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Bakalářská práce

Vliv tradice anglického gotického a viktoriánského románu na současnou dětskou literaturu

The Influence of English Gothic and Victorian novel on the Contemporary Children's Literature

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Ráda bych poděkovala své vedoucí bakalářské práce PhDr. Alici Sukdolové, Ph.D. za inspirativní podněty, doporučení, cenné rady a připomínky a v neposlední řadě za rychlou komunikaci během náročné doby.

ANOTACE

Cílem práce je představit dílo autorky americké dětské literatury Maryrose Wood, která se ve své současné tvorbě pro dětské čtenáře zabývá návazností anglické tradice gotického románu na současnou dětskou prózu. Práce v úvodu představí autorku a v následující kapitole se pokusí charakterizovat anglický gotický román, jeho témata, hlavní znaky a motivy, a jeho návaznost v kontextu viktoriánské tradice. Prostřednictvím srovnávací analýzy románu Jane Eyre Charlotty Bronte a příběhů série The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place (Maryrose Wood, 2010-2018) se práce zaměří na motivy gotické literatury a jejich transformaci v současné dětské próze. Součástí práce bude kapitola věnovaná prostředí gotického románu a jeho proměnám v současné dětské próze.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this bachelor thesis is to present the work of the American author of contemporary children's literature Maryrose Wood, who in her contemporary work for child readers deals with the connection of the English tradition of Gothic and Victorian novel and contemporary children's literature. The first chapter will focus on introducing the author and in the next chapter will attempt a characterization of English Gothic novel, its themes, main characteristic and motifs and its connection in the context of Victorian tradition. Using comparative analysis on the novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte and stories from the series The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place (Maryrose Wood, 2010-2018) the thesis will focus on motifs of Gothic literature and their transformation in contemporary children's prose. The thesis will include a chapter dedicated to space and environment of Gothic novel and its transformation in contemporary children's prose.

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INTRODUCTION

Maryrose Wood is an American author of contemporary children's literature who gently introduces a child reader of the 21st century to the genre and the literary tradition of the Gothic novel.

There is not much information about her personal life available, but her writing life is very prolific. Her style is engaging and attractive, her narration is interweaved with advice and lessons yet she manages to make it funny and entertaining for children in the modern era. Her characters come across as contemporary, even though they were inspired by some characters from books that are over two centuries old.

In the first part of the bachelor thesis, I would like to introduce Maryrose Wood as an author and her biography with a focus on The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place. In the following chapters I would like to attempt a characterization of English Gothic novel, its themes, main characteristic and motifs and its cultural and social connection in the context of Victorian tradition.

The second part of the bachelor thesis would be dedicated to a comparative analysis on the novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte and stories from the first three books from the series The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place by Maryrose Wood. The aim is to research possible transformation of selected motifs that are characteristic for the Gothic novel and the setting of Wood's fiction.

MARYROSE WOOD

Biography

Unlike many contemporary authors, Maryrose Wood does not share much information about her personal life. She grew up in the suburbs of Long Island, New York.¹

Being interested in acting, she moved to New York City, where at the age of 17 she started studying acting. She took part in the chorus of a Broadway musical Merrily We Roll Along by Stephen Sondheim and George Furth, which flopped and then became beloved.²

She studied film and television writing at the New York University and comedy writing and improvisation with The Groundlings (a comedy troupe and school). She spent her time acting, directing, playwriting and working at comedy clubs. Her playwriting for musical theatre was successful and earned her a victory of the Richard Rodgers Award, administered by the American Academy of Arts and Letters three times. She taught fiction writing at CUNY-Lehman College and NYU's Gallatin School.³

Regarding the main focus of the thesis, Maryrose Wood is best known for her children's prose. The most fame was brought to her through the series The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place about three raised-by-wolves pupils and their teenaged governess.⁴ This series has six books many of which appeared on "Best Children's Books of the Year" lists from NPR, *Christian Science Monitor, Kirkus,* and others. They've been Junior Library Guild selections and received multiple starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly, Kirkus Reviews, School Library Journal,* and *Booklist.*⁵

⁵ Ibid.

¹ *Maryrose* Wood. https://maryrosewood.typepad.com/about.html

² Ibid.

³ Maryrose Wood. https://www.maryrosewood.com/about

⁴ Ibid.

Nowadays she offers "in-depth training for writers through Path of the Storyteller, a comprehensive online course in writing fiction "⁶ via her website and she serves on the faculty of the Stony Brook Children's Literature Fellows program. Apart from that she is working of new projects for publishing, television, and film.⁷

Maryrose Wood's Works of Children's Fiction

Maryrose Wood is mostly known for her children's book series, but she writes novels that are not part of any series, for example her first novel Sex Kittens and Horn Dawgs Fall in Love, which was published in 2006. Other novels of hers are My Life: The Musical (2008) and Alice's Farm, A Rabbit's tale which was published on September 1st 2020 in the USA. The first two novels are more suitable for young teenagers but her upcoming novel is recommended for readers aged 8 and up.⁸

Her series about Morgan Rawlinson are written for young adult readers. This series consists of three books which are about Morgan Rawlinson's life. Morgan is a high schooler, who apart from trying to figure out what to do with her life also interacts with the supernatural world of fairies and other creatures. The books are called: Why I Let My Hair Grow Out (2007), How I Found the Perfect Dress (2008) and What I Wore to Save the World (2009).

The Poison Diaries is a series of two books written by Maryrose Wood and The Duchess of Northumberland. The first book is simply called The Poison Diaries (2010) and the second one is The Poison Diaries: Nightshade. The books are focusing on sixteen-year-old Jessamine Luxton's life. One can see, that it is a running theme, typical for Maryrose Wood to set her series around one fairly young girl's life.

⁶ Maryrose Wood. https://www.maryrosewood.com/about

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Alice's Farm: A Rabbit's Tale. https://www.maryrosewood.com/alices-farm-a-rabbits-tale

Last but not least is her series about The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place. The basic information about this series can be found in the chapter The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place.

"Her personal essays and short fiction appear in Recycle This Book: 100 Top Children's Book Authors Tell You How to Go Green (Random House), Dear Bully: 70 Authors Tell Their Stories (HarperCollins), Who Done It? (Soho Teen), and Starry-Eyed (Running Press)."⁹

The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place

Maryrose Wood has written six books about the Incorrigible Children. This mystery series is based around the lives of Alexander, Beowulf, and Cassiopeia, children whose origin is unusual, considered they were brought up by wolves in the woods around Ashton Place in England. These children experience many adventures with their governess, Miss Penelope. Some of the books were listed in Christian Science Monitor Best Books of 2010, Kirkus Best Books of 2010 and NPR Best Books of 2015 as it was mentioned earlier.¹⁰

The first book The Mysterious Howling, published in 2010, introduces us to Miss Penelope and also gives us some background about her life. We get to know the children, who were given their names by their founder, Lord Ashton. Miss Penelope, a 15-year-old governess is given a task to tame the children down, because they have canine tendencies and Lord Ashton's wife is not willing and capable to work on improving the children's behaviour.

In the second book The Hidden Gallery (2011), the children and Miss Penelope travel to London, where they meet Simon, a playwright, who befriends them (and also appears in other books). More of Miss Penelope's past is uncovered apart from exploring London.

⁹ Maryrose Wood. https://www.maryrosewood.com/about

¹⁰ The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place. https://www.maryrosewood.com/the-incorrigible-childrenof-ashton-place

The third book The Unseen Guest (2012) is set in Ashton Place again and the children get to meet Lord Ashton's mother and her suitor, who is interested in ostrich racing. The children have to spend some time in the woods and their governess is worried about how it might influence the children.

In the last three books, The Interrupted Tale (2013), The Unmapped Sea (2015), and The Long-Lost Home (2018), the children as well as Miss Penelope overcome the difficulties they are facing. More information about the curse of the Ashton family is revealed as the series is coming to an end. In The Interrupted Tale Miss Penelope fights for her alma mater and her position as governess. The Unmapped Sea introduces the Babushkinov family, while Lord Ashton and his family are in Brighton on a seaside holiday. The Babushkinov children are wild and it seems to be a big coincidence that two sets of "wild" siblings happened to be in the same place, at the same time. The Long-Lost Home is "an action-packed conclusion of the series, mysteries are solved and long-lost answers are found. Only one question remains: Will Penelope and the Incorrigibles find a way to undo the family curse in time?¹¹

¹¹ The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place, https://www.maryrosewood.com/the-incorrigible-childrenof-ashton-place

ENGLISH GOTHIC NOVEL

From the cultural context of the 18th century onwards, the Gothic itself has many styles and forms as a genre. "A genre isn't like a box in which a group of texts all neatly fit and can be safely classified; there is no essence or a single element that belongs to all Gothics."¹² It originated in the eighteenth century in Britain but we can trace it to postmodernist representations. Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe were the founders of the Gothic tradition. They and other authors writing Gothic novels in the 18th century were not understood by the critics, who called their work "unending torrent of popular trashy novela."¹³ People at the time of Enlightenment fancied literature that showcased good morals and rational understanding, was instructive rather than entertaining and overall praised the classical values. "The first mention of "Gothic", as pertaining to literature, was in the subtitle of Horace Walpole's story The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story which was supposed to have been meant by the author as a subtle joke. The term "Gothic" was used in a way meaning barbarous as well as deriving from the Middle Ages."¹⁴

In the eighteenth century, there was a strong link connecting medieval romances, the ideas of chivalry and adventure, and the tales that were later labelled as Gothic. "Gothic excesses and transgressions repeatedly return to particular images and particular loci."¹⁵ However, that does not mean that Gothic novel is written using the same pattern. Moreover, "many cultures perceive some of the reoccurring figures and images differently, based on how their fears and fantasies are projected."¹⁶

Some of the major Gothic writers were Horace Walpole, later Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and Bram Stoker. "Elements of Gothic fiction prevailing in several 19th-

¹² BOWEN John, Gothic motifs, https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs

¹³ BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996., p.22

¹⁴ KENNEDY, Patrick. *Gothic Literature*. thoughtco.com/gothic-literature-2207825.

¹⁵ BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996., p.20

¹⁶ Ibid., p.20

century classics, including books by Mary Shelley, Charlotte Brontë and Victor Hugo"¹⁷, among others.

Themes and motifs in Gothic novel

Gothic novel has many themes and motifs. In this thesis, only the ones that are relevant to Ch. Brontë's Jane Eyre and M. Wood's The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place series are mentioned.

First, the overall atmosphere is mysterious, spooky even though some parts of the story can be romantic. It is connected with the setting, which is mentioned later. Usually there is some kind of mystery or unknown or unexplained elements which causes that the reader does not know, where the story is heading and what is going to happen.

One of the many themes in Gothic novels is death. The death often deeply affects at least one person which can result in people going insane. Often the person that dies had a loving relationship with the person who survived. The idea of death is often connected with murder and how guilt can influence the murderer's life. This theme can be found for instance in The Tell-Tale Heart written by Edgar Allan Poe, where the heartbeat of the dead man drives the killer insane, so that he confesses to the policemen.

Another significant theme is the presence of a supernatural entity. This entity can be a ghost, a vampire, a werewolf, an undefined power or another mystical creature. The supernatural presence brings a sense of mystery and sometimes helps the reader with explaining why something happened the way it did, because the supernatural is often connected with magic. Often the entities are nocturnal, which helps to create a spooky atmosphere. Each of the entities has a given set of characteristics, e.g. werewolves turn into their wolf-like forms during full moon. These days there is a psychological disease called lycanthropy. A person suffering from this disease perceives himself as an animal, mostly a wolf. This theme can be found in Bram Stoker's Dracula, where that supernatural entity are vampires. Lycantrophy in literature works with the theoretical

¹⁷ KENNEDY, Patrick. *Gothic Literature*. thoughtco.com/gothic-literature-2207825

presence of a mythological creature and focuses on the belief in the supernatural transformation of a man into an animal.

Family mystery is another reoccurring theme. The whole household or some members hide some terrible secret that they do not want other people to know. The mystery is connected with the life of the family before the reader gets to know them or it can be a curse. Usually, the main protagonist is intrigued by this mystery and wants to get to the bottom of it although the members of the family repel him or her from it. In case of Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë, the mystery that everyone is hiding from Jane is the madwoman in the attic. The madwoman, Bertha Mason is Mr. Rochester's first wife, who suffers from a mental illness due to her genetic predisposition.

Closely related motif is mental illness. Often referred to as madness or insanity. In early Gothic literature, madness tends to be connected with the moral failing of a character. There are many great examples in the works of Edgar Allan Poe. In his story The Tell-Tale Heart we encounter a narrator, who in the beginning, insists that he is sane, but as the story continues one can see from a first-person perspective, how guilt works on his mind. The narrator's mind changes and the line between victim and villain becomes more and more blurry as he becomes crazy from hearing the heartbeat. In the Victorian era madness was usually connected with female characters, especially in the form of "hysteria", which brings us back to Bertha from Jane Eyre. One can see, that women were portrayed as a pure, beautiful almost angelic creatures or frightful monsters and nothing in between.

Omens are popular motifs in Gothic novels. They can taky many forms, such as card readings from gypsies, spiritual seances with supernatural presence (ghosts), dreams etc. They often foreshadow upcoming events or give the reader an insight into a character's mind and also help to raise fear within the reader. For instance, Jane Eyre from the book of the same name, has dreams that foreshadow the future without giving away the details. The reader anticipates that something is going to happen and the suspense starts building up. But most of the times Jane does not do anything about the omen, except from acknowledging it.

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Another element, typical for Gothic novel are frightening animals. They can be black cats, owls, wolves, ravens, crows or toads. They often carry a symbolic meaning and are a frightening element adding to the spooky atmosphere. In The Black Cat by E. A. Poe, the black cat is a symbol of the narrator's guilt. Animals can be also used for pointing out animalistic or inhuman behaviour of characters.

Romance in Victorian Gothic novel frequently uses the Byronic hero as the main male love interest. Byronic heroes are often arrogant, moody but intelligent rebels or outcasts standing at the edge of society, often haunted by their past. Although Byronic hero has many flaws and sometimes resembles villain rather than the hero, the heroine tries to help him in hope for their romantic relationship to become normal. Great example of such hero is Heathcliff from Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë. Heathcliff is an orphan who growing up falls in love with his stepsister Catherine. She rejects him for a wealthier man and he never recovers from the rejection. He abuses people around him, is seeking revenge not only on people who hurt him but their children, yet the reader is able to feel sorry for him. It is worth noting that the main male love interest does not have to have all the characteristics of the Byronic hero.

Next motif which is connected to romance is loveless marriage. In many Gothic novels people are getting married or got married only for money or for improving their social status. In some cases, they decided on their own, in others they were pushed into marrying by their family. Some are still satisfied, because they either got what they wanted (money, status) or they do not realize that they are in this situation (e.g. the madwoman from Jane Eyre). People who were unhappy in their marriage still lived together, because divorce was not an option. Still marriage is something valuable and the idea of two people living together as a romantically involved couple is unacceptable.

The aristocratic family is a common motif in Gothic novels. The noble family often lives in a nice castle or mansion, is rich and reputable, but under the surface often lie decayed and atrocious morals. What is even worse that the family is usually highly dysfunctional and has big issues. Some of those can be insanity, inbreeding and isolation. Those problems can be found for instance in Poe's The Fall of the House of

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Usher. The Usher family lives in the middle of nowhere and the last two members suffer from several medical conditions. The authors can be pointing out that trying not to dilute the blue-blood lines is a sign of the decay of old aristocracy and therefore their decadence.

In Victorian Gothic novels, the protagonist is often female. She slowly becomes liberated from the older system that divided female characters into two groups- pure, angelic ladies in distress and shameless monsters. When the heroine is also the narrator the reader gets to see, that a woman can be more than a pretty face that serves her husband. There are some female characters that are young and very appealing to men, e.g. Lucy Westenra from Dracula. Contrary there are young female characters which are smart, usually coming from the indigent family (if they even have one). An example is Jane Eyre. Both have their great qualities which make an impression on the male lead character. Especially female writers used the Gothic to explore feminine and sexual aspects, which was not very common. The key symbol of Gothic feminine character is the madwoman in the attic in Jane Eyre. She is not the stereotypical female character, because she starts as a young beautiful lady from a good family, but she becomes a burden that everyone has to tolerate.

Absent parents or at least mother is another common motif. Usually, the heroines are orphans who sometimes have relatives that do not care about them and want to get rid of them, because they prefer their own children over the poor orphan. "This trope is already clearly established in the first major Gothic novel, The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole. In Otranto, the heroine Isabella is assumed to be an orphan, although her father Frederic is revealed to be alive toward the end of the novel."¹⁸ Absent parents create the sense of loneliness, uncertainty, which can make the heroine more susceptible or vulnerable. (The reader tends to get more emotionally invested in the story.) It can be a reflection of Victorian fear of anything else than the traditional family unit.

¹⁸ *Gothic Tropes: Absent Mothers—A Mother's Day Post.* https://www.thegothiclibrary.com/gothictropes-absent-mothers-a-mothers-day-post/#more-617

Another Victorian Gothic aspect of the life of the Victorian society and upper class is a character of a governess. Usually young, intelligent females who were brought up in an institute, where they got their education. Often, they are orphans, but even when they have some living relatives, the relatives do not want to do anything with them. The governess is employed by an upper-class family, because it was not suitable for the lady of the house to educate her own children. "When Victorian authors wanted to write a novel about a young woman, it made sense for her to be a governess. Just like an orphan, the governess had to make her own way in the world, travelling alone far from home, with no resources to call upon if things went wrong. Her status as a 'lady' allowed her to mix in the best circles, but the fact that she worked meant that she also encountered all sorts of people and situations that would have been far-fetched for a girl who lived with her parents. The governess was a blank slate onto which all possibilities were open, so that novelists could write any plot that they wanted."¹⁹

In the course of the Victorian era, next big theme is science. We cannot understand it in the same sense that we do now. "The centre of science was transformation, either from one form of energy to another one or from one species into another."²⁰ For instance, in Frankenstein (by Mary Shelley), Frankenstein the monster which is a hideous creation tries to fit into the human society. Firstly, we can see the transformation from something non-living into something living. Secondly, after the monster realises that the society will not accept him, there is a shift (transformation) in his feelings which causes him to seek revenge against Victor, his creator. When the authors wrote about something scientific, they often used only the basic concepts and then they used their creativity to finish the rest, so what they've written is a partial fiction. But what is important that they created characters that were intrigued by science and its possibilities. Sometimes it resulted in a clash of science and religion in the 19th century poetics.

¹⁹ HUGHES Kathryn. *The figure of the governess*. https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-figure-of-the-governess

²⁰ BAKER, William a Kenneth Womack. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002., p. 111

Religion, as a theme is often questioned. In some books there are characters from clergy, who have questionable morals, to say the least. It is how religion influences characters, which is vital. The way God is perceived changes. He is not the almighty omnipresent entity who watches people every minute of their lives anymore. His powers seem limited and often are contained in an object- crucifix, etc. and he acts only when someone cries for him or he gives signs, ideas, feelings or an inner voice. For example, in Frankenstein, Victor cries for God to give him the strength to destroy his monstrous creation. The characters decide on their own, it is not God or fate that makes the important decisions. Religion itself can be questioned whether it is still relevant. All that said, the characters still possess some kind of faith or trust in God, they just might question their faith, but that does not mean that they stop believing, it is more like making sure that they do not blindly trust everything. In Anne and Charlotte Bronte's books the reader can find an interesting idea- "...that a human love that does not harmonize with God's law, and thus offends against the highest love, is never allowed to fructify in the fiction of the Brontës..."²¹ which gives the reader a different point of view while reading their books.

Setting

The setting plays an important role in Gothic literature. Mainly it establishes the overall atmosphere. Most of the times, the story is set in a (gloomy) place with dark, mysterious and even scary atmosphere. The locations are in remote, uninhabited places or at least not so close to other dwellings. Examples of such places can be castles, ruins, abbeys, caves, churches, graveyards, dense woods, large estates (e.g. family mansion), isolated houses, etc. Those places usually have an evil element connected to them. This element often has a tendency to cause harm.

The idea of those places might be creating the sense of loneliness or unsettling, threatening feeling which is linked to the unknown. The characters are in an isolated, scary place, many times without any means of getting help, so the reader knows that something bad might happen (which usually does). On top of that the writer might use

²¹ BAKER, William a Kenneth Womack. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002., p. 259

a personification to make the setting even scarier. All those feelings and thoughts that the setting provokes in the reader builds a suspense and tension, making the story more interesting to read.

"There are some elements which the locations often share. For instance, architectural features, one can encounter towers, trapdoors, mysterious halls, tunnels and more. Other elements are flickering candles, manuscripts, books, suits of armour, lights going on and off without a reason, portraits of ancestors (sometimes their eyes are moving) and more. In those locations can be heard sounds like rattling of chains, footsteps, creaking and slamming doors and crazed laughter."²²

The scary atmosphere of the setting is often enhanced by the nature. The weather is unpleasant, storms with lightnings, howling wind, fog or intense rain occur frequently. Plants can cast weird shadows and crackling of branches can cause that someone might think he is being followed. Animals can make the characters shiver only by existing and making sounds that are normal, e.g. fluttering bats, cawing of ravens or crows, distant howling or hooting.

²² GODMAN, Jane. *Setting in the Gothic Novel*. https://janegodmanauthor.com/setting-in-the-gothic-novel/

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE VICTORIAN TRADITION

The Position and Role of a Governess

During the Victorian era, having a governess was a standard for an upper-class household (even a richer section of middle-class household followed their example in the 19th century). The ability to employ a governess was a status symbol meaning the family was financially secure, thus wealthy people from lower social circles often employed governesses in order to show off their wealth.

A governess was usually a lady from a middle-class family. When her family found itself in a bad financial situation whether it was due to a failed business, perhaps the father or brother losing their job, the lady was in need of money. Due to being raised a s a lady, it would be humiliating to get a job as a servant or even worse, work in a factory. Often the only option was to get a job as a teacher either in a private household or in school. "Their salary was 25 pounds (\$3,000 in today's money) per year. Due to this, they became very poor before them reaching their 40's. As a way to put a stop to the Governesses' Benevolent Institution was set up in 1841 to help them with pensions."23 Alongside with the salary, a governess living in the household had her bed, sometimes even a room in the house (for the time being) and a board. It was hard to earn living this way, because the governess was usually needed for a couple of years, so "in the 1840's the Governesses' Benevolent Institution was set up to create a register of employment to reduce the risk of exploitation by unscrupulous employers, and in 1885 that The Lady magazine came into being with its advertisements for domestic service and childcare."24 Other ways of finding employment included recommendation (by a former employer) or through the newspapers. A governess was expected to dress modestly although she was supposed to look better than a regular servant. "Around 1880 the dress was formalized and it included a long, plain skirt, usually grey or black, boots and a wide belt, a blouse buttoned up to the neck, along with a shawl and

²³ What is a governess? What was role of Victorian governess?. http://victorian-era.org/what-is-a-governess.html

²⁴ GRACE, Evie. What was life like a Victorian governess? .

https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2018/what-was-life-like-as-a-victorian-governess.html

bonnet for outside wear. Hair was usually scraped back into a tight bun and secured firmly under a net."²⁵ Since a governess paid for her own clothes, she took great care of them.

Governesses employed in private households were responsible for educating her pupils. They mostly taught girls since it was common for boys at the age of eight²⁶ to attend school, for instance Eaton. The youngest children were taught "the three Rs", standing for reading, writing and arithmetic. In addition to that, complex languages were an important part of education. Slightly older girls were trained in so called accomplishments. Those ranged from speaking French to dance, playing the piano etc. Those skills were needed in order to capture eligible suitor's attention. Governesses were also in charge of pupil's moral upbringing. This included reading the Bible, praying, indoctrinating moral code, for example not lying, being grateful, kind and polite. It was a common practise to hire a governess who was part of the same church as the family. That helped English governesses because most of the French ones were Roman Catholic and not protestant and same faith was more valuable for employers than the ability to teach a correct pronunciation. Also, a governess apart from being a lady and having the proper behaviour and values that the students could mimic, she had to teach young girls, how to show off while trying to make them good Christian women which might be a contradiction at times. It was not unusual for children to have closer relationship with a governess than with their own mother. That was caused by the amount of time the governess and the child spent together during the formative age.

Generally, life of a governess was lonely in the terms of finding her place within the household. On the one hand, she was not worthy enough to socialize in the family that employed her. On the other hand, since she was a lady, having a higher social background the other servants of the household did not want to befriend, because as

²⁵ What is a governess? What was role of Victorian governess?. http://victorian-era.org/what-is-a-governess.html

²⁶ HUGHES, Kathryn. *The figure of the governess.* https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-figure-of-the-governess

far as they were concerned, she thought she was better than them. Moreover, she was served a separate meal, often in the classroom, which meant more work for the staffgoing up and down the stairs, washing the dishes. "The governess often spent the evenings alone and she was sometimes expected to use the schoolroom as her sitting room. Life could feel very lonely: Charlotte Brontë tried to avoid going into her employers' sitting room in the evenings because she found it awkward to make conversation with people she didn't know very well."²⁷ Solitude made a governess unprotected and vulnerable to the often-unwanted attention of men both in and out of the household. Overall, relationships were a problem. It was hard to find a man to marry, because a governess was working most of the days. However, in some cases the gentleman of the house offered a marriage proposal to the governess although, it was more frequent that the gentleman wanted an intimate relationship while he was still married. This led to female employers to worry that the governess might try to seduce their husbands or sons. Interestingly, at that time advice books aimed at employers and employees regarding managing relationships were published. Especially young and pretty governesses could be a victim of an assault. Most of the times, it was hard to prove anything, but when there was a witness the court tried to solve the situation.

The Presence of Death and Its Manifestation

Death has always been a part of human life, but in the Victorian era it held a special place in people's lives, one can even say that people were obsessed with it. That is not surprising considering the fact that "in London, in 1830, the average life span for middle to upper-class males was 44 years, 25 for tradesman and 22 for laborers, 57 of 100 children in working class families were dead by five years of age".²⁸ Some of the common causes of death were pneumonia, tuberculosis, bronchitis and stillbirth.

Queen Victoria herself helped to draw more focus to death. After her husband, Prince Albert passed away, she mourned for 40 years. She popularized mourning attire,

²⁷ HUGHES, Kathryn. *The figure of the governess.* https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-figure-of-the-governess

²⁸ HUNTER, D. Lyn. A Victorian Obsession With Death. https://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2000/04/05/death.html

informing others that one is grieving using fabrics and colours. Typically, women's mourning dress consisted of plain, black dress, black caps and a black ribbon tied to the underwear. As the time passed, the dress could be changed for grey or some shades of violet one and a couple of flounces could be added to the skirt. Those changes helped to recognize how long was the person in mourning, because mourning dress was worn for up to two and a half years however with the mortality rates being high, mourning dress could be worn most of people's lives. Men's mourning dress was composed of a mourning coat and black bands on hats and later on black gloves were added.

Grief period was especially hard for women, because socialization was forbidden for the whole 28 months. They were expected to stay at home and they could not have visitors. Men on the contrary were able to work during mourning.

Since death was ever-present, Victorians came up with some coping mechanisms. It was important for them to bid farewell to their dying loved ones as well as hear their last words. "In fact, the use of narcotics was discouraged, to keep the dying as lucid as possible in the hopes of hearing a climatic testimony to the meaning of life."²⁹ At that time, it was popular to create so called Memento Mori, which were objects with a purpose of reminding a passed away loved one. Those objects ranged from sculptures, paintings, death masks to jewellery containing parts of a deceased one (e.g. a strand of hair). Another popular method of keeping a memory was photography. As photography became more popular and affordable, it was frequent for families to take a photo with or of a dead relative, whose body was arranged in a way that it looked like the person was sleeping. Sometimes the photo was painted over, so the dead one had blush on the cheeks and looked more alive or open eyes were painted over the actual closed ones to again, create an illusion of life. Superstitions came hand in hand with the coping mechanisms, some of the interesting ones were: "The dead were carried out of the house feet first to prevent the dead from beckoning another family

²⁹ HUNTER, D. Lyn. A Victorian Obsession With Death.

https://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2000/04/05/death.html

member to follow them. Or if you dream about a child being born, someone close to you will die."³⁰

Science and Religion

Even though in the Victorian times, there were many scientific discoveries and inventions, the era was mostly influenced by religion.

The biggest contribution to science that was in a way reflected even in literature was Charles Darwin's evolution theory. His book On the Origin of Species published in 1859 created a discussion among scientists and the church. During the Victorian era were invented things that are still in use, for example a postage stamp (1840) and a post box (1859). Henry Bessemer figured out how to turn iron into steel which made him into one of the key inventors of The Second Industrial Revolution. The first photography was taken in 1830s and the popularity of it skyrocketed during the Victorian era. Last, but not least was the invention of a telephone by Alexander Graham Bell that was patented in 1876. The Victorians worked on improving their houses, so that they would be more comfortable to live in. "The Victorians were the first to build housing on a society-wide scale that featured central heating, weather-tight windows and doors, indoor running water, and artificial lighting, either gas or electric."³¹ Some features, for instance artificial lights, were harder to have, when the house was not in a city. Features like central heating, indoor running water, etc. took less than a century to become a standard.

Surprisingly science and religion did not necessarily go against each other. People were very religious, but they were curious and questioned the literal biblical truths. They wanted to prove that Bible was a reliable source and for that they used scientific methods. Unfortunately, this effort caused some people to become atheists (which was something unheard of before). It made sense for Victorians to have strong faith,

³⁰ PENNINGTON, Jackie. *Victorian Superstitions : Why Death Was So Important*.

https://thepenningtonedition.wordpress.com/2014/05/09/victorian-superstitions-why-death-was-so-important/

³¹ TAYLOR, David. *Technology And The Victorian House*.

https://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~infocom/scndempr/essay.html

because death was almost part of their culture and Christianity gave them hope. When someone struggled through their life and the average life span was not long, the vision of getting to a better place if acting as a good Christian must have been appealing. Moral code was taken from the Bible (which served as a guide to life) and with morality being very valuable in Victorian times, the church had to come up with explanations for why bad things happened although people follow the path of righteousness. Moreover, England was "more tolerant towards Christians outside the Church of England (e.g. Catholics and Methodists) thanks to legislation changes in the 1820s"³². Still, the majority of Victorians were part of the Church of England (but most of the Scotsmen were Presbyterian).

The Position of an Aristocratic family

Nobility consisted of only a smaller percentage of the population, but it had its hierarchy. During her reign, Queen Victoria focused on the middle-class. "She appealed to the constantly growing middle-classes; reflecting their values and morality. Despite the middle-class virtues reflected by the Royal Family, the aristocracy still held sway throughout the nineteenth century"³³ (especially compared to the rest of Europe, mainly France that abandoned monarchy at the turn of the century). Carrying the right title was more important than wealth.

"Generally, the nobility was divided into two categories- the peers and the non-peers. The peerage had been hereditary and descended down the male line. The peer's category included people carrying titles like Duke and Duchess, Marquess and Marchioness, Earl and Countess, Viscount and Viscountess and finally Baron and Baroness. The title of Duke or Duchess is the highest title among the nobility and the title of Baron or Baroness holds the lowest rank. The non-peers include Baronet and Baronetess, whose titles are hereditary and the title of knighthood. Knights were not part of the aristocracy and their title was not hereditary."³⁴

³² Religion. https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/story-of-england/victorian/religion/

³³ ROSEN, Dr. Bruce. The Aristocracy. https://vichist.blogspot.com/2010/06/aristocracy.html

³⁴ Who is Who Is A Nobleman?. http://victorian-era.org/who-is-a-nobleman.html

Since the middle class was growing and a part of it managed to get even richer than the aristocracy, the aristocrats had to do something in order to keep their power and place in society. They would often marry their children to wealthy and successful entrepreneurs with middle class origins and they necessarily did not have to be British. For example, "Winston Churchill's father, William Randolph Churchill, married the daughter of wealthy American press tycoons."³⁵ Aristocratic way of living was what the rich middle class aspired to. In order to be more like the elite of society, the wealthy middle class sent their children to the well-known expensive boarding schools like Eton, married their offspring to aristocrats and attended the same social events.

The biggest events happened during "The Season", which took place every year starting in May and ending in the end of July. For those three months the family moved to London for the social life- theatre, dances and parties. The men could use the time in the City for work or socializing in the city clubs. For females "The Season" was very important, especially "coming out". That meant when a young lady (a debutante), who was eligible for marriage, was presented at Court. It was a special occasion for which the girls were preparing in advance. The preparations included learning the propter curtsy and other skills one needed in monarch's presence, getting the proper white gown dress made and more. Another part of "The Season" were balls.

"August to November was the shooting season, when lords moved to their country homes to shoot grouse or stags, and go fox-hunting. In the winter, many rich families went abroad. For the more adventurous younger adults of a richer family, there was the 'Grand Tour' of European sites and cities."³⁶

The aristocrats needed someone to take care of their houses. As the middle class wanted to imitate them, slowly, there was a need for servants. One way of resolving the issue was "rescuing" poor orphans, the family took them in, gave them some basic education and then made them work as servants. That might seem bad, but "children from lower class around the age of ten had to earn living as soon as possible and before that they helped in the house or on the farm or field. Those children were often

³⁵ The Victorian Aristocracy. https://www.kingsnews.org/articles/the-victorian-aristocracy

³⁶ Everyday life in the Industrial Era. https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z3x39j6/revision/2

employed as maids, gardeners, stable hands (if they got lucky) or they ended working in factories or mines."³⁷ A wealthy family with a large house would usually employ a housekeeper to supervise the rest of the servants and a main cook who was responsible for the kitchen.

³⁷ Victorian society. https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/the-victorians/victorian-society/

LITERARY ANALYSIS

The aim of the analysis is to show that The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place by Maryrose Wood were influenced by the tradition of the Victorian novel, namely by the novel Jane Eyre written by Charlotte Bronte in 1848. Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte and The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place by Maryrose Wood share several similarities, but also differ in many aspect that are going to be discussed in the following analysis. Since Jane Eyre is a Gothic novel and it influenced The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place, I would like to demonstrate how some of the Gothic motifs transformed or stayed the same in contemporary children's literature. Some of the common features are some similar characters (e.g. Jane and Penelope that are both young governesses) and the setting. Maryrose Wood is an American writer and she uses her detachment from the Victorian era to point out the criticism of mistakes or wrong doings of British aristocracy during the Victorian era. She was clearly inspired by Jane Eyre and the Victorian era, but she made some adjustments to make the story interesting for a child reader of the 21st century.

The Presence of Death

Charlotte Bronte and Maryrose Wood approached death in different ways.

The novel Jane Eyre written by Charlotte Bronte was heavily influenced by the author's own life. During her early childhood Charlotte lost her mother and two of her sisters. Unfortunately, her other siblings, sisters Emily and Anne and brother Branwell passed away a few years before she did. She got married a year before her own death and did not have any children. Similarly, the main protagonist of Charlotte Bronte's novel Jane Eyre, Jane Eyre's life was surrounded by death. Before the novel even starts, some of Jane's relatives pass away, namely her parents and her uncle Reed. When Jane is young, the people dying are important to her and care about her. Next person that dies is Helen, Jane's friend from school. Jane spent Helen's last night with her and woke up next to a dead body, which would traumatize a child, but it does not seem like it took a toll on Jane. This may be connected with Victorian's death obsession with last words. Based on their talk about God, it feels like Helen tried to pass her knowledge onto Jane. Other people that died were Jane's uncle Eyre, who left her money, and her

aunt Reed with her son John. Lastly, Mr. Rochester's first wife, Bertha committed suicide. Interestingly, not much is said about the characters that passed away from natural causes. The reader is not sure whether John Reed died because of his dangerous lifestyle or if he took his own life. However, in Bertha's case, the reader knows that she died by willingly jumping from a roof. In this case, her death is described shortly, yet detailly. *"…she yelled and gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement.*.' *'Dead?' 'Dead! Ay, dead as the stones on which her brains and blood were scattered.*.' *"*³⁸

Such description is definitely not suitable for children's literature. Young readers might sometimes think that a certain character is dead, for example Lord Ashton's father or perhaps Penelope's parents, but in the case of Lord Ashton senior, it seems that he is still alive and in fact he might be Lord Ashton's friend, Judge Quincy. So the characters in Maryrose Wood's children's fictional series are more frequently just absent from the story, or they disappear, rather than having been proclaimed dead.

To conclude, death in Jane Eyre is clear and ultimate. The reader knows that Jane's parents are dead, and also how Bertha died. In the Incorrigible series, death is more hinted and it is not certain whether the dead are actually dead or gone.

Supernatural entity

Corresponding with the sense of the Gothic, both Jane Eyre and The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place hint at a supernatural entity, which is used for creating mysterious or eerie atmosphere, although the types of entities are different.

Jane Eyre has two strong encounters with what at first seems like a supernatural entity. First, when she is young and living with her aunt and cousins, she thought that she was about to see a ghost of her dead uncle. She comments on it that now she knows, it was probably a lantern, but at that time she was scared and her fantasy was overworking. The second apparition occurred when she heard a voice calling her name. *"I might have said, 'Where is it?' for it did not seem in the room, nor in the house, nor the in the garden; it did not come out of the air, nor from under the earth,*

³⁸ BRONTE, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre* (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p. 518

nor from overhead. I had heard it- where, or whence, for ever impossible to know! And it was the voice a human being- a known, loved, well-remembered voice- that of Edward Fairfax Rochester; and it spoke in pain and woe, wildly, eerily urgently."³⁹ During this encounter she heard a voice and saw a ghostly shadow. In this case Jane did not have a logical explanation, but compared to the first experience, this one was somewhat pleasant.

It is worth noticing that Mr. Rochester sometimes calls Jane a fairy or a goblin. He does not call her that, because he thinks Jane is a mystical creature, rather he gives her an insight how enchanting she is in his eyes.

Being raised by wolves is a myth in the Anglo-American cultural context (see Kipling, The Jungle Book). Werewolves were popular in Victorian literature for they depict the animality of humanity itself. The whole Incorrigible series evokes a strong werewolf connection. The wolves which raised the children do not look and act like regular wolves. They are bigger and have better qualities than some humans. Lord Ashton's unusual behaviour indicates stereotypical werewolf signs. Later on, it is revealed that Frederick's father Edward struggled with the same issues, before his son was born. Some of those issues were: "… howling and barking and scratching, whenever the moon was full".⁴⁰ The werewolf indicating behaviour might be a curse, but this mystery is not solved in the first three books.

Family mystery

Jane Eyre and The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place are filled with mystery. They add to the mysterious atmosphere, but they are a key element of the story.

In the novel Jane Eyre, there are two mysteries concerning Bertha. The first one was keeping her unfortunate fate with a mental illness from Mr. Rochester, so that he would not find out before their marriage. That hurt his relationship with his father, which was not great to begin with. The second mystery was hiding Bertha and keeping

³⁹ BRONTE, Charlotte. Jane Eyre (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p. 507

⁴⁰ WOOD, Maryrose. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book III: The Unseen Guest*. HarperCollins, 2015, p.77

her away from people, especially Jane. The servants do not talk about Bertha and they lead Jane to think that Mrs. Poole is the one behind the weird sounds etc. "Good God! What a cry! The night- its silence- its rest, was rent in twain by a savage, a sharp, a shrilly sound that ran from end to end of Thornfield Hall. ... It came out of the third story; for it passed overhead. And overhead/ yes, in the room just above my chamberceiling- I now heard a struggle: a deadly one it seemed... 'All's right! – all's right!' he (Mr. Rochester) cried. ... 'A servant has had the nightmare; that is all. She's an excitable nervous person..."⁴¹ Jane is (to some extent) determined to find out the truth.

There is a difference between Jane and Penelope. Jane is non- actively trying to solve the mystery on her own, but Penelope gets hints from old Timothy, sometimes Simon helps her. And Miss Mortimer tells her not to look for answers, which is suspicious. *"Keep your curiosity within reason, and do not let your questions go overboard. Any further visits to the attic of Ashton Place, in particular, would be taking things much too far!"*⁴²

In the Incorrigible series three major family mysteries can be found. The first one concerns the origin of the children where the children actually came from (apart from the forest), who are their parents, why they ended up in the forest, how they managed to survive in wilderness, without being civilized (however that probably does not concern young readers). The second mystery is Penelope's origin. Are her parents alive and if so, who are they, where they are and why they abandoned her? And why her hair has the same colour as the children's? *"It (children's hair) was same color as her own natural, unpoulticed hair, and of Agatha Swanburne's, too. What could it mean?"*⁴³The last and probably most intriguing for a child reader is the curse connected with the mysterious howling. This mystery is being solved throughout the whole series.

⁴¹ BRONTE, Charlotte. Jane Eyre (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p. 245-246

⁴² WOOD, Maryrose. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book II: The Hidden Gallery*. HarperCollins, 2012, p. 310

⁴³ Ibid., p.288

Mental illness

The motif of a mad woman in Jane Eyre has been subject to literary criticism for decades⁴⁴. Bertha Mason, Mr. Rochester's first wife is struggling with a mental illness. Her life which is hugely influenced by her illness is basically a taboo. After her illness gets worse, Mr. Rochester's father tries to suppress the information, that his son is married to a mad woman. Later on, when Mr. Rochester moves Bertha to Thornfield, England, he tried to keep people from knowing. Only his servants knew and when Jane was coming to work for him, he ordered everyone not to talk about it and try, so that Jane knows as little as possible (preferably nothing).

Bertha's illness was hereditary. According to Mr. Rochester "her mother was crazy, her younger was a mute idiot and her older brother might end up badly as well"⁴⁵, which points out to the fact, that the family might have had genetic issues. Everyone accepted the idea, that there is nothing one can do to cure it.

In the Incorrigible Children books, there are some strange characters who behave in a weird way, but it does not look like a mental illness and the characters acting strangely are men, for example Lord Ashton. His behaviour is strange every four weeks, when he starts making weird sounds etc., but later on the reader learns that the cause of it might be a curse. That is more understandable for children than a psychiatric problem without a solution. Another possible strange character might be hidden in the attic, since the children bit a hole into a wall because they felt like someone or something was there. One of the possible explanations what or who that might be is the children's mother. In the first three books, it is not revealed what creature was really hiding in the attic.

Omens

Omens are often connected with mysteries and as many motifs common in Gothic novel, they can help with creating the right atmosphere, but also they can foreshadow the future events.

⁴⁴ See GILBERT, GUBAR. The Madwoman in the Attic

⁴⁵ BRONTE, Charlotte. Jane Eyre (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p. 368

In the novel Jane Eyre written by Charlotte Bronte, Jane is the one experiencing omens and visions. One of the strongest omens Jane has experienced was connected with the death of her cousin John Reed. "...during the past week scarcely a night had gone over my couch that had not brought with it a dream of an infant, which I sometimes hushed in my arms, sometimes dandled on my knee, ... I did not like this iteration of one ideathis strange recurrence of one image."46 As it was mentioned earlier, the Victorians believed when one dreamt about a child, someone they know was about to die. Another situation which can be perceived as an omen is when Mr. Rochester dressed up as a Gypsy and gives Jane small signs of their possible future: "Chance has meted you a measure of happiness: that I know. I knew it before I came here this evening. She has laid it carefully on one side for you. I saw her do it. It depends on yourself to stretch out your hand, and take it up: but whether you will do so, is the problem I study."47Last but not least, a significant omen is the chestnut tree. The night before Mr. Rochester and Jane's wedding, a lightning struck a chestnut tree on Thornfields grounds. It is the same tree under which Mr. Rochester proposed to Jane. She describes it as follows " ... the trunk, split down the centre, gasped ghastly. The cloven halves were not broken from each other, for the firm base and strong roots kept them unsundered below..."⁴⁸ The tree is a symbol of their relationship which also foreshadows their upcoming failed wedding and Mr. Rochester's injury. Although Jane leaves Thornfield and its owner, their relationship survives their separation. After they are brought back together, before Mr. Rochester proposes to Jane the second time, he tells Jane" I am no better than the old lightning-struck chestnut-tree in Thornfield orchard⁴⁹ meaning that he considers himself useless and she would waste her time with him, but she quickly disproves this idea.

In the Incorrigible series, there are many omens (the most important ones are connected with either Penelope or the children). Omens with mysteries, strangely

⁴⁶ BRONTE, Charlotte. Jane Eyre (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p. 263-264

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 238-239

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 331

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.538

acting animals and suspicious situations create the structure of the plot (whereas in Jane Eyre the plot is focused on Jane Eyre's life, especially her spiritual development) and are what the child reader is interested in. One of the omens is a warning from a Gypsy plainly stating: *"The hunt is on!"*⁵⁰ This warning appears throughout the series and since it is a broad statement it is not clear what hunt is the actual one (some of the "hunts" include actors going after the children or the pursuit in London etc.). Another omen might be the same hair colour of the children, Penelope and Agatha Swanburne, but that might be revealed in the books following the first three ones this thesis is concerned with. The same problem is regarding the Hixby's Guide, it has to be important since a man taking the same train as Penelope and the children tried to steal it and Simon confirmed that *"There are no Hixby's guides, of any kind, anywhere. Nobody's ever heard of them. What you've got there is sui generis."*⁵¹ To make it even more suspicious, the pictures do not match the description of the London sights. These two examples demonstrate how the books are connected.

Sinister animals

In Jane Eyre, there are not many references of sinister animals that occur in Gothic literature rather frequently. That is unusual for Gothic literature, for instance E.A. Poe used animals e.g. a raven as a symbol in his poem The Raven where the bird foreshadows the death of the lyrical subject and also deepens the mysterious atmosphere since black coloured animals in literature usually have a negative meaning connected to them. There are couple of times, when it is said that there are crows around Thornfield. I believe that crows only serve to emphasize the atmosphere, for example when Jane returns to Thornfield and finds nothing but ruins. *"The crows sailing overhead perhaps watched me..."*52

In comparison with Charlotte Bronte's novel, Maryrose Wood makes use of many animals in The Incorrigible Children series. The ones that could be classified as

⁵⁰ WOOD, Maryrose. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book II: The Hidden Gallery*. HarperCollins, 2012, p. 48

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 245

⁵² BRONTE, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre* (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p. 513

frightening are wolves. In the beginning they are scary, because the reader only knows that they exist and live in the woods surrounding Ashton Place. There is even an attempt to hunt them down. In the third book, it is revealed that the wolves are huge compared to regular ones. That can lead us to believe that there might be a connection with werewolves (for that see chapter Supernatural entity). Some of them that the reader gets to know better act smarter and are more affectionate than some humans (e.g. Mama Woof is more motherly towards the children compared to Lady Constance). The wolves love the children so much, that they are willing to help them and the people the children care about, even if it might cause them harm.

When Bertha, the ostrich escaped, the wolves helped with finding her and getting her and the children back to Ashton Place while Lord Ashton was on a hunt. *"Penelope... seized Mama Woof's thick fur with the other (hand). "Lord Frederick is on his way," she said, hauling herself onto the wolf's back. "Which means we must be on our way to the POE, and quickly." "Poe! Poe! Nevahwoo!" the children shouted, leaping onto their trusty wolf steeds. Mama Woof gave a stern series of yelps, and the other wolves took up the cry."⁵³*

Other animals that the children interact with are e.g. ostrich Bertha and a squirrel. Bertha gives the reason for the children to go back to the woods (that is her main purpose). Bertha might be an allusion to Bertha Mason in Jane Eyre, because when they escape, it always causes trouble which endangers other people in the household. The squirrel's function is to show how the children became tamer and more humanlike and also it is common in children's literature that children have an animal friend. Overall, animals are more characters that move the plot by their actions or are a reason for a certain situation whereas in Jane Eyre animals help to create an atmosphere but are not necessary for the plot.

⁵³ WOOD, Maryrose. The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book III: The Unseen Guest. HarperCollins, 2015, p. 197

The Sense of the Romantic Genre

Romantic relationships can be found in Jane Eyre and in The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place, but unsurprisingly both authors chose a different approach. However, the female protagonist is involved in the romance and has a shy attitude.

Jane Eyre found herself in a romantic relationship with her employer, Mr. Rochester. They come from different social circles, he is much older than her, he is more experienced and probably received better education. Although Mr. Rochester seems smarter and is financially secure, he finds some of Jane's features, for instance independence (in terms of her opinions and world view) admirable. In my opinion, Mr. Rochester can be classified as a Byronic hero, because he sometimes acts arrogantly and moody. He is not necessarily at the edge of society, but he critiques it and is sometimes disgusted by other people's behaviour. Their relationship is not built solely on physical attraction (they even tell each other that they see some flaws in their physical appearance), but on personality qualities. The two main protagonists of the novel Jane Eyre even tease each other, e.g. Jane leads Mr. Rochester to think that she is married or at least involved with St John Rivers, when she realises that she took it a bit far, she explains and even shows her emotions to make him feel better "Oh, you need not be jealous! I wanted to tease you a little to make you less sad: I thought anger would be better than grief. But if you wish me to love you, could you but see how much I do love you, you would be proud and content. All my heart is yours, sir: it belongs to you; and with you it would remain, were fate to exile the rest of me from your presence for ever."⁵⁴ In the end they are more equal, maybe Jane has the upper hand when Mr. Rochester struggles with his eyesight but when the couple are together, they make each other a better person.

In The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place series, Penelope's love interest is Simon Harley- Dickinson. They are about the same age; they have similar social background and both are good looking. Compared with Jane's relationship, Penelope and Simon's is mainly based on physical attraction and shared mystery that they are trying to solve. Simon helps and visits Penelope and the children, but the relationship is more

⁵⁴ BRONTE, Charlotte. Jane Eyre (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p.538

resembling a close friendship than a romantic relationship. Since the books are written primarily for children ages eight to twelve, it makes sense that Penelope's and Simon's relationship is not overly romantic, because that is not appealing for that age of child readers.

Loveless marriage

One of the tragic Gothic motifs is loveless marriage. The reasons behind getting married to a person without love is usually money, but the causes why the two people are not happy together differ.

The unhappy married couple in Jane Eyre is Mr. Rochester and Bertha Mason. Mr. Rochester was pushed by his family to marry Bertha, even though he did not know Bertha well and soon after the marriage he realised that his character was not compactible with Bertha's. In the beginning he admired her beauty, but after she showed her true personality and her mental illness progressed, he tried to spend as little time with her as possible. That is why he travelled and searched for love outside his marriage which is why he might be Adele's father. But in his own way, he cared about Bertha and respected her as a human being (that is why he did not want to cause her death), and that is probably the reason for hiring Grace Poole to take care of her. Yet he still craved a marriage where he could love the other person and be loved back. "Mr. Rochester flung me behind him: the lunatic (Bertha) sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled. ... He could have settled her with a well-planted blow; but he would not strike: he would only wrestle. At last he mastered her arms; Grace Poole gave him a cord, and he pinioned them behind her: with more rope, which was at hand, he bound her to a chair. ... 'That is my wife,' said he. 'Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know- such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! And this is what I wished to have' (laying his hand on my shoulder.)"55

Considering the relationship of the protagonists of the Incorrigible Children series, Lord Ashton and Lady Constance, it seems that they both had their own reasons why they

⁵⁵ BRONTE, Charlotte. Jane Eyre (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p.353

got married, however it is not directly said. Lord Ashton probably got married because it was something that was expected of a man his age and status. Lady Constance wanted a husband that could financially provide for her and likely to improve her social status. It is not surprising, considering her naïve nature that *"there are times when married life is not what I (Lady Constance) expected"*.⁵⁶ It seems that those two have nothing in common, no similar interests. Their attitudes are very different, for example "their" children. Lady Constance is not fond of them, she views them as a burden. Lord Ashton thinks of the children as if they were his possession, he does not care what happened before he found them, he wants to keep them and use them how he thinks fits. But he considers them his, in accordance with the phrase *"finders keepers"*⁵⁷He uses this phrase, which can be paraphrased as who finds something (because he does not acknowledge the children as something more than a property) is the rightful owner of the aforesaid thing, when someone tells him what to do with the children and he does not like the proposal.

The Lifestyle of an Aristocratic family

The employers of the governesses come from wealthy families that get together with people from higher social classes and also own several residences. Moreover, they have their servants who take care of their property. Both Mr. Rochester and Lord Ashton are sociable, attending events and hosting them as well.

Rochester's family has been wealthy for several generations. In order to accumulate even more wealth, Mr. Rochester's father forced his son to marry Bertha, who was rich and could provide a pleasant life (in terms of money) to Mr. Rochester. Mr. Rochester owns two residences, Thornfield Hall and Ferndean Manor, which together with his family history implies that he might be an aristocrat. However, he is called Mr. Rochester and not lord or duke, so it is not certain if Mr. Rochester is in fact part of aristocracy. In my opinion, he might be related to the rank of a Baronet (non-peers).

⁵⁶ WOOD, Maryrose. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book I: The Mysterious Howling*. HarperCollins, 2011, p.165

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.259

In comparison with the Rochesters, Ashtons have an established name. *"Ashton is an ancient and noble name. A name ripe with glorious history. A name with illustrious and, dare I say, wealthy associations."*⁵⁸ Also, Lord Ashton can afford renting residences in more lucrative places (e.g. in London) than Mr. Rochester. He is friends with members of society carrying titles such as the Earl of Maytag, a Baron and his wife. Those connections suggest that Lord Ashton's title was of higher level than Mr. Rochester's.

There is also a question of Jane Eyre's family background. It was known that her mother came from a wealthy family, but she married out of her social class and for that reason she was written out of the will. Jane's uncle from father's side died wealthy, but as it was indicated, he did not come from an aristocratic family. So, there is a possibility that Jane could have been from nobility if her mother married someone else.

Female protagonist- a governess

Both novels Jane Eyre as well as In The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place project a female protagonist who is a young governess. Jane's and Penelope's lives are similar in many aspects however there are some differences which are mainly caused by the writer's intentions to write a story appealing for a particular age group.

The way Jane's life is presented is mostly chronological. The reader gets to know Jane when she is ten years old. At that time, she lives with her aunt Reed and her cousins, because her parents passed away. She is not treated nicely and after she reproached her aunt for not keeping her promise to her late husband that she would treat Jane as her own, Jane is sent to Lowood Institution.

In Lowood, her quality of life improves in terms of relationships. The institute is for poor girls, often orphans and Jane spends her formative years there, getting her education. Afterwards she works there as a teacher. Miss Temple, a teacher who is in charge of Lowood Institute, firstly becomes a new motherly figure to Jane and later a friend.

⁵⁸ WOOD, Maryrose. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book I: The Mysterious Howling*. HarperCollins, 2011, p.82

Jane decided to find a new job, on her own and she quickly succeeded. She had only one student, Adele and was responsible for her education. Adele's French nurse was responsible for her overall well-being. The book does not go into a detailed description of their relationship and their classes, the main focus is on Jane's relationship with her employer, who turned out to be Mr. Rochester and not Mrs. Fairfax as Jane assumed from their correspondence.

There are several mentions about what a governess should look like etc. which correspond with the Victorian's way, for example: *"I dressed myself with care: obliged to be plain"*.⁵⁹ Jane knew she did not belong to the higher social circles and yet she was not a servant, however she was not alone in the household, Mrs. Fairfax considered her an equal- *"I am so glad you are come; it will be quite pleasant living here now with a companion. To be sure it is pleasant at any time; for Thornfield is a fine old hall, ….one feels dreary quite alone, in the best quarters. I say alone- Leah is a nice girl to be sure, and John and his wife are very decent people; but then you see they are only servants, and one can't converse with them on terms of equality; one must keep them at due distance for fear of losing one's authority.".⁶⁰*

Contrary to meeting Jane Eyre when she is a child living with her relatives, the reader meets Penelope when she is on her way to her fist job. Her story is told chronologically too, but there are more flashbacks, for instance about her childhood at school. In the beginning of the series, it is not certain, what happened to Penelope's family. All that is know is that her parents did not raise her, but no one knows if they are alive or not.

Penelope grew up at the Swanburne Academy, which was a school for poor bright females. She got her education there both of academic and philosophical nature. Like Jane, Penelope had a favourite teacher that she looked up to, Miss Mortimer who later became her friend and unlike Jane and Ms. Temple, they kept in touch after Penelope started working.

⁵⁹ BRONTE, Charlotte. Jane Eyre (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p.115

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.113

Miss Mortimer was the one, who helped Penelope to get her job, she found an advert and wrote a recommendation. The biggest difference between Jane and Penelope was their teaching situation. Penelope had three students and not only was she responsible for their education, she basically took care of them. The Incorrigibles did not know how to act human-like, so she had to teach them how to dress, how to talk and after that she could start passing on the information she learnt. The whole series is focused on Penelope and the children, mainly because the children were dependent on her. Apart from learning, they experience adventures which form the story.

Penelope struggled for a moment, while trying to find her own place. She knew she was socially below her employers, moreover Lord Ashton was hardly ever home and Penelope had nothing in common with Lady Constance. Penelope and the servants internally despised her. Also, Lady Constance made sure, that Penelope was perceived as an employee, when she gave a seamstress clear instruction about Penelope's dress for an upcoming ball. *"For you I (the seamstress) will make something 'governessy'. That is what Lady Constance has ordered. ...The dress will be modest and plain. You would not want to be mistaken for one of the guests, after all."*⁶¹Penelope could not be friends with other servants, because they knew that she was higher on the social scale. She spent most of her time with the children and if she wanted to talk to a friend, she had the option to write a letter to Miss Mortimer or Simon.

Science and Institutional Education

Science is not a noticeable motif in either Jane Eyre or The Incorrigible Children series. There are mentions of things that were newly invented or popular at that time, but the story does not focus on them. What the story partially focuses on is education, which is undoubtedly connected with science.

Jane Eyre received good foundations at the Lowood Institution as did every girl attending that school. Since Jane was intrigued by all the things she could study, she tried to gain more knowledge in areas that she found interesting. Some of those were

⁶¹ WOOD, Maryrose. The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book I: The Mysterious Howling. HarperCollins, 2011, p. 142

painting, drawing, languages and more. What she did not have and maybe that is the reason why Mr. Rochester was appealing to her were travel experiences.

Penelope's case is similar to Jane's, both were at the top of their class, they both enjoy reading. However, there is a slight difference between Jane and Penelope. Jane was genuinely interested in languages and arts (drawing), which Penelope was not (or at least it was not specified), but Penelope was interested in ferns. She considered herself to be an expert because "Penelope had once attended a lecture at Swanburne given by the deputy vice president of the Heathcote Amateur Pteridological Society."62 This shows, that Maryrose Wood does not make the characters as serious, which results in jokes, making the books more child-friendly. Maryrose Wood also uses funny situations to present valuable lessons to her readers. For instance, when Penelope is dealing with children's animal-like behaviour, she uses what she learnt before and wants to show gratitude- "I shall write Dr. Westminster separately to thank him; his animal training techniques have so far proven invaluable."63 Maryrose Wood sometimes uses well-known scientific methods and twists the truth in order to motivate her readers to study. A great example is when the Incorrigibles created a pie chart. "Penelope had left instructions for them to count how many pigeons landed in the branches of the elm tree outside the nursery window while she was out and to record the figures in what she unthinkingly called a PIE chart, by which she simply meant Pigeons In Elm. ... the children had simply understood their assignment to mean that the chart should be in the shape of a pie, complete with slices."64

Religion

In Jane Eyre, one of the first direct mention about religion is when Jane's friend Helen Burns is on her death bed. Helen tells Jane, that she is going home- to her last home, which is the eternity and that she is happy about it. She pleaded Jane to not mourn.

⁶² WOOD, Maryrose. The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book I: The Mysterious Howling. HarperCollins, 2011, p. 14

⁶³ Ibid., p.66

⁶⁴ WOOD, Maryrose. The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book III: The Unseen Guest. HarperCollins, 2015 p. 278-279

Helen believed that dying at a young age was almost like a blessing which helped her avoid troubles. Jane is curious and asks Helen whether she knows, where will she be after her death and after Helen's answer- *"I am going to God."*⁶⁵, Jane asked her *"Where is God? What is God?"*⁶⁶. They continue their conversation about God and their relationships with him for a while. Helen perceived God as a friend, saviour whereas Jane doubted God. Helen symbolizes traditional Victorian attitude to religion and faith (which is boundless). On the other hand, Jane is questioning her faith and the information she was taught about spirituality and religion, which was more progressive in late Victorian era when science representing rationality became more preferable.

Throughout the book, Jane's attitude changes. Her effort to be the "right" Christian woman is shown. Looking back, she assumes one of the reasons why her first marriage to Mr. Rochester did not happened, was that she worshiped him as an idol, which shows this extract. *"My future husband was becoming to me my whole world; and more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion..."*⁶⁷

Towards the end of Charlotte Bronte's novel, one can see, that Jane wants to do what is right, but also what makes sense to and for her. That is why she does not go on a mission trip with St John. She feels like mission itself is a good and meaningful thing, but marriage is so sacred in her eyes, so she does not want to get married unless she is sure about it. Jane wants to have marriage that is built on right foundation, which for her is mutual respect and love. These extracts show that John's almost fanaticism would clash with her belief. "God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must- shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you- not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service."⁶⁸ "I did consider; and still my sense, such as it was, directed me only to the fact that we did not love each other as man and

⁶⁵ BRONTE, Charlotte. Jane Eyre (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p. 93

⁶⁶ Ibid., p 93

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 329

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 486

wife should: and therefore it inferred we ought not to marry. I said so. 'St John,' I returned, 'I regard you as an brother- you, me as a sister: so let us continue.'"⁶⁹ Generally, Jane follows religious rules and propositions, but in areas that are important for her, she searches for a compromise between her conscience and faith.

Religion in Maryrose Wood's Children's Books is not directly mentioned and the reader does not meet the representatives of clergy or churches. But that does not mean that the series do not imply religious topics or moral. For instance, Penelope follows rules that she was taught at the Swanburne Academy, which refer to Christian moral rules and also using common sense. Examples of said rules are: *"All books are judged by their covers until they are read"*⁷⁰and *"The word of a Swanburne girl is as solemn an oath as anyone could require."*⁷¹ Contrary to Jane, Penelope does not go through a phase when she would question whether the rules make sense and if it is necessary to trust and follow them. Comparing all the characters by their faith and religious beliefs, Penelope is more similar to Helen rather than Jane. (Like Helen, Penelope simply accepts inculcated truths and rules and is proud that she is a part of something bigger due to accepting them.

The Transformation of environment of the Gothic novel in contemporary children's literature

Looking at The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place, one can see that contemporary authors take inspiration from older literature and use it in their own way or they use the motifs of traditional genres of the Gothic fiction regardless of the modern twists.

Maryrose Wood frequently used the environment in the way that was common for writers of Gothic novels. The setting helps to establish the general atmosphere, which is mysterious and sometimes scary. The story takes places in a family mansion of the Ashton's which is surrounded by woods. Ashton Place itself is shrouded in mystery.

⁶⁹ BRONTE, Charlotte. Jane Eyre (1847). London: Penguin Books, 2012, p.490

⁷⁰ WOOD, Maryrose. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book I: The Mysterious Howling*. HarperCollins, 2011, p.7

⁷¹ Ibid., p.28

*"Four generations of Ashtons have lived out their days there."*⁷² The place has its history; something appears not to be right with its attic (there is a possibility that someone or something is hiding in there); portraits of ancestors and suits of armour add to the spookiness of the place. When Penelope arrives to Ashton Place for the first time, she notices that the *"tall and forbidding black iron gate"*⁷³ soon after her arrival, she hears mysterious howling which is caused by the children as it is later revealed. The estate has tens of thousands of acres including a forest and orchards. That creates the feeling of loneliness, isolation and human unimportance. The author appeals to the reader's feelings e.g. by using the weather to enhance the atmosphere to make the story more captivating.

There are some instances, when Maryrose Wood takes a place or element from traditional Gothic novel and transforms it. For instance, she uses a cave in the woods, but she describes it with no emphasis on the terrifying aspect of the place yet she keeps it mysterious. That is when Penelope and the children are looking for Bertha the ostrich and they hide in a cave which happens to be the same cave the children were raised in. Apart from the realistic description of the setting, she provides the place with unexpected and familiar items, e.g. quilts, pillows, sandwiches etc. Maryrose Wood also adds new settings and she finds an unusual use for it, e.g. a barn, where the children are kept before Penelope has them moved inside the mansion. In other instances of a new attractive setting being used is when Penelope and the children travel to London and experience a chase after a theatre fiasco or when they have to hide in a gallery.

Some elements that can be found in traditional Gothic novel locations are manuscripts and books. M. Wood uses them, but the items are not scary or mysterious by themselves. For example, an almanac is a regular book, but the way Lord Ashton is so careful about it and needs to know where it is at all times makes it mysterious.

⁷² WOOD, Maryrose. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place: Book I: The Mysterious Howling*. HarperCollins, 2011, p.10

⁷³ Ibid., p.16

CONCLUSION

In the theoretical part of my bachelor thesis, I tried to introduce Maryrose Wood and her work, mainly the series The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place. Then I attempted to describe and characterize English Gothic novel, its themes and motifs. There are so many themes and motifs, so I focused on those, that can be found either in Jane Eyre or The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place or preferably in both (for example: death, family mystery, romance, loveless marriage, aristocratic family, female protagonist, governess, science, religion). In the subsequent chapters I mentioned their cultural and social connection in the context of Victorian tradition.

In the literary analysis, I focused on the comparison of each particular theme and motif from the theoretical part is used in the novel Jane Eyre written by Charlotte Bronte in 1847 and the first three books from the series The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place written by Maryrose Wood in 2011-2015 and I tried to demonstrate the differences and similarities in the works' structure. I wanted to show, how Maryrose Wood uses Gothic motifs and themes and settings typical for a Gothic novel in a new way and is able to transform it if it is needed. She is able to set the story in the Victorian era and yet make it feel current and fresh. I would like to stress that her take on the story is unique, because last couple of years many authors were inspired by Jane Eyre, but their works either tell the same story from a different perspective (Fire at Thornfield Hall by Jane Stubbs) or they share a similar plot.

To sum up, there is a clear connection between Jane Eyre and The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place, which is shown in the analysis. Nevertheless, Maryrose Wood has a modern grasp on the Victorian classic which is suitable for a child reader in the age group eight to twelve. She skilfully uses and transforms (if necessary) elements typical for a Gothic novel. The quality of her work is apparent and her books have a great potential for being used in English lessons all over the world, not only English-speaking countries.

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