my bedroom can be found, which temporarily filled me with a sense of peace. I inspected that studded door briefly before Wilhelm unlocked it, calling on me to enter his study and "discuss a serious matter and the longevity of my stay."

* * *

"Please, sit. There is much to be said, Kaspar." I complied, settling down in a fine chair across the table from Wilhelm, who was still on his feet. "As you have noticed, I have not called upon you to meet me at my deathbed, but to ask for your advice." Pacing erratically, he wrestled with words before he could mouth it. "Loralei and I are in bad standing. There is a growing disparity, and it feeds on our silence." Facing him completely, I stiffened in my seat. "She has taken up new… interests, if you could call them that. She takes excessively long walks, rambles on when she speaks to the help, and she even sleeps apart from me. My Lady has even taken up gardening, ordering exotic herbs and flowers from all over, their genesis ranging across South America, some even being brought over from India. A few held a particular potency. Entheogens, as the herbalist called them. Herbs that induce spiritual… experiences, or so I have read. I can only imagine what use she makes of them. I cannot, however, only ascribe this failing to her involvement in these dubious affairs, odd and uncharacteristic of her as they are. I see reticence as our greatest bane." My brother was still standing, pacing even more fervently, but that was no deterrent to his confession. A man of average height and broad shoulders, a mistreated erudite of the local intellectual circle, Wilhelm stood as a proud man whose stature was compromised by a withering frame showing a legacy of old rowing teams of the river Joyce. He held a small, overall insignificant title, which was enough to grant him a morsel of attention, but insufficient for him to hold any importance among his peers. His age showed indications of his fleeting youth, only exacerbated by the troubling environment created by unfamiliar familial ties of distrust and dishonesty. Finally, the man rested, easing down into his chair. He took a couple of breaths, looked towards the ancient plastered ceiling, and began to softly cry. Sitting there, I dared not intervene. Men often repair themselves by conversing, sharing thoughts without asking for a solution, so I allowed him to continue. "I betrayed myself so she would believe in me," he collected himself, and grew grave instead of sorrowful. "I faltered to give way for her love, but she never caught up to my pace. I suspect this was an injection of resentment into our relation… You

see, Kaspar, they don't expect you to change for them, or expect you to give them everything they want. They need only what you are willing to provide, and want you only as long as you are breaking your back to work for yourself – that's where the feeling of safety emerges, from seeing that a man will never let himself down, and therefore would not let others down. In being untrue to yourself, you are weak to them." He paused for a moment, looking at a little scale on his desk. "Pray that," he continued, "in the coming days of your future your heart does not spoil like mine did." He gently nudged the scale, the weight of one of its sides dropping down utterly. "For it is true that a man's heart is enveloped entirely when he loves, and to extricate that part of his being is to cut out a piece of him. Our hearts do not come with spare parts, brother, so be reverently vigilant in who you invest your being in. Love is only great if it's a mirrored image; if you do not receive as much as you give, you may as well claim it no love at all."

I became restless in my chair, squirming among the thick bulges of the seat's lining. I began to miss my rigid composure, replaced by this agitation. A light film of sweat, condensed into droplets formed upon my upper lip. A constriction tightened around my throat, causing me to deepen my breath, inaudibly struggling to breathe. This, expectedly, did not interfere with my brother's speech, who continued vehemently with the harrowing account of his household's demonic rifts of marital lies, fuelling an uncontrollable sense of apprehension rising from my diaphragm, crushing its way up to my chest, spiralling upwards and coiling around the sinew of my neck. Something had changed inside, the furniture of my being was disturbed and rearranged by the uncanny, by spores of lies and exotic exuberance of irreverent infidelity. The room smelled faintly of liquor and heavily of something akin to mint, soothing my troubled body. "I must be going mad!", yelled Wilhelm. "I am haunted, Kaspar. The walls wail when I sleep, the chandeliers clatter with acrimony while phantom winds blow in the halls of the manor. This is no longer a home; it is a bastion of unfamiliarity and bent flowers of love." He eased out of the chair quickly, only to reset himself in the rattan chair's armrests

with shaking distress in the movements of his wrists. He was disturbed, resentful, and defeated. Nothing like the champion I remembered from our youth. It would take even a poor eyesight less than a few moments to surmise that his skin was of pallid hue, and that his cheeks had sunk in noticeably, showing the ridges of his bones just under the eyes. "There is a presence, its shadow cast long in the darkness of the halls," he said in his failing voice. "It walks among us; it is resentment in its being."

* * *

By the time the doors opened, I was nearing a state of delusion. It must have been the weight of the air, the humidity of the home in this country. Strangely, the open hall felt much more austere. I left Wilhelm to calm down as his storm had passed, and decided to rest, seeing how the night had crept up on us quietly as we spoke. As I ascended the stairs, I recognized the butler Alder's voice. I stopped for a moment, pausing to locate the elusive source of the murmur. The shrillness of my foot locking in place where it met the old step must have alarmed the butler, as he no longer spoke. I could perceive the speaking came from somewhere near, no further than a couple of yards from me. Yet, it did not seem to come from the upper floor, or the antechamber, least of all the dining room behind me, which connected to the entranceway. All I could do was speculate of its point of origin, its existence, and of its verity; Alder seemed to have been addressing someone, but in an elevated pitch, as you would do with a child. I prescribed it to my weariness and the fatigue of my mind, which pulled satin veils over an already obscure reality. Decisively continuing the climb, I made it to my room, but only after I stopped at the summit of the casing to survey the home in new light, as darkness had taken over completely while my brother toiled over his troubles.

The timbered structure of the old home murmured in the night, joining the infinitely far and barely audible song of the crickets loading the slumbering branches of white spruce trees which kept the manor

company, tight around its founded waist. The entrance firmly shut, the broad double-leaf doors weighing down on the blackened grime of the resting hinges. Beyond the small antechamber stretched out a stairwell, illuminated by the full moon's light only at its midpoint, where it turns conspicuously at a right angle to allow for ascension upwards, leading into a dark hallway lined with bedrooms on its left wall, which carried ornate crests, emblazoned beautifully by heritage of indiscernible age and origin. Enclosing it was a railing on the right, overlooking the stairwell feeding into the antechamber. An arborescent and heavy fume permeated the ether of antiquity of the manor, especially at the railing, which was furnished in solid mountain ash and coated in a dark amber lacquer, slick to the touch of an unsuspecting guest, crowned with brass mitres adorned by splendid relief meeting the balustrade. Closing the hallway was a right turn into a corner to which no light travelled, a small crevice, a room hidden from rays seeping in through the broad, narrow panes of the window atop the stairwell's centre. The slight slit of the window's shutters let in enough light for one to find their way in the house's levels, but not enough for a sense of warmth grand old manors usually provided. Warmth was furthest from that secluded corner, where the pantry stored the household's goods and sheltered it from heat and light. Stocked regularly by Aldred, it had enough room to shuffle around, and even stretch out one's arms if one's dexterity and nimbleness of limbs allowed it, and it had an uncanny quality of keeping any sound from escaping its space. I exhaled with disappointment, saddened by this broken home; nothing in this house spoke or held a memory. It locked it all within the scent of the timber and the mortar, sealing the space shut. The manor frightened me, exuding hostility which escaped the locked pores of its walls and floors.

* * *

Having taken off my clothes, I was ready for respite. Finding delight in my fragrant friend, I laid atop the linen, but I could not find peace. Rancour poisoned the sweet mixture of the soothing herb. I was set in the heavy bedding of the cot, the bedstead firmly holding

the frame of my body bound to the antique mattress. The old age of the bed mattered not; it was the inscrutable, impending violence, a malevolent signum hanging over every doorframe of this afflicted manor. An intangible force pressing against my chest stood at my side, sapping my strength by draining the minutes of my sleep. Rest eluded me for the better part of an hour past my finished preparations for the repose to come, when a note slid across the worn panels of the polished floor. Lifted lightly by a slight wind's stream, it landed on its back. I rose to my feet and picked it up, minding not to smear the ink with my sweating palms. I grew nervous as my index finger and thumb met over its texture. I began to read the writing:

Dear brother, I am at odds with life. My wife has forsaken me, my work is deteriorating as rapidly as my health, and the very purpose of my existence is taken from me. It is as if someone has redacted the history of my pride and self-respect; I feel no manhood or humanity remaining in me, there remains only the question of what horror will haunt my days next.

You must have felt it, the indiscernible spectre that resides here among us. It stalks my surrendered hours, the time spent adrift among the non-existing. What should belong to a night's rest, belongs to a creeping doubt and a horned monster of mistrust. There is more to be said, and I fear it cannot wait. Join me, if you can, in the study once again.

This was a call I had to answer, a duty I needed to fulfil. Weary, but still at capacity to let me mind roam in the unknown, I prepared to face him. But the unknown irks the mind, tickles the imagination. It pushes the creative to the precipice of uncanny and lets it peer over the edge, ensuring it catches a glimpse of the infinitely dark. As my hand meets the handle, I hear a strange tread reaching from the staircase, continuing down the hallway. The intruder audibly made his way past my room, hence I pushed the door ajar ever so slightly. In this minute space, I catch a glimpse of a massive being's back, and immediately lock eyes with the Lady, doing the same across the

hall. The pulse of my heart cracked the silence which had gathered as I observed the indiscernible towering mass lumbering. For its tremendous size and overt strength, the creature moved with surprising smoothness. In its might it carried determination, a goal, a search – it must have ranked almost as sentient as a man would. I dared not utter a word or produce a sound; the ability had abandoned me completely. All we could do was survive in the eyes of each other and return carefully to the sanctuaries of our rooms. As I retreated, I felt deeply that I was quitting, that I was leaving a fellow to die. "Alas, there is nothing I can do!", I thought. "To fight or challenge such terrible presence is to stare directly into the overwhelming, let yourself be consumed by insane dread," my mind assured me. I spent an indiscernible amount of time sitting with my back flat against the door and my legs stretched forwards, as if it would bar the progress if the beast came knocking. I cannot attest to the time, but as the final crude steps faded, I remember managing to clamber up the bed and letting the linen soak up the dry wetness of my body as I clouded over in fatigue.

* * *

Thin strips of light penetrated the shutters and landed across my eyes. As I woke slowly and with caution, I muttered in disbelief: "It must have been a nightmare. The trip and my brother's confession took a toll on my mind, so imagination played along to best me at my weakest." I looked for my blazer bent over a beautiful chair, and donned it to pursue the day's business. As the fabric glided over my arms, settling around my neck and chest, I was once again greeted by the stark contrast of the bright green against my grey attire, as I set the herb neatly once again. "At least some amity in this solitary, place," I thought.

In the dining room, Alder was already serving the first course of the breakfast's meal; I was late. My presence was sorely missed, I gathered, as my host gave me a slight smile and the Lady of the manor got up in haste to apologize for her absence the previous day. "I

hope you do not hold it against me, dear Kaspar!", she enthusiastically declared, half in cheer, half in shame. I noticed no sign of distress or disturbance due to last night's perceived phenomenon, which only furthered my reason's notion: it was surely false, produced in the brief absence of sanity. Lady Kyler returned to her regular place, and waited patiently for me to do the same before she resumed having her breakfast. This morning, the food was fresh and properly prepared, much to the liking of my hosts. Despite the manners of enjoying their food in silence, I had expected the couple to, at the very least, communicate in some way. No one in the manor spoke to each other. It was a family of strangers. The hollow clatter of cutlery irritated me, so I, foolishly, decided to cut into the placidity: "It looks to be a fine, albeit a gloomy morning. Do my gracious hosts have any plans for this day?" Stabbing me with a sharp gaze, Wilhelm immediately grew rabid: "I share very little with this woman these days, let alone time." Placing the second course before us, the butler made his rounds with speed and precision. The barren atmosphere settled among us again. I minded my plate, trying to make sense of its appetizing content, when Loralei let out a subdued moan, a gentle cry followed by a river of tears. Before I could react, Wilhelm slammed his fist against the table, a silver spoon flying off of the ceramic onto the white tablecloth. "Adopt the sombre grief of your error. It is yours to bear, not mine in the slightest." It was in plain sight, there was a painful thorn in the body of the couple, but there was nothing to meddle with, no tools to diffuse the explosion about to occur. In his rage, Wilhelm rose from the table, disturbing it completely into a mess, and uttered with incredible intensity: "Stiffen in the chattering frost of solitude and isolation. Let the sterile aura of distilled cherishment murder the final remnants of sentiment you have left, give them up completely to a force so pervasive that it commands silence, commands nothing – begs a vacancy of the soul that no prayer for mercy can dissuade." This ended the ordeal, and he walked off straight into his study. I joined Lady Kyler to try and calm her, but also in hope to understand what curses this place.

We strode off, following the road connecting the manor to the nearby village, the usual route the Lady would take. At first, we observed and did not speak. We let the waning brown of the trees do the talking, as they lost all colour of life. "Seething with hatred." – "I beg your pardon, Lady Kyler?", I inquired. "That is what his eyes were. Tempered by slow, scorching inferno of resentment and disappointment. I could feel the distance even when we sat right next to each other, as we would when we ventured to acquaintances and friends as guests; it was a vast distance travellers describe in writings about voyages to the Antarctic regions. A homogenous space of naught, sparsely populated by murderous beasts that were his gazes towards me." "Broken, but not yet free", I mused to myself, thinking of this silence, now shifted into reluctance. "Wilhelm detests me, Kaspar. I am afraid that I cannot blame him for it. The reticence that dwells among us now has spread its vines and let its roots grow deep into the structure of our past love, the love that we once shared, which has now receded down marbled stairs of cleanliness into a basement of filthy hatred." It was a sin on her part, as I presumed. But any other presumption evaded me, mostly out of sympathy for this hurt and regretful woman, and out of shame that comes with ignorance and the impulse to guess where knowledge should be put forward. Her bright green eyes pointing to the field off to our side, she remarked: "No lesson which is learned is too expensive." I saw the battered eyes of this beautiful woman, my brother's bride. She cried with little strength, but with all the might of a wrong spouse. "In their still air, even whispers echo in halls of nothingness, filling the void of betrayed love." Our elongated gait brought us to a dead end, and we turned slowly to repeat our journey, our looks crossing in doing so. I hung low, my spirits in sorrow for this woman. "I would call this life a horrible cover, a false doppelganger of a once-great love. Paint a portrait of me – No, of us! Whatever this tattered cover is, I would like for it to be captured in its appearance. Let me gaze upon the finest nightmare, the worst of my dreams that I wish to remember; capture the pain in oil and canvas, set the walls of the manor ablaze. Will you do it, Kaspar? Oh, it would mean so much to me." I stopped, confused

by this troubling request, and the desperate tone of the Lady's voice. "What could be so heinous, so despicable that it would take a monument to redeem it, to proclaim its fault?", I asked, more so myself than the Lady. Without hesitation, losing all kindness in her face, she spoke: "None are spared in damnation. Not even innocent children, mistakes and lamentable acts alike." I grew exceedingly afraid of what omen this woman's sin bore. There was grief and wrongdoing on both sides, but the Lady shouldered the guilt. I could not help but assume that the marriage was failing due to insincerity and emotion gone foul, but I dared not pretend to understand what laid in the root of their quarrel. Some unspeakable horror, or a conjecture which was found to be true, thus these outbursts. The revelation of this splinter which tore the family asunder cleared the toxicity in the air; the lines of communication broke open and carved a path for a different type of quarrel – the matter of pressing urgency, the monstrous marriage.

It was barely afternoon when we crossed the manor's threshold again, but I admitted to the Lady that I was tired, and that I would rest for the day. I was overwhelmed by a burden, a familiar, overbearing aroma of something in the manor. I retired to my room, feeling the drowsiness taking over.

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I fell into a stupor lasting till nightfall. Upon waking up, I looked down my chest and noted that I had not taken off my clothes before lying down to sleep. My lungs jumped up and down, in strained rhythm of rigor and tremors, the still-present herb packed into my pressed grey shirt. Shivering, I tried to find my way to the exit, in a feeble attempt to assure my hosts that I was still with them. "They must be worried sick", the old thinker rang. Stumbling from one step to another, I fumbled my way across the fittings to the cold brass and turned the handle. Out, on the clarity of the hall, I mustered the strength to descend the stairs. "In this state, the feat will be an arduous task", I encouraged myself. Rotating my body around to face the barely lit wood of the stairs, my eyes were slow to follow. As they

caught up, I froze. Something was making its way up the stairs. It did so with ease, with familiarity and credulous intent, bent forwards. It reared up, revealing a horrible visage. For the quick flickers of the light the swinging lantern threw in through the window, the presence was revealed. I sensed a dread coming over me, the frigid chills running through the base of my spine, down to into my legs and shooting up into the back of my neck. A nervous heat lit me up almost immediately, but I was cold – the heat sapped by fear and rising panic. My brows were flooded then, but I slunk away to the Lady's chamber. "What damned thing is that?! It is of hell, there is no doubt", the distraught voice in my head hollered. Found once again with my back against the door, I was meeting the same demon. In this torment, I catch a glint of an eye – Lady Kyler huddled down, her knees pulled tight to her chest, sitting at the foot of her bed in pitch black shade of the night. Next to her, Wilhelm, coiled even more tight, Loralei holding his hand. The discovery brought us no rest. There were imperceptible sounds bouncing off the lonely walls, adumbrating the terrible fact: we were not alone. Awaiting death and its deliverer, I cowered over to their side and joined them in the aphasic spectatorship. In a moment, a dull scratch grazed the door's surface. The scratching grew into a rive, cutting into the soft oak, now buckling under tremendous pressure. The weak entrance swung open slowly, presenting the spawn. Even in the darkest crevices of a sane man's imagination exists no such likeness as that of the beast. The creature surpassed the largest man I had seen by a fair margin, it was Goliath's Goliath, a monster in its full meaning. Shoulder rolling off the other, muscle ripping across its frame, the hulking monster advanced. As it trod, the mad thing, horns snaking above its tall forehead, its seething maw tore the steady air with its edged teeth, clattering in little, brittle rhythms, like the tail of a rattlesnake. Even in silence, it was awful. The unproduced howling of the jaws standing slightly agape were enough to let us know: *it* was furious, spiteful, bitter. It searched for retaliation, moving with intention, sore to settle a score. It slid out of the worst infernal nightmare and spawned here to persecute us. It was teeming with rage, a devastation subdued by inability to

detect an opportunity to strike. There striding was misery and pain, treading heavily, bending the surface where it stepped. It scanned the chamber as if it saw clearly, but nothing caught its sight – it was blind, unruled by reason or keen perception of the eye. The being was enmity incarnate, a remnant emotion waiting to burst and claim its destructive toll of bodies. "A sin of the flesh, in the flesh", the theodicean mind professes in its wordless piety. Whichever kind of denizens your mind can fathom, they cannot match the obscenity that lived in our eyes. When the creature drew near, we observed that we could no longer speak, but it was not due to our fear that our voice was taken, it was the presence of the creature that muted the sound: *it commanded* annihilation. The beast stood so closely now that I could make out the long tubes of its nostrils, twitching rapidly… "To sniff out the betrayal and cowardice", I added in thought. It was inhaling in deeply the odour of despair, the failing glands of our shuddering bodies. From the bleak of darkness, a voice rang: "Meet your maker, spawn!" Aldred called upon it, the lunatic invoking his end in a rave. The beast followed the sound carefully, out of the chamber and down to the end of the corridor. The steps now far and faint, we stood up, aligned in speechless awe. Bodies surrendered to panic long ago, only our heads remained under our command, and with them, our only being at this time. As fate decreed, however, the conclusion was not yet upon us: the brackets of the gilded door failed us, the entrance grinding to a screeching halt while nearly closing.

Three deliberate steps echoed from the corridor. The final footfall was heavy, digging deeply into the shifted hardwood floors of the blighted manor, producing a creak just before the door. With a violent swing, cutting the air as it flew, the creature pierced the door inches from the upper hinge which faced us, mocking us with a false sense of security; it held the door with nothing more than waning hope against such terrible force. As the elongated, black claws shattered the wood, splinters of old oak littered the room, muffling our aspiration which grew fiercer with each passing moment. Death knocked; dissolution entered and the future exeunt – time has elapsed, it runs no longer as the furious snarls inch closer. Striking each time with

more power, the creature tore down the barrier with incredible ease, returning once again to face us – but it stopped as it passed the frame. The beast mumbled in the silence, evolving its effort into a howl. Petrified by my destiny, I bore witness to a most perturbing display – the monster's roars transformed into a striking utterance: *Mother*. In a muffled whimper of a voice, the Lady whispered: "Ernest." As a deep howl pierced the ether, all sound fell through the cracks of silence. The beast made a single decisive, sharp motion, looking straight at its mother, the queen that birthed the abominable sadness, the witch that brewed the vile hatred and concocted the putrid skin that lay on the monster's outside. Its horns indicated what resembled a slight bow, turning downwards to front a charge. The thin wooden tiles of the floor cracked once more, and Ernest leapt for his mother, swiping away at the still group of our inert bodies as I shielded my face in vain.

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I unravelled the contorted fingers of my hands and lowered them to confront what violence awaited me, but I found that the bloodbath had already transpired. I stood and observed, first in shock, then in terror. "Could I have been wrong?", my racing mind darted from one lie to another, knowing all the while this was still an enigma to be unlocked through some cipher. At first, my gaze pointed downwards in some sort of bleated infantile reflex to protect my neck, causing me flinch and notice that my old herb had dried up, no longer producing the pleasant, lulling notes of its tropical shamanic origin.

The Lady, one eye open, as curious as if her mien posed a question, still stared at me as her body laid supine over the table. Arms apart like threads unwound; the quick pace of life stopped, pulsing yet in the slightest; rivulets of blood making their beds over the old carpets. The legs neatly together, her dress coloured with warm blood, still streaming down the tapers of her silk. I went to move and felt pressure around my ankle – it was my brother. He must have crawled to me, trailed by his blood, leaving a crimson channel in his wake. He

laid there, still breathing, a slow draw inward and outward, trying for breath. His body was a slow wave, collapsing on top of itself, folding into its interior. Wilhelm had been holding onto me, in search of help as I stood petrified and afraid. Soon, his motion died. I had failed them both. A cloak of garnet liquid, produced by deep rends covering their mangled bodies, shrouded their frames like a fine fan enclosed within a hand. In their pale faces I found my rest, and lost my consciousness, joining the lifeless fray.

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They were prisoners in that box, a box that let not a whisper leave its confines. Shackled by jealousy and want for reprisal, they could not escape their home. It took a witness to set them free, and an agent of destruction to set the wheels in motion.

The tired faith of a Lady and her Lord. Misplaced lust, a want gone astray… It spawned an apparition, an ill mind which stained walls, tinted windows and howled in the dead silence of the night cloaked in red. Deadly is the secret that holds its keeper in hatred.

I put down here, in grave ink and earnest heart, a recountment of those nights. The perils I faced and the monstrosity that roamed the halls of Kyler manor. May this serve as a warning to all who venture to that precinct… The silence speaks volumes of that which wishes to remain hidden, just as howls cover the truth of austerity and love murdered.

About *Kick*

From its inception, students' magazine *Kick* had one simple purpose, to provide students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek with an easy and simple way to publish both their academic and creative writings in English. Students wholeheartedly accepted this opportunity and as a result *Kick* has already had three online issues in 2018 containing students' research papers, poems, short stories, and reviews. *Kick*'s first printed issue was entirely dedicated to students' papers in the twentieth century American literature. This issue is a product of cooperation between students and assistant professor Ljubica Matek who taught the course on Fantasy literature and selected the most insightful papers for publication.