

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES

PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY

PALACKY UNIVERSITY OLMOUC

Kateřina Irglová

**The Development of Female Characters in Gothic Novels
Written by Female Authors**

Diploma thesis

Thesis Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, PhD.

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I declare that I have written the diploma thesis by myself and listed all the sources according to the prescribed format.

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Kateřina Irglová

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Introduction

Gothic fiction came along with the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century when the number of publishing-houses, public readings and circulating libraries considerably increased. First literary work where the term 'Gothic' is applied has been generally considered *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764) written by Horace Walpole. It is the period from 1760s until 1820s where the gothic fiction as such reached its peak. Among other authors that are connected with gothic literature in this period are Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis and Mary Shelley.

However, the main concern of this thesis is not only the eighteenth century but the female features of the gothic literature in its entirety up to the twentieth century. I chose gothic works from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century and decided to make a comparison of the most established so called gothic stories in the development of the three centuries with the special emphasis on the involvement of the female characters in this kind of stories throughout the centuries. In order to narrow the field of the literary works covered by this thesis, I restrained myself only to works written by women writers as to focus on both male and female authors would be a subject of literary work of much larger extent. The main focus is going to be on the female characters of each of the following literary pieces.

A Sicilian Romance (1790) written by Ann Radcliffe was selected as the representative of the eighteenth century gothic novel written by an female author, since she is, together with Matthew Lewis, often considered as classic gothic novelists of this period.

It is hard to find some other female 'gothic' author more famous and recognized even in the present days than Mary Shelley. One cannot simply avoid her *Frankenstein* (1818) while writing about gothic novels of all times. This work is no exception, therefore the nineteenth century is represented by her novel.

There are two female authors that considerably contributed to gothic fiction in the twentieth century. Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson. I have thus decided to analyse Carter's short story "The Bloody Chamber" (1979) and *Sexing the Cherry* (1988), a novel written by Winterson.

I am going to analyse female characters from several various aspects. I would like to trace the development of women figures in the stories mentioned above and also consider the process of their change, if any, from the historical perspective. Another point that this work is going to look into is the similarities of the female protagonists of these gothic tales as well as on the discrepancies in their characters. Each chapter is going into detail in a specific area.

In the part called "The Significance of Women Characters", closer look is going to be taken on the role of female characters in the plot, their significance in the stories and influence on the plot line. The thesis also tries to find out whether the characters underwent any process of alternation.

Next chapter is going to be focused on female characters and their relation towards nature. I am going to find out if nature has any specific role in the gothic tales.

The part "Features of Femininity" is going to describe the qualities that are considered to be typical for a woman with yet again the insight into their development and alternation throughout the time.

Following chapter is considered to be a search for any features of feminist thinking in these gothic texts, which would inevitably conclude in their comparison and description of certain development pattern. This part will also cover bravery of women and their ability to take things into their own hands.

The final chapter "Female Writers and Their Male Characters" is going to explore the way female authors depicted male characters in the selected pieces with the special focus on males' treatment of women.

1. Elements of Gothic novel throughout centuries

What does the word 'Gothic' really mean? Do we fully understand this term or is it more complicated than the image of dark corners in the high steep vaults and spires of churches? Meyer Howard Abrams defines the origin of the word in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1958).

The word Gothic originally referred to the Goths, an early Germanic tribe, then came to signify 'germanic', later 'medieval'. Gothic architecture now denotes the medieval type of architecture, characterized by the use of the high pointed arch and vault, flying buttresses, and intricate recesses, which spread through Western Europe between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries.¹

In the context of literature, the term Gothic has gone through some changes during the centuries. There is a set of characteristics that traditionally describes the gothic novel. In David Punter's words as they appeared in his theoretical work on gothic *The Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition* (1996), he defines the gothic novel as

An emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense are the most significant. Used in this sense, Gothic fiction is the fiction of the haunted castle, of heroines preyed on by unspeakable terrors, of the blackly lowering villain, of ghosts, vampires, monsters and werewolves.²

¹ M.H.Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (USA: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999)110-111.

² David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition* 2nd ed, vol.1. (Harlow: Longman Group Limited, 1996)1.

These characteristics apply especially to eighteenth century gothic texts because the mood of later gothic tales changed as it is going to be explored in next chapters.

1.1. Eighteenth Century

As I have already pointed out in the introduction, the gothic novel is a type of prose fiction which features were first found in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*. The subtitle refers to its setting in the middle ages. Eighteenth century authors usually set their stories in the medieval period, often in a catholic country, for example, Italy or Spain.

The locale was often a gloomy castle furnished with dungeons, subterranean passages and sliding panels. The typical story was focused on the sufferings imposed on an innocent heroine by a cruel and lustful villain, and made bountiful use of ghosts, mysterious disappearances, and other sensational and supernatural occurrences (which in a number of novels turned out to have natural explanations).³

All these requisites can be found in *A Sicilian Romance* as the extract below shows. It is the case of Ann Radcliffe's novels including *A Sicilian Romance* where usually all terrific incidents are at the end of the stories explained. The main goal was to arouse fear in the readers.

As he surveyed the place in silent wonder, a sullen groan arose from beneath the spot where he stood. His blood ran cold at the sound, but silence returning and continuing unbroken, he attributed his alarm to the illusion of a fancy, which terror had impregnated. He made another effort to force the door, when a groan was repeated more hollow, and more dreadful than the first. At this moment all his courage forsook him;

³ Abrams, *A Glossary* 111.

he quitted the door, and hastened to the stair-case, which he ascended almost breathless with terror.⁴

This extract describes a moment when the brother of the main female character examines the desolate part of the castle from where light and strange sounds were repeatedly observed. All the castle's inhabitants believe that these strange incidents are caused by ghosts, nevertheless, they are logically explained at the end of the novel.

⁴ Ann Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* (1986; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)46-47.

1.2. Nineteenth Century

The characterization of gothic literature in following centuries will not be that simple as the gothic novel has gone through some considerable changes. In those time, the term 'Gothic' was not only associated with a novel but also with poetry. Poets like Blake, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron played an important role in formation of 'Gothic' in their images of terror that influenced later literature.⁵ Going back to the gothic novel of the nineteenth century, it may be said that it lacks the exotic setting of the earlier gothic novels. It also develops gloomy and horrific atmosphere and deals with gruesome events. Nevertheless, it is more concerned with abnormal psychological state of mind. Hero or heroine suffers from unbearable psychological terror, as they must keep some terrible secrets. The following extract is from *Frankenstein*.

The human frame could no longer support the agonizing suffering that I endured, and I was carried out of the room in strong convulsions. I lay for two months on the point of death: my ravings, as I afterward heard, were frightful; I called myself the murderer of William, of Justine, and of Clerval. Sometimes I entreated my attendants to assist me in the destruction of the fiend by whom I was tormented; and, at others, I felt the fingers of the monster already grasping my neck, and screamed aloud with agony and terror.⁶

The main character, Viktor Frankenstein, undergoes mental sufferings that accompanied him instantly after creating the monster. He could not bear the responsibility for his own action and condemned the monster immediately after his creation because of his ugly appearance without giving even a slightest chance to get to know his

⁵ Punter, *The Literature* 87.

⁶ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (1921; United Kingdom: Everyman's Library, 1992)131.

own child. The terror is produced by haunted psyche rather than by haunted castles.

According to Punter, there are three symbolic characters that can be found in gothic literature: the wanderer, the vampire, and the seeker after forbidden knowledge.⁷ It is Viktor Frankenstein who is probably the best known protagonist of the seeker after forbidden knowledge and the novel as such is the most famous gothic novel of all times also thanks to its many film versions.

⁷ Punter, *The Literature* 87.

1.3. Twentieth Century

It is not easy to clearly illustrate the gothic fiction of the twentieth century. David Punter in his second volume of *The Literature of Terror: The Modern Gothic* (1996) gives this description.

Gothic is more in use now as a description of kinds of writing that it has been since the 1790s, and in a far, far broader range of contexts. As the term has lost its more precise currency, it has acquired a new and extensive range of further meanings, some of them seemingly very different from its original usages. One central meaning, however, it has retained: Gothic writing is not a realistic writing.⁸

Therefore, it might be difficult to say who is and who is not a gothic writer. It may be easier to propose that some novels or stories of a certain author are described as gothic for some certain features they attain or have some gothic elements. Still the opinions whether to consider a certain literary work as gothic or not would diverge.

Beyond the catafalque, in the middle of the shadows, a white nacreous glimmer; as my eyes accustomed themselves to the gathering darkness, I at last – oh horrors! made out a skull; yes, a skull, so utterly denuded, now, of flesh, that it scarcely seemed possible the stark bone had once been richly upholstered with life. And this skull was strung up by a system of unseen cords, so that it appeared to hang, disembodied, in the still, heavy air, and it had been crowned with a wreath of white roses, and a veil of lace, the final image of his bride.⁹

Some of the early horror films are also connected with the gothic literature, especially the protagonists and settings from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The term ‘Gothic’, however, started to be used

⁸ David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: The Modern Gothic*, 2nd ed, vol. 2. (Harlow: Longman Group Limited, 1996)119.

⁹ Angela Carter, “The Bloody Chamber”, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979; England: Penguin Books, 1981)28.

in different areas at the end of the twentieth century. Besides so called 'Gothic' romances that are easy to attract a wide range of readers but usually lack any literary quality¹⁰, 'Gothic' is connected also with music that goes together with fashion, even though there are many young people that fancy just one of them. Especially the gothic (Goth) fashion has become a cultural phenomenon.

¹⁰ See Punter, *The Literature* vol.1. 2.

2. Brief Summary of the Books

2.1. *A Sicilian Romance*

The novel is set at the end of the sixteenth century. The main protagonist is Julia who lives quite secluded with her sister Emilia in an ancient castle in Sicily Island. Their father, the marquis of Mazzini, left the castle with his son soon after his wife had died to live in Naples with his new young and beautiful wife Maria de Vellorno. Their mother died when they were little children and both sisters were raised up by Madame de Menon who was a good friend of their mother. When their father returns with his new second wife to the island, he forces Julia, influenced by his pretty beloved, to get married with the Duke de Luovo. By this time the castle is haunted by strange sounds and mysterious sights. Julia refuses to marry the Duke of Luovo as she is in love with the young Count Hippolitus de Vereza. She flees and must endure many obstacles on her way to be free from her father and his wishes. The reader is acquainted with the haunted castle, a pastoral landscape, a treacherous forest, deep caverns, great storms on the sea or with a religious monastery. At the end, events suddenly take a turn for the better and Julia reunites with her family again and finally marries the Count Hippolitus. Together with the happy reunion comes also the explanation of the strange events in the castle. The reader is told that Julia's mother was not dead but imprisoned in the deserted part of the castle and that the sounds were caused by her. The lights that appeared in the night belonged to the servant and later to the marquis when they brought meal to the imprisoned mother.

2.2. *Frankenstein*

Victor Frankenstein is a young Swiss student who is fascinated by science. He manages to create a being from pieces of corpses and brings this creature to life. However, Victor is disgusted by the creature he made because of its ugly appearance and rejects him immediately. The monster arouses abhorrence in everyone he meets. He seeks affection but finds only loathing. Nobody is able to overcome his visual aspect and he becomes a symbol of evil for his creator. After bringing the monster to life, Victor Frankenstein is physically and mentally destroyed. He turns down the monster's request to create a female partner for him. He realizes that he has not right to be at the creation of a new race of "devils". Miserable and lonely, the monster starts to revenge his creator for turning him down. He murders Victor's brother, his best friend Clerval and finally his wife. Frankenstein's psychological torture continues throughout the novel until his death.

2.3. “The Bloody Chamber”

This story is a pastiche of “Bluebeard” (1697) fairytale. The narrator is a seventeen-year-old girl who just married a much older wealthy marquis. The reader does not know the name of any of the characters. The girl reveals the circumstances under which she met with the marquis and the fact that he had already been married three times before. She reveals her memory from her childhood and her feelings about her early marriage. Shortly after their arrival at the marquis’s castle on their wedding night, he suddenly informs her that he must depart for the USA because of some urgent business affairs. She is left at the castle with a bunch of keys. She decides to enter all rooms to find out more about her husband whom she does not really know. She finally goes into a chamber that she was forbidden to enter by the marquis where she finds the corpses of his three dead wives. The marquis unexpectedly returns and instantly realizes that she did not obey his command. He is about to lop off her head when all of a sudden her mother arrives on a horse and shoots the marquis into his head. The girl returns home with her mother and with a blind piano tuner who opened the gate of the castle to let her mother in to rescue the girl. The girl donates almost all her inherited property to charities.

2.4. *Sexing the Cherry*

The story is set in the seventeenth and twentieth century. The main characters are Jordan and his stepmother, the Dog-Woman. The story is alternatively narrated from the Dog-Woman's and Jordan's point of view. She is called the Dog-Woman because she lives alone and only takes care of a pack of dogs. The Dog-Woman describes her own appearance like a monster one. She is abnormally huge and strong. People are rather scared of her. The Dog-Woman finds Jordan as a baby in the mud of the river Thames. She raises him and cares for him very much.

Jordan sets out to find a woman, a dancer that he once met. He goes to many places and meets interesting people during his search for the dancer. The journey however becomes rather spiritual one. In the middle of the narration, there is embedded another story about the "Twelve Dancing Princesses". Each of the princesses tells a story about the separation with their husbands and the way they reunited with their sisters. Only the youngest one is missing, who turns out to be the dancer. Jordan finds her eventually but after he spends some time with her, decides to continue with his travelling.

Sexing the Cherry is a 'crossed-time' novel. There is a jump into the twentieth century where the reader finds Dog-Woman and Jordan reincarnated into an environmentalist and into a navy man. She fights against big companies that pollute rivers. Nicolas Jordan learns about her through his friend. He admires that she voluntarily gives up a comfortable life to change things. He desires to meet her and finds her camping by a river. She suggests burning a company she is fighting with and the Dog-woman helps to increase the infamous great fire in London. The two final events of the novel may be viewed as an attempt to purify the social environment from harmful forces.

3. The Significance of Female Characters

In *A Sicilian Romance*, the narrative is focused mainly on female characters. The story starts by Julia's, the main protagonist, unsuccessful attempt to escape her father's reach and the unwanted marriage. Although helped by two men – her brother and her lover – she is not able to get away from the unpleasant situation she finds herself in. Julia finally manages to escape but only thanks to near self-sacrifice of her servant Caterina. Julia hides in a cottage that belongs to Caterina's sister on whom she can rely on. Radcliffe demonstrates the importance of female reliability and friendship several times. Madame de Menon, who raised and educated the two sisters, Julia and Emilia after the death of their mother, also leaves the castle after Julia's escape. After they reunite, Madame takes Julia to a monastery where she hopes to find asylum. When the shelter fails to be a safe place for Julia because of the fickle character of the superior, Madame encourages and helps Julia to escape one more time. Finally, it is Julia who, though incidentally, discovers a prison of a woman who turns out to be her mother that was supposed to be dead and thus saving her life because the marquis was just about to get rid of his first wife forever. The reader may come to the conclusion that every time the male element fails, there is always a woman who saves the situation, which may imply that the author wanted to show the importance and strength of women in the days when men had a dominant role in the society.

At this point we should look at the significance of female characters in *Frankenstein*. The main character and also the narrator is Victor. The female characters may be seen as having less significant meaning in comparison with the female characters in *A Sicilian Romance*. Mother of Victor dies at the beginning of the novel. There are two more women in Frankenstein's household who also die during the narration. Elizabeth is adopted by Victor's parents and she

immediately becomes a member of the family. Victor narrates the whole account of his early life until his death and it is more than obvious that the role of Elizabeth is to take care of the family and the household. She is portrayed almost like an angel by Victor:

The saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home. Her sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us. She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract; I might have become sullen in my study, rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness.¹¹

Elizabeth also represents the mental support for the family members. During the sequence of unfortunate accidents, she is always trying to console the others, especially Victor, even though she herself is suffering. Both of their parents would like them to get married, nevertheless, we never get to know if this is really Elizabeth's wish as well. One of the possible understandings of her figure can be that she does care for Victor but just as she cares for and looks after the rest of the family members. However, there might be a room for many other interpretations. Although women's significance within the main plot may seem minor, the author also included an example of tight bond between women within the story. Victor's mother looked after Elizabeth when she caught the scarlet fever, although she knew that it might be dangerous and finally it really turns to be fatal for her. Another example is the friendship of Elizabeth and Justine, the servant at their house, who is unjustly sentenced for the murder of small William. Elizabeth is convinced of her innocence though the evidence speaks rather against Justine.

In the case of "The Bloody Chamber" and *Sexing the Cherry*, we may see some considerable changes. In "The Bloody Chamber", the main protagonist is a girl who narrates the story. The reader learns

¹¹ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 26.

the circumstances of her life and her marriage to the marquis from her point of view. There are two main characters in *Sexing the Cherry*. The Dog-Woman and her stepson Jordan. They alternatively narrate the story. While in *A Sicilian Romance* and also in *Frankenstein*, the common feature is that mothers are not present at all, they play an important role in the last two works.

Considering the mothers in *A Sicilian Romance*, Julia's mother Luisa is thought to be dead for eighteen years. The reader learns from Madame de Menon that her mother also died when she was little and in fact Luisa's mother died during the eruption of Etna. Julia becomes a close friend with one of the nuns in the monastery who later on tells Julia that she was brought up only by her father. In *Frankenstein*, the absence of mother is also more than visible. It is not only Victor's mother who dies but we learn that also Elizabeth's mother died during the child birth. In the chapter that is narrated by the monster, he introduces the De Lacey family, which deprived of their considerable property, live in a small cottage in Germany. Their family members are Felix, Agatha and their blind father. There is no mention of their mother. Finally, there is a Turk girl Sophie whose mother also died. In addition to it, we also should not forget about the monster who, in fact, does not have a mother and who is completely neglected by his father.

In contrast, the presence of mothers in "The Bloody Chamber" and *Sexing the Cherry* does not only fulfil the general role of motherhood but has actually a significant impact on the plot as the mothers in these stories usually save their children. The mother in "The Bloody Chamber" comes to the castle to shoot the marquis when he is just about to cut off her daughter's head. The Dog-woman finds Jordan by the river Thames.

She found me in the slime by the river. I was wrapped up in a rotting sack such as kittens are drowned in, but my head was wedged uppermost

against the bank. She took me home and kept me there with fifty dogs and no company but her own.¹²

We can therefore notice the change from no mothers at all to the presence of mothers who are very active in their role of a sort of saviours of their children. So the shift in significance of the mother roles within the centuries of gothic novel is enormous. The movement from not being actually present at all to the active participation in the story is crystal clear. With the increase of the mother's role in the selected works of the twentieth century, the significance and the presence of the father's role for the main characters decreased as the fathers are not practically present during the narrative.

¹² Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 10.

4. Nature and Women

I would like to start this chapter with a quotation by one of the leading figures of Transcendentalism, Ralph Waldo Emerson. In his essay “Nature” (1836) Emerson, apart from other things, says: “In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man, in the spite of real sorrows.”¹³ I want to apply and prove the truth of this statement in the works in the relation with the female characters.

Nature is being traditionally in literature referred to as ‘she’. In my analysis of the books, I noticed that there seems to be a more frequent and closer connection between nature and women than between nature and men. Nature plays a significant role for female characters in *A Sicilian Romance* and also in *Frankenstein*. We should not forget to mention the concept of the sublime in connection with nature. Edmund Burke describes this phenomenon as:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant with terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.¹⁴

Nevertheless, in the case of Radcliffe and Shelley, it is rather the natural sublime that can be found in the poetry of James Thomson or Edward Young:

Which opens up the concept of the sublime as a democratic experience, since all people can respond to the beauties of the creation.....the effect of wresting the sublime away from its closed circle of the classically trained to a position where it acts as a unifying factor in the construction of a

¹³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature”. *The Harper American Literature: Compact edition*, ed. Donald McQuande et al (New York: Harper & Row, 1987)451

¹⁴ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into The Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips, World’s Classics (Oxford, 1990), pt. I, sect. 7; p.36

human subjectivity that is made through its awareness of its weakness and status as God's creature.¹⁵

At this point, I want to refer to my initial quotation of Emerson that nature can make us feel good although we may be going through hard times as nature goes at its own pace and we can feel the peace and also the stimulating power of nature. And this is in fact what the female characters experience when they appear to be in nature. This means that Radcliffe and Shelley were able to describe those powerful feelings several decades before Emerson. It is true that our problems seem trifling when standing face to face to a gorgeous view of nature.

In *A Sicilian Romance*, Julia goes through much hardship. She grew up without mother, her step-mother hates her and tries to get rid of her, her brother is imprisoned by their father and her fiancé is probably dead. Going through all these tough and unhappy experiences, she is very often consoled by nature. "The dewy coolness of the air refreshed her.....as the nightshades fell, excited sensations of a sweet and tranquil nature, and soothed her into a temporary forgetfulness of her sorrows."¹⁶ Nature does not only seem to sympathize with women and console them but it also seems to reunite them with each other. When Madame de Menon leaves the castle, she goes for a walk away from the village situated among the mountains and is also moved by the beauty of nature. "And their fantastic shapes exhibited nature in her most sublime and striking attitudes. Here her vast magnificence elevated the mind of the beholder to enthusiasm."¹⁷ She seems to be led by the power of nature to the place far from the village where she finds Julia.

We can also notice certain opposition between the city and nature. The second wife of the marquis is from Naples representing the phenomenon of civilized, by people inhabited, place – the city. She is

¹⁵ Alison Milbank, introduction, *A Sicilian Romance*, By Ann Radcliffe (1986: Oxford: University Press, 1993)xiii,xiv.

¹⁶ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* 125.

¹⁷ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* 104.

portrayed as a sly hypocritical woman and this might evoke the idea of the corruptive power of the city. This fact is even strengthened as we realize that Julia, her sister and also Madame de Menon lived in the castle in Sicily surrounded by woods and mountains quite secluded from the society and these female characters are depicted as nice and innocent, which is quite the opposite of the wife from the city.

The connection between Elizabeth and nature in *Frankenstein* comes up clearly in the text as well:

She busied herself with following the aerial creations of the poets; and in the majestic and wondrous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home – the sublime shapes of the mountains, the changes of the seasons, tempest and calm, the silence of winter, and the life and turbulence of our Alpine summers – she found ample scope for admiration and delight.¹⁸

At this moment it is almost impossible to avoid the role of the male characters as it will bring us back to women and nature. Emerson also states in his essay that “Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection.”¹⁹ Victor in contrast with Elizabeth is not initially interested in nature as such but he rather wants to learn the physical secrets of the Earth and the human life - the facts. There seems to be one of the oldest stereotypes about the genders at work here. Women are presented as the ones whose connection with the powers of nature is rather emotional or sensual and they usually use it well or are encouraged by these powers. Whereas men are the ones who always try to learn the sole facts about the nature and attempt to control it, putting themselves in the position of gods. Basically, she-part of the world enjoys nature as it is and strives to merge to it while the he-part of the world enjoys the nature only when it can be

¹⁸ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 27.

¹⁹ Emerson, “Nature” 450.

controlled, changed and used by them. How symbolic for the exploitation of female characters in early gothic novels. It is only after Frankenstein's scientific 'success', the creation of the monster, that he finds consolation and peace in nature as he mentions it several times. When he realizes that nature's powers are not here to play with, he finally succumbs to her powers. However, too late for his loved ones, especially for the woman that he loves the most. Mary Shelley in a way suggests that women are connected to the nature since their birth and men, although having the same dispositions to establish such a connection with nature when born, somehow have to learn about it and find their way to understanding it.

It seems as a move from the scientific world to the natural one in case of Frankenstein, whereas for the monster, it goes the other way around. It is only nature that accepts him without any prejudice. It is the only place where he acquires the feelings of happiness. The monster was animated from the bones that Frankenstein gathered from some burial vaults and charnel houses. The reader, however, does not get the information whether the remains are male or female. It may be possible that the monster is a mixture of both and the female instance could cause his immediate attachment towards nature.

The day which was one of the first of spring, cheered even me by the loveliness of its sunshine and the balminess of the air. I felt emotions of gentleness and pleasure that had long appeared dead, revive within me. Half surprised by the novelty of these sensations, I allowed myself to be borne away by them, and forgetting my solitude and deformity, dared to be happy. Soft tears again bedewed my cheeks, and I even raised my humid eyes with thankfulness towards the blessed sun, which bestowed such joy upon me.²⁰

The monster is able of such emotions after being harshly refused by a family which he supported and felt that he could even become an

²⁰ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 141.

equal member of the family. Nevertheless, he changes entirely his attitude towards human being when he is again treated badly and unjustly. We may see the crucial moment in the scene when he rescues a drowning girl and is rewarded for his good deed by bullet into his shoulder. Then he turns away from nature and accuses her of being hypocritical.

The labours I endured were no longer to be alleviated by the bright sun or gentle breezes of spring; all joy was but a mockery which insulted my desolate state and made me feel more painfully that I was not made for the enjoyment of pleasure.²¹

This moment can be viewed as if he turned away from the only friend, more over 'female friend' and as a beginning of his transformation into the real monster as from this time he starts to revenge on human beings. We also should not overlook that the ones that hurt and turn the Monster down are men. Victor, Felix De Lacey, the boyfriend of the rescued girl and William.

If we take a look at "The Bloody Chamber", there are several details that have to be mentioned in order to complete the picture of nature and female characters and its significance within the gothic tales. The marquis's castle in "The Bloody Chamber" is surrounded by the sea. Water is also linked with the feminine factor and it often symbolically stands for the creation of life.²² On the other hand, the sea that surrounds the castle evokes more the feelings of danger and wilderness. The girl compares the sea with the deliquescent harmonies of Claude Debussy²³ In his piece of music called symbolically *La Mer*, the performance of the violins are compared to the raising storm

²¹ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 142.

²² See Michel Odent, "Man, the Womb and the Sea: the Roots of the Symbolism of Water" Journal Title: Pre- and Peri-natal Psychology Journal. Volume: 7. Issue: 3. Association for Pre & Perinatal Psychology and Health, 1993. Provided by ProQuest LLC. 12. February 2010 <www.questia.com>.

²³ See Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 13.

waves.²⁴ The sea may signify the girl's unconsciousness, seemingly calm but in fact torn between feelings of doubt and premonition.

She imagines herself as the queen of the sea rather than the queen of the castle. More over, the castle itself seems to be like a burial chamber. Not only because of the three murdered wives of the marquis and the servants that seem to be rather lifeless. Their bedroom is covered with arum lilies which were arranged there by the marquis. Lily is the symbol of innocence and purity, nevertheless, here they seem to be corrupted by the marquis who cut them, and therefore they are not alive anymore.

I could not stifle for his white, heavy flesh that had too much in common with the armfuls of arum lilies that filled my bedroom in great glass jars, those undertakers' lilies with the heavy pollen that powders your fingers as if you had dipped them in turmeric. The lilies I always associate with him; that are white. And stain you.²⁵

The undertaker is the marquis himself as he prepared the funeral for his previous wives and now the bedroom looks more like a grave for the girl than a bedroom in which they are supposed to spend their wedding night. Therefore, she often refers to the sound of the sea as it is the only contact with nature and the signs of life.

On the way to the castle, another allusion is made within a description of daybreak. "...the sky with a wintry bouquet of pink of roses, orange of tiger-lilies, as if my husband had ordered me a sky from a florist."²⁶ Why wintry bouquet? Does it refer to the doubts about the girl's feeling toward the marquis or the marquis himself? Also the tiger-lilies may imply the connotation of a stained innocence of the girl which brings us to the fact that not all female characters in gothic stories are pure, innocence and a harm is done to them, but that even

²⁴See Encyclopaedia Britannica Deluxe Edition 2004, CD-ROM, Claude Debussy

²⁵ Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 15.

²⁶ Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 13.

the victimized women can have two sides – a phenomenon that is going to be explored later on in this work.

In “The Bloody Chamber”, nature also seems to console and sympathize with the girl as we could have noticed this in *A Sicilian Romance* and *Frankenstein*. The day when she was to be decapitated by the marquis, nature had a sad appearance with grey sky and oily sea.²⁷ Her need of the attachment to the earth strikes the reader clearly in this sentence. “But I knew no good Breton earth would cover me, like a last, faithful love; I had another fate.”²⁸ Even though, she still hopes that one day the remains of her body will be washed out by the sea together with the castle to console herself that she will be reunited with nature.

Similarly as in “The Bloody Chamber” the sea, the river Thames plays also a significant role in *Sexing the Cherry*. Jordan comes to the Dog-Woman through the river. The Dog-Woman refers to London as to a dirty corrupted place. She would prefer to live with Jordan in the country but she cannot leave London because she earns her living at dog races and dog fights at Hyde Park. Before she found Jordan by the river, the Dog-woman lived only with her almost fifty dogs. She generally does not trust people and she has special and interesting way of treatment of the opposite sex group members and there are only a few of them which she respects and would not kill or torment.

The Dog-Woman is often compared to a mountain or a mountain range not only by the people around her but also by her very self. Even though, she does not seem to mind her abnormally huge appearance, there are moments where we can doubt it. “In the dark and in the water I weigh nothing at all”²⁹ The darkness and water allow her to forget about her heaviness and it is also the only moment when she admits that she would like to have somebody who would like her and when she could imagine it possible. Darkness and water – two

²⁷ See Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 36.

²⁸ Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 37.

²⁹ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 40.

completely natural things. Darkness helps to conceal her hideousness and water makes her forget about the unusually large and heavy body she has to cope with everyday. These two elements seem to make her a normal woman to which even the feelings of desire and affection are not strange. So the nature makes her a 'woman', not a monster, that can even think, behave and feel like a woman.

In addition to the facts just mentioned, there are also other scenes that imply certain similarities of her character to the characters of the stories already mentioned. The Dog-Woman, similarly to the figures of Julia and Elizabeth, enjoys looking at the running stream and waiting for the sunset. She even sings the songs of love and death, nevertheless hidden behind a rock as if she would not like anybody else to see her romantic side.

5. Features of Femininity

The main goal of this part of the thesis is to look up and analyse features of femininity in the gothic stories written by female authors. Once the features are properly described, the chapter is going to deal also with their significance as feminine tools which may or may not be helpful to the female figures in their pursuit of their own various goals, whatever these might be.

The dictionary definition of the term 'femininity' tells us that femininity can be described as “the fact of being a woman; the qualities that are considered to be typical of women”³⁰ This set of characteristics is not surely a final one and it is undeniably to a large degree a matter of subjective opinions and experiences. The cultural differences also play an important role as, for example, some African tribes certainly have different notion of what makes a woman feminine than in western civilization. There are certain socially encoded opinions about the most typical features of femininity in western cultures, e.g. long hair, fine facial features, high-heels, skirts, make-up, jewellery and many others more or less strong.

Among feminists it has long been established that ‘femininity’ is a cultural construct: one is not born but rather becomes a woman, as Beauvoir argues. Seen from this perspective, patriarchal oppression consists in imposing certain standards of femininity on all biological women, and making us believe that the chosen standards are natural. Patriarchy, in other words, implies that there is an essence of femaleness, called femininity, and that such an essence is biologically given.³¹

Small girls are dressed in pink clothes and are supposed to play with dolls whereas a small boy dressed in a pink outfit playing with a

³⁰ *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 6th ed (1948; Oxford University Press, 2000)251.

³¹ Olivia Bălănescu, “Receding behind the Veil: Angela Carter and the Disguise of Femininity Gender Studies” (*Gender Studies*), issue: 05 / 2006, pages: 74-83, www.ceeol.com. 74.

doll would arouse at least a surprise. Girls are not supposed to fight but parents are often proud of their sons when they are successful at fighting etc. This also implies that some kind of passiveness is expected from the she-part of the world. The list of feminine and masculine-like social roles that have impact on everyone would be long but it is important to note that during the last several decades, the strict distinction of the roles has been weakened. However, quite a lot of these strictly female and strictly male models of behaviour seem to be still at work in nowadays society but as with everything there has been a certain development towards larger uniformity.

5.1. Absence of a Female Character as a Feature of Femininity

Elizabeth Bronfen states in her work *Over Her Dead Body. Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (1992) that death is often depicted through the image of a dead woman in western cultures and therefore, she sees absence (death) of a female character as a part of the cultural construction of femininity. "...the elimination of the feminine character does not mean the elimination of femininity. On the contrary it serves the production of stereotypes of femininity contingent on the absence of women's bodies."³² In other words, she suggests that death of a female character, the complete absence of she-essence may be considered as the highest means of femininity expression. Bronfen points out that there are many examples when the death of a woman helps the society to return to its order, remove harmful forces or serves as the topos of martyrdom of an innocent, virtuous woman.³³

Considering *A Sicilian Romance*, readers may find the images of a dead woman at several places in the story. The mother of Julia is considered to be dead throughout the novel and we only learn at the very end that she was alive all the time and that it was marquis's infidelity and his bad treatment that put her in the state of half-dead, half-alive being. As I have already mentioned in the previous chapters, seemingly dead, her husband buried her and then put her into a hidden place only to wait until she really passes away. We get the information that she was buried "in effigy at a neighbouring church, with all the pomp of funeral honour due to my rank."³⁴ Therefore, she is not present during the narrative although she is referred to by her close friend Madame de Menon at many occasions.

Another image of a dead woman is presented to us through the character of Cornelia, a sister of Hippolitus. The unfortunate turn of

³² Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body. Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1992) 208.

³³ See Bronfen, *Over* 219.

³⁴ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* 177.

events prevented her to be with the one she loved and in order to avoid unwanted suitor, she entered a monastery. Nevertheless, she could never reconcile with her destiny and the reader is brought to witness her romantic death.

A faint smile passed over her countenance, and was succeeded by a fine devotional glow; she folded her hands upon her bosom, and with a look of meek resignation, raising towards heaven her eyes, in which now sunk the last sparkles of expiring life – her soul departed in a short deep sigh.³⁵

Cornelia and Julia's mother are both depicted as innocent and virtuous ladies whose lives were sacrificed because of the selfish interest of their male relatives. It is quite clear that these two 'deaths' or rather absences play important role in the decision making process of the main female character of the book – Julia, which is going to be analysed more thoroughly in the following chapter.

The death, actually a suicide, of marquis' second wife, Maria de Vellorno, might be seen not only as a moment when disorder becomes to be organized again and consequently replaced by the old state of affairs, but also as a moment in which the members of the family reunite and the assumed dead mother returns to the story. As I have already mentioned in the chapter on Significance of Female Characters, all the major and minor characters are in fact motherless, which yet again takes us back to the Bronfen's idea about the strong effect of the absence of the female feature in the story perceived as actual reminder of the femininity itself.

The world of *Frankenstein* is completely motherless as well. Mothers seem to be remembered just through the memories of other characters. Victor's mother dying is depicted in similar romantic mood as Cornelia's death. "On her deathbed the fortitude and benignity of this best of women did not desert her.....She died calmly, and her

³⁵ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* 136.

countenance expressed affection even in death.”³⁶ She died at the beginning of the story, however, she is still present through the picture that Victor’s father has in his library, so her absence acquires similar dimensions as the half-dead, half-alive figure of Julia’s mother in *A Sicilian Romance*. At this time we know for sure that Victor’s mother is dead, however, she is still present in her absence and thus once again fulfilling the femininity frame put down by Bronfen.

The picture shows a moment when Victor’s father met Caroline, his mother, for the first time:

Caroline Beaufort represented in an agony of despair, kneeling by the coffin of her dead father. Her garb was rustic and her cheek pale, but there was an air of dignity and beauty that hardly permitted the sentiment of pity.³⁷

She lived only with her father who used to be a wealthy merchant but due to some business accidents lost all his property. Victor’s father entered Caroline’s life just in the right moment and started to take care of the orphaned girl who, in two years time, became his wife. Not only the writer’s description of her is feminine but also the picture itself, hanging on the wall, is a feature of femininity as Caroline thanks to it belongs in the narrative, even though she is absent.

When the girl from Carter’s story enters the prohibited chamber where she finds the marquis’ dead wives, she refers to the torture tools as to the ones she saw in “woodcuts of the martyrdoms of the saints.”³⁸ This comment most certainly refers to the three dead wives in the chamber. The opera singer, the artist’s model and the Romanian countess might not fulfil the marquis’ expectations considering the femininity and the only way to reach this ideal of his was in their deaths. Dead but still there. Therefore, when still alive they could have been seen as the symbol of female independency and success while as

³⁶ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 34-35.

³⁷ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 72.

³⁸ Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 28.

dead, they became the symbol of femininity. The chamber is marquis' "private study, a den"³⁹ and the three female bodies are there for "his pleasure of imagining himself wifeless"⁴⁰ as he tells the girl before leaving her alone at the castle.

Jeanette Winterson's depiction of the monstrous body and appearance of the Dog-Woman seems to be a direct refusal of Bronfen's theory about the absence of female character as the strongest feature of femininity in literature. Nevertheless, we should recall the Dog-Woman's note that she does not weigh anything in the dark and in the water.⁴¹ It is the time when she does not feel the heaviness of her body or rather she does not feel it because others cannot see it. Elizabeth Langland argues that the Dog-Woman's gender remains uncertain because she does not succeed in having sex with a man even though she tried.⁴² On the other hand, if you read the novel closely, you may come to a conclusion that the Dog-Woman is in fact very woman-like. She admits being in love once, this experience was painful to her and she forbade herself to be ever in love again, which somehow hardened her heart. The guy was scared by her huge appearance and her appearance and size are the same reasons why she could not have sex with the other man.

However, it does not mean that she would not like to have someone and her love remains unfulfilled. In her moments of femininity, she states that she "would enjoy the consolation of a lover's face."⁴³ There are also scenes when she imagines herself disembodied. And because it is her body which seems to be the real obstacle in her path to successful love-life, she devotes herself to her son and transforms her desires for a man into the form of the maternal love. Another cause of her harsh treatment of the men may be found in the

³⁹ Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 21.

⁴⁰ Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 21.

⁴¹ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 40.

⁴² Elizabeth Langland, "Sexing the Text: Narrative Drag as Feminist Poetics and Politics in Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*." *Narrative* Volume 5, NO.1 10.January 2010< <http://www.jstor.org/pss/20107105>>.

⁴³ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 40.

disrespectful behaviour of men towards women presented throughout the novel, especially the Puritans, which made her to stay away from them and to keep her feelings and desires in the realm of dreams and imagination.

5.2. Other Features of Femininity

As has been already mentioned, femininity as such is a matter of highly individual and subjective evaluation of the main features typical for a woman. The aim of this chapter is to find out what these features actually are like in the four gothic tales under consideration and whether they are present in all the works or if there is any kind of change in their description and perception.

The characters in the first two novels are described in a purely feminine manner. Ann Radcliffe gives the reader the following description about Julia and Emilia.

Emilia was finely proportioned. Her complexion was fair, her hair flaxen, and her dark blue eyes were full of sweet expression. Her manners were dignified and elegant, and in her air was a feminine softness, a tender timidity which irresistibly attracted the heart of the beholder. The figure of Julia was light and graceful - her step was airy - her mien animated, and her smile enchanting. Her eyes were dark, and full of fire, but tempered with modest sweetness. Her features were finely turned – every laughing grace played round her mouth, and her countenance quickly discovered all the various emotions of her soul. The dark auburn hair, which curled in beautiful profusion in her neck, gave a finishing charm to her appearance.⁴⁴

Both of the sisters' external descriptions are angel like and the account on their characters is given in a similar way. This is in contrast with the description of the marquis' second wife Maria de Vellorno who, though also regarded as beautiful, seems to be missing the femininity qualities that the sisters possess. "Her hair was ornamented with a profusion of jewels, but was so disposed as to give an air rather of voluptuousness than of grace, to her figure."⁴⁵ Thus the depiction of Maria de Vellorno in a way bears certain resemblance to

⁴⁴ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* 6.

⁴⁵Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* 17.

the sisters characterisation since her external appearance reflexes in fact her character as it was the case with the two sisters. However, with Maria the appearance and character traits are not so angel-like at all. She has no problem, though married, to engage herself in affairs with much younger men or in a network of intrigues in order to reach her own profit.

Elizabeth Bronfen sees femininity also as “missing in action”⁴⁶. In this sense, we can say that the passive characters are Emilia and her imprisoned mother in comparison to brave Julia, active Madame de Menon and treacherous Maria de Vellorno. The character of Julia, though more active than her sister and therefore not “missing in action” completely, shows many other signs of the gothic femininity, e.g. she is constantly about to faint during the narrative and her manners together with appearance follow the eighteenth century femininity ideal standard. Moreover, she actually really faints several times throughout the story:

She shrieked, and fainted. On recovering, she found herself supported by Ferdinand and Hippolitus, who has stole this moment of silence and security to gain admittance to her presence.....She looked mournfully upon him – her lips moved, but no sounds were uttered. As he repeated his question, she waved her hand, and sunk back in her chair. She had not fainted, but continued some time in a state of stupor not less alarming. Hippolitus hung over her in an agony not to be described, and Ferdinand vainly repeated her name. At length uttering a deep sigh, she raised herself, and, like one awakened from a dream, gazed around her.⁴⁷

This is not to be found in any other work that is subject to this thesis. By incorporating the frequent inclination towards fainting to Julia's characteristics, the author makes sure that Julia's feminine features are sufficiently stressed and that she is to some extent still fulfilling the feminine expectation because, as a matter of fact, Julia

⁴⁶See Bronfen, *Over* 205.

⁴⁷Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* 17.

represents a strong woman character. (see the chapter Signs of Feminism)

The description of the female figures in *Frankenstein* seems to be carried out in a similar way as that of *A Sicilian Romance* characters. The depiction not only of Elizabeth but also of Agatha, the daughter of the financially ruined De Laceys family, and of Safie, the daughter of a Turkish merchant, emphasizes many dignified features of the women mentioned. “The saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine – dedicated lamp in our peaceful home. Her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us.”⁴⁸ The common feature of these descriptions lies in the stress these descriptions put on the ideal figure, eyes and airy behaviour. There is one more illustration in the description of Safie that demonstrates it:

I beheld a countenance of angelic beauty and expression. Her hair of a shining ravel black, and curiously braided; her eyes were dark, but gentle, although animated; her features of regular proportion, and her complexion wondrously fair, each cheek tinged with a lovely pink.⁴⁹

It is only in the case of Julia and Safie when the authors use the word ‘animated’ to describe their countenance. Consequently, these two characters are the most active ones within their stories.

At the opening of the “The Bloody Chamber”, the girl talks about her mother as about an eagle-featured woman who is always carrying a revolver with her. This evokes rather a masculine image. The reader is not provided with the description of the girl. The only thing that we learn about her is that her hair is long. However, its comparison to “listless sheaves”⁵⁰ also does not bring about the image of feminine beauty. The one who tries to endorse the feminine aspect in the girl is the marquis as he makes her to wear “a sinuous shift of white muslin

⁴⁸ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 29.

⁴⁹ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 115.

⁵⁰ Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 37.

tied with a silk string under the breasts”⁵¹ when they go to the opera. The girl was still a virgin at that time and it looks as if the marquis wanted to stress the fact that she was still unused by the white colour that she wore and that may be accepted as a symbol of purity.

It is also the marquis who gives the girl a family jewel, a choker of rubies that has a special meaning for him because when she wears it together with the white long dress, she notices his lust for her for the first time:

I saw him watching me in the gilded mirrors with assessing eye of a connoisseur inspecting horseflesh, or even of a housewife in the market, inspecting cuts on the slab. I'd never seen, or else had never acknowledged, that regard of his before, the sheer carnal avarice of it.⁵²

He even makes her to wear it when they make love and it is the choker that he kisses before he kisses the girl's lips. A choker or in other words a neck ring still signifies femininity – it is a feature of beauty in some tribal society even nowadays.⁵³ Therefore, it is more than clear that Carter supports the idea that femininity is a cultural construct in patriarchal society because it is a man through whom is the girl veiled in the feminine aspects rather than the girl herself being born already with the femininity naturally embedded in her.

“My nose is flat, my eyebrows are heavy. I have only a few teeth and those are a poor show, being black and broken. I had smallpox when I was a girl and the caves in my face are home enough for fleas.”⁵⁴ The Dog-Woman goes on with her self-description when she refers to the event when she overweighed an elephant. Winterson's refusal of femininity is recorded in the extremely grotesque appearance of the Dog-Woman. This strong refusal may be found also in other characters. The Dog-Woman's female neighbour is:

⁵¹Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 11.

⁵² Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 11.

⁵³ See http://www.chiangmai-chiangrai.com/longneck_karen.html

⁵⁴ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 24.

So blackened and hairless that she has twice been mistaken for a side of salt beef wrapped in muslin, airs herself abroad as a witch. She hardly moves but her hands are never still scratching her head and her groin and darting out to snatch food and ram it square into her mouth.⁵⁵

Moreover, the image of a mermaid who is usually portrayed as a beautiful creature is somewhat spoiled here since she starts to gulp herrings and throw them back to her throat. Jordan pictures her as very beautiful but without fine graces.⁵⁶

While Ann Radcliffe and also Mary Shelley stress the feminine features in their female characters, Angela Carter's description of the mother lacks any of those characteristics and the girl becomes an object of femininity only after the marquis makes her so by wearing the white shift and the choker. That is also the moment in which she realizes the fact that she actually was made a woman through accepting the necklace and the dress – a femininity sign - and at the same time she can see herself as if through the eyes of the marquis for the first time:

When I saw him look at me with lust, I dropped my eyes but, in glancing away from him, I caught sight of myself in the mirror. And I saw myself, suddenly, as he saw me, my pale, face, the way the muscles in my neck stuck out like thin wire. I say how much that cruel necklace became me.⁵⁷

Angela Carter stated that she tries to reveal “the nature of my reality as a woman, how that social fiction of my femininity was created, by means outside my control, and palmed off on me as the real thing”⁵⁸. She sees the femininity as a role assigned by men to women and she obviously demonstrates it in the scene in which the

⁵⁵ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 13.

⁵⁶ See Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 47.

⁵⁷ Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 11.

⁵⁸ Angela Carter, “Notes from the Front Line”, in M. Widor (ed.). *On Gender and Writing*. (London: Pandora, 1983) 71.

girl realizes that she is identifying with the choker that was given to her and that she was made to wear it to please and satisfy the marquis. Jeanette Winterson entirely refuses femininity and the woman's body as an object of desire by exaggerated depiction of female characters' attributes that have hardly anything in common with the idea of femininity.

5.3. Through Femininity to Power

Diane Long Hoeveler in her *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontes* (1998) argues that:

The heroines of Gothics written by women masquerade under the guise of proper femininity while covertly using passive-aggressive tactics to defeat patriarchal tyranny. Consequently, the gothic heroine simultaneously supports yet undercuts patriarchy's dominance⁵⁹

Hoeveler endorses the idea that women use passiveness deliberately and that under the veil of femininity they can achieve their goals. Let's see if this idea has any resonance in the selected works.

Starting with the character of Julia's mother in *A Sicilian Romance*, it could be said that because of her passiveness, she was able to survive the imprisonment for many years. The marquis brought her to the hidden chamber when she was unconscious being convinced that she will die soon. His plan, however, was not successful because his first wife did not only recover but was even able to maintain a healthy mental condition, which is quite remarkable. She received food once a week and there was nobody to talk to for many years because the appointed servant was not a very sensible person. She even did not try to make other people to know that she is imprisoned as she was aware that there was nobody who would and actually could stand against the marquis.⁶⁰ Therefore, the only way to survive and have a chance to see her children again was to be calm, weak, passive and give no reason whatsoever to the marquis for murdering her. Under the weak physical appearance, Radcliffe in fact reveals a mentally strong woman who was able to stay sane under very difficult conditions.

⁵⁹ Jeanette Roberts Shumakerm, "Review of Hoeveler", ROCKY MOUNTAIN REVIEW, Spring 1999 <http://rmmla.wsu.edu/ereview/53.1/reviews/shumaker.asp>

⁶⁰ See Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*, 179-181.

The abbot of the monastery where Julia finds a shelter accuses Julia later on for not telling him the real cause of her coming to the convent. She, at first, defends herself quite assertively saying that:

When I sheltered myself within these walls, it was to be presumed that they would protect me from injustice; and with what other term than injustice would you, Sir, distinguish the conduct of the marquis, if the fear of his power did not overcome the dictates of truth?⁶¹

Yet, as soon as she realizes that this speech made it worse and the abbot is even more convinced that he will submit her to her father, she changes her strategy. The abbot consents to protect her, only after she expresses her distress and shows her subjection to him.

With all the artless eloquence of sorrow she endeavored to soften him to pity. He listened to her pleadings in sullen stillness. But each instant now cooled the fervour of his resentment to her, and increased his desire of opposing the marquis.⁶²

This submissive attitude and the acceptance of the role of a victim finally helps Julia to escape from the convent when she was about to be made to take vows. Nobody suspects that she would not like to enter the convent and stay there forever, which enables her to secretly run away without anybody noticing anything.

Women in *Frankenstein* do not seem to show any of the features that would help them to overcome the patriarchal order because almost all of them die during the novel. There is only Safie who does not obey her father and chooses her own way, nevertheless, in this case, we cannot support Hoeveler's argument because the reader is only informed that she manages to go to Germany with her servant to look for Felix De Lacey whom she fell in love earlier on.

⁶¹ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*, 132.

⁶² Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*, 133.

There is one attempt when the girl in “The Bloody Chamber” tries to use the feminine power to distract marquis’ attention from the keys that are stained with blood and which would prove that she did not obey him and went to the prohibited chamber:

I forced myself to be seductive. I saw myself, pale, pliant as a plant that begs to be trampled underfoot, a dozen vulnerable, appealing girls reflected in as many mirrors, and I saw how he almost failed to resist me. If he had come to me in bed, I would have strangled him, then.⁶³

She is trying to put on the feminine disguise. Anyway, if she had been successful, she would, we can say quite surely, have ended up dead as it is hard to imagine that she could strangle the huge marquis and that her attempt would not be punished immediately. We can therefore say that in this case the feminine effort would be harmful. More over, as Angela Carter perceived the femininity as a social construct, she could be also suggesting that it is rather dangerous than contributing to the womankind.

Hoeveler’s theory can hardly be applied to *Sexing the Cherry*, nevertheless, there is one situation, though quite bizarre, in the book where it is possible to see very slight link to Hoeveler's idea of woman using the femininity in order to get what she wants. It is in the scene when the Dog-Woman tries to achieve her intention by a feminine like manner. She together with Jordan and Tradescant want to see the trial of the King Charles I. but there is a warrant for her arrest because she has been supporting the king that is why she disguises herself and sits in the wheelbarrow to hide her real stature. She insists on staying in the wheelbarrow even in the court hall claiming that she has the gonorrhoea and that her flesh is rotting.

Then, please,” said I, rolling my eyes winningly, “please, clear a path for us, for I will have to stagger up the steps into the gallery while my

⁶³ Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 35.

daughter catches any fluids that may flow from me. It is the stench of a three days' dead dog and not for the noses of the tender.⁶⁴

The whole situation is actually grotesque and though the content of her speech is quite disgusting, it is the only situation when she puts herself in a victim like position. She uses feminine tools like sighing, rolling eyes, waving her hand to persuade the soldiers to let her in.

Even though, the features of femininity were found both in *A Sicilian Romance* and in *Frankenstein*, it is only Radcliffe who employs it also as the means to survive or overcome the patriarchal power, whereas the women in *Frankenstein* are portrayed as innocent victims of male's wishes and actions only with the exception of Safie. The unsuccessful attempt to apply the feminine strategies on the marquis in "The Bloody Chamber" may be perceived as a refusal or as a harmful tactics. Winterson presents exaggerated situation that seems to mock the feminine-like attitude that makes it possible to beat the men.

⁶⁴ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 69.

6. Features of Feminism

This chapter is going to trace and analyse the features of feminism in each work and draw a comparison among them. There are many definitions of the term 'feminism' in today's society but to make it simpler and narrow the point of view through which we are going to approach the gothic stories written by women, we will have to apply the most basic and, at the same time, the broadest explanation of the term. Feminism might be defined as "the belief in the social, economic, and political equality of the sexes."⁶⁵ Feministic approach to the gothic novels brought a new important perspective to the entire body of works by female authors. At this point it would be proper to mention Ellen Moers and her contribution to understanding of gothic novels by introduction of the feministic point of view into the area of literary criticism. In her influential study of literature written by women called *Literary Women* (1976), she used the term 'Female Gothic' that she defined as "the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic"⁶⁶ Literary critics usually underestimated gothic novels written by female authors, for example, Fiedler's criticism of Ann Radcliffe's body of work. Moers' interest in Female Gothic showed that the works of many writers covered by this term were wrongly understood. She brought the Female Gothic to another level in the literary canon. Moers' analysis of these texts placed the gothic tradition to its rightful place in the history of female writing by emphasizing the difficult position of women within the society of men and gothic novels as a means of expressing feminism.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Encyclopaedia Britannica Deluxe Edition 2004, CD-ROM, Feminism.

⁶⁶ Ellen Moers, *Literary Women*, (1976; London: The Women's Press, 1978), p. 90.

⁶⁷ See Andrew Smith, Diana Wallace, "The Female Gothic: Then and Now", *Gothic Studies*, Manchester, 10 May 2007
http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/searchFulltext.do?id=R03554229&divLevel=0&queryId=../session/1179237340_25948&trailId=111F5870D5B&area=abell&forward=critref_ft

In *A Sicilian Romance*, it is the character of Julia through which Radcliffe portrayed a strong female character. Though gentle and seemingly weak, she quite frankly reveals to the duke, her suitor, that she does not have any feelings for him thus suggesting that there is already somebody else she is fond of.⁶⁸ It certainly was not common to openly reject somebody who was supposed to be your partner, especially when he was chosen and assigned to you by your parents. "Financial and status considerations were at stake, it became a crime against the social code for any woman to admit her real feelings or to confess to passion."⁶⁹ Julia broke this 'social code' and the duke's pride got seriously offended. Later, she was able to escape from her tyrannous father and the unwanted suitor even though she knew that her beloved one was seriously wounded and might have been even dead. Radcliffe does not let Julia to share the same fate as Julia's mother, who after the death of her loved one, married the marquis - a man who she defied from the very first moment they met. Moreover, Julia left the monastery to avoid becoming a nun which would lead her to the same fate as was the fate of Cornelia. At that moment, there were two threats she had to confront, the patriarchal system of society and the church. Nevertheless, as both of these options were unacceptable, she continued in her, though uncertain, quest for equality. The development of the female character across the borders of the stories can be seen in the figure of Julia who neither followed her mother's footsteps nor Cornelia's ones. She also refused both of the elements threatening her freedom, not only the patriarchal power but also the power of the church.

The difference between the first and the second wife of the marquis is also to be considered in the story of *A Sicilian Romance*. His first wife, the mother of Julia, is depicted as a shy gentle nice woman who basically became a victim of male's intrigues. Her husband did not

⁶⁸See Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*, 59.

⁶⁹ David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition* 2nd ed, vol.1. (Harlow: Longman Group Limited, 1996)83.

treat her well and finally got rid of her to marry a younger woman. Radcliffe introduces a change in his behaviour towards his second wife, Maria de Vellorno. It is obvious that the one who wears the pants in this couple is Maria de Vellorno. She dictates her wishes and he is fulfilling them without hesitations. It is actually from her impulse that the marquis decides to marry Julia to the duke because Maria plans to seduce Hippolitus, Julia's loved one, and Julia stands obviously in the way. The marquis has no idea that she is engaging herself freely with other younger men. At the beginning of the novel the marquis is described as "a man of a voluptuous and imperious character"⁷⁰ Nevertheless, in Maria de Vellorno's presence, he becomes henpecked. There is certain shift in the roles that are in fact exchanged and it can be interpreted in several ways. It can be simply the fact that the marquis married a younger beautiful woman and he would do anything to make her happy and to make her stay with him. "Though naturally of a haughty and overbearing disposition, he was governed by his wife."⁷¹ We have witnessed this phenomenon throughout the centuries many times up to now, both in literature and in the real life. Or it may be interpreted as one of the first blunt, so called feministic, attempts of Radcliffe to cope with the position of a woman at her times. Radcliffe completely changed the traditional marriage pattern where man is the one that is allowed to do everything he wants and desires, whereas woman has to follow the rules of the society and of her husband. Marquis' second marriage is described as quite the opposite where he is the one who follows the wishes of his wife and Maria de Vellorno enjoys herself without restraints. However strange it may sound to a modern reader, this fact can be considered as one of the first feministic features in the Female Gothic.

Frankenstein has several female characters out of which only two survive till the end of the book. Elizabeth and Justine are the victims

⁷⁰ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*, 3.

⁷¹ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*, 3.

of Frankenstein's own ambition and irresponsible behaviour. Frankenstein's mother dies because she caught scarlet fever when she was taking care of sick Elizabeth. She dies in order to save Elizabeth. All these female characters are portrayed as nice passive angels whose main role is to take care of the family and the household. Nevertheless, they are rewarded by death.

Agatha De Lacey and Safie are rather marginal characters who appear in the story narrated by the monster. Agatha lives with her father and brother Felix in poverty, even though they used to be a significant wealthy family once. The family was deprived of its wealth after Felix helped a Turkish merchant to escape from a prison. Felix fell in love with the merchant's daughter Safie but her treacherous father finally did not agree with their marriage as Felix's family stayed without any money. Nevertheless, Safie did not obey her father and escaped to Germany to look for Felix instead of returning back to Turkey. This escape also prevented her from having the same destiny as her mother who as a Christian Arab was not happy in her marriage and taught her daughter, before she died, to strive for better life than she was confined to. Safie, although portrayed with feminine qualities, represents the only active female character in the novel that in essence stood up against the patriarchal dominance, an act which ultimately led her to happiness. There may be a parallel in Safie's escape from her father with the life of Shelley who also ran away from her difficult-to-deal father to be with Percy Bysshe Shelley. It is therefore interesting that in her work she depicted the female characters as rather passive and submissive with the only exception of Safie but her figure does not play much of an important role in the text. Shelley portrayed the typical social structure of the nineteenth century society with the slight suggestion, presented by the character of Safie that there are other possibilities for women than to just obediently accept their role determined by society and its stereotypes.

The mother of the narrator in “The Bloody Chamber” is completely different than the mothers in *A Sicilian Romance* or in *Frankenstein*. First of all, she is actually present during the entire story and her presence has a significant role considering the plot. As I have already pointed out in the previous chapter, her eagle like nose together with the fact that she always carries a gun with her suggests that she may sort of fulfil roles of both the caring mother and protecting father. The girl calls her “indomitable mother”⁷² and refers to her mother’s adventures, e.g. as she defeated Chinese pirates or took care of the villagers who were stricken by the plague or shot a tiger who was eating a man. Furthermore, the mother gave up the comfort of being a member of a rich family in order to be with the one she loved. She “beggared herself for love”⁷³ and finally stayed alone with a child after her husband died in the war.

In the original story “Bluebeard”, the bride is saved by her brother who kills the marquis⁷⁴ whereas in Carter’s version it is the mother who saves the girl by shooting the marquis into the head.

You never saw such a wild thing as my mother, her hat seized by the winds and blown out to sea so that her hair was her white mane, her black lisle legs exposed to the thigh, her skirts tucked round her waist, one hand on the reins of the rearing horse while the other clasped my father’s service revolver.⁷⁵

The shift of the role of the rescuer from a man to a woman and the image of a woman on the horse with a gun can be regarded as purely feminist one. The marquis does not succeed in his another attempt to destruct a woman and instead his end comes from the hand of one.

⁷² Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 7.

⁷³ Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 7.

⁷⁴Aytül Özüm, “Deconstructed Masculine Evil in Angela Carter’s The Bloody Chamber Stories.11

Jan.2010<www.interdisciplinary.net/ati/Evil/Evil%208/ozum%20paper.pdf>

⁷⁵ Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 39.

The girl shares the same feature with the mother in choosing her own way. However, her choice is quite the opposite because she marries the marquis, even though she probably does not love him. The mother's question whether the girl loves the marquis is repeated three times in the text and the only answer is "I 'm sure I want to marry him."⁷⁶ While this fact of being in love is important to the mother who became poor to be with the one she loved, it does not seem that important to her daughter. She sees herself as the heir of the marquis' property since he is much older than she is. She also calls herself the chatelaine right after she arrives at the castle. The desire for the material possession is stronger than her premonition that something bad is going to happen and even several repetitions of the bad feelings about the future did not stop her from pursuing her path towards the so desired wealth and rise on the social scale.

She obviously wants to be financially independent, however, the means, through which she wants to achieve her goal, makes her dependent on her husband who then considers her his property and he also treats her in this way. Whereas Julia in *A Sicilian Romance* runs away from the man she does not love, the girl voluntarily becomes marquis' wife and only thanks to her mother does not become his next victim. Julia is portrayed as an innocent young woman while the girl, in contrast to Julia, openly reveals her dark side to the reader and she even realizes and admits the fact that she is not that innocent and pure herself. First she says "I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away"⁷⁷ and later on she admits that the marquis might have chosen her because he could sense a rare talent for corruption in her.⁷⁸ When the marquis wants to punish her by cutting her head off because she entered the prohibited chamber, she prepares herself for the execution quite calmly as if she considered it a rightful punishment for her corrupted side. When she is told that

⁷⁶ Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 7.

⁷⁷ Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 11.

⁷⁸ See Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 20.

she does not deserve to be murdered, she replies “Who can say what I deserve or no?”⁷⁹ She is also glad that the blind piano tuner cannot see the red mark that the marquis made on her forehead with the key of the bloody chamber, as if it was meant to be a symbol of the corruption for her. On one hand, Carter presents the mother in the feministic mood but on other side, the girl’s attitude cannot be considered as feministic.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, the Dog-Woman and her son Jordan do not live a typical family life. They live together without a father with many dogs which are actually the means of earning their living. Dogs’ races and fighting are stereotypically associated more with men than a woman who was traditionally supposed to take care of a child and the household rather than to engage in a dog races and make a living out of them. Even the idea of a mother supporting a child on her own represents a significant movement towards the gender equality in the literature. In contrast with the quite satisfied way of life of the Dog-Woman a Jordan, there is an episode about a married woman who loses her senses, does not recognise her children and kills her husband about whom she later says that she has never seen him before.⁸⁰ This incident can be understood as a criticism of a family life and a marriage as an institution where a woman’s life becomes in fact the life of her husband and her children. She, in pursuit to manage daily tasks and under the weigh of responsibilities, loses her very self and one day realizes that she became a completely different person than she used to be. It may also imply certain transformation of married people who at the beginning usually try their best to show themselves in the best light but as time passes they try less and less and then there comes the moment when a woman enters her home and sees “a fat man waiting for his supper”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Carter, “The Bloody Chamber” 37.

⁸⁰ See Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 81.

⁸¹ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 81.

Winterson challenges the traditional gender roles in the character of the Dog-Woman through her massive appearance which is in striking opposition with the female characters from other gothic novels as well as her manners and behaviour are. In *A Sicilian Romance*, *Frankenstein* and also in “The Bloody Chamber”, women are oppressed in several ways by men. Men are either dominating women or making them do something they do not want to do or even murdering them. In *Sexing the Cherry*, it is the Dog-Woman who oppresses men, especially the Puritans. She murders without any scruples everyone who is against the King Charles I. Her comment about her attitude towards the Puritans speaks for itself: “Many of them have set upon me for my insolence, and most of those are dead. Out of charity, such as I am famed for, I left one or two to be crippled.”⁸² The Dog-Woman has her own sense of justice and every time she kills a man she is quite convinced about the necessity of the act. She even claims that she saves women from wicked husbands:

My actions are not motivated by thought of gain, only by thought of justice, and I have searched my soul to conclude that there is no person dead at my hand who would be better off alive. As evidence, if any need evidence, I will cite the good wife of Preacher Scroggs, she whose only pleasure had been his member poking through a sheet. When she heard about the death of her husband, she raised her hands to heaven and thanked God for his mercy. Such is my humility that I bore no resentment at this mistaken gratitude towards Our Saviour.⁸³

Anyway, we can doubt if her attitude towards men is caused only by her support of the king and the need to help women. There is a moment when she, in her mind, returns to her childhood and in her recollection sees a girl who is verbally abused by her schoolmates. They say to her that she is smelly, too fat, too tall and the girl feels hatred

⁸² Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 84.

⁸³ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 129.

towards them and wants to kill them.⁸⁴ The Dog-Woman is relieved when she realizes that it was only a recollection from her childhood. She feels secured because this was in the past and at present, if there was anybody who would want to hurt her either psychically or physically, she can easily punish such boldness thanks to her strength and size. We can therefore justly assume that her attitude towards men could be caused by her bad experience during her childhood and also adolescence and that it was the society that refused her first because of her abnormal appearance. The author criticizes society for being prejudiced against everything and everybody who differs somehow from what is considered to be a standard. The Dog-Woman's behaviour is thus the consequence and also a way of protecting herself against similar experience. The only one who can shatter the 'protective wall' is her son Jordan and the Dog-Woman was afraid of this from the very beginning when she found him. She is defenceless against maternal love and she is in constant worries that her son will break her heart once.

"The Story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses" embedded into the novel *Sexing the Cherry* should not be omitted from the analysis especially when looking at the feministic qualities of the book. All the princesses were made to marry princes and none of the marriage turned out well. Some of them had lived happily but shortly with their girlfriends before they got involuntarily married. In the depiction of their life when they were married, the reader is told that their husbands were unfaithful, cruel or homosexual. The princesses finally ended up killing or leaving their husbands. Actually the only relationship that works out well in the novel are those based on lesbian and maternal one. Jeffrey Roessner states in his article: "Winterson invites readers to accept alternatives to heterosexuality, particularly

⁸⁴ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 82.

lesbianism, as natural expressions of a basic human quest for love.”⁸⁵ I would add to it that it is not only the celebration of lesbianism but also a celebration of free expression, open-mindedness and an appeal to mankind not to be down-to-earth and rooted in stereotypes.

As it clearly comes out from the analysis of the features of feminism in gothic novels written by female authors, there is a huge change in not only the perception of women by women but also in the representation, behaviour and significance of female characters within the stories. It is only logical that the female figures in gothic novels turn to be, throughout the centuries of literary history, more and more independent, self-sufficient and even more powerful or stronger than the men. With the development of the fight for women rights came also the reflection of this movement, its ideas and, in some moment, even the extremes in the literature and gothic stories were not an exception.

⁸⁵ Jeffrey Roessner, “Writing a history of difference: Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* and Angela Carter's *Wise Children*”, 11 May 2007 http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3709/is_200201/ai_n9084193

7. Female Writers and Their Male Characters

It is said that the rise of gothic novels gave a chance to female authors to leave the sphere of domestic novels. One can easily agree with such a statement since there are certain topics that are impossible to find in the domestic novel literature so popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The female authors seem to be able to express things in gothic stories that would not be even possible to mention in the domestic novels, e.g. certain hidden and forbidden family relationships. This would be, as I have mentioned before, specifically the case of eighteenth and nineteenth century female writing when the authors usually wrote under various pseudonyms just to avoid being marked as a 'female author'. Clive Bloom's statement expands gothic writing into other social areas:

A final aim of gothic writing may also be seen to be social disturbance, thereby questioning technological, scientific and social norms as well as class relations in a way unavailable to realist fiction.⁸⁶

Concerning the family relationships in *A Sicilian Romance*, there is a character of a tyrannous father who buried his first wife while still alive and then kept her in a hidden place for many years which enabled him to marry a young and beautiful marchioness:

Marquis paid an annual visit to the castle of Mazzini. He staid only to give such general directions concerning the education of his daughters, as his pride, rather than his affection, seemed to dictate.⁸⁷

His attitude towards his two daughters is more than cold and without any parental interest. His dominance is overtly expressed by the imprisoned marchioness who states that he has the right of life and

⁸⁶ Clive Bloom, *Gothic Horror* 2nd ed (1998; Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 15.

⁸⁷ Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* 3.

death in his own domains. The dominance of masculine power is seen also in the character of the Duke de Luovo. His own child also escaped from his cruel authority and chooses to join a group of robbers in order to be free and out of his father's reach. Women authors seem to express themselves more freely about negative family relationship in gothic novels since it did not seem that extraordinary in the supernatural background.

Radcliffe's description of monastery life needs to be considered as well. The Duke asks for a place to stay for the night at the monastery at the time of midnight prayer. Nevertheless, he finds the monks grouped in a room together with their superior and all of them are already obviously intoxicated sitting round the table full of food and wine at the time of prayers. The superior with hiccup dropping his goblet full of wine is hardly what we would expect to see at midnight at the monastery in Roman Catholic Sicily. Radcliffe makes it quite clear that the superior of another monastery where Julia finds a shelter allows her to stay at the religious premises just to show his power to the marquis, not expressing the slightest streak of Christian compassion and gratitude. He seems to see himself as a God who can decide about Julia's destiny and obviously enjoys the mental torment he causes to Julia and Madame de Menon.

Another example of men's domination is to be found in the character of Victor Frankenstein. His treatment of his half-sister Elizabeth may seem to be affectionate at first sight, nevertheless, there are some instances that seem to be quite alarming. Firstly, he treats Elizabeth as a present. He does not refer to her as a girl or a new member of his family, when his parents adopt her:

And when, on the morrow, she presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift, I, with childish seriousness, interpreted her words literally and looked upon Elizabeth as mine – mine to protect, love and cherish.

All praises bestowed on her I received as made to a possession of my own.⁸⁸

Later on in the story, he also refers to her as “one reward I promised myself”⁸⁹ or as someone who can claim. In *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2000), one of the meanings of the verb claim is “to demand or ask for something because you believe it is your legal right to own or to have it.”⁹⁰ Even though or maybe because of the fact that he observes her as his property, he fails to protect her, cherish her and the reader may even have doubts about his love towards her. Victor spends several years far away from his family, hardly being in touch with them when he was busy studying in Ingolstadt. Victor’s superior attitude toward Elizabeth can be clearly recognized in his letter to her before their wedding where he informs her that he keeps a terrible secret that he will reveal to her only after their wedding:

I have one secret, Elizabeth, a dreadful one; when revealed to you, it will chill your frame with horror, and then, far from being surprised at my misery you will only wonder that I survive what I have endured. I will confide this tale of misery and terror to you the day after our marriage shall take place, for, my sweet cousin, there must be perfect confidence between us. But until then, I conjure you, do not mention or allude to it. This I most earnestly entreat and I know you will comply.⁹¹

How nice of Victor that he wants to share a secret with his future wife after the wedding. He forbids Elizabeth even to ask about it before He decides to tell her. Shouldn’t he tell her before the wedding? Elizabeth seems to have no right to choose or decide anything. The author does not criticise or makes any comments about it, nevertheless, there is a shift in Elizabeth’s behaviour which is quite understandable,

⁸⁸ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 26.

⁸⁹ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 156.

⁹⁰ *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* 6th ed (1948; Oxford University Press, 2000)212.

⁹¹ Shelley, *Frankenstein* 195.

since only the thought that she will learn his terrible secret only after they join their lives forever seems to undermine the marriage and certainly makes Elizabeth's unquestionable belief in Frankenstein to falter. Moreover, he lets her know about the secret shortly after the death of three of her closest friends that is why she might be even frightened by the secret. She does not seem to be pleased anymore as if she could sense that something unpleasant is going to happen. This is the first time in the course of the book when Elizabeth does not appear to play her determined role of always supportive and positive young lady that cheers up and encourages everyone around her despite the conditions and the fact that even she was deeply hurt by the deaths of William and Justine. This fall into melancholy and sadness might imply Shelley's opposition to Victor. Then even more appalling scene comes when Victor is reproaching Elizabeth's sad appearance:

You are sorrowful, my love. Ah! If you knew what I have suffered and what I may yet endure, you would endeavour to let me taste the quiet and freedom from despair that this one day at least permits me to enjoy.⁹²

At this moment, Victor is dropping a hint that he is going to encounter the monster in, most probably, final struggle. This is another sign of Victor's self-centred character because the monster claimed to be with Victor on his wedding night when Victor finally turned down the monster's wish to create a female partner for him. There is one obvious question. How come that Victor did not realize that Elizabeth is the one in danger? He is carrying a gun all the time to protect himself and leaves her alone in their room. The monster is quite logically after Elizabeth as he does not want Victor to 'possess' a woman if he was not allowed to have one as well.

Marquis and the Duke in *A Sicilian Romance* are not portrayed very sympathetically from the very beginning and it is hard to find

⁹² Shelley, *Frankenstein* 198.

anything positive about their characters. On the other hand, Victor is a more complex figure since he tries to evoke compassion by frequent lamenting over his fate and sort of tries to excuse his actions. In fact Victor is not any better than Marquis or the Duke and there are a lot of moments when he proves it. The first person narrative style enables Victor to talk theoretically about his virtues and defend himself but in reality, in real situations, he fails to be the person, he claims to be. All of them fail as fathers since they pursue their own interests and do not pay much attention to their children's desires. This fact is in striking contrast with the mothers in "The Bloody Chamber" and *Sexing the Cherry* who do care for their children very much and where even work "maternal telepathy."⁹³

As I mentioned in the previous chapters, the common feature of *A Sicilian Romance* and *Frankenstein* is that all mothers are practically absent whereas in "The Bloody Chamber" and *Sexing the Cherry* those absent ones are fathers. The girl's father did not return from the war and she grew up only with her mother in "The Bloody Chamber" story. Jordan was brought to the Dog-Woman by the river and we have no information about his origin. This shift may signify the change from the dominantly patriarchal society where it was not really possible for an unmarried woman to live alone with children because she would be socially disgraced to a society where a woman could live on her own without the need of support by a man.

There is also another important analysis by comparison to be made. This time it involves the figures of the marquis, the main male protagonist of the Carter's story with the young piano tuner from the same story. The marquis does not seem to take the girl very seriously and treats her rather as a child than a woman. When she finds his pornographic books, he tells her: "My little nun has found the prayer books, has she? Have the nasty pictures scared Baby? Baby mustn't play with grownups' toys until she's learned how to handle them, must

⁹³ Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 40.

she?"⁹⁴ He is amused by her innocence and he does not pay much attention to what he says to her, even though it is rather insulting. He does not try to be careful during their first and, in fact, last love making and the girl faints. When she is brought to her senses, he tells her: "My dear one, my little love, my child, did it hurt her? He's so sorry for it, such impetuosity, he could not help himself; you see, he loves her so...."⁹⁵ He talks to her as a parent talks to a small child, referring to himself in the third person. The way he talks to her evokes even incestuous image. The girl being brought to senses may also have another interpretation. It may indicate the end of childhood and her awakening to the real life. In her case a cruel one. After the marquis got apparently the only thing he wanted from her, her virginity, she becomes worthless for him. He leaves her on their wedding night and comes back only for the purpose of killing her.

On the other hand, the blind piano tuner is described by the girl as a young gentle humble shy man in contrast to the much older heavy marquis with white toad-like skin. He is the only one who stays at the castle when the marquis wants to get rid of the girl. Why would not he go for a help when all of the servants were dismissed? He seems to be rather passive character because he just accompanies her to the place of her execution but does not try to do anything to avoid it. It is the girl's mother who finally saves her.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, the Dog-Woman shows openly her disgust for Puritan men whom she considers hypocritical. The reader encounters several grotesque situations concerning mainly Puritans. The Dog-Woman learns from a Puritan preacher's wife that her husband makes love to her through a hole in the sheet and never kisses her. Nevertheless, later on she finds the preacher in a sexual intercourse with another Puritan man in a brothel. This is after the King Charles I. execution and the Dog-Woman kills these two men in

⁹⁴ Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 17.

⁹⁵ Carter, "The Bloody Chamber" 18.

the same manner. Then she sees that other men come to mount the corpses. The point is not the homosexuality but rather the hypocrisy of society who represses the sexual desires that leads to perversity and deviation like necrophilia. Not only the Puritans but also all the husbands of the twelve princesses are described as two-faced, cheating or tyrannous men with whom the princesses divorce in the end.

It is only Jordan and Tradescant that we may find respect for in *Sexing the Cherry*. Jordan, in his search for the dancer, learns a lot about life and especially about the nature of relationship of men and women. He is given a rule book about men whose first page looks like a decalogue. (See the attachment 1) At first, he is angry about its content but after observing his and other men's behaviour, he admits that it is truthful.⁹⁶ Jordan expresses his desire to have a wife and children but at the same time he does not conceal his ambition to achieve some recognition. He wants to be the ideal husband pursuing his own career while his family faithfully awaits his arrival from the work, business trip or any other adventure and welcomes him warmly back home showing their gratitude of being allowed to be part of his life - an image too ideal to be real and achievable. Nevertheless, neither Jordan nor Tradescant, his companion on their voyages for oriental flora, get married.

On one hand, the author introduces a man whose desires are to have family, who admires women and who permits that men are weak but who eventually does not get married and devotes his life to his career. On the other side, there are corruptive Puritans and unfaithful husbands that make their women happy only after they divorce them or die.

To summarise this chapter, it looks as if the authors want to give a message that men are often driven by their desires either sexual or other and that women should be aware of the consequences of these desires that no one else but them must endure. Woman as a victim of

⁹⁶ See Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 33.

man's actions, desires and powers belongs to one of the most recursive features of the gothic stories.

8. Conclusion

In this thesis, I analysed and traced the development of female characters in gothic works written by female authors from several points of view. In *A Sicilian Romance*, "The Bloody Chamber" and *Sexing the Cherry*, women are the central characters and their close friendship and mutual cooperation is undeniable. It is only the novel *Frankenstein* representing the nineteenth century where the role of women is marginal, nevertheless, even there are features of women's mutual support and affection. The most significant development can be found in the role of mothers. While in *A Sicilian Romance* and *Frankenstein*, practically all the mothers are dead or at least absent, as if to stress the patriarchal dominance of that times, the mothers in "The Bloody Chamber" and *Sexing the Cherry* are present and are given a significant role within the plot.

In the chapter on "Nature and Women", where the relationship between the female characters and nature as such were discussed, I found out that the female characters in all analysed works are closely attached to nature and that in case of "The Bloody Chamber", nature seems even to reflect the female character's mental disposition. There is no doubt that the nature played a significant role in the development and growth of female literary characters several centuries ago and that the relation between women and nature acquires certain levels that the male figures have never even dreamt of in quite late works as well. As it was already considered, there may be several explanations why the bond between nature and women is presented as much stronger and mutual while the relationship of men to nature is based more on the power of control.

The female characters from the eighteenth and nineteenth century are depicted in purely feminine terms. There is again certain shift considering the female characters in the gothic stories of the twentieth century. During the analysis of Angela Carter's story the

readers encounter a woman figure that is in a way transformed into the feminine ideal of woman by her husband whom she married because of his money – not love – anyhow. Carter sort of suggests that the notion of femininity is a socially constructed phenomenon rather than intrinsically given value to women at their birth. She supports this idea by describing a female character very unfeminine-like in the way she decided to get to higher social status no matter what it costs and put her feelings away in the process. Winterson rejects femininity entirely by the demonstration of the monster-like appearance of the Dog-Woman, nevertheless, there are moments when she is very woman like but only when there is nobody who could see this quite different side of her character since she seems to keep the mask of a strong woman to avoid being hurt again.

Even though under the feminine veil, Radcliffe's main female character Julia represents a strong woman who abandons her cruel father, unwanted suitor and refuses the shelter of a monastery in order to be free even with the risk of being a constant refugee and giving up her comfortable way of life. On the other hand, women in *Frankenstein* are portrayed as passive ones who sacrifice their lives in taking care of their families and households. There is, however, a slight mention of the Turkish girl Safie, an active strong woman who stands against her father and follows her own will. Carter's mother in "The Bloody Chamber" story is a brave woman, a fearless fighter who saves her daughter's life. But at the same time, Carter seems to suggest that also women have two sides, the good one and the corrupted one, in the figure of the girl whose innocence is very doubtful.

All the authors describe their male characters' attitude towards women more or less negatively. They are portrayed as oppressive, unfaithful, tyrannous, egoistic or even as murderers. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' texts present dominant fathers, whereas there are almost no fathers in the twentieth century and the portrayal of other male figures is negative or there the figures of Jordan and

Tradescant who prefer voyaging and concentrating on their career to a family life.

The main development of the female characters in the gothic works throughout the centuries is that features of femininity are to be found especially in the early texts together with the first signs of feministic thoughts, while it is reversed in the twentieth century. There is a strong presentation of feminism with subtle feminine traits in comparison to the early tales. Therefore, even the characters in gothic stories reflect the reality of everyday woman throughout the centuries.

Résumé

Diplomová práce má název „The Development of Female Characters in Gothic Novels Written by Female Authors” v češtině “Vývoj ženských postav v gotických románech ženských autorek”. Cílem této práce je nastínit, jak ženské autorky vylicily ženské postavy v jednotlivých stoletích, jejich vývoj, důležitost v dějové linii v rámci gotických děl z osmnáctého, devatenáctého a dvacátého století. Ann Radcliffe a její román *A Sicilian Romance* zastupuje století osmnácté, dílo *Frankenstein*, které napsala Mary Shelley reprezentuje století devatenácté a konečně Angela Carter s povídkou „The Bloody Chamber“ a Jeanette Winterson s novelou *Sexing the Cherry* pro století dvacáté.

Práce se v úvodu věnuje charakterizaci gotických děl v uvedených stoletích. Za autora prvního gotického románu bývá považován Horace Walpole s jeho románem *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* z roku 1764. Období mezi rokem 1760 až 1820 bývá tradičně označováno jako vrchol gotické beletrie. Gotické romány osmnáctého století jsou většinou situovány do období středověku a odehrávají se často v katolických zemích jako Španělsko či Itálie. Hlavní rysy těchto děl jsou ponuré hrady s kobkami či podzemními chodbami a častým výskytem nadpřirozených jevů, jako jsou například tajemné zvuky, duchové, různá zjevení a nevysvětlitelné události. Hlavní postavou byla většinou nevinná žena, která musí čelit mnoha nebezpečstvím, přičemž to největší nebezpečí představuje bídný mužský jedinec, který hrdinku ohrožuje na životě.

Mezi hlavní rysy gotické literatury devatenáctého století patří postavy, které se nachází ve špatném psychickém rozpoložení. Jedinci trpí po stránce psychické, neboť v sobě často dusí hrozná tajemství. Rámec děje již nebývá tak často zasazován do exotických krajin, i když scénérie stále vyvolávají pochmurnou atmosféru a samozřejmě nemohou chybět jisté všudypřítomné děsivé události. V tomto století se

také do jisté míry objevily určité prvky literární gotiky i v oblasti poezie.

Romány a povídky dvacátého století nelze označit jako čistě gotické, ale spíše jako obsahující určité prvky dřívějších gotických děl a i zařazení románů či povídek do gotické literatury se může subjektivně lišit. Koncem dvacátého století se termín 'Gothic' rozšířil i na scénu hudební a především módní.

V další části se práce věnuje stručné charakteristice všech zmiňovaných děl a to především proto, aby i méně sečtělý čtenář mohl lehce porozumět následující analýze.

Kapitola nazvaná „The Significance of Female Characters“ se již zabývá samotnou analýzou ženských postav v jednotlivých dílech, přičemž se zvláště zabývá důležitostí jednotlivých ženských postav v rámci každého textu. V dílech *A Sicilian Romance*, „The Bloody Chamber“ a *Sexing the Cherry* zauímají ženy hlavní roli v dějové zápletce. Pouze ženy v románu *Frankenstein* vystupují jako vedlejší postavy a nemají velký vliv na dějovou linii. Docházíme také k poznání, že hlavní změna spočívá v absenci a přítomnosti matek. V románech *A Sicilian Romance* a *Frankenstein* jsou téměř všechny postavy matek v textu nepřítomny či jsou vyličeny jako ženy pasivní, jakoby jejich nepřítomnosti chtěly autorky zdůraznit patriarchální převahu tehdejší společnosti. V dílech dvacátého století jsou postavy matek v textu přítomny a významnou měrou se podílejí na dějové zápletce. Tato změna je zcela zřetelná a spolu s ní dochází k opačnému posunu postav otců, kteří jsou v románech osmnáctého a devatenáctého století aktivně přítomní, kdežto ve století dvacátém se prakticky nevyskytují. V každém z uvedených děl je také patrná vzájemná spolupráce žen, zejména v *A Sicilian Romance* je tento jev nejvýraznější.

V kapitole nazvané „Nature and Women“ se práce věnuje jistému zvláštnímu spojení, které je v gotických románech úspěšně vepsáno, mezi přírodou a ženskými charaktery jednotlivých postav. Není náhodou, že i v jiných kulturách je příroda od nepaměti

označována za matku a tudíž rodu ženského. Jelikož se tato práce snaží věnovat zejména ženskému elementu v rámci gotické literatury reprezentované vybranými díly, není možné toto spojení mezi přírodou a ženou opomenout. Jednak se tato část zabývá jistým druhem fascinace přírodou u ženských postav a jednak poukazuje na skutečnost, že příroda je povětšinou všem ženám jakousi nezlomnou oporou a zdrojem útěchy, síly i ženskosti samé. Není tedy pochyb, že příroda jako taková je i v gotických románech velmi zajímavým a silným elementem, který, díky svému silnému spojení s ženskostí, ovlivňuje myšlenkové pochody, činnosti a reakce jednotlivých postav napříč stoletími.

Pátá kapitola „Features of Femininity“ se věnuje typickým znakům a projevům ženskosti. Samotný termín „femininity“ je velmi těžké definovat, protože jak lze jednoduše a výstižně definovat to, co dělá ženu ženou? Nicméně jsme se o to v této kapitole pokusili a to i přes skutečnost, že jsme si vědomi velmi subjektivního rázu jakékoliv definice tohoto termínu. Hlavním cílem této části je najít, popsat a v souvislostech analyzovat typické znaky „ženskosti“ v jednotlivých dílech gotické literatury psané ženskými autorkami, samozřejmě s neodmyslitelným přihlédnutím k ženským postavám v jednotlivých dílech. Dalším důležitým faktorem, jenž úzce souvisí s ženskostí samou, je způsob, jakým jednotlivé postavy žen, dam, děvčat, princezen apod. – pokud vůbec – využívají těchto znaků „ženskosti“ jako předností či naopak jsou díky nim nějakým způsobem předurčeny k jistým rolím. Do značné míry celá tato kapitola vychází ze zažitých stereotypů o ideálu ženy a muže, jejich klasických rolí a generového rozdělení společnosti, přičemž všechny tyto prvky doznaly v průběhu století jistých změn, jenž jsou zcela evidentně prezentovány i v rámci jednotlivých ženských postav ve vybraných románech a povídkách. Samotná struktura kapitoly je na této skutečnosti založena, jelikož první část se věnuje faktoru nepřítomnosti ženského prvku v textu jako nejvyššímu možnému znaku ženskosti, druhá pak víceméně tradičním

názorům na znaky „ženskosti“ u ženských románových postav a třetí svým způsobem poukazuje na fakt, že se ženské postavy postupně začaly vyobrazovat jako postavy využívající svých předností k dosažení svého cíle, ať už je jakýkoliv.

V následující kapitole pojmenované „Features of Feminism“ se opět věnujeme rozboru všech představených literárních děl, ale tentokrát z feministického úhlu pohledu. Opět zde nastává problém v tom, jak přesně vymezit, popsat a chápat termín feminismus. Pro naši analýzu byla zvolena ta nejširší možná definice tohoto termínu, jelikož rozbor samotný se věnuje jednotlivým, někdy až extrémním a záměrně přehnaným, projevům ženských postav gotických příběhů, které by mohli v kontextu doby a textu samotného být považovány za určité projevy feministických myšlenek jednotlivých autorek. Stejně jako u předchozí kapitoly i tato poukazuje na silné charakterové odlišnosti, které svým postavám jednotlivé spisovatelky propůjčují a tyto odlišnosti jsou popisovány v rámci reflexe vývoje myšlenkového hnutí za ženská práva.

Další kapitola se možná trochu překvapivě zabývá mužskými postavami, jak je ztvárnily jednotlivé autorky ve svých gotických dílech. I přesto, že celá práce je výhradně zaměřena na ženské prvky gotického románu, není možné zcela vynechat mužský prvek z celé analýzy. Naopak možná právě pro její charakter je nutné, aby padla i zmínka o mužských postavách a jejich kvalitách v jednotlivých textech reprezentujících odlišná časová období. Je to právě tento mužský element gotických románů, který čtenářům pomáhá zcela jasně popsat a rozeznat jednotlivé charakteristiky ženských postav. Navíc nesmíme zapomenout na fakt, že autorky gotických příběhů do jisté míry využívaly některých fantaskních prvků tohoto žánru, aby ve své době docela otevřeně psaly o věcech, jež nebyly zrovna na denním pořádku u ostatních románových či povídkových žánrů. Většinou se mezi tyto věci týkaly různých vztahů, v nichž nemalou roli sehrávali i mužské postavy. Samozřejmě, že se tato skutečnost týká především gotických

románů z 18. a 19. století ale ani ve 20. století a jeho komplikovaném literárním vývoji tento fakt úplně neztrácí svoji relevantnost. Dalším nesporně zajímavým faktorem, který nás přivádí k rozboru mužských postav v práci věnované převážně ženám a ženskosti jako takové, je používání mužských pseudonymů autorkami zejména proto, aby na jejich práce nebylo pohlíženo už díky jejich autorství skrze pokřivenou čočku. Jak jsou vůbec mužské postavy vyloženy v ženou psaných gotických románech v kontrastu k ženským postavám? Existuje tedy mnoho důvodů proč se věnovat, i když jen ve zkratce, mužským postavám v gotických románech. Není překvapením, že většinou toto kontrastní srovnání s ženskými postavami vychází silně v neprospěch mužského elementu ve vybraných gotických románech.

Závěrečná kapitola shrnuje všechny poznatky uvedené v předcházejících částech této práce, dává je do souvislostí a tím tak prezentuje celistvý pohled na proměny ženských postav gotických románů v rámci několika historických etap zastoupených konkrétními díly vybraných autorek.

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Attachment 1.

Winterson's rule book about men:

1. "Men are easy to please but are not pleased for long before some new novelty must delight them.
2. Men are easy to make passionate but are unable to sustain it.
3. Men are always seeking soft women but find their lives in ruins without strong women.
4. Men must be occupied at all times otherwise they make mischief.
5. Men deem themselves weighty and women light. Therefore it is simple to tie a stone round their necks and drown them should they become too troublesome.
6. Men are best left in groups by themselves where they will entirely wear themselves out in drunkenness and competition. While this is taking place a woman may carry on with her own life unhindered.
7. Men are never never to be trusted with what is closest to your heart, and if it is they who are closest to your heart, do not tell them.
8. If a man asks you for money, do not give it to him.
9. If you ask a man for money and he does not give it to you, sell his richest possession and leave at once.
10. Your greatest strength is that every man believes he knows the sum and possibility of every woman."⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry* 32.

ANOTACE

Jméno a příjmení:	Kateřina Irglová
Katedra:	Anglistiky a Amerikanistiky (FF UP)
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Ema Jelínková PhD.
Rok obhajoby:	2010

Název práce:	The Development of Female Characters in Gothic Novels Written by Female Authors
Název v angličtině:	The Development of Female Characters in Gothic Novels Written by Female Authors
Anotace práce:	Práce se věnuje ženským postavám v gotických románech britských ženských autorek. Ann Radcliffe a román <i>A Sicilian Romance</i> representuje 18. století, Mary Shelley <i>Frankenstein</i> zastupuje gotický román 19.století, povídka Angely Carter "The Bloody Chamber" a román Jeanette Winterson <i>Sexing the Cherry</i> pro 20.století . Hlavním cílem práce je nastínit vývoj a důležitost ženských postav v jednotlivých gotických knihách z historického hlediska.
Klíčová slova:	Gothic Literature, Female Gothic, Ann Radcliffe, <i>A Sicilian Romance</i> , Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , Angela Carter, "The Bloody Chamber", Jeanette Winterson, <i>Sexing the Cherry</i>
Anotace v angličtině:	The thesis deals with female characters in gothic works written by British female authors. Ann Radcliffe and her novel <i>A Sicilian Romance</i> represents 18 th century, Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i> for 19 th century and Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber" and <i>Sexing the Cherry</i> written by Jeanette Winterson that contributed to gothic fiction in 20 th century. The work tries to draw the development and significance of the female characters in the presented works from historical perspective.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Gothic Literature, Female Gothic, Ann Radcliffe, <i>A Sicilian Romance</i> , Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , Angela Carter, "The Bloody Chamber", Jeanette Winterson, <i>Sexing the Cherry</i>
Přílohy vázané v práci:	1
Rozsah práce:	76
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina