Université de Liège – Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres
Département de langues et littératures germaniques
Année académique 2021-2022

The Female Gothic in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*

Mémoire présenté par Romane Castelli

Acknowledgments

I am most grateful to Prof. Michel Delville who introduced me to the genre of the Female Gothic and for his feedback and his suggestions regarding my work.

Contents

Introduction

As to begin this research, the main challenge which first arises is to define the genre of the Female Gothic. This is what Wallace and Simth attempted to do in their essay entitled *Defining the Female Gothic*. In fact, the first definition of the Female Gothic which is given in their work is the following one: "The term 'Female Gothic' has become much contested. When Ellen Moers coined the term in 1976 she thought that it could be 'easily defined' as 'the work that women have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic'"(Wallace, p. 1). Form the beginning of this passage, it is made clear that this definition is too reductive. In fact, it does not seem right to only encompass in this genre Gothic novels which have been written by women since it would deny the fact that the Female Gothic is a genre of its own, with characteristics which sometimes differ from the ones that can be found in the Gothic. The real challenge is thus to determine what the characteristics of this genre are if one keeps in mind that the Female Gothic is a literary genre which has often been criticized and whose varying definitions have been widely debated. As argued by Wallace and Simth in their essay: "[Some] comments are part of a wider critique of what [is seen] as a radically misguided tendency to privilege psychoanalytic interpretations above historicist ones in the criticism of Gothic texts: 'the collapse of history into universal psychology' […]" (Wallace and Smith, p.2). Critics indeed deplored the lack of historical analysis of Female Gothic novels which seemed to privilege a strong focus on the psyche of their characters. However, this criticism is challenged by Wallace and Smith who argue that it has a tendency to undermine and to marginalize what they call "the new wave of feminism […]" (Wallace and Smith, p. 2), which disrupts firmly established patriarchal mechanisms and highlights women's fear of being trapped in "the domestic and the female body" (Wallace and Smith, p. 2). Therefore, one could go as far as arguing that this literary genre cannot be separated from a psychological analysis of its characters. For example, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya* both highlight the ambiguous relationship of female characters with their mothers who are either absent or at the origin of some personality disorders, such as Victoria's tendency to refuse to accept rejection from either male or female characters in *Zofloya* for example. This ambivalent relationship between mother and daughter, which oscillates between love and hate, is typical of a post-Freudian approach in which the mother represents the figure of the "nurturer" while the father figure represents "authority" (Flax, p. 171). In their relationship with their mothers, young women are looking for both protection and autonomy. These two needs are at

the core of their ambivalent relationship and will lead the daughter to try to violently extirpates herself from her mother's affection to gain independence in the same way one could remove a band-aid quickly to reduce the pain that will be felt. In this sense, it is obviously pertinent to read Female Gothic novels while keeping in mind the psychological explanation of the female heroines who evolve in them.

However, a psychoanalytical analysis of the novels of this genre is not sufficient to fully understand the different implications of the Female Gothic. In fact, since 1990, this genre has been increasingly looked upon as a means to understand the political and sociocultural contexts of the society in which Female Gothic novels were written (Wallace, p. 3). In fact, many Female Gothic novels, such as *Northanger Abbey* and *Zofloya*, mirror the social norms related to gender roles which women were complying with at that time. In the former, Catherine is in fact a more submissive and naïve character who fits the perception of women that was prevailing in the late 18th century, with women who were in charge of the household while men took the important decisions. In the latter, Victoria seems to represent a proto-feminist vision of gender roles in which women are more assertive, if not sexually aggressive, that shows the evolution of the society regarding gender roles between the two periods in which these novels were written.

Therefore, Female Gothic novels should be read and analyzed with a combination of psychoanalytical, and socio-cultural approaches in order not to miss any dimension of this genre. The Female Gothic is indeed a complex genre which uses the original genre of the Gothic to highlight the complexities faced by women to define their identities while being trapped between the figures of the authoritarian father and the absent mother and while having to comply with gender norms which are defined by the society they live in.

Moreover, it could be argued that this genre could have been emancipatory and empowering for women who read *Northanger Abbey* in the late 18th century and *Zofloya* in 1806. In fact, even though the former initially represents a naïve and submissive character, Austen still depicts Catherine's character development as she becomes more critical and independent. In this view, she could be said to encourage young women to develop their critical sense and to be more assertive with their desires (in comparison to Catherine who is a rather hesitant character at the beginning of the novel), which could finally lead them to become less submissive towards men and therefore, more independent. In a similar way to *Northanger Abbey*, *Zofloya* can be said to be empowering for women who read it. However, while Austen uses a character to criticize a certain notion of gender role, Dacre uses the character of Victoria to somehow promote a vision of women who are smart, assertive and in touch with their desires,

while of course warning young women against the downfalls of such behavior if it becomes exaggerated (which can be seen in the way Victoria ends up abandoning her life in the hands of Zofloya, a devilish figure).

All in all, this research will be mostly aimed at exploring Austen and Dacre's novels which belong to the genre of the Female Gothic. Regarding the methodology of this work, it will focus on the two female heroines of these novels, respectively Catherine Morland and Victoria di Loredani, as to realize to which extent the socio-cultural and psychological dimensions which have been discussed hereabove can actually be vehiculated by the characters themselves.

Summary of the novels

Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*

Until her tenth birthday, Catherine Morland is a girl who likes to play in her garden, covered in dirt, who is noisy and not really pretty. She is not very smart, nor does she have any interest in drawing, or in learning music, which makes her far from becoming an accomplished young woman. She also plays games which are usually reserved to boys. In short, Catherine's appearance and personality are plain, and no one could ever imagine her becoming a heroine of any sort.

At 15, Catherine begins to take care of her appearance and to care for mondain activities such as going to balls. She is now almost pretty. She is also found of Gothic novels and prefers to read stories rather than information books.

One day, her parent's neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Allen, invite her to their residence in Bath for a few weeks, and Catherine thus leaves the familial house for the first time in her life. Once she arrives in this unknown city where appearance, dresses and acquaintances are of great importance, Catherine quickly has to adapt to the ways in which a young lady must behave in society, especially when she is invited to the Lower Rooms with Mrs. Allen. In this place, she meets Henry Tilney, an elegant young man who belongs to an upper-class family, and later on, his sister, Eleanor, an introvert young woman who also likes to read. Catherine quickly develops a romantic interest in Mr. Tilney, and she spends her day longing for the next time they will meet. However, Henry's interest in rationality and history books seem to oppose him to Catherine who has a fertile imagination.

Thanks to Mrs. Allen's friendship with Mrs. Thorpe, Catherine also builds a friendship with Isabella Thorpe, who is a beautiful young lady mainly (if not solely) interested in talking about dresses, balls, and flirts. This friendship instantly emphasizes Catherine's inability to determine what is convenable to do or not, in comparison to Isabella who seems to master every attitude which is expected from a young lady. This friendship leads Catherine to meet Jonh Thorpe, Isabella's brother. Jonh is willing to impress Catherine by showing her his wealth and by insisting on his possessions, and for a moment, his compliments make Catherine forget the fact that he is quite bad-mannered.

During a ball given in the Upper-Rooms, Isabella dances with James Morland, Catherine's brother, who falls under her charm. Catherine has thus no choice but to stay in the company of Jonh Thorpe as her distaste for him grows stronger.

Later on, after not being able to see Eleanor nor Henry Tilney for days, Catherine finally meets them in the Pump-room. Henry indeed invites Catherine to dance, and they even end up sharing their views on marriage. Still, Henry is critical of her lack of intelligence and interest in intellectual matters.

An incident then occurs when Catherine is invited to join the Tilneys for a walk in the countryside. In fact, before she has the chance to leave the house, the Thorpes and her brother arrive and ask her to come to Bristol with them to visit Blaize Castle. Catherine refuses since she already had other plans for the day, to which Jonh responds that Miss Tilney is no longer available since he saw her driving away with another friend. Catherine, quite deceived by this piece of news, agrees to go to Bristol. However, on their way back, Catherine discovers the trickery of which she was the victim with deception when they meet Miss Tilney, who was indeed still in Bath. Following this incident, Catherine is willing to meet Eleanor in order to explain the situation and to ask for her forgiveness. She thus goes to the Tilneys' house and asks to see her friend. The servant claims that she already left, and therefore, Catherine leaves the house, only to see her friend leaving it as well a few minutes later, which triggers her anxiety about the thought of having lost a friend. Later that day, she goes to the theatre where she meets Henry to whom she apologizes for what happened, on behalf of his sister. Following this discussion, Catherine and Miss Tilney then plan to go for a walk later that week.

However, on the day of her appointment with Miss Tilney, Isabella invites Catherine to come to Clifton with her, her brother and James. As Catherine refuses, Isabella urges her and begs her to accompany them. Jonh Thorpe then enters the room claiming that he talked to Eleanor and made up an excuse for Catherine's absence. Catherine thus expresses her anger at their behavior and rushes to the Tilneys' house. As she sees them leaving, she follows them into their lodgings where she finally meets Eleanor to clarify the misunderstanding which had taken place. Once everything was settled, Eleanor introduced Catherine to her father, General Tilney.

Later that week, Catherine meets Isabella who informs her of her engagement with James Morland. Following this piece of news, Jonh Thorpe insinuates that he might want to propose to Catherine, who gently dismisses the suitor.

During the evening, Catherine spends some time with the Tilneys and meets Henry's brother, Captain Tilney. As Catherine talks to Isabella, the latter informs her that she will not be able to marry James for two to three years and she even insinuates that the income they will receive as a married couple does not satisfy her. Isabella then proceeds to spend the rest of the evening dancing with Henry's brother.

After that evening, the Tilneys invite Catherine to spend some time with them in their property, Northanger Abbey. Catherine obviously agrees and the thought of staying in this place triggers her reveries which are highly inspired by the Gothic novels she loves to read. Before Catherine leaves Bath, Isabella begins to flirt with Captain Tilney, which helps Catherine to understand that Isabella might break her engagement with James.

As Catherine and the Tilneys are on their journey to Northanger, Henry tries to scare Catherine with gloomy stories about the Abbey, which only increases the young lady's excitement. However, the sight of the Abbey deceives her since the building does not fit her expectations. But as she enters her room, Catherine notices a heavy chest and craves to examine it. Still, she decides to report her investigation as she is called to eat dinner. During the supper, a tempest bursts outside and Catherine's imagination is in turmoil. After eating, she comes back to her room but cannot sleep. She thus decides to explore a part of the Abbey, and after battling with the lock of a door, she finally enters a room in which she finds a manuscript hidden in a drawer. She then rushes to her room but falls asleep before being able to examine the bit of paper she found. However, in the morning, Catherine is highly disappointed and ashamed when she discovers that the manuscript was nothing more than a trivial household inventory.

During breakfast, the deceased wife of the General is mentioned. Catherine immediately imagines that Henry's father must have been an unking husband and proceeds to ask many pressing questions to the Tilneys about her. Later that they, as she visits the Abbey, the General seems to be wanting to keep her away from certain rooms, which awakes Catherine's suspicions. Moreover, when one mentions the General's wife sudden and short illness, Catherine's imagination leads her to think that General Tilney may have murdered his wife. She then decides that she must introduce herself into the deceased's room to discover any evidence of the murder. But as she tries to enter the room, she is surprised by Henry who quickly understands Catherine's doubts about his father's potential implication in his mother's death. Catherine thus realizes the fact that she hurt him with her suppositions, and she is scared of losing his affection.

On the same morning, Catherine receives a letter from Isabella who informs her that she broke her engagement with James in hopes to marry Captain Tilney. Catherine thus understands that money matters more than love to Isabella. However, she learns that Captain Tilney ended up flirting with another young girl before leaving the city. Left with no hopes to marry him, Isabella then tries to convince Catherine that she loves James and that the fact that she broke their engagement was a misunderstanding.

Then, during the night, the General arrives to the Abbey even though he was supposed to be gone. After this impromptu visit, Eleanor seems to be distressed and tells Catherine that she will have to leave the Abbey the following morning, that no servant will be put at her disposal, and that she cannot send her letters anymore. Catherine thus leaves Northanger Abbey the following morning, full of doubts and of questions about what she might have done to deserve such a treatment.

At her arrival at Fullerton, Catherine is quickly overwhelmed by a feeling of solitude and of boredom after going through so many exciting events in Bath. However, after a few days, Henry arrives to Fullerton as well. He explains to Catherine that his father asked him to get close to her because he thought that her family was wealthy according to what he heard from Jonh Thorpe, and that she was asked to leave Northanger Abbey only because she was less fortunate than what he had imagined. Henry then explains that he got into an argument with his father and that he remains willing to marry her.

Finally, Henry Tilney and Catherine Morland celebrate their wedding after struggling to get the General's approbation and live their happy ever after.

Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*

The story of Victoria di Loredani takes place at the end of the 15th century in Italy, in the city of Venice. She is the daughter of the Marchese di Loredani and of Laurina di Cornari, two rich and powerful Venetians who are part of the nobility. Victoria is initially described as a young woman who is haughty and beautiful. Her brother, Leonardo, is equally presented as haughty, but also as turbulent. Victoria's world falls apart when, during a festival aimed at celebrating her birthday, a young and handsome man appears and is invited to the Marchese's Palazzo as his guest. It is quickly made clear that Count Ardolph's fantasy is to court older, married women. He thus tries to seduce Laurina, who succumbs to the young man's attempts to get her attention and finally commits adultery. Soon after, Count Ardolph persuades her to flee the city of Venice and to leave her family behind to completely assert his power over her. After the Marchese discovers his wife's treason, he decides to care for his children. However, Leonardo flees the house as well, disgusted by his mother's behavior. Only Victoria remains.

One night, as he wanders in a secluded part of the city, the Marchese unfortunately meets Count Ardoldh and enters a duel with him. Badly hurt during the fight, the Marchese is agonizing, and Victoria stands by his side. Warned of the Marchese's situation by Count Ardolph, Laurina hurries to the Palazzo to say her last farewell to Victoria's father. Before he dies, the latter begs Victoria and Laurina to make peace, and they finally agree to do so.

A year later, Il Conte Berenza, led by his curiosity about Laurina and Ardolph's depravation, comes to Monte Bello to meet them. Once he arrives, he is captivated by Victoria's beauty and character of mind and decides to seduce her. Victoria finally succumbs to Berenza's charms, but his attempts to get the attention of her daughter displease Laurina. Together with Count Ardolph, they elaborate a plan to separate the two lovers: they decide to write a letter to Berenza which would supposedly be written by Victoria, asking him to return to Venice. Then, they take Victoria on a trip to the house of the Signora of Modena, Laurina's cousin, in Treviso. The Signora is described as conservative and as a fervent believer, but also as greedy and as someone who loves to torment people. The house of the old lady, called Il Bosco, is a dark and gloomy place in the middle of the woods. After the first night she spends there, Victoria awakes alone. The Signora's aim is supposedly to put Victoria back on the right path, while she actually nurtures cruel intentions against the young woman. However, Victoria is smart and tries to find a plan to flee this place. After befriending and manipulating the Signora of Modena's servant, Victoria flees into the woods and ends up near a river, where she meets a gondolier who accepts to accompany her to Venice.

Once in her birth city, Victoria meets Berenza who takes her to his house. The lovers celebrate their reunion. However, Berenza doubts the authenticity of her love towards him and wants to be sure of it before getting too involved in their relationship. As they spend time together, he decides to take her on a ballad on a gondola. This is the moment they meet Megalena Strozzi, Berenza's former mistress. Megalena is instantly jealous of Victoria and decides to plan her revenge.

One night as they sleep, Megalena sends and intruder into Berenza and Victoria's room to kill the former. However, Victoria does not sleep and intercepts the intruder, who is in fact her brother, Leonardo. He indeed met Megalena after many peripeties and became obsessed with the idea of pleasing and serving her. During the night attack, Victoria gets wounded and as Berenza realizes that the idea of losing her triggered such fear in him, he decides to propose to her. However, it is already too late since Victoria, who is aware that he formerly considered her unworthy of becoming his wife, is now planning her revenge upon him.

Five years later, Henriquez, Berenza's brother, comes to visit his older brother. Henriquez is madly in love with a young and innocent lady called Lilla, who refuses to marry him because of a promise she made to a female relative. To help him, Berenza suggests to his brother to invite Lilla to his Palazzo. However, Henriquez's attraction towards Lilla triggers Victoria's jealousy, since she herself plans to seduce her husband's brother. One night, the Moor appears in Victoria's dream, in which Lilla and Henriquez are about to get married. Zofloya then says that if Victoria accepts to be his, the wedding will not take place and Victoria finally agrees. The day after, Victoria meets the Moor in person and learns that he is in fact Henriquez's servant. Zofloya then goes missing for a few days after a murder attempt against him. Once he comes back to the Palazzo, he meets Victoria in the garden, and she gradually grows more and more fascinated by him and his beauty. She then admits to him that she loves Henriquez. The next day, Victoria and Zofloya meet again in the garden near nighttime. With his hypnotizing voice, the Moor offers to give some poison to Victoria, who then decides to kill her husband with the slow poison. Scared of getting condemned if someone discovers her plan, Victoria decides to leave Venice to go to Torre Alto in the Apennines, according to Zofloya's advice.

Berenza is slowly dying, and Victoria gets impatient. She thus decides to give him more poison than what the Moor had told her, and she meets him in the woods for him to give her more poison. Of a haughty nature, Victoria surprisingly always feels uneasy and inferior when she is in his company, which make his power over her more and more obvious. Zofloya suggests to give Victoria another poison which would kill Berenza faster but suggests to give it to

someone else first to be sure of its efficiency. They then decide to try the poison on the old Signora who accompanies Lilla. They take her on a walk in the woods and give her the poison. However, she does not die, and Zofloya has to strangle her. After this, the Moor promises to Victoria that Berenza will die during the night.

After the death of his brother, Henriquez begins to suspect Victoria. During the night, Victoria has a nightmare and becomes scared that Berenza's body could show evidence of the poison she gave him. She then goes to see his body and is submerged by despair when she sees that his figure is changed and discolored. Zofloya then arrives and says to Victoria that she must not worry. Then the next day, Berenza's body goes missing. Henriquez dislikes Victoria more and more but he wants to wait until Lilla agrees to become his wife to leave this place. When Victoria proposes to become his wife, he thus refuses, and she seeks comfort near Zofloya. She is resolute to kill Lilla, but the Moor tells her to have her at her disposal rather than to kill her. Lilla then gets abducted and secluded in a cavern. When Henriquez discovers the absence of Lilla, he gets overwhelmed by despair.

After searching Lilla for three weeks, Henriquez still has not given any attention to Victoria. Zofloya thus suggests that if she resembled Lilla, Henriquez would fall in love with her. The Moor then gives Victoria a drug which is supposed to make Henriquez believe that Victoria is in fact his beloved Lilla. During an evening, Victoria gives him the drug and waits for him in Lilla's room. They have a banket and they dance. But in the morning, Henriquez awakes and realizes that Victoria sleeps next to him. He thus commits suicide with a sword and Victoria hurries to the forest to kill Lilla. After the murder of the young lady, Victoria dreams of an iron chest in which lies the skeleton of Berenza. Zofloya tells her that her vision might become true and that she has to leave this place.

She awakes after being unconscious for a day and a night and she does not remember the journey. Victoria is scared and ashamed of her romantic feelings for Zofloya, but he is the only one who did not want to change her. After a while, they meet armed men, mercenaries, or bandits. Zofloya and Victoria meet the chief of the mercenaries who wears a mask and Victoria recognizes the woman besides him. However, she remains incapable of determining who she actually is. They now have to live in the cavern of the bandits which triggers Victoria's compassion for Lilla who endured a similar fate. Once they get out of the cavern, the Moor aggressively claims to Victoria that she belongs to him.

During the night, Victoria falls asleep, and dreams of an angel sent by God because she has, for the first time, shown inclinations implicating that she might be repentant. The angel warns her against Zofloya. She sees him as monstrous and deformed. Then, when she wakes up, Zofloya appears, and he keeps her from repenting. Suddenly, Laurina enters the cavern, badly wounded, followed by the chief of the bandits who is in fact Leonardo. He kills Count Ardolph because he brutalized Laurina. When Laurina awakes, she begs Victoria and Leonardo for forgiveness, but Victoria ignores her and blames her for her own crimes. Leonardo then calls Victoria a monster for behaving this way towards her mother.

Later on, the wife of the chief, Megalena, tries to kill Victoria but ends up stabbing herself after seeing Zofloya. Intruders get into the cavern and after killing the chief of the intruders, Leonardo stabs himself too. Surrounded by armed men, Victoria has no choice but to entirely rely upon Zofloya. Victoria thus swears allegiance to the Moor, and he finally reveals that he is Satan in person before mocking her and throwing her into the abyss.

Chapter one: *Northanger Abbey* and *Zofloya* as Female Gothic novels which depict the development of young ladies' characters

Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Dacre's *Zofloya* are two novels which belong to the genre of the Female Gothic and which display young female characters, respectively Catherine and Victoria. As one reads these novels, one might rapidly notice that the two stories seem to be each other's complete opposite. In fact, while Catherine is initially described as a naïve young woman who seems to be struggling to find her place in society as well as to determine the right way to behave as a lady, Victoria is then described as a haughty and cruel character who is strong-minded. Moreover, Catherine's story ends with a happy marriage after a series of tumultuous peripeties, whereas *Zofloya* ends with the death of Victoria who ended her life as an unrepentant and more corrupt than ever young woman. Regarding these initial observations, these two novels seem to follow two distinct patterns which are respectively the development of a female character who gradually learns the proper way to behave in society as well as to decode its implicit, and the downfall of a female character who does not learn from her mistakes and who ends up paying a heavy price for it. However, it can be argued that, despite the seemingly obvious opposition between these novels, they are united by the fact that both display the story of the psychological growth of these female characters. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the idea that these two novels somehow display the development of Victoria and Catherine's characters.

The first novel which will be discussed according to this point of view is *Northanger Abbey*. As argued by Aktari: "The conventional Gothic plot revolves around a virtuous young heroine pursued by an older aristocratic villain and the plot – especially the element of suspense – is based on this chase" (Aktari, p. 23). *Northanger Abbey* seems to fit this description of the Female Gothic since Catherine's story develops around her love story with Henry Tilney, which is hindered by many obstacles, the main one being General Tilney (thus an older aristocratic man). In fact, Austen waits until the very last chapter of the novel to reveal to the readers that Henry's original attraction towards Catherine was encouraged by his father, and that the General also dismissed this potential union after learning that the young lady was not as wealthy as he wished her to be. General Tilney is thus at the center of the plot. Aktari then argues that:

> "The traditional Female Gothic plot 'suggests a bourgeois aesthetic, as it creates a circle of defamiliarisation and estrangement by the re-

> establishment of conventional life' (Kilgour 38). In this respect, the traditional female pattern is circular. It pushes the heroine back to where she started from: the patriarchal home. The female protagonist is reconciled with the demands of society and she is 'brought safely into a social order which is affirmed in the end' (Kilgour 37): marriage." (Aktari, p. 24)

This principle of the reestablishment of the conventional life after an episode of defamiliarization is indeed present in *Northanger Abbey*. In fact, Catherine leaves her familial house in Fullerton for the first time in her life to go to Bath with the Allens. This journey is at the very core of the story since it marks the beginning of the peripeties through which Catherine will have to navigate. The circle is then closed at the end of the novel once the Tilneys ask the young lady to leave Northanger Abbey. Indeed, she comes back to Fullerton, and thus to the patriarchal home, where she finally fulfils society's expectations for women since she ends up marrying Henry Tilney.

However, what is truly interesting happens between her departure from Fullerton and her return. In fact, despite the reestablishment of social order at the end of the novel, it could be argued that the events which are faced by Catherine in Bath help her forge her character and become a more independent young lady, rather than remaining a submissive and naïve woman who has to comply with the demands of a patriarchal society. This claim goes against most critiques which have been formulated against *Northanger Abbey* since Catherine is often depicted as an "impressionable mind [who] occasionally interprets scenes at Bath in the light of reading of Gothic romance" who suffers from an "excessive credulity" (Glock, p. 33). One can indeed not deny the fact that Catherine often gets overwhelmed by her excessive imagination throughout the novel, reaching the apogee of her dull credulity at her arrival in Northanger Abbey. Moreover, Aktari also underlines the fact that it is usually Male Gothic which is characterized by "[a] plot […] which presents the male protagonist's story of personhood and individuation" (Aktari, p. 23). In other words, according to this claim, Female Gothic is not supposed to display stories of female characters who finally emancipate from society to reach a more independent state of mind. Every evidence thus converges towards an interpretation of *Northanger Abbey* in which Catherine is a plain and banal character whose lack of intelligence cannot lead her further that the common patriarchal institution of marriage. However, it can be argued that the novel rather renders the development of her character in a

subtle manner, on the one hand through her interaction with society, and on the other hand through the confrontation of her fantasies with reality.

The first element which will be addressed is Catherine's interaction with other members of the society as well as her learning of the ways in which one has to behave. At the beginning of the novel, Catherine is originally depicted as someone who "never could learn or understand any thing before she was taught; and sometimes not even then, for she was often inattentive, and occasionally stupid" (Austen, p. 16). This quotation depicts the rather harsh judgment that the narrator imposes on Catherine. In fact, this description of the young lady leads the readers to foresee the fact that she will be unfit among Bath's society, and that her so-called stupidity will get her into trouble. This assumption is then confirmed at Catherine's arrival in Bath. In fact, the beginning of the novel is marked by her doubts about the proper way to behave in society, and about what to say and when. This can be observed in many passages, for example: "she was not experienced enough in the finesse of love, or the duties of friendship, to know when delicate raillery was properly called for, or when a confidence should be forced" (Austen, p. 35). Her apparent lack of experience is no surprise since she never left the familial house before her stay in Bath, and she therefore could not be acquainted with the ways in which one has to behave around other members of the society. Moreover, this lack of experience leads her to display a lack of spontaneity since she is described as "fearful of hazarding an opinion of [her] own" (Austen, p. 47). Indeed, her relationship with other characters is constantly perturbed with intrusive thoughts and self-doubt regarding how she is supposed to act. However, from the beginning of the novel, Catherine still displays a subtle force of character:

> "To be disgraced in the eye of the world, to wear the appearance of infamy while her heart is all purity, her actions all innocence, and the misconduct of another the true source of her debasement, is one of those circumstances which particularly dignifies her character. Catherine had fortitude too; she suffered, but no murmur passed her lips" (Austen, p. 52).

Even though this passage may depict Catherine as a submissive character, it could be argued that it rather displays her strength of mind. In fact, as she remains sitting while the youth around her is dancing, she suffers the humiliation of not having any partner who could ask her to dance but also of staying with Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Thorpe while her friend, Isabella, is dancing with a suitor. However, in spite of this degrading situation, Catherine suffers in silence and keeps her dignity intact. This character trait greatly opposes her to Isabella Thorpe. Since the first

time she was mentioned in the novel, Isabella is depicted as a beautiful young woman who knows very well the ways of society: "she could compare the balls of Bath with those of Tunbridge; […] could rectify the opinion of her new friend in many articles of tasteful attire […]" (Austen, p. 32). Therefore, while Catherine is unfit and feels as an outcast in this new place which induces doubts and self-consciousness, Isabella navigates with ease through the difficulties which are faced by the original main character of the novel. This element could even lead the readers to wonder whether Isabella could replace Catherine in her role of the heroine of the novel. However, as argued by Glock:

> "In contrast to the sentimental heroine, Isabella Thorpe, whose sufferings are histrionically imitative of the Gothic ideal, Catherine endures her outrageous ejection from the Abbey with quiet and unobtrusive dignity: the modern, real heroine, in other words, suffers inwardly, […] eschewing grand and romantic gestures." (Glock, p. 37)

In regards of this quotation, one may argue that Austen disrupts some Female Gothic original mechanisms by inventing a heroine who is far from the grandiloquent and romantic heroines who can be encountered in traditional Female Gothic novels such as Victoria from Dacre's *Zofloya*, Emily from Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, or Harriet from Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*. In fact, Catherine is a young woman who is not that beautiful nor smart, but who is able to tame her heart's impulses. This ability of remaining calm in spite of her internal turmoil makes of Catherine a stronger-minded character than what on may initially think.

Then, even though Catherine does not seem to understand how one must act in society nor is she able to pick up hints regarding people's thoughts, it can be argued that she gradually learns to see through her peers' characters, especially Isabella. In fact, the beginning of the novel is marked by their blooming friendship which is characterized by Catherine's "feeling of awe" and "tender affection" (Austen, p. 32) towards Isabella. However, as mentioned by Glock: "Evil exists, [Catherine] soon discovers, but it is more often than not a calculating and low-spirited evil […]" (Glock, p. 37). In fact, while Catherine does not initially seem to be aware of her new friend's perfidy and unreliability, the narrator spreads hints of it throughout instances of Isabella's speeches. The first example which demonstrates this claim can be found in the following passage: "The men think us incapable of real friendship you know, and I am determined to shew them the difference. Now, if I were to hear any body speak slightingly of you, I should fire up in a moment" (Austen, p. 40). In this passage, Isabella claims that she

knows how to be a true friend and that she would never betray Catherine. In fact, she says that she would not allow anyone to speak badly of Catherine in front of her. Still, a few lines later, Isabella mentions Mrs. Andrews who is supposedly a friend of hers. As she speaks of her, she says that "there is something incredibly insipid about [Mrs. Andrews]" (Austen, p. 40). Any reasonable reader would then notice the hypocrisy of Isabella who claims to be a true friend for Catherine but who still openly criticizes her so-called friends behind their backs. As argued by Levine: "it also implies that what is mistakenly taken as the intrusion of supernatural or demonic energies into society is really humanly created disorder" (Levine, p. 339). Indeed, the beginning of Catherine's story inevitably displays her innocence and naiveness, which can be considered a mechanism which is created by the narrator to warn the readers against the idea that maybe the danger is not to be found in Gothic novels such as those Catherine reads, but rather in their everyday life, behind the face of a friend or of a potential lover.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that throughout the novel, Catherine slowly learns to understand the implicit behind what people say and to forge her own critical opinion about them. Once again, her relationship with Isabella is a great example to illustrate this claim. In fact, in spite of her initial blindness towards her friend's hypocrisy, Catherine begins to notice that she might not be as loyal as she thought she was. The first example of this growing awareness can be found in the passage in which Isabella corroborates her brother's lie to Catherine in order for her to accompany them to Bristol. In fact, Jonh Thorpe pretends that he saw Miss Tilney driving away with a friend while she was supposed to meet Catherine, and Isabella incites her to abandon her plans with Eleanor: "Come, you must go; you cannot refuse going now" (Austen, p. 82). Catherine is then highly disappointed at her friend's behavior when she sees Miss Tilney on their way to Bristol and when she thus realizes the trickery of which she was the victim. A similar event later occurs when, once again, the Thorpes try to keep her from meeting Eleanor. In fact, "Isabella became only more and more urgent […]. She knew her beloved Catherine to have so feeling a heart, so sweet a temper, to be so easily persuaded by those she loved" (Austen, p. 94). This passage clearly demonstrates the fact that Isabella uses emotional blackmailing with Catherine in order to achieve her own ends. The narrator indeed allows the readers to get an insight into what Isabella thinks, which is that according to her, Catherine is a sweet and innocent creature who does not have a will of her own and who can easily be convinced by flatteries. However, Catherine stands out and proves her wrong by forging her own opinion on her friend: "Isabella appeared to her ungenerous and selfish, regardless of every thing but her own gratification" (Austen, p. 94). This passage displays

Catherine's thoughts towards Isabella's behavior, and the former goes as far as arguing that the latter is selfish and is ready to do anything to reach her own aims, which is quite surprising for a character such as Catherine who is supposed to be naïve and not that smart.

The last example which will be discussed is Catherine's reaction after reading Isabella's letter about the end of her engagement with James Morland. In fact, after having read the paper, it is said that "such a strain of shallow artifice could not impose even upon Catherine. Its inconsistences, contradictions, and falsehood, struck her from the very first. She was ashamed of Isabella, and ashamed of having ever loved her" (Austen, pp. 203-204). This passage displays the apogee of Catherine's detachment from her former friend. In fact, if one compares the language used in this passage to quotations which have been discussed earlier in this chapter, one could notice that the words that Catherine uses to describe Isabella are increasingly opiniated and judgmental, which proves that she is indeed able to build some critical awareness of her surroundings as well as to have an opinion of her own. All in all, it can be argued that Catherine Morland underwent a great character development. Initially a naïve and impressionable young lady who was hardly able to read through people's words, she became more independent and strong-minded since the end of the novel depicts a young woman who is able to judge people truthfully.

1. Catherine's ability to gain knowledge by confronting imagination with reality

As mentioned earlier, another element which helps Catherine to grow into a more independent young woman is her relation to the Gothic novels she reads. In fact, it will be argued that her fantasies about Gothic locations and stories, and her following delusions help her to gain knowledge of what the reality is and therefore to become more independent and down-to-earth. From the very beginning of the novel, Catherine's interest in Gothic novels is made clear to the readers. In fact, on pages 39 and 40, she exchanges her thoughts with Isabella on *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, a well-known Female Gothic novel written by Ann Radcliffe. The two friends indeed get excited by making speculations about what is to happen next: "I know it must be a skeleton, I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book" (Austen, p. 40). To see such interest in macabre matters such as skeletons in convenable young ladies is surprising. Catherine is indeed in awe when she learns that the books that her friend suggests her to read are truly "horrid" (Austen, p. 40). The oxymoron-like character of

this discussion between the two friends highlights the interest that young women of that time had in gloomy stories and lugubrious places. Then, Catherine's longing to experience what the heroines she reads about go through arises when the Thorpes and her brother suggest they should go to Bristol to visit Blaize Castle. She indeed proceeds to describe "the happiness of being stopped in their way along narrow, winding vaults, by a low, grated door, or even of having their lamp, their only lamp, extinguished by a sudden gust of wind, and of being left in a total darkness" (Austen, p. 84). The scene which is being described here would not be envied by anyone doted of usual common sense and of a rational point of view on reality. In fact, to be stuck in a gloomy castle with no light to see the surroundings is not an enviable position. Still, it is depicted by Catherine as a situation which would make her truly happy. Therefore, her Gothic fantasies highlight her lack of experience of the world as well as her overflowing imagination. As Glock argues:

> "Her impressionable mind occasionally interprets scenes at Bath in the light of her reading of Gothic romance, and she succumbs to excited anticipations of viewing Blaize Castle, but […] none of these temporary enthusiasms quite prepares the reader for the excessive credulity with which Catherine becomes the victim of Gothic illusions at Northanger Abbey" (Glock, p. 33)

Her previous reveries about living her Gothic fantasies are indeed feeble in comparison to what happens at Northanger Abbey. In fact, until her arrival at the Abbey, she still has not been able to experience any event which might come close to her Gothic ideals since they had to come back to Bath before arriving at Blaize Castle due to a lack of time. Moreover, Glock's quotation underlines the idea that she can be considered the victim of her illusions. In fact, her reveries are so overbearing that they keep her from seeing the reality. A great example of this is her nightly exploration of the Abbey: "her quick eyes directly fell on a roll of paper pushed back into the further part of the cavity, apparently for concealment, and her feelings at that moment were indescribable. Her heart fluttered, her knees trembled, and her cheeks grew pale" (Austen, p. 161). The first element which highlights the fact that she is the victim of her fantasies is the narrator's focus on Catherine's physical reactions. Indeed, she seems to be at the verge of fainting. Yet, these uncomfortable physical symptoms are only the cause of her imagination since no real danger is actually described in this passage. Moreover, her later discovery of the manuscript being a washing-bill induces the greatest delusion in her since she is confronted with the absurdity of her fantasies. In this sense, one could argue that Catherine is nothing more

than a naïve heroine who easily submits to the follies of her imagination and who does not learn from her mistakes since she reiterates her reveries later on with her speculations about the murder of Henry's mother.

However, in spite of her naiveness and attachment to the novels she reads, it can be claimed that Catherine actually undergoes a transformation towards the end of the book, which leads her to become more rational and thus more critical of what she reads. In fact, during her stay at Northanger Abbey, the Tilneys mention the "sudden and short" (Austen, p. 176) illness of the deceased wife of the General. In addition to that, the General refuses Catherine the access to some rooms in the Abbey which triggers her suspicions about his implications in the death of his wife: "Yes, aversion! His cruelty to such a charming woman made him odious to her. She had often read of such characters, which Mr. Allen had been used to call unnatural and overdrawn; but here was proof positive of the contrary" (Austen, p. 171). This passage once again highlights her credulity and her lack of critical mind since she jumps to the wrong conclusion without even having any proofs of what she claims to be the truth. This thus leads Catherine to venture near Henry's mother's room, and she gets caught by the young man. According to Glock, this scene can be said to "[constitute] a symbolic contrast between Deception and Revelation, between Catherine's childhood naïveté and the disillusionment from which knowledge grows" (Glock, p. 36). In fact, her confrontation with Henry about her suspicions and his disappointment towards her induced an awakening in her: "it had been all a voluntarily, self-created delusion, each trifling circumstance receiving importance from an imagination resolved on alarm" (Austen, p. 188). As argued by Glock, it is her delusion which made her understand that she willingly let her imagination and desire to be frightened confuse her and manipulate her. She thus now notices that the novels she loves so much may have led her to lose the interest of the man she fancies. Her deception thus leads her into gaining knowledge about the world and encourages her to set aside her reveries.

2. Victoria as the archetype of the villain

Regarding *Zofloya*, it can be argued that, unlike *Northanger Abbey*, the novel does not follow the traditional Female Gothic plot depicted by Aktari, which is a plot in which "a virtuous young heroine [is] pursued by an older aristocratic villain" (Aktari, p. 23). On the contrary, Victoria is far from being a virtuous young woman. In fact, from the beginning of the novel, she is depicted as

> "Beautiful and accomplished as an angel, [but also] proud, haughty, and self-sufficient—of a wild, ardent, and irrepressible spirit, indifferent to reproof, careless to censure—of an implacable, revengeful, and cruel nature, and bent upon gaining the ascendancy in whatever she engaged" (Dacre, p. 40)

This passage indeed displays a strong-minded, if not aggressive, female character. In this sense, one could go as far as arguing that Victoria is not pursued by an older aristocratic villain but is in fact the villain herself. Indeed, as the main character of this novel, Victoria repeatedly shows herself capable of cruelness as well as being able to understand the human mind in order to manipulate it to reach her goals. Moreover, Victoria's story is once again opposed to Catherine's since *Zofloya* ends with the complete corruption of the young woman who puts her life in the hands of Satan himself as well as with her death. It will thus be argued that if *Northanger Abbey* displays a tale about growth and the gain of wisdom and knowledge, *Zofloya* rather depicts the downfall of a female character whose choices led her to her death.

As already stated, Victoria's story is characterized by her progressive corruption and increasing cruelty. It could be argued that her progressive downfall is marked by different stages which occur through the novel. The first notable event which could be mentioned is Laurina's adultery and therefore her treachery against her family. As argued by Anolik: "In Dacre's novel, characters and narrator reiterate that the mother, who initiates the decline of her family by running off with a seducer, is the 'the primary cause' (258) of the unfortunate events that follow" (Anolik, p. 28). It is true that Victoria's tendency to be haughty and cruel seems to be innate. However, as argued hereabove, it is Laurina who seems to be at the origin of Victoria's depravation. The implication of Laurina in the development of Victoria's character will indeed be further discussed in the third chapter of this paper, yet, for the purpose of the present chapter, this initial sin will only be considered the departure point of the different stages of Victoria's downfall.

From the occurrence of her mother's treachery, Victoria's haughtiness and perfidy will gradually develop when she finds herself in situations in which she feels stuck or in which she cannot freely fulfil her desires. In fact, Aceves claims that "Victoria's monstrosity develops when her desires are repressed" (Aceves, p. 23). The first passage in which this mechanism can be observed happens when her mother and Count Ardolph abandon her to the Signora of Modena who tyrannizes her to supposedly put her on the right path. During her stay in Treviso with the Signora, Victoria's only desire is to escape. In comparison to Catherine, Victoria is

described as smart as she can easily understand how to manipulate people. She indeed uses this ability with Catau, the Signora's servant. Catau was initially strategically chosen by the Signora "from an idea that Victoria would despise her too much to endeavor to corrupt or make a friend of her. Should she even make the attempt, the Signora presumed the extreme stupidity of Catau would render it abortive" (Dacre, 52). This passage clearly highlights that the Signora's strategy is thus supposed to prevent Victoria from manipulating the servant, and the conditions for her escape are thus not favorable. This would have been true if Victoria was a naïve and impressionable young woman, who easily gave up on her desires. But nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Victoria's understanding of the way people think actually helps her to find a round-about way to evict the obstacles put on her path by the old Signora:

> "[Victoria] was but now in the infancy of her attempt, sounding the disposition of Catau; and her mailed heart was not to be thrown off its guard by any effusions of softness or feeling, attributable to the effect of the moment alone" (Dacre, p. 53).

This passage highlights the fact that Victoria knows that if she behaves too kindly towards Catau, the young maid will suspect her intentions. Victoria is thus smart enough to anticipate the servant's thinking mechanism to finally manipulate her mind, which was initially judged sufficiently strong by the Signora. In other words, she knows the ways in which people think and feel emotions and it helps her to get what she wants, which in this case is to lead Catau to become her accomplice in her plan to escape. Then, the ultimate proof of her power over the servant is to be found in Catau's attitude when Victoria is finally about to leave this place: "Catau, with a violent burst of tears and sobs, seized the hand of Victoria, and impressed on it a kiss forcible in proportion to the affection it was meant to convey" (Dacre, p. 60). While this passage underlines Catau's reluctance to let Victoria escape, it also highlights that this reluctance is not the consequence of her desire to obey the old Signora but rather of the affection she developed towards Victoria. In other words, Victoria successfully used the young maid and led her to grow affectionate towards her, without any remorse, in order for her to reach her aim.

Then, another example of the fact that Victoria's cruelty increases when her desires are repressed happens when she develops a strong attraction towards Henriquez, Berenza's brother. Her desire to seduce him is obviously forbidden, firstly because of the fact that she is married to his brother, and secondly because Henriquez is already deeply in love with a young woman called Lilla. Following Victoria's growing jealousy towards Lilla, the Moor makes his first appearance in the novel (Dacre, p. 136). One could then claim that Zofloya amplifies Victoria's

cruelty by inciting her to cause bad to others around her. For example, after Victoria has exposed to him her attraction towards Henriquez, he suggests her to use poison to murder Berenza, and when Victoria emits doubts about his plan, he utters: "'It is not that you hesitate,' in an accent half serious, half disdainful, […]; 'and why *should* you hesitate?' he had no hesitation in sacrificing to himself your young and beautiful person, for his gratification" (Dacre, p. 155). Indeed, this passage highlights the fact that when the young woman expresses her doubts, Zofloya is right behind her to push her into committing horrible deeds and to justify her actions. In a way, he relativizes the murder of her husband by claiming that he himself did her wrong, and therefore, he pushes her into becoming even more corrupted than she already was. Victoria's insatiable need to fulfil her desires, whatever the cost may be, leads her to give her trust to the Moor as he says: "Victoria! […] if you would have *my* services, I repeat, what I have often urged, you must place implicit confidence in me, and firm reliance" (Dacre, p. 191). This passage inevitably reminds the readers of the well-known myth in which people give up their souls to the devil in exchange for the satisfaction of their wishes. In a similar way, Victoria is thus ready to fully abandon herself in the hands of Zofloya because of her frustration whenever she cannot get what she wants.

Her desire to seduce Henriquez thus leads her to accept Zofloya's proposition, and therefore to reach the absolute level of corruption. In fact, in addition to Berenza's murder which already was the consequence of her desire to fulfil her longings, she then directs her vengeful frustration towards the young Lilla, who is "pure, innocent, free from even the smallest taint of a corrupt thought" (Dacre, p. 133). This description of the young girl only emphasizes Victoria's cruelty, since Lilla, as pure and innocent as she is, can be considered far from deserving such hate from the vengeful Victoria. Therefore, Victoria's cruelty can be said to reach her apogee when she agrees to follow Zofloya's advice as he suggests her to kidnap and sequestrate Lilla in a cavern. In fact, as argued by Dunn:

> "Dacre's most expansive scene of violence occurs as Victoria stalks, attacks, and murders Lilla, who is hardly more than a child, an unformed wisp of girlish virtue. […] The most evident rationale for this attack is that Victoria desires to eliminate everyone blocking her erotic pursuit of Henriquez, a forbidden object, the brother of her husband" (Dunn, p. 313)

Once again, this quotation confirms Aceves' claim that Victoria's monstrosity increases whenever she cannot immediately fulfil her desires. Her so-called monstrosity is indeed to be

found in her need to seduce her husband's brother, which is not only against moral sense and decency, but also a revelation of her readiness to commit adultery, which is a sin committed by her mother and which led Victoria to harshly condemn her. But in addition to this longing for a forbidden subject, her monstrosity is also to be found in her perpetration of her atrocities against the young Lilla, as already mentioned earlier. As stated by Dunn, the idea that this episode is the most strikingly violent event in the novel is supported by this passage: "The morning was now far advanced, but no beams of the chearing sun irradiated the heavens […] as though the eye of the morning paused in grief, upon the crimes that had ushered in its dawn" (Dacre, p. 206). This quotation indeed displays a personification of nature, which according to the narrator, is now capable of grief. In other words, the way Victoria imprisoned Lilla in that cavern after badly hurting her was so cruel and so inhuman that even nature itself could not help but mourn. All elements thus seem to converge towards the idea that Victoria's cruelty against Lilla is the ultimate stage of her absolute corruption.

All these episodes of growing cruelty and infamy then led to Victoria's final ruin. Indeed, the novel ends with Victoria's swearing allegiance to Zofloya, who is now named "Satan" (Dacre, p. 267). As argued by Aceves: "in Dacre's novel, it is the black moor, Zofloya, who reveals himself as the devil and Victoria who is then seduced into giving into her own lascivious desires" (Aceves, p. 23). In fact, as already argued earlier in this chapter, as the devil himself, Zofloya leads her to fully abandon herself in her corruption by inciting her to commit atrocities such as the murder of her husband or even the murder of an innocent young woman. In addition to that, Zofloya then asks her to swear that she will remain loyal, as he promises to "save [her] for ever from all future accidents – all future worldly misery – all future disgrace" (Dacre, p. 266). Indeed, what the Moor actually claims to guarantee to Victoria is that she will forever remain unpunished for her deeds. He is then supposed to be her protector, the one who will fully accept her corrupted nature without blaming her, without allowing anyone to harm her in return. However, this claim is obviously far from being true since Zofloya ends up being the one who punishes her by pushing her "down the dreadful abyss" (Dacre, p. 267). Moreover, Zofloya addresses Victoria by saying: "Few venture far as thou hast ventured in the alarming paths of sin. […] I found thee, oh! of most exquisite willingness, and yielding readily to all my temptations!" (Dacre, p. 267). Not content with having led her to the very moment of her last seconds on earth, the Moor also punishes Victoria's selfishness by openly mocking her by claiming that even though she may have thought herself to be smart, her stubborn desire to fulfil her longings blinded her to the evil power he was applying upon her.

All in all, as argued by Dacre in her final note: “the progress of vice is gradual and imperceptible” (Dacre, p. 268). In fact, Victoria’s downfall has been proven to develop gradually, her cruelty increasing each and every time the impossibility of fulfilling her wishes triggered her frustration.

To conclude this chapter, Catherine’s and Victoria’s stories were compared to finally reach the conclusion that neither Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* nor Charlotte Dacre’s *Zofloya* follow the traditional Female Gothic plot depicted by Aktari. In fact, regarding Catherine Morland, even though she is a young woman who is pursued by an older aristocratic villain and whose story ends with the patriarchal institution of marriage, she still reaches a certain level of autonomy through the development of her character. It has been demonstrated that the initially naïve and unfit young woman gradually learned to read between the lines and decode the implicit behind what people say, as she did with Isabella, and that the inevitable confrontation of her reveries with the reality actually led her to become more critical and rational. As for *Zofloya*, it displays the gradual downfall of Victoria, a female character who is not pursued by a villain but who rather grows to become the villain herself. Indeed, her story retraces the different stages of her inevitable depravation, beginning with the initial sin of the mother, and followed by every episode in which Victoria’s irresistible need to accomplish her desires triggered the increase of her cruelty towards other characters. Therefore, both *Northanger Abbey* and *Zofloya* are novels which depict the growth and the development of two female characters, whether these stories end in a happy marriage or in a terrible death.

Chapter two: Heroine versus villain - the ambivalence of Catherine and Victoria's characters.

The first chapter of this work was dedicated to providing a clear description of Catherine and Victoria. In fact, while the former has been depicted as a heroine who is innocent and apparently deprived of any evil thoughts, the latter is presented as a villain who is characterized by her selfishness and her perfidy. The distinction between these two characters thus seems to be clearcut and any comparison between them would inevitably lead the readers to consider them each other's opposite. However, one could go as far as arguing that Victoria and Catherine resemble each other more than what one may initially think after reading Dacre's *Zofloya* and Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. This claim is indeed supported by the comparison made by Aktari between Female Gothic novels and Sentimental novels. In fact, while both genres' popularity was at its apogee towards the end of the eighteen's century, they also seemed to share a tendency to display a certain analysis of psychological matters. In fact, sentimental literature is characterized by its strong focus on the emotions which are felt by characters but also on the ones which are vehiculated through the author's writing style. In these novels, "women are either represented as emotional, submissive, good-natured, and virtuous, or as evil, immoral, intriguing, corrupt and not conforming to their prescribed role in society, which makes them outcasts" (Aktari, p. 26). In view of this description of the Sentimental novel, Aktari argues that:

> "Elizabeth MacAndrew draws attention to the Gothic's relation with the Sentimental novel [which] emphasized virtue and goodness and regarded evil as a destroyer of the harmony of the universe. In this sense, it depicted benevolent characters in beauty and evil ones in ugliness and monstrosity. […] Sentimental novels reflect an ideal that, coming from God, is possibly realizable; the Gothic represents the distortion of that ideal. (MacAndrew 24)". (Aktari, pp. 25-26)

Regarding the beginning of this quotation, the original parallelism between the Female Gothic and the Sentimental Novel seems to indicate that no ambivalence can be found in female characters since they are supposed to be characterized by a manichean point of view in which heroines are presented as inherently good, and villains as inherently bad. However, MacAndrew further specifies the link which unites the two types of novels, which is the fact that the Female Gothic distorts the ideal which is presented in Sentimental novels. In this sense, the Female

Gothic can be said to display characters who do not fit the ideals of Sentimental novels, and therefore, to rather use characters who embody a certain duality. Consequently, in this chapter it will be argued that Catherine's character is not as pure and innocent as the readers may think and that it is in fact ruled by selfishness from time to time. In a similar way, Victoria is not the ultimately corrupted character she initially seems to be since she happens to actually show signs that she might be repentant or compassionate.

1. Catherine Morland: When imagination leads to immaturity

As stated hereabove, Catherine is initially seen as a naïve and innocent young woman who encounters many obstacles in her attempts to find her place in Bath's society. However, it could be claimed that these obstacles are sometimes created by Catherine herself, and the fact that she is self-centered. In fact, her obsession about the Gothic novels she reads often leads her overflowing imagination to take the lead and to interpret what she experiences in the light of her Gothic fantasies. This is indeed the case when Catherine arrives at Northanger Abbey to stay there with the Tilneys. As stated in the first chapter of this work, every element of the decor, such as a heavy chest, a tempest, a locked door, or even a bit of paper in a drawer, easily triggers her tendency to daydream about being a Gothic heroine. During her stay in the Abbey, Catherine begins to nurture suspicions about the implication of General Tilney in the potential murder of his wife. Once again, she sees the events which occur around her in the light of her fantasies, not because she has proofs of what she suspects, but rather because she expects the reality to fit her expectations. In this sense, her vivid imagination and her desire for reality to mirror the novels she reads lead her to become self-centered. As claimed by Aktari in this passage, characters who can be found in Female Gothic novels are inevitably characterized by their ambivalence since their psychology and way of thinking present a dichotomy between what their consciousness tells them to be, and what their unconscious leads them to long for: "Freud's emphasis on the psychologically divided self which manifests itself especially in the conflict of the id and the ego or the super-ego is also detected in representations of the double in Gothic works" (Aktari p. 49). In this case, Catherine's subconscious indeed leads her to ignore the fact that her need to fulfil her longings for gloomy events can hurt the people who are involved in her fantasies.

In fact, the first instance of Catherine's immaturity can be found in the passage in which the young woman questions Eleanor Tilney about her mother's death and expresses "her wish of being permitted to see [her mother's room], as well as all the rest of that side of the house" (Austen, p. 176). The readers would obviously spot Catherine's indiscretion and tactlessness for overwhelming her friend with questions about her deceased mother and for pressing her into showing her the room in which she died. Moreover, the idea that Catherine's behavior has indeed a negative effect on Eleanor is made clear when it is said that, during the visit of the Abbey, "Eleanor's countenance was dejected, yet sedate" (Austen, p. 180). This description of Miss Tilney inevitably underlines the fact that Catherine's attitude hurts her feelings, since thinking about her mother's death and the perspective of entering her former room lead Eleanor to feel depressed and mournful. Moreover, Catherine utters the idea that "to court her [friend] into an apartment which must wring her heart, could not be the office of a friend" (Austen, p. 181). Some may claim that this passage proves that Catherine cannot be called selfish since she is aware of the fact that what she asks her friend may hurt her and that she wishes to remain a loyal friend. However, it could be argued that the fact that Catherine is indeed aware of the effect that her behavior may have on Eleanor rather further proves the fact that she is centered on her own desires. In fact, Catherine asked Eleanor to visit Mrs. Tilney's room in spite of the idea that this could potentially hurt her friend. She thus found herself more interested in fulfilling her desire to investigate what she thought was a murder case than in being a thoughtful friend who pays attention to what others are feeling.

Moreover, Catherine reiterates her attempts to enter Mrs. Tilney's room which highlights the fact that she is immature and that she wants to satisfy her curiosity no matter the hurt it may cause. And she in fact ends up hurting someone, since she gets caught by Henry who utters: "you infer perhaps the probability of some negligence […] – or it may be – of something still less pardonable" (Austen, p. 85). After underlining the fact that he is now aware of her suspicions, Henry then proceeds to coldly explain the circumstances of his mother's death, as to make sure that Catherine truly realizes how offensive her suppositions are. However, this does not stop the young woman from asking if his father "was […] afflicted" since the contrary "would have been very shocking!" (Austen, p. 185). Once again, she is blinded by her fantasies which do not allow her to see that her behavior impacts other people around her since she does not stop insinuating that the General may have been implicated in his wife's death.

The last proof of Catherine's tendency to be self-centered that will be discussed is her reaction after getting caught by Henry. In the previous chapter, it had been argued that

Catherine's delusion which is due to the confrontation of her imagination with the reality finally helped her to grow into a wiser young woman. This remains true since this event indeed leads her to change and to be less subject to her reveries. However, it could be argued that this change in her character was triggered not by the realization that she hurt Henry Tilney, but rather by the idea that she might have lost his interest: "She hate herself more than she could express. He had – she thought he had, once or twice before this fatal morning, shewn something like affection for her. – But now – […]" (Austen, p. 187). This passage clearly highlights the fact that what truly bothers Catherine is not the thought of having hurt Henry with her doubts, but rather that her doubts may have led her to ruin a potential marriage with someone as Henry, who is part of the upper-class. Therefore, her attitude once again depicts her as a self-centered young woman who is obsessed with her own wishes and desires.

All in all, as argued by Aktari: "the dark forces which shape human psychology and which reside in the unconscious are the main elements of the dark, gloomy and dreamy atmosphere of the Gothic narratives" (Aktari, p. 49). Nothing could come closer to the truth since every gloomy element which is present in *Northanger Abbey* is actually created by Catherine's imagination. Moreover, she creates obstacles herself by letting her unconscious lead her to fulfill her desire to experience her Gothic fantasies at any cost. Therefore, Catherine Morland is indeed an ambivalent character whose subconscious desires sometimes emphasize her immaturity and her lack of compassion.

2. Victoria di Loredani: When it is too late to repent.

In *Zofloya*, Victoria is initially described as an inherently haughty and cruel character. As argued in the first chapter of this research, her lack of compassion and her selfishness led her to be unrepentant regarding the many crimes she has committed throughout the novel. For example, this can be seen at the end of the novel, when her mother, badly harmed by Count Ardolph, enters the cavern of the bandits. In fact, before dying, Laurina begs for her children's forgiveness in order to be able to rest in peace, and Victoria openly refuses and mocks her mother. As argued by Moreno: "contrary to her sister Victoria, Leonardo, 'the vile chief of a band of robbers', shows compassion, repentance and forgiveness when meeting his mother and condemns Victoria's pitilessness" (Moreno, p. 429). In other words, while her brother who initially seemed to be equally cruel as Victoria is able to show remorse and to forgive his

mother, Victoria remains deprived of any feeling of guilt and proves herself to be unrepentant. In this regard, the young woman could be thought to be far from being an ambivalent character since she does not seem to display any nuance or duality in her behaviour. However, it will be argued that, towards the end of the novel, some passages actually highlight the fact that she might be able to be compassionate and to display a feeling of guilt, even though these instances of repentance remain too weak to save her from damnation.

The first passage in which Victoria shows herself able to repent happens after she flees Torre Alto where she caused the death of Berenza, Henriquez, Lilla and the old Signora who was taking care of Lilla. In fact, after leaving this place, Victoria faints and wakes up with Zofloya near a cavern which is inhabited by bandits and mercenaries. As they are invited to sleep in this gloomy cavern, Victoria reflects on what she put the young Lilla through because of her jealousy. In fact, while she is still in the Apennines, Victoria follows Zofloya's advice and secludes the young woman in a cavern: "extended on the flinty ground lay the emaciated and almost expiring girl; her pale cheek reposing upon her snowy arm, barely preserving it from unworthy contact with its rocky pillow" (Dacre, p. 223). This passage highlights the poor conditions in which the young woman had to survive because of Victoria. Moreover, this episode of the novel obviously reminds the readers of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice from the ancient Greek Mythology. Indeed, Lilla finds herself confined in a cavern by the devil himself (Zofloya), in a similar way to Eurydice who is kept captive in Hades' hell. Then, both young women await their loved ones, respectively Henriquez and Orpheus, in hopes that they would be able to save them. Both stories tragically end with the death of the young lovers. This episode of the novel is then mirrored by Victoria's speech when she herself has to lay upon the ground of a lugubrious cave:

> "The Moor withdrew, and Victoria sunk oppressed upon her couch, - a couch harder far than any on which hitherto she had reposed; -'Yet the poor departed Lilla!' -whispered conscience, which the gloomy hour of adversity ever wakes, 'the poor Lilla! -she had not even such as this'" (Dacre, p. 240)

In fact, Victoria finally displays the semblance of a feeling of guilt by recognizing that what she inflicted upon the young woman was truly inhuman. The lack of comfort and the gloomy atmosphere of the cavern trigger Victoria's awakening in regards of the crime she has committed. Furthermore, this reversal of situations also applies to the myth which was mentioned hereabove since Victoria is now the one who is secluded in a cavern with the devil

himself. Thus, as argued by the narrator, it is not surprising to witness Victoria's display of compassion for the young Lilla since she now finds herself in "the gloomy hour of adversity", which means that Victoria's compassion is only triggered by her own suffering and fear. Even though this explanation may decrease the authenticity of Victoria's repentance, she still proves herself capable to realize that she is at the origin of Lilla's terrible fate and to recognize that she suffered because of her. Therefore, Victoria can still be said to feel compassion for another character at some point in the novel.

This is further supported by the appearance of an angel sent by God to meet Victoria in her dreams. The angel indeed says to her:

> "I am thy good genius; I come to warn thee at this moment, because it is the first, for many years, in which a spark of repentance hath visited thy guilt-benighted soul. [If] thou wilt endeavour, by thy future life, to make amends for the terrible list of the past, even yet shalt thou be saved" (Dacre, p. 247).

As clearly stated in this passage, the angel came to Victoria because, for the first time in her life, she felt a feeling of guilt and of compassion towards one of her victims, in this case the young Lilla. Therefore, this appearance suggests the idea that there is still some hope for Victoria to find her way back to the right path and to ask for forgiveness for what she has done in the past. According to what the angel says, a simple thought showing that she feels remorse is thus sufficient to overcome a lifelong list of sins, which highlights the importance of the passage in which she feels compassionate towards Lilla for the plot of the novel. However, when Victoria awakes, the Moor keeps her from repenting for her past crimes. He indeed reads her thoughts and tells her: "You are mine, I have gained you, and lose you now I neither can nor will. -You do not hate me, Victoria" (Dacre, p. 248). Zofloya can be said to manipulate Victoria by insinuating that he knows better than her how she actually feels towards him. He imposes his judgement on her by claiming that she belongs to him and the vain Victoria finally forgets the warnings of the angel.

As Zofloya interferes in the process of her redemption, the narrator allows the readers to experience dramatic irony. In fact, as Victoria ignores the threats which have been proffered to her, one can easily understand that the only fate which awaits Victoria is a "speedy death and eternal destruction" (Dacre, p. 247). She indeed meets her tragic destiny through the last pages of the novel. In fact, as Count Ardolph, Laurina, Leonardo and Megalena die in the cavern,

Zofloya and Victoria are now pursued by robbers. They suddenly find themselves in another place and as the Moor urges her to swear allegiance to him and to fully abandon herself in his hands, Victoria agrees to do so. Then, the earth cracks open:

> "Victoria trembled, for the spirit of the beauteous Lilla seemed to rise to her view from the depth of the frightful abyss! -mournful it appeared, and mangled with many a wound. -Victoria remembered, that for her she had felt no pity. The images of the dying Berenza, of the destroyed Henriquez, glided before her on the rocky steep – *remorse* filled her guilty soul, but filled it too late, for it came from despair!" (Dacre, pp. 265-266).

As the silhouettes of her victims appear in front of her, Victoria remembers the crimes that she committed against them, as well as the fact that she had not shown any pity or any remorse regarding the ones she hurt in the past. In fact, Victoria once again thinks about the young Lilla and about what she did to her. Her so-called "guilty soul" is now filled with remorse and a desire to repent from her sins, which shows the ambivalence of Victoria's character. However, as argued by the narrator, this longing for redemption cannot actually save her from damnation since it comes from despair and from her fear of facing the consequences of her deeds. This passage inevitably sends the readers back to a previous observation made by the narrator in which Victoria's "whispered conscience, which the gloomy hour of adversity ever wakes" (Dacre, p. 240) is described. Once again, the approach of her fatal fate triggers Victoria's urge to repent. It could thus be argued that her redemption is not authentic. However, while her guilt is said to arise from the wrong intention, it still manifests itself in the head of Victoria, which proves that, at least in her subconscious, she is aware that she hurt people in the past and that she regrets it. All in all, Victoria is an ambivalent character, full of nuances and of dualities which efficiently mirror the complexity of the human mind.

3. The influence of the narrator's interventions in the novels

Another element which will be discussed, and which highlights the fact that Victoria should not be looked upon with a manichean point of view is the ways in which Dacre's novel cleverly displays reflections and thoughts about human nature throughout the novel. Indeed, it

will be argued that these notes written by the narrator tend to undermine Victoria's cruelty and to render her less monstrous to the reader's eye. The first example which will be discussed happens after Victoria escapes the house of the Signora of Modena and finds herself in Berenza's palazzo in Venice. In fact, as the readers realize the fact that Berenza does not judge Victoria worthy of becoming his wife, one can read: "Victoria, beneath his roof, voluntarily in his power, he had leisure to revise and amplify on those errors, which while she seemed unattainable, struck him in a point of view infinitely less momentous. Such is the nature of man!" (Dacre, p. 69). This passage clearly shows that the narrator is critical about the human mind. In fact, this passage highlights the tendency that one often has of idealizing what one cannot have and of undermining the value of what one already possesses. Even though this observation is initially uttered in regards of Berenza's attitude towards Victoria, one can easily understands that it also applies to Victoria. This quotation indeed mirrors the episode of the novel in which is displayed Victoria's desire to seduce Henriquez, her husband's brother, while she is already married. She remains unsatisfied with what she already has within her reach and longs for what she cannot possess, for the forbidden subject of her desires. In this sense, Victoria could be compared to Catherine. In fact, both young women seem to display a tendency to seek the fulfilment of their desires, even though they are unattainable. Once she arrives in the Abbey, Catherine is immediately deceived by the fact that the decor before her is not as gloomy as she expected it to be. Even though this deception is initially seen as the consequence of the confrontation of her desire to experience her Gothic reveries with the reality, it could also be argued that Catherine is deceived because now that she is able to live what she reads about in her Gothic novels, it no longer seems appealing. In other words, the excitement she feels about being invited to spend some days with the Tilneys at Northanger Abbey is easily surpassed by her unattainable desire to become a Gothic heroine. The narrator's observation of human nature can thus be seen as a way to focus on the characters' flaws, as if to make sure that the readers actually acknowledge that these flaws are not specific to Victoria but rather to humankind. One can thus only feel compassion, or at least tolerance towards Victoria since anyone (even a seemingly innocent and pure character such as Catherine) could also display such flaws.

Another instance of the narrator's reflection on human nature happens when Victoria understands that from the beginning, Berenza had been reluctant to marry her because of his doubts about the authenticity of her love towards him and because he judged her unworthy of becoming his wife. As she understands what he thinks about her, her rage grows. First of all, a parallelism could be made between this passage and the previous quotation in which Dacre

underlines the fact that people tend to seek the fulfilment of unattainable desires. In fact, Victoria's rage grows from the fact that the affection that Berenza gives her is no longer sufficient and that she now desires to become his wife, which is until then impossible since he refuses to marry her. Then, the narrator uses this passage to display another observation regarding the human mind:

> "When the mind is dissatisfied, whether upon grounds just or unjust, it ever views objects through an exaggerated medium; trifles which, when in a sane state, would have passed unnoticed, are twisted from their proper insignificance, to aid the conceptions of a disturbed imagination" (Dacre, p. 128).

In this passage, Victoria's furious reaction to her recent discovery is justified and relativized through a reflection on human nature. In fact, it underlines the idea that when someone goes through an event which triggers an emotional reaction, it is not surprising that this person displays a tendency to overreact to this very event. In other words, any insignificant detail following this event will be looked at in the light of one's imagination since one is no longer able to objectively master his thoughts. In this sense, the narrator highlights the fact that anyone could be subject to the folly which gains Victoria after being humiliated by Berenza.

The last passage which will be discussed is the narrator's final note to the readers with which the novel concludes. In fact, one can read:

> "That [the] seductions [of vice] may prevail, we dare not doubt; for can we otherwise account for those crimes, dreadful and repugnant to nature, which human beings are sometimes tempted to commit? Either we must suppose that the love of evil is born with us (which would be an insult to the Deity), or we must attribute them (as appears more consonant with reason) to the suggestions of infernal influence" (Dacre, p. 268).

The first striking element is the fact that the pronoun "we" is used to directly address the readers. In fact, this is the first and the last time in the novel that the narrator openly implicates the readers into the narrative, as if to make sure that they do not only consider *Zofloya* as a story which displays the downfall of a corrupted character, but most importantly as a moral which concerns them and which may prevent them from repeating the same mistakes as Victoria. The second important element is that the pronoun "we" does not only implicate the reader, but also

the narrator. In fact, the narrator himself is included in his speech about human nature, which underlines the idea that it is not solely a warning which is directed at the readers but also a moral which is intended to the integrity of mankind. Moreover, the fact that the novel concludes with a reflection on human nature's tendency to feel the urge to submit to evil thoughts makes the readers reconsider the entirety of the novel under a new point of view. In fact, they should not blame the haughty and cruel Victoria but rather feel compassionate towards her because of the human character of her reactions. Therefore, Victoria should not be considered a monster but rather a victim of her human nature, and readers should not consider themselves superior to the young woman since the narrator clearly highlights the fact that, they too, could find themselves in a situation which might lead them to adopt some controversial behaviors.

Then, it could also be argued that a similar mechanism is used by the narrator in *Northanger Abbey*. In fact, while *Zofloya*'s narrator addresses the readers by exposing his thoughts about human nature to make them feel more compassionate towards Victoria, *Northanger Abbey*'s narrator also addresses the readers by using irony and dropping hints for them to pick up, which has for effect to nuance Catherine's character. The first way in which the readers are implicated in the narrative of the novel is the disnarrated. This literary process indeed allows elements to exist in the plot of the novel by denying them, as in this passage: "though she had 'never from the first had the smallest idea of finding any thing in any part of the cabinet, and was not in the least disappointed at her ill success thus far, it would be foolish not to examine it thoroughly while she was about it'" (Austen, pp. 160-161). This passage of the novel takes place during Catherine's nightly exploration of the Abbey. It highlights the fact that the narrator tries to display Catherine's thoughts by exposing what she might actually think in this very moment. Indeed, one could easily interpret this quotation as the heroine's way of rationalizing her investigation, as if she wanted to justify the fact that she pursues her searching of the Abbey. However, the fact that she claims that she would not be disappointed if her investigation ended up being unsuccessful is in contradiction with the fact that she is described as full of hope a few lines before this passage. Therefore, by denying her hope and excitement about living her Gothic fantasies, Catherine rather emphasizes them. The narrator thus incites the readers to decode the meaning behind her words and to spot the incoherence as a way to further understand Catherine's way of thinking.

Another tool which is used in *Northanger Abbey* to catch the attention of the readers is the use of irony. An example of this is to be found when Catherine begins to nurture some doubts about the potential implication of the General in his wife's death: "They set forward;

and, with a grandeur of air, a dignified step, which caught the eye, but could not shake the doubts of the well-read Catherine, [General Tilney] led the way across the hall" (Austen, p. 172). In this passage, the narrator ironically refers to the Gothic novels which are read by Catherine as a truthful source of knowledge for the young woman. In fact, it is insinuated that Catherine is able to see through the General's appearance and attitude and that her love for Gothic novels prepared her and keep her from being fooled by artifices such as the ones supposedly displayed by General Tilney. The readers thus inevitably understand the irony of such insinuation since Catherine's way of thinking is far from being rational, and that the following events which occur in the novel prove that Catherine's doubts were only a figment of her imagination.

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted the fact that both *Zofloya* and *Northanger Abbey* are Female Gothic novels which are not characterized by a manichean point of view but rather by an ambivalence and a duality which allow female characters to emancipate from a clearcut vision and therefore, to appear more human. In fact, it has been argued that in Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine who is initially perceived as a pure and innocent character can be said to be self-centered and immature. Her need to fulfil her desire to become a Gothic heroine actually leads her to hurt both her friend Eleanor and her potential suitor, Henry. Moreover, the fact that she realizes that her behavior was considered offensive by Henry is only the consequence of her fear of ruining her hopes to marry him and not of authentic and honest remorse. Then, regarding Dacre's *Zofloya*, Victoria who is described as haughty and cruel throughout the novel finally shows signs of remorse when she finds herself in the same position of fear and discomfort that she put her victims through. In fact, her stay in the bandits' cavern make the young woman realize that the way in which she treated Lilla was harsh and cruel. Moreover, even though her feeling of guilt does not come from authentic redemption but rather from despair, it could still be argued that the fact that her victims come to her mind when she thinks about her past underlines the idea that, in her subconscious, she is aware that she hurt people and that she regrets what she has done. Lastly, the mechanisms which are used by Dacre and Austen's narrators to address the readers have been proven to have an influence on the readers' perception of these female characters. In fact, it has been argued that, whether through the use of direct address, irony or the disnarrated, both narrators help the readers to understand that Catherine and Victoria are not inherently bad or inherently good, but rather full of duality and ambivalence. This is aimed at making the readers identify with those characters to consequently be able to humanize them and to feel more compassionate towards them.

Chapter three: The influence of the mother figure

Dacre's *Zofloya* and Austen's *Northanger Abbey* depict the stories of young women as well as the development of their characters. This development can be said to be caused by the many eventful peripeties that these female characters have to go through. However, another influence is notable regarding Catherine and Victoria's character evolution: the influence of their mothers. From the beginning of times, mothers have indeed been considered the ultimate nurturing figures. After carrying their babies in their wombs for nine months, they give birth, they breastfeed their children, and they look after them to guarantee their safety. From the moment of the child's birth, a maternal bond arises and bounds him to his mother. This link is then maintained by the fact that father figures are usually absent and that throughout their infancy, children are mainly raised by their mothers. In this sense, mother figures are inevitably considered the ones who shape and educate their progeniture who then becomes dependent on the ones who gave life to them. This idea also applies to Female Gothic novels, since as argued by Aktari:

> "[…] Freud concentrates on infancy as the fundamental period of psychological development and the Gothic narratives are also concerned with the childhood period in their presentation of the protagonists' quest in the form of transition from childhood to adulthood" (Aktari, p. 49).

In fact, it is not surprising to find a focus on female character's childhood since the typical Female Gothic plot is about displaying the growth of its heroine. This can be observed in *Northanger Abbey* since the novel opens with a focus on Catherine's childhood in the familial house, as well as on the education she received from her mother. On the contrary, *Zofloya* does not particularly attach importance to depict Victoria's infancy. This difference between these two novels marks the fact that they both present two different types of mother figures: the absent mother, and the depraved one. In fact, while Catherine's mother is voluntarily left out for the greater part of the narrative, Victoria's mother, Laurina, is at the very core of her peripeties. In this sense, Female Gothic novels thus seem to break with the original vision of the mother figure who is nurturing and who inspires her children to resemble her and to take her as an example. This chapter will therefore discuss the extent of the impact that these flawed mothers have on Catherine and Victoria's lives and educations.

1. Mrs. Morland: The archetype of the absent mother figure

The first mother-daughter relationship which will be discussed in this chapter is the one which unites Catherine Morland to her mother. As it has already been claimed hereabove, the young woman's mother is mostly absent from the narrative. This absence can firstly be observed in the structure of the narrative as well as in the politics of naming which can be encountered while reading *Northanger Abbey*. Regarding the form of the novel, one can easily notice that Catherine's mother is rarely mentioned throughout the story. In fact, Mrs. Morland is not mentioned once from page 19 to page 218. The narrative of the novel can thus be said to mirror the absence of Mrs. Morland in Catherine's life with her literal non-existence in the greater part of the plot of Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. Then, regarding the politics of naming, the ways in which Catherine's mother is mentioned also indicate the fact that she is set aside and apparently of little importance. In fact, the only names which are given to her are Catherine's "mother" (Austen, p. 15) or "Mrs. Morland" (Austen, p. 16). First of all, the apparent insignificance of Mrs. Morland is obviously noticeable through the fact that she is only described according to what her roles are. In fact, being called Catherine's mother inevitably refers to the idea that she is reduced to the role of the mother figure who takes care of her children. Then, the name "Mrs. Morland" refers to the role of the wife which she has to fulfil with her husband. The name Morland is indeed not hers but rather the one of her husband, which she has been obliged to take on the day of her wedding with Mr. Morland, as any married woman from that time period in England. Lastly, the fact that she is only referred to by her family name implies that it is not judged important to mention her surname. This is even more striking as one reads the first page of the novel and notices that Catherine's father is not only initially presented as Mr. Morland but also "Richard" (Austen, p. 15). In fact, the narrator openly mentions the surname of Catherine's father, in opposition to her mother who remains nameless. This opposition is obviously meaningful since it insinuates the idea that, as a woman, Catherine's mother is deprived of her identity, of being independent and emancipated. She has in fact no choice but to submit to her society's expectation towards women, which is to belong to her husband (which is made clear by the fact that her family name is replaced by his, therefore erasing her past and her bloodline) as well as to become a caring mother. Therefore, it can be argued that it is not very surprising to encounter a mother which is depicted as absent since the very structure of the novel leaves no room for her to stand out as an individual being.

Next to the structure of *Northanger Abbey*, the absence of the mother figure is then to be found in her absence of the narrative as the consequence of Catherine's departure from the familial home in Fullerton to stay in Bath for a few weeks with the Allens. Aktari depicts this departure as necessary for female characters in Female Gothic novels since it mirrors "[…] the necessity of the infant's separation from the maternal body in order to realize the boundaries between 'me' and 'm/other' […]" (Aktari, p. 54). In fact, from the beginning of the novel, it is mentioned that this journey to Bath is the first time in her life that Catherine leaves Fullerton. Moreover, the tale of her childhood does not mention any friend of hers nor any other social relationship than the one that her parents entertain with the Allen. Catherine's possibility to detach herself from her mother and thus to form her own identity by opposing herself to others was therefore quite limited until her departure. Consequently, Aktari claims that:

> "In fact, the Oedipal development of identity plays a significant role in the conventional Gothic plots [...]. Since the Oedipal stage starts with the separation from the (m)other, the traditional Gothic also discards the mother figure in order to advance the plot in Oedipal terms. In this respect, the mother figure is rather absent or dead in these Gothic works." (Aktari, p. 4)

The fact that he refers to oedipal relationships is indeed relevant in regards to *Northanger Abbey*. In fact, mother-daughter relationships are almost always ambivalent and filled with duality. The young girl therefore has to endure a separation with the mother figure to fulfil her attraction towards the other sex. In other words, Catherine's character development was induced by the opportunity she was given to go to Bath and thus to distance herself from her mother and therefore, to forge her own identity, especially through her encountering with male characters such as Jonh Thorpe of Henry Tilney.

Then, another element which stands out to the reader's eyes from the beginning of the novel is the apparent lack of experience and incapacity to fulfil the role of an outstanding mother which is displayed by Mrs. Morland. The first time that her capacity to be a good mother is questioned happens when the children of the Morland family are described: "A family of ten children will always be called a fine family, where there are heads and arms and legs enough for the number; but the Morlands had little other right to the word, for they were in general very plain" (Austen, p. 15). In fact, instead of focusing on the difficulty that a mother has to face through bearing ten children into the world in addition to educate them and to take care of them, the narrator rather focusses on the idea that there is nothing remarkable about this family since

the Morland children are banal if not insignificant. This claim thus undermines Mrs. Morland's capacity of being an outstanding mother figure since the narrator underlines the fact that she was not able to give birth to children who were sufficiently valuable.

Another example of Catherine's mother failure regarding the education of her children is this claim: "Mrs. Morland, who did not insist on her daughters being accomplished in spite of incapacity or distaste, allowed [Catherine] to leave off [learning music]" (Austen, p. 16). In fact, the uttermost important task which was given to mothers at this time was to make sure that their daughters became accomplished young women. This implies that they were supposed to attach importance to teaching their daughters how to read, how to play and sing music, how to draw, etc. It is obviously not the case with Mrs. Morland who easily gives up making of Catherine an accomplished young woman because the young girl dislikes playing the piano. This element is not to be treated as unsignificant since the non-fulfilment of this motherly task will inevitably impact Catherine's life. Indeed, to be accomplished should be a priority because it determines the way in which Catherine will be perceived when she goes out in public and creates new social relationships. In fact, potential suitors could easily dismiss her because of her lack of education, which would lead her to be competing with other young ladies who are indeed accomplished. Still, the narrator then relativizes Catherine's mother negligence by claiming that: "Mrs. Morland was a very good woman, and wished to see her children every thing they ought to be; but her time was so much occupied in lying-in and teaching the little ones, that her elder daughters were inevitably left to shift for themselves" (Austen, p. 17). In fact, this passage highlights the fact that being a mother of ten children is a considerable task which takes a lot of time and of patience. Therefore, the narrator seems to be willing to be critical of Mrs. Morland's attitude while remaining non-judgmental since her failure is undermined by the fact that the readers are reminded of the fact that the role of the mother figure is not an easy one.

The last example which will be discussed occurs before Catherine's departure for Bath. In fact, as the very moment of her separation with her mother approaches, the narrator cleverly describes how Mrs. Morland is supposed to feel and to behave:

> "When the hour of departure drew near, the maternal anxiety of Mrs. Morland will be naturally supposed to be most severe. A thousand alarming presentiments of evil to her beloved Catherine from this terrific separation must oppress her heart with sadness, and drown her in tears for the last day or two of their being together." (Austen, p. 19)

The most striking element in this quotation is the writing style. In fact, the readers can easily see through the choice of words as to understand that every emotion which is described in this passage is in fact not experienced by Catherine's mother. Indeed, the narrator repeatedly uses the auxiliary "must" which implies that Mrs. Morland should be reluctant regarding the approach of her separation with her daughter and that her last days with Catherine should be filled with anxiety and sadness. Still, the repetition of the auxiliary also entails that none of this reluctance and fear is actually experienced by Mrs. Morland. Moreover, the narrator also states that Catherine's mother anxiety is "supposed" to grow as Catherine's departure approaches. Once again, this implies that, according to the narrator, any mother would have been expected to feel this way, whereas it is clearly not the case for Mrs. Morland. Then, a few lines under this passage, one can read:

> "Cautions against the violence of such noblemen and baronets as delight in forcing young ladies away to some remote farm-house, must, at such a moment, relieve the fulness of her heart. Who would not think so? But Mrs. Morland knew so little of lords and baronets, that she entertained no notion of their general mischievousness, and was wholly unsuspicious of danger to her daughter from their machinations." (Austen, p. 19)

Once again, one can observe the use of the auxiliary "must", which is combined with a particular use of commas in this quotation. Indeed, the fact that this word as well as the phrase "at such a moment" are placed between comas is not innocuous. This writing strategy is aimed at emphasizing the fact that, in addition to being sad, Mrs. Morland should most importantly, at this very moment, worry about the safety of her daughter. The narrator indeed insinuates that any mother should be aware that making an entrée into Bath's society comes with some potential dangers, including the fact that young men could be tempted to corrupt the young and innocent Catherine. The task of Mrs. Morland, which is to inform her daughter and warn her against such threats, is thus unfulfilled. This is also made clear in the question which is addressed to the readers: "Who would not think so?". This question induces the idea that to warn a young woman against men is a matter of common sense for mother figures during this time period, and that any reader would agree with this claim, which inevitably indicates Mrs. Morland's incompetence. However, this passage also emphasizes the fact that it is not surprising to witness this behaviour in Mrs. Morland since she is herself not acquainted with the ways in which one has to behave in society as well as the threats which hover over women.

In this sense, Catherine could not have been taught how to behave in society as well as not to be too naïve since her mother herself is not able to do so.

Moreover, the separation which occurs between Catherine and her mother can be said to be necessary for the development of the plot of the novel. In fact, as argued by Anolik:

> "Thus the mother's imposition of convention and quietude within the narrative opposes the need of the narrative for deviance and instability that is identified by D.A. Miller. The mother, like the state of marriage, is the enemy of the "narratable": the "instances of disequlibrium, suspense, and general insufficiency from which a given narrative appears to arise. […] The absence of the mother from the Gothic text allows for a narratable deviance to flourish in the text, a deviance that allows the text to thrive." (Anolik, pp. 27-28)

According to this quotation, the mother figure is usually attributed the role of the pacifier. She is indeed supposed to educate her children in such a way as to make sure that they stay in the right path and that no obstacles arise in their lives. In this sense, if the mother figure remains close to the female protagonist, the plot cannot further develop since the conventional and stable setting does not allow enough room for the disruptive element to take place and to trigger the beginning of the heroine's peripeties. Therefore, it is not surprising to observe that *Northanger Abbey* actually begins with Catherine's departure from the familial home since it results in a certain imbalance in the narrative. Moreover, the separation of the main character with her mother does not only take place in a physical dimension but also in a more psychological one. In fact, it was argued in the previous paragraph that, more than once, Mrs. Morland is presented as a mother who fails at fulfilling the duties which fall under the responsibility of the mother figure. Therefore, her incapacity to provide a proper education to Catherine is also the source of some deviance in the text, as it is the triggering element which leads the young woman to struggle to fit in Bath's society and which thus creates enough imbalance in the narrative to actually allow her to face some peripeties and thus to allow the further development of the plot. In fact, if Catherine's mother had taught her how to behave in society as well as to be an accomplished young woman, the greater part of the narrative would not have taken place. Catherine's naiveness and innocence are indeed at the origin of most of the peripeties she faces, such as encouraging Jonh Thorpe's advances by claiming that he would be welcome at Fullerton if he decided to come see her, when she in fact has no desire to seduce him or to make him believe that she is interested in him (Austen, p. 118).

The beginning of the novel thus focusses on the fact that Mrs. Morland is incompetent as a mother and that her absence from the narrative is needed for the plot to actually further develop. However, when Mrs. Morland happens to be mentioned again in chapter XIV, the readers could initially notice a change in her behavior. While she used to be negligent regarding the education of her daughter, she now seems to be interested in Catherine becoming an independent young woman. Indeed, one can read: "[But] we are so glad to have [Catherine] amongst us again! And it is a great comfort to find that she is not a poor helpless creature, but can shift very well for herself" (Austen, p. 222). This passage indeed highlights the fact that Catherine's mother seems to rejoice at the idea that her daughter is able to take care of herself and to build her own opinion. However, Mrs. Morland's speech is in contradiction with her behavior. In fact, one can read:

> "'Well,' continued her philosophic mother, 'I am glad I did not know of your journey at the time; but now it is all over perhaps there is no great harm done. It is always good for young people to be put upon exerting themselves; and you know, my dear Catherine, you always were a sad little shatter-brained creature; but now you must have been forced to have your wits about you, with so much changing of chaises and so forth […]'" (Austen, p. 219).

The first striking element in this quotation is the fact that Catherine's mother is depicted as "philosophic". In fact, this adjective can be said to be uttered on an ironical tone since Mrs. Morland who never gave any advice to Catherine nor taught her how to be an accomplished young lady now cares about the fact that her daughter is supposed to become more independent and autonomous. In this sense, Catherine's mother seems to be justifying herself and relativizing the failure of the education she was supposed to give to Catherine by claiming that no advice nor theoretical speech could have taught Catherine what she actually learned while experiencing difficult situations in real life. This can also be observed in the following passage: "'Catherine would make a sad heedless young house-keeper to be sure,' was her mother's foreboding remark; but quick was the consolation of there being nothing like practice" (Austen, p. 232). Once again, Catherine's mother refuses to admit that it was her duty to teach her daughter how to be a good housekeeper and she also denies the fact that she was not able to behave as what the society in which she lives considers a good mother. In this sense, Catherine's mother undermines her own failure by claiming that only practice can actually teach a young woman how to become a wife and a mother, and therefore, that she is not responsible for her

daughter's lack of education. Then, another ironical element related to this idea is that Mrs. Morland expresses her own opinion about the fact that to learn by doing is the best way to grow wiser, while she herself never had to experience life in society. In fact, the narrator underlined earlier in the novel the fact that "Mrs. Morland knew so little of lords and baronets […]" (Austen, p. 19), which insinuates that she is as ignorant of the ways in which one has to behave in society as Catherine used to be before she left Fullerton.

After all the peripeties she went through, Catherine thus seems to be wiser than her mother, which can be seen in the dissatisfaction that the young woman feels when her mother tries to comfort her. In fact, one can read: "There was a great deal of good sense in all this; but there are some situations of the human mind in which good sense has very little power; and Catherine's feelings contradicted almost every position her mother advanced" (Austen, p. 223). In this passage of the novel, Catherine seems to reproach to her mother the fact that her attempts to make her feel better are solely based on good sense rather than on the feelings and the emotions that she may feel after being rejected by a man she appreciated and hoped to become her husband. This thus implies that Mrs. Morland is not good at reading behind the words of her daughter or at trying to understand her. All in all, these perpetual contradictions and misunderstandings between the two women seem to be unavoidable, even as the plot reaches its end. However, it could be argued that, once again, this distance between the mother and her daughter is important for the development of the plot. In fact, this distance between them is at the origin of a gap which can only be filled by a potential husband, who in this case is Henry Tilney. Such separation is indeed inevitable for a young lady who approaches the required aged to find a husband and to leave the familial house. In this sense, one could claim that Austen's *Northanger Abbey* can be depicted as the story of a young woman's passage from childhood to adulthood through a difficult separation from the mother figure, to finally find a husband and become a mother in her turn.

2. Laurina di Cornari: The influence of a disgraced mother figure

If Austen's *Northanger Abbey* is characterized by the absence of Mrs. Morland from the narrative, one can then easily determine that Dacre's *Zofloya* is its complete opposite. In fact, it will rather be argued that Victoria's mother is far from being absent from the narrative. This idea is indeed defended by Anolik since he argues:

> "While mothers are often absent of the Gothic narrative, either because they are simply ignored or because they are dead before the story of the heroine begins, '[only] the occasional deviant evil mother, like Laurina in Charlotte Dacre's Zofloya (1806), is allowed to survive and flourish in the Gothic text'" (Anolik, p. 26).

This quotation clearly underlines the fact that Laurina is indeed a female character which is present at the very core of the novel, and which is characterized by its outstanding deviant personality. Anolik then goes further than this claim since he argues that among other novels which belong to the genre of the Female Gothic, Dacre's *Zofloya* is actually the only one which presents a mother figure who is not dead or excluded from the plot.

Before discussing the presence of Victoria's mother in the narrative of the novel, the structure of the text as well as the politics of naming which can be found in *Zofloya* will be compared to the ones which are displayed in *Northanger Abbey*. As already discussed in the previous section, the idea that Mrs. Morland is mostly excluded from the plot is mirrored in the fact that she is not mentioned for the greater part of the novel. Moreover, she is not actually given a surname of a name of her own and is only described through her role as a mother and as a wife. However, this observation does not apply to the character of Laurina. The first evidence which will be highlighted is the fact that Victoria's mother is constantly mentioned throughout the story. This may seem surprising since Laurina is not physically present in the plot from page 42 to page 252. In fact, she leaves Victoria in the hands of the Signora di Modena and does not meet her daughter again until the very end of the novel when she enters the cavern of the bandits with whom Victoria and Zofloya are staying. In this sense, one could easily be led to believe that, in a similar way to Mrs. Morland, Victoria's mother should be absent from the narrative since the physical distance which exists between her, and her daughter is supposed to result in her effacement from the text. However, Victoria still repeatedly mentions her "cruel and ungenerous mother […]" (Dacre, p. 67) in order to blame her for what happens to her. Laurina is then also brought up into the narrative by other characters, such as Berenza who describes her as "the parent, whose example and conduct had corrupted the sentiments of her daughter" (Dacre, p. 67). Then, the narrator also addresses Laurina and condemns her: "Unhappy Laurina! whose criminal desertion of thine offspring entailed upon them such misery and degradation" (Dacre, p. 124). These passages indeed prove the fact that the criticisms and blames which are proffered against Victoria's mother for being the very source of her daughter's depravation keep her from being excluded from the narrative. Then, regarding the

politics of naming, Laurina can once again be considered the opposite of Mrs. Morland. In fact, one can notice the way in which she is initially introduced in the narrative by the narrator: "At this time the Marchese di Loredani had been married seventeen years to Laurina di Cornari, a female of unexampled beauty, and of rare and singular endowments" (Dacre, p. 3). It is true that the first time that Victoria's mother is mentioned in the novel is actually related to her relationship with her husband. One could thus think that, as Catherine's mother, she is reduced to being a wife and that she is not considered an individual and independent being. However, one major distinction which has to be made between her and Catherine's mother is the fact that Victoria's mother is given a surname and a name of her own. Therefore, one could go as far as arguing that, through the fact that Laurina is given a place in the novel as an individual, with her own personality and desires, this passage insinuates from the beginning of the novel that her character will be of a crucial importance in the development of the plot.

To move on to the actual narrative of the novel, it will be claimed that Laurina is at the origin of Victoria's depravation. Indeed, in the first chapter of this paper, it was stated that, as argued by Anolik: "In Dacre's novel, characters and narrator reiterate that the mother, who initiates the decline of her family by running off with a seducer, is the 'the primary cause' (258) of the unfortunate events that follow" (Anolik, p. 28). In this quotation, Anolik clearly states that, according to him, Laurina has to be held accountable for the downfall of her family. It is true that her adultery, followed by her departure from the familial house triggered the beginning of Victoria's peripeties. However, one could also argue that the initial description which is given of Laurina's character also seems to indicate that her bad influence on her daughter's life began to arise even before Count Ardolph's arrival. In fact, one can read on the first page of the novel: "[…] Laurina di Cornari [was] a female of unexampled beauty, and of rare singular endowments. If she possessed a foible, it arose from vanity, from too great a thirst of admiration, and confidence in herself" (Dacre, p. 3). Victoria's mother is thus described by the narrator as a woman who is incredibly beautiful but who is also extremely vain. In fact, she is said to seek the approval and the admiration of people around her. Regarding this unflattering description of Laurina's character, the readers can easily be led to think that the mother figure's predispositions inevitably have an impact on her children since she is the one who is supposed to take care of them and to educate them. In fact, as underlined by Aktari in his essay: "The female protagonist is never independent or autonomous; she constructs her identity through relations, through identification with others and especially with the mother" (Aktari, p. 24). Evidence of this claim can firstly be found in the way in which Victoria is introduced into the

narrative. Indeed, the main female protagonist is initially described as "the lovely and haughty Victoria […]" (Dacre, p. 3). This description of the young woman mirrors the way in which her own mother is pictured at the beginning of the novel, since they are both displayed as haughty and self-sufficient characters. However, the influence of the mother figure on her daughter is not only to be found in natural predispositions linked to her own personality traits. On the contrary, to fully understand the impact that the education given by the mother has on her children, one must concentrate on the progressive development of the narrative and on the series of events which are at the origin of the child's depravation. The importance of this claim is indeed underlined from the beginning of the novel by the narrator. In fact, the narrative opens with the following passage:

> "The historian who would wish his lessons to sink deep into the heart, thereby essaying to render mankind virtuous and more happy, must not content himself with simply detailing a series of events – he must ascertain causes, and follow progressively their effects; he must draw deductions from incidents as they arise […]" (Dacre, p. 3).

It is not surprising to note that the novel begins with such warning. This passage is indeed of crucial importance for the readers to understand the aim of the narrative. In fact, this opening passage can be said to fulfil the role of a warning for the readers which actually indicates the guidelines that one has to follow while reading the novel. In this sense, it can be argued that the narrator insists upon the importance of not judging the characters too fast and of not considering the development of the plot independently from the causal implications of the characters' decisions and behaviours. Therefore, this section of the present paper will attempt to retrace the gradual influence that Laurina's choices had on the education of her daughter while making sure to fully encompass the complexity of their relationship, considering both positive and negative feelings that one nurtures towards the other.

Before focusing on concrete passages from the novel, this paragraph will firstly underline the fact that to think that the mother figure's choices affect the development of her children's personality traits is not uncommon. In fact, as quoted above, Aktari highlights the fact that Freud established childhood as the period of one's life in which one's psychological mechanisms especially develop. This can be said to apply to Dacre's *Zofloya* since Victoria is only fifteen years old at the beginning of the narrative, which allows the readers to consider her a teenager rather than a full-grown adult. Moreover, the text also shares some flashbacks with the readers to send them back to the childhood of the main female protagonist. In this sense, the

novel offers favourable circumstances to allow the observance of the influence that the education which is given by the mother may have on her children.

The first passage of the novel which actually focuses on the impact that education may have on the child's character development happens on the second page of the novel when Victoria's family is described. In fact, the narrator proceeds to depict the attitude of the Marchese di Loredani and of Laurina di Cornari towards their children:

> "[Lavish] and imprudent was the fondness bestowed by the parents upon their idolized offspring – boundless and weak was the indulgence for ever shewn to them. The youthful parents little comprehended the extent of the mischief they were doing […]. The consequence was, that Victoria, though at the age of fifteen, beautiful and accomplished as an angel, was proud, haughty, and self-sufficient – of a wild, ardent, and irrepressible spirit, indifferent to reproof, careless of censure – of an implacable, revengeful, and cruel nature, and bent upon gaining the ascendancy in whatever she engaged." (Dacre, p. 4)

This passage of the novel insists upon the importance of the education which is given by the parents to their children. The narrator indeed uses this passage to highlight the consequences that an over-permissive education may have on the children's lives. In this sense, this quotation mirrors a passage which occurs later in the novel on page 124 and in which the narrator addresses Laurina to blame her for her daughter's evil nature. However, the parents' guilt is approached with the exact guidelines which were provided earlier in the novel. In fact, instead of being too judgemental towards Victoria's parents, the narrator rather tries to comprehend why they behaved this way with their children. In fact, the first noticeable element is that the narrator refers to the Marchese and his wife as "youthful parents". This appellation highlights the idea that Victoria's parents were themselves quite young when they had their children. In this sense, they should not be blamed too harshly for the difficulties they had to face when educating their progeniture since they probably lacked experience and maturity. Then, another element which is worth mentioning is the fact that these parental figures are said to be fond of their children and to idolize them. One could thus obviously argue that their indulgence towards Victoria and Leonardo was only motivated by good intentions and by loving and nurturing feelings, especially for immature parents who try to take care of their children as well as they can. Nevertheless, the evidence that such education inevitably led Victoria to become vain and cruel ends up being established. In this sense, the narrator makes sure to clearly display and

define the causal links which unite different events and facts in the novel, which allows the readers to remain as objective as possible. It is thus not surprising to witness such unflattering description of Victoria. Indeed, she can obviously be considered a spoiled child who was used to getting what she wants without any opposition since her parents refused to frustrate her. This claim then inevitably mirrors what was argued in the first chapter of this paper, namely that "Victoria's monstrosity develops when her desires are repressed" (Aceves, p. 23). One can thus easily link this personality trait of Victoria to the education she was given by her parents since a girl who has never been refused anything in her childhood cannot properly learn how to face refusal and how to be tolerant and patient.

Another passage which underlines the influence of Laurina's way of educating Victoria on the latter can be found a few pages later:

> "Vainly did the Marchese hope that time, by maturing [Victoria's] reason, and improving her ideas, would correct the wrong bias of her character; for strict education alone can correct the faults in our nature; they will not correct themselves. […] Thus, though Victoria in childhood gave proofs of what is termed, somewhat injudiciously, a corrupt nature, yet a firm and decided course of education would so far have changed her bent, that those propensities, which by neglect became vices, might have been ameliorated into virtues." (Dacre, p. 14)

This passage is obviously important for the further development of the narrative since the narrator clearly states that Victoria will never be able to quit being haughty and cruel if her parents do not educate her soon enough. This quotation thus also inevitably foreshadows the idea that neither Victoria's father nor her mother will step out of their way to finally put her back on the right path. Therefore, the readers experience dramatic irony since it is implied from the beginning of the novel that Victoria's downfall is almost inevitable. Moreover, this warning can be said to not only apply to Victoria's parents but rather to every parent who might read the novel. In fact, with the phrase "our nature", the readers are directly and openly addressed through the fact that they are being included in the narrative. In fact, this passage implies that every reader may have been impacted by the education that their parents gave them, and that they might badly impact their children's lives in their turn. This claim can thus be said to relativize the child's guilt for being deviant or depraved since it shares this guilt with the parents themselves. Another element which is present in this quotation, and which relativizes Victoria's guiltiness is the fact that the narrator states that the young woman's "corrupt nature" is

"injudiciously [termed]". This remark is aimed at making the readers realize that there is no such thing as a corrupt nature which is innate and irremediable. In fact, the narrator rather mentions Victoria's "propensities", which is a term that still acknowledges that Victoria might be the victim of some innate evil character traits but that also places the parents' influence as the uttermost nefarious cause of their progeniture's deviance from the usual social norm in which a young woman is supposed to place other's interests before her own and to repress her own desires so as to appear as a decent young woman.

Now that the influence of the parent's education was discussed, it will be argued that Victoria nurtures an ambivalent love-hate relationship towards her mother. When reading the novel, the readers indeed inevitably notice that, more than once, Victoria blames her mother and considers her responsible for the miserable situations she has to face. In fact, the young woman claims that it is her mother's treachery and adultery which cursed her. The most striking example of this claim can be found at the end of the novel. In fact, Victoria is in the bandit's cavern with Leonardo when their mother arrives, badly wounded. The agonizing Laurina then begs her children for their forgiveness, to which Victoria answers:

> "'Hah! - that is the very point,' exclaimed Victoria, with a wild frightful laugh, - 'that which I have been, my mother made me! – Mother,' she pursued, addressing the anguished Laurina –'why did'st thou desert thy children, to follow the seducer, who hath justly rewarded thee? –'Tis thou who has caused *my* ruin; on thy head, therefore, will my sins be numbered […] – thou taughtest me to give the reins to lawless passion – for that I dishonoured my husband; - caused the death of his brother, and murdered a defenceless orphan!'" (Dacre, p. 258).

In this passage, Victoria harshly judges and criticizes her mother for leaving the familial house with Count Ardolph. She even goes as far as claiming that Laurina cannot blame anybody but herself regarding the fact that the man with whom she fled is now the one who brought her to her death. The violence of Victoria's words then intensifies when she argues that no one can consider her guilty for the crimes she committed, including murder, because Laurina was the only one who was responsible for her daughter's cruelty and lack of compassion. These observations then lead Victoria to refuse to make peace with her mother and to forgive her before her last breath, which could be considered the ultimate offence that a child can cause to his parent. Then, as argued by Aktari: "[…] Freud"s theory of the Oedipus complex is another significant approach that provides critical readings of the Gothic. It explains the problematic

family relationships found at the core of the Gothic plot" (Aktari, p.49). This quotation may suggest that Victoria's hate towards her mother is not only the consequence of the fact that she was abandoned by the latter, but also the consequence of the complex relationship which unites them. In fact, while Freud argues that familial relationships are usually complexified by the love that the boy nurtures for his mother, which is at the origin of his hate towards his father, Jung's Electra complex describes the idea that girls who nurture strong links with their fathers end up despising the parent of the other sex out of jealousy. This could then explain why the difficult relationship between Victoria and Laurina can be characterized by rivalry and repetitive patterns (such as when Victoria marvels about committing adultery such as her mother).

An element which corroborates the claim that Victoria's hate towards her mother is not rational is the fact that the narrator spread some hints throughout the novel which insinuate that the readers should feel compassionate towards Laurina. The first example which will be discussed happens at the beginning of the novel when Count Ardolph arrives at the Marchese's Palazzo. In fact, one can read the following passage:

> "[Count Ardolph] plunged into such a stream of depravity as rendered him in a few years callous to every sentiment of honour and delicacy; but the species of crime, the dreadful and diabolical triumph which gratified his worthless heart the most, was to destroy not the fair fame of an innocent unsullied female […] – no, he loved to take higher and more destructive aim – *his* was the savage delight to intercept the happiness of wedded love – to wean from the adoring husband the regards of a pure and faithful wife." (Dacre, p. 7)

This description of the Count inevitably leads the readers to question the guilt of Laurina. The first element which is noticeable is Ardolph's tendencies to follow his desires in spite of moral and ethical values and of one's sense of honour, which obviously highlight his perversion of mind. From the beginning of the novel, it is thus made clear that nothing will stop him from destroying the family which was created by the Marchese and his wife. Moreover, the narrator also insists on the immorality of his fantasies. In fact, to deliberately break the heart of a young and unmarried woman would already be sufficiently cruel and evil. However, Ardolph's desires proves themselves to be even more perverted since his aim is to corrupt and to seduce married women. Then, the last sentence of this quotation also seems to indicate that Laurina was doomed from the very day of their first meeting. In fact, it is said that Count Ardolph loves to

make “pure and faithful [wives]” fall under his charm. In this sense, even the most trustworthy, reliable, and loving wife would not be certain of not succumbing to his attempts to seduce her. This mirrors what is argued by Anolik in his essay, since he claims that: “Although all Gothic women are threatened, no woman is in greater peril in the world of the Gothic than is the mother. The typical Gothic mother is absent: dead, imprisoned or somehow abjected” (Anolik, p. 25). This obviously applies to the character of Laurina since she is completely at Ardolph’s mercy, with no one to keep him from perverting her and no one to understand her. Her peril is then to be seen in her departure from the familial house, her separation from her children, her life being secluded by an abusive husband and finally her death by his own hands. All in all, the fact that Victoria harshly criticizes her mother for being seduced by another man than her husband can be considered to show her cruelness and lack of compassion since she does not once try to understand her mother.

Then, the narrator mentions the idea that it is highly ironical when Victoria blames her mother since she herself desires to seduce her husband’s brother:

> “[The] curse of Laurina [,] that of becoming absorbed by a guilty and devouring flame, with the single exception that, in the case of the former, the heart and mind had been *involuntarily* seduced by a designing betrayer, while the other cherished and encouraged an increasing passion for one who attempted her not, and which common honor should have taught her to repel.” (Dacre, p. 132)

This quotation is extremely important since it underlines Victoria’s hypocrisy. Indeed, from the beginning of the novel, she nurtures her hate against her mother for letting herself be seduced by another man than her husband. However, she now finds herself in a position which gives her the opportunity and the desire to commit adultery, but still refuses to feel compassionate towards her mother. Then, her hypocrisy is emphasized by the fact that the situation which led her mother to be seduced is very different from the one Victoria finds herself into. In fact, as underlined in this quotation, Laurina is not actually responsible for her crime because it is involuntary. Moreover, it is Ardolph who tried to seduce her and who initiated their relationship. Regarding Victoria, the readers notice a situation which is completely different. The young woman is indeed the one who initially voluntarily tried to seduce Henriquez in spite of his apparent indifference towards her.

Moreover, while Victoria is almost incapable of showing authentic remorse and repentance, her mother is capable of asking for her children's forgiveness and of acknowledging that she hurt people around her. In fact, in a letter she writes to Count Ardolph, Laurina utters: "But mark my determination – it is to see you *no more*! - With Victoria, the innocent sufferer for her mother's crimes, it is my intention to quit immediately the roof under which I am […]" (Dacre, p. 23). This passage underlines the fact that Laurina is aware that her relationship with Ardolph has a negative impact on her daughter's life. In fact, she is able to show compassion towards her daughter and to imagine how she feels. In this sense, she admits that she is guilty, and she goes as far as claiming that she is ready to leave her house, her family and everything she possesses for the well-being of her daughter. Then, later in the novel Laurina meets Victoria again when she is about to die: "'Daughter! – beloved daughter,' in broken accents she said – 'by what chance do I behold thee? – but no matter – I have not time to ask, - forgive – forgive me!'" (Dacre, p. 256). This passage once again proves that Laurina is able to accept her responsibility for the harm she has done, and that she even is ready to ask for her daughter's forgiveness. This is even more important when one notices that, if Victoria is compared to her mother, the young woman rarely admits her responsibility for the crimes she committed and that she is not ready to forgive her mother. In this sense, one could argue that these passages give more depth to Laurina's character and allow the readers fully understand that this novel is not to be read from a manichean point of view.

Finally, one could argue that the rage that Victoria nurtures against her mother only proves that she is still very attached to her mother. As argued by Aktari:

> "[…] the Female Gothic writers aim to transgress the boundaries of the imprisoning Gothic structures by disrupting established practices. Therefore, in their narratives they destroy the Oedipal myth that excludes the (m)other in the identity formation process. Instead they insert mothers or substitute mothers in their plots in order to emphasize that the maternal bond is never broken." (Aktari, p. 4)

Most readers could initially criticize this claim, especially regarding the many passages discussed earlier which underline the fact that Victoria considers her mother responsible for what happens to her. However, one could also argue that, to feel such rage against Laurina, Victoria must still deeply love her and care about receiving her approval. Otherwise, Victoria would not have despised her mother but would rather have been indifferent. This claim is supported by this passage: "Ah! mother, mother! thou didst deceive and betray me; but I shall

live to thank thee for teaching me the path to love and joy" (Dacre, p. 67). This passage is quite striking since it is the only passage in the novel in which Victoria thanks her mother or expresses any positive feeling that she might feel towards her. Moreover, it also focuses on the ambiguity of the young woman's attitude towards Laurina. In fact, while she expresses her deception and blames her mother for what she did, she also thanks her. In this sense, Aktari's quotation can be said to apply to Dacre's *Zofloya* because it actually breaks down the Oedipal myth since Laurina's positive and negative influences on her daughter's life are fully accepted and integrated in the novel. Moreover, the fact that Victoria mentions her mother recurrently throughout the novel also indicates that the maternal bond which exists between them is never broken since Victoria's hate proves that she is far from being indifferent towards her mother.

In conclusion, this chapter focused on mother-daughter relationships as displayed in Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Dacre's *Zofloya*. The analysis of the former novel underlined the fact that Mrs. Morland is given the role of a mother figure who is hardly present in the novel but who still manages to have an impact on Catherine's life. In fact, her failure at efficiently educating her daughter for her to become an accomplished young woman and her own lack of knowledge regarding the ways in which one has to behave in society led her daughter to face many peripeties throughout the novel. Moreover, it has also been argued that the absence of Mrs. Morland, both literally in the novel and figuratively regarding Catherine's education, was necessary for the further development of the narrative. In fact, only a separation from the mother figure and the familial house could lead Catherine to grow wiser and to develop a critical way of thinking. Then, regarding *Zofloya*, it has been argued that in a similar way to Mrs. Morland, Laurina di Cornari fails at fulfilling the role that a mother is supposed to endorse, which is to be a nurturing and reassuring figure who has to educate her children. In fact, after she commits adultery, she flees the familial house and abandons her daughter. However, instead of being absent from the novel, Victoria's mother is recurrently mentioned throughout the text, especially in her daughter's speeches. In fact, Laurina is often blamed for her faults, even by the narrator who claims that if she had given her a more strict and disciplined education, Victoria might not have developed such evil personality traits. Then, another common point between the two novels is that they both seem to summon the readers not to succumb to a harsh and judgmental point of view towards these two mother figures. In fact, in *Northanger Abbey*, the narrator relies on the idea that her lack of experience of the world and the fact that she had to take care of her numerous children did not allow Mrs. Morland to properly educate Catherine. Then, the narrative of *Zofloya* underlines Laurina's guilt while reminding the readers of the

events which led her to commit crimes against her family. In fact, she was at the mercy of Count Ardolph whose perversion left her no choice but to submit to his attempts to seduce her. Moreover, the novel also highlights the fact that, in opposition to her daughter, Laurina has proven herself to be capable of admitting her guilt and of begging for forgiveness. Both novels thus share a dual and ambiguous point of view on the characters of Laurina di Cornari and Mrs. Morland since they display mother figures who are blamed for the bad education they gave to their daughters while also relativizing their guilt by making the readers realize that these mothers are submitted to their human nature which is inherently flawed.

Chapter 4: Victoria as a female vampire in Dacre's *Zofloya*

Regarding the description of Victoria which was given through the previous chapters of this work, one could easily notice that Dacre's *Zofloya* is remarkable for its uncommon heroine. This is especially true if this young woman is compared to Catherine in Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. In fact, the latter is characterized by her innocence, her naiveness, and her overall attempt to fit the expectations that her society has for young women, which is to be well-educated, submissive to the patriarchal order, and to become a wife, then a mother. This description of Catherine thus seems to be opposed to Victoria's character in every way possible. In fact, Dacre's heroine is bold, impulsive, driven by her desires and aggressively assertive. In this sense, she could be said to heavily contrast with the stereotypes which were usually imposed upon women, which can seem quite surprising for this time period that was still very much imbued with patriarchal mechanisms. The present chapter will therefore focus on Victoria's ambiguous character which results from a mixture of feminine and masculine personality traits, leading the narrator to compare her to a female vampire. It will thus be argued that, through the comparison of characters with non-human creatures, the genre of the Female Gothic enables these characters to transgress established conventions which are related to a strict binary view of the genres.

Before focusing on actual evidence from the text itself, it only seems right to begin this discussion with a clear description of what a vampire actually is. When one thinks about vampires, the first element which comes to mind is inevitably a folklore related legend. In fact, a common definition of the word "vampire" would depict it as a monstrous figure who sucks the blood of its victims. However, as time went by, more and more writers became interested in introducing this folkloric figure in their novels, such as the famous *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, which led the figure of the vampire to eventually be associated with a wide range of stereotypical features and characteristics. In fact, in his essay called *The Vampire Myth*, James Twitchell proceeded to write a how-to guide to understand what a vampire is. The initial description which was given of this monstrous figure is the following one:

> "The vampire, a/k/a Dracula, the Count, etc., is an older man who both terrorizes and seduces younger women. He is handsome, tall, powerful, rich; has a strange middle European accent (this the influence of Bela Lugosi, for Stoker's Dracula spoke perfect English!) and strange

> appetites. The first part of the story describes how the vampire sates these horrid appetites. He must have blood, and this blood invariably must be from a young lady [who remains a virgin]." (Twitchell, p. 84)

This description more surely than not resonates with most representations that common people have in mind while thinking about vampires. In fact, it is not surprising that this figure ended up being fascinating for the public, especially young women. This myth indeed emphasizes the fact that older, powerful and handsome men often represent a threat for young women's lives and virtues. Vampires are known for biting the neck of their innocent and virgin victims with their fangs which causes their blood to flow. This vampiric attack thus inevitably stands as a metaphor for the first sexual intercourse which is often relatively painful, and which often causes the young lady to bleed. In this sense, vampires' fangs can actually be considered phallic symbols. Moreover, it also encompasses the threat that men represent for women, especially at a time period in which sexual intercourse was taboo and could completely ruin a woman's life and reputation if it happened outside a marital context. Then, as James Twitchell gave such description of these monstrous figures, he also highlighted the idea that they are not supposed to remain entangled with folklore and pure fiction since they could be argued to be much more related to social and psychological levels than one may initially think. In fact, he argues that:

> "Prior to the Romantic movement (say before the 1780's), the vampire had been either a subject of ecclesiastical study or a minor concern in folklore—it had no artistic currency. Then quite suddenly in Germany (Ossenfelder, Bürger, Goethe, F. W. A. Hoffman), in France (Nodier, Merimée, Gautier, Baudelaire), and especially in England (Southey, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats) the vampire had become an eidolon of Romantic consciousness, an apt mythologem for a new view of human interactions." (Twitchell, p. 83)

This quotation is quite interesting since it depicts the gradual excitement and enthusiasm which gained most romantic writers from the 1780's onward. One element which is particularly worth mentioning is the fact that this myth was used and integrated in stories all over Europe, which highlights the importance of this vampiric figure. As Twitchell argues, the fascination for vampires is actually due to the fact that authors were able to use these non-human legendary characters as a metaphor for more common interactions between human beings in their everyday life. The figure of the vampire can indeed be said to encompass the sometimes-threatening relationship that women entertain with men. But it also highlights the patriarchal

mechanisms which characterized this time period, as well as the social hierarchy which submitted common people to more powerful and wealthy ones. In fact, the immortality of the vampire could be said to mirror the idea that power is inherited through one's bloodline and that it is actually very difficult to disrupt this well-established hierarchy. This idea is indeed mirrored in John Polidori's well-known novel entitled *The Vampyre* (1819):

> "In his story, the aristocratic Lord Ruthven is described only later as a parasite; he is presented from the start, however, as a notorious, upper-class gambler in modern-day London. […] Ruthven easily converts others to his disease of bankruptcy and destitution, a death by insolvency that only he seems able to survive […]" (Scoggin, pp. 101-102).

This quotation highlights the fact that vampirism and aristocracy often go hand in hand. In fact, Polidori's Ruthven is a vampiric figure whose power and control upon people is enabled through the fact that he belongs to the upper-class. In this sense, his immortality, and therefore the fact that he remains the only one in Polidori's novel who survives the nefarious effects of debts and of bankruptcy, clearly mirrors the idea that his aristocracy keeps him from being impacted by common people's preoccupations such as money.

However, if vampiric figures are commonly thought to be exclusively masculine, it is also important to notice that some stories feature female vampires. In fact, Twitchell argues that female vampires come to exist after a young virgin is bitten by a male vampire, the bite allowing him to transmit his curse to his victim:

> "She soon visibly weakens, he continues to return at night until she seems to die, but is actually transformed into the very type of demon who has 'attacked' her. This seems a most intriguing instance of the Doppelgänger motif, as the victim now becomes the vampire seeking new victims. […] The young female, corrupted into sin, now seeks victims of her own. She has become a 'lamia' or 'female vampire'" (Twitchell, p. 85).

One element which is especially interesting in this quotation is the fact that Twitchell mentions the idea that, through the bite of the male vampire, the young lady who was originally an innocent victim now becomes "corrupted into sin". This idea sends back to the claim which was made hereabove and which considered the vampiric attack a metaphor for sexual

intercourse. This idea is indeed inevitably echoed in this description since the young woman who became a vampire in her turn is now no longer considered pure and innocent but rather corrupted and deviant. This is not surprising, especially regarding the ideas which were vehiculated by the Church at this time, in which young women had to remain pure and untouched to be worthy of their husband. In this sense, sexuality was highly repressed and any woman who was sexually active was inevitably considered deviant or perverted. This claim is indeed supported by Hammack:

> "The construction of sexualized animal-humans had indeed become a preoccupation of the late-Victorian period. As Jenifer DeVere Brody has observed, many antifeminist writers reacted to feminist criticism of 'beastly men or syphilis, the beast in man' by vigorously promoting images of bestial women. [Sexually active women were thus considered] ever transgressive, regressive, and perverse." (Hammack, p. 886)

The literary tradition which focused on female vampires can thus be said to emerge from a reaction to female sexuality. In fact, female vampires, or lamias as Twitchell calls them, actually stand as a personification of the sexually assertive and aggressive woman, or even simply of the overall deviant woman. This can be observed in "[one of] the best-known images of bestial hybridity from the Victorian era [which is to be found in] Charlotte Bronte's nightmarish descriptions of mad Bertha Rochester [in her novel *Jane Eyre*]" (Hammack, p. 885). In fact, this woman is often compared to a vampire, whether because of her monstrous physical appearance or because of the fact that she purposely attacks Jane's brother by biting him. Other examples of novels featuring female vampires are Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* or Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*. The latter is particularly relevant regarding the present research since Harriet Brandt, the main character, presents vampiric traits which are somehow similar to the ones which are displayed by Victoria. This claim will indeed be further investigated later in this chapter. However, one element which is worth noticing is Dacre's earliness regarding the whole female vampire tradition. In fact, while all the novels which were mentioned hereabove were written in the late nineteenth century, *Zofloya* was written in 1806. In this sense, it is not surprising to notice that Charlotte Dacre's character, Victoria, is not openly portrayed as a proper female vampire but rather vaguely compared to it.

1. Victoria's submissiveness: Her part of femininity

To move on to the actual discussion about Dacre's novel, the first element which will be explored is related to Victoria's character. In fact, the description of the archetype of the female vampire which was given above focused on the idea that these women are deviant and sexually aggressive, which is often considered a more masculine personality trait. This description initially seems to apply to Victoria who is bold and assertive. However, she sometimes also appears as more submissive in the narrative, or at least as submitted to men's power. This section will therefore discuss the idea that Victoria sometimes displays personality traits which are more usually associated with the expectations that society has for women. The first passage which will be discussed happens at the very beginning of the novel, when Count Ardolph first enters the Marchese's Palazzo. In fact, one can read: "Victoria, as the young divinity of the festival, was presented to [Count Ardolph] by her beautiful and scarce less blooming mother: the eyes of the count dwelt momentarily upon her charms" (Dacre, p. 7). This passage can seem to be trivial and of little importance in the narrative. However, it could be argued that this passage rather highlights the fact that Victoria's body is sexualized and objectified by Count Ardolph. Indeed, he is said to look at "her charms", which inevitably leads the readers to understand that he was in fact looking at her breast. This can appear as evidently indelicate and improper for a man to look at a girl of fifteen in such a way. But one element which is even more striking is the fact that this passage happens when Victoria is presented to the Count for the very first time in the novel. In fact, the first meeting with someone is supposed to enable one to get to know the other person and to forge an opinion about him or her. In this sense, it is important to notice that, by looking at Victoria's body at the very moment of their first meeting, Count Ardolph sexualizes Victoria and reduces her to an object at which he can glare, and which is at his disposition. Therefore, Victoria can actually be said to be submitted to men's judgment and power, which was quite common for women from this time period.

Another passage which could be said to echo the previous one happens during one interaction that takes place between Victoria and Berenza. One can indeed read the following passage:

> "[Victoria] was at this period about seventeen: the age of Berenza was five and thirty; his person was majestic, and his countenance, though serious, possessed a sweetness of expression, that riveted and delighted

> the eye: but it was not this so much that engaged the attentions and allured the fancy of the young Victoria – no, it was the flattering remark that herself exclusively attracted his regards […].” (Dacre, p. 27)

The first striking element in this quotation is the fact that the narrator seems to purposely compare Victoria and Berenza’s ages. In fact, while the young woman is only seventeen years old, her suitor is eighteen years older that her. This age difference may appear as disturbing for modern readers, though it was probably the norm for young women at that time to be married to men who were significantly older than them. The attraction that Victoria experiences towards Berenza is then justified by his description as a powerful and handsome man. However, the attraction that Berenza entertains towards the young Victoria is less pardonable since making of her his mistress, and later his wife, insinuates the fact that her young age and her beauty make him more inclined to potentially have sexual intercourse with her. Then, another element which can be observed in this passage is the fact that Victoria fits the expectations that society usually has regarding women. In fact, she is said to be well-disposed towards Berenza because of his compliments and the fact that he makes her feel special. In this sense, Victoria is depicted as a woman who is naïve because she can easily be manipulated by men’s attempts to seduce her.

All in all, the passages which were discussed in this section both indicate that Victoria actually fits from time to time a more stereotypical representation of women. In fact, she has to submit to men’s attempts to seduce her and to the fact that they sexualize and objectify her. But more strikingly than this, she is also led to believe these behaviors to be flattering and enviable, which can be seen in the fact that she is flattered by the idea that Berenza, who is a handsome and powerful man, is not attracted to any other woman than her.

2. Victoria’s physical and psychological representation as a vampire.

As already claimed earlier in this chapter, Victoria is compared to a female vampire in Dacre’s novel. This comparison can indeed be seen in some physical as well as in psychological characteristics of the young woman. However, regarding the physical description which is given of Victoria in the narrative, one could initially argue that she is far from displaying a monstrous appearance. In fact, the young woman is described as “beautiful and accomplished as an angel”

(Dacre, p. 4), and it is said that "[…] no fair Venetian had presumed to vie with her, either in beauty of person, or splendour of decoration" (Dacre, p. 3). In this sense, Victoria appears as a young woman who has nothing to envy to other females and whose beauty is too outstanding not to be noticed. Therefore, this description seems to oppose her in every way possible to the description which is given of Bertha Rochester by Charlotte Brontë in her novel *Jane Eyre*. In fact, this woman who is compared to a female vampire is said to have a monstrous appearance, with "eyes rolling and red, lips 'swelled,' 'brow furrowed,' and 'eye-brows wildly raised,' [which reminded Jane] of 'the foul German spectre, the Vampyre'" (Hammack, p. 886). Bertha is thus described as a character who is savage and wild, and whose appearance reminds Jane of a monster. Therefore, Victoria could be said not to fit the representation that one has in mind while thinking about monstrous figures. However, the narrator of *Zofloya* still happens to depict her in peculiar ways from time to time, especially when her cruelty is triggered. This can be observed in a passage of the novel in which Zofloya suggests to the young woman that she should not kill the young Lilla but rather keep her secluded in a cavern. To this suggestion, Victoria is said to answer positively, with "demoniac sparkling eyes […]" (Dacre, p. 199). While this passage seems far from rendering the same impression of monstrosity as the one that can be experienced while reading Bertha Rochester's description, the readers can still easily imagine Victoria's cruel look. Moreover, another passage of the novel underlines the fact that Victoria is also said to look at Lilla "with the eyes of a basilik […]" (Dacre, p. 150). This comparison between the young woman and a giant snake-like monster underlines the idea that her jealousy makes her humanity disappear until she finally appears as a bestial woman. In this sense, it could be said that, whenever the young woman's perfidy is awoken, the intensity of it is so strong that it goes as far as modifying the appearance of the initially beautiful woman. In fact, the further the plot develops, the crueller she is described and the more she is compared to bestial creatures and devilish figures.

Then, regarding the evidence of Victoria being a female vampire at a more psychological level, one could argue that it can especially be found in the narrator's way of describing the young woman's thirst for blood. The first passage in which this can be observed happens when Victoria administrates Zofloya's poison to her husband, Berenza. In fact, one can read: "The allotted week had not expired, ere change sufficient was visible in the unfortunate Berenza, to satisfy even the soul of Victoria, thirsting as it was for his innocent blood" (Dacre, p. 170). Regarding the description which was given of vampiric figures at the beginning of this chapter, this passage of Dacre's novel inevitably awakes the readers' suspicion about Victoria being a

female vampire since she is said to thirst for human blood. However, unlike a proper vampiric figure, Victoria never bites her victims nor drinks their blood. In this sense, she could be compared to Marryat's character Harriet Brandt from her novel *The Blood of the Vampire*. In her essay, Hammack indeed highlights the idea that Harriet's thirst for blood could be interpreted as a metaphoric one:

> "While most literary vampires exhibit bestial qualities by punctuating jugulars with elongated fangs and shapeshifting into (and communicating with) nonhuman life forms, including rats and wolves, Harriet Brandt of *The Blood of the Vampire* avoids such antics. [She] is a psychic vampire whose "thirst for blood" is more metaphorical than literal. Harriet has acquired a draining personality, rather than a giving one, which leads her to unknowingly deplete the health and strength of her inmates. She exhibits […] a vengefulness elicited when she is disappointed in love. Although she does not actually drink blood, Harriet does render her companions anemic." (Hammack, p. 887)

This quotation is obviously important since it underlines the idea that female vampires are not always represented in novels as real demoniac creatures, but also as more metaphorical ones. Indeed, according to Hammack's claim, one could argue that the fact that Victoria and Harriet are thirsty for the blood of their victims is related to their "draining personality". Such personality can indeed inevitably be said to result from an extremely selfish and self-centered character. This idea thus sends back to Twitchell's claim which was highlighted earlier in this chapter, in which he underlined the idea that writers did not include vampires in their texts as real monstruous figures but rather as a metaphor which was aimed at depicting human behaviors. In this sense, Victoria's comparison with a female vampire is obviously relevant because her selfishness is emphasized when she privileges the fulfilment of her own desires by purposely killing her husband to finally be able to marry his brother, Henriquez. Therefore, she literally drains the life out of her husband's body, in a similar way to a vampire who would suck the blood of its victims until they died. Moreover, the fact that Victoria's metaphorical thirst for blood is triggered by her disappointment when it comes to sentimental matters can actually be observed in another passage of the novel. In fact, when Henriquez ignores Victoria and rather claims his love for the orphan Lilla, Victoria is said to "[curse] herself, the hour that gave her being, and the mother that had borne her; her outraged pride swelled her heart to bursting, and its insatiable fury called aloud for vengeance, for blood, and the blood of the innocent Lilla"

(Dacre, p. 198). This passage indeed inevitably underlines Victoria's frustration for not being the one who is actually loved by Henriquez. His rejection towards her therefore triggers her jealousy, which has for effect that she projects her desire for revenge on the young Lilla. Once again, Victoria's selfishness and jealousy can thus be said to have dreadful effects on people around her, which can obviously be seen in the fact that every single character to which she was once related in the novel, excepting Zofloya, end up dying by the end of the novel.

Moreover, her vampire-like draining behavior is strengthened through the comparison which is made between her and Lilla. In fact, while Victoria is compared to a vampire, which is a monstrous creature, Lilla is actually compared to a fairy several times in the novel. In fact, she is said to "[be] fair and beautiful […], with her long flaxen tresses almost veiling her fairy form […]" (Dacre, p. 164). The narrator also describes "her trembling delicacy, her gentle sweetness, her sylph-like fragile form" (Dacre, p. 194). In these two passages, the young Lilla is indeed compared to two non-human creatures which are associated with good and innocence, since fairies and sylphs are generally gentle figures which are related to nature and the natural element of air. This comparison between Lilla and fairy-like creatures is then reinforced by the fact that she places other's interests before her own. In fact, she refuses to marry Henriquez because she wants to honor a promise she made to a female relative (Dacre, pp. 130-131). This behavior thus opposes her to Victoria who is ready to commit murder in order to marry Henriquez. In this sense, the young Lilla's purity and devotion to other characters only emphasize the draining character of Victoria's behavior, which can thus obviously be compared to that of a female vampire.

3. Female vampires as creatures who disrupt gender boundaries.

As to refer back to the first section of this chapter, it was argued that Victoria actually displays characteristics which are usually associated with women, such as the fact that they often have to submit to men's power and that they are used to being objectified and sexualized. In this sense, these elements can be said to display Victoria's part of femininity. One could thus argue that such description of Victoria's character reinforces "the social stereotypes of male dominance and female passivity […]" (Twitchell, p. 89). However, as argued by Aktari:

> "[The female vampire figure offers a focus] on [female characters] who [destroy] the conventional binary of masculine and feminine and on [female subjects] who [transgress] the social and sexual boundaries of the patriarchal order. In this respect, the [female] figure is abject, a threat to the established systems of order and she therefore carries within the potential to subvert heterosexist ideology." (Aktari, p. 11)

This quotation indeed underlines the idea that the figure of the female vampire is aimed at interfering with well-established patriarchal mechanisms and gender roles, especially regarding one's sexuality. The first passage of the novel which will be discussed has already been mentioned in the previous section of this work but will now be looked upon according to the idea that female vampires have the power to reverse gender roles. This quotation is the following one: "[Victoria] cursed herself, the hour that gave her being, and the mother that had borne her; her outraged pride swelled her heart to bursting, and its insatiable fury called aloud for vengeance, for blood, and the blood of the innocent Lilla" (Dacre, p. 198). One element which is particularly striking in this quotation is the reversal of roles which takes place in it. Indeed, according to Twichtell's description, male vampires are said to bite young women who are still virgins. In this case, the victim, the young Lilla, is indeed a fair and beautiful young woman who remains pure and potentially untouched. However, Victoria seems to embody the role of the male vampire, especially if one acknowledges the idea the act of drinking the blood of a young woman is a metaphor for the act of having sexual intercourse with her. In this sense, Victoria can be said to display signs of sexual aggressivity, which is a personality trait which is more often associated with men than with women, according to standard gender roles. In this sense, Victoria can be compared to Charlotte Brontë's female vampire since "Bertha is not merely animal-human, she is male-female" (Hammack, p. 886). In fact, both female characters are compared with female vampires, which allows them to fully embody characteristics which are usually associated with men. Therefore, Victoria can be said to display a personality full of duality which results from a mixture between masculinity and femininity.

Then, it could be argued that the genre of the Female Gothic not only uses the figure of the female vampire to depict the duality of the character's personality, but that it is also aimed at disrupting the stereotypes which are usually associated with gender roles. In fact, as argued by Aktari: "One of the main social problems that the Gothic handles is the gender distinctions which draw clear-cut boundaries between the masculine and feminine roles. The Gothic also undermines the power structures that construct these gender distinctions" (Aktari, p. 64).

Dacre's *Zofloya* is indeed a great example to highlight this claim, especially if one decides to carefully observe the different relationships which are entertained by Victoria in the novel. In fact, the first relationship which will be discussed is the one which unites the young woman to Berenza. One can indeed read at the beginning of the novel: "[It] happened that the heart of Berenza had acquired a real passion, while that of Victoria was susceptible only of novel and seducing sensations – of anticipations of future pleasure. Berenza *loved* – Victoria was only roused and *flattered*" (Dacre, p. 29). This quotation is inevitably aimed at striking the readers since both characters seem to embody personality traits which are usually assigned to the opposite gender. In fact, Berenza is said to love Victoria and to nurture a "real passion" towards her. Such sentimentality is usually associated with women who are supposed to be gentle creatures whose interests in men are merely romantic rather than carnal. Then, Victoria is said to be attracted by Berenza because of the "novel and seducing sensations" that she can obtain from him. She thus shows signs that she is in fact sexually assertive since her desire to experience sensual pleasures with Berenza is expressed, even though female sexuality was not usually openly addressed at the time. Moreover, Berenza is said to be "seating himself at the feet of his mistress […]" (Dacre, p. 29), which highlights the idea that he is submissive towards Victoria. In this sense, the young woman could be said to embody the role of the deviant female vampire figure whose sexual interests are openly displayed in the novel.

Her sexual deviancy is also to be found in the quarrelsome relationship which unites her to Henriquez. The example of *The Blood of the Vampire* perfectly illustrates the behavior which is displayed by the young woman in this relationship: "[…] Marryat's titular vampire exhibits symptoms of relative sexual deviancy. She refuses to accept rejection from either men or women" (Hammack, pp. 891-892). This claim obviously applies to Victoria since her thirst for Lilla's blood arises from the fact that Henriquez rejects her. Then, in a similar way to what was discussed in the previous paragraph, this relationship between Victoria and the object of her desires also displays a disruption of gender roles. In fact, as Victoria's frustration related to her forbidden love towards Henriquez grows, she proceeds to utter: "'Henriquez!' she cried, 'Henriquez, my soul adores you! – behold me at your feet, - I offer you all, - all that I possess – my hand in marriage – grant me but your love!" (Dacre, p. 195). This quotation inevitably reminds the readers of a declaration of love which could have been uttered by a young man to his loved one. In fact, by proposing Henriquez to give him everything she possesses, and by giving him her hand in marriage, she is in fact asking him to become her husband. It is quite uncommon to see such proposal perpetrated by a woman, since the act of proposing is usually

thought to be men's role. However, as a female vampire, Victoria is not afraid to clearly expose her desires and to take the lead. In this sense, she once again embodies a certain ambivalence. This is especially true if she is compared to Catherine from Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, since it is said: "When a young lady is to be a heroine, [something] must and will happen to throw a hero on her way" (Austen, p. 18). This quotation indeed insinuates the idea that a young woman is incapable of becoming a heroine if she does not have a man by her side. This claim applies to Catherine since she is rather submissive and is only able to grow wiser through her interactions with Henry Tilney. However, Victoria is far from fitting the description of a heroine which is given by *Northanger Abbey*'s narrator. In fact, she is fierce and independent and does not wait for Henriquez to make his proposal but rather takes initiatives to fulfil her desires by herself.

Then, the ultimate evidence which shows the disruptive character of the female vampire figure is to be found in Victoria's sexual aggressivity towards men. However, as argued by Twitchell: "There is considerable sexual hostility in the [female vampire] myth although it is very muted" (Twitchell, p. 90). This claim is obviously important regarding the present research since it highlights the fact that no explicit sensual scene uniting two characters can actually be found in the novel. In fact, sexual intercourse is not openly exposed but rather suggested, in a similar way to what happens in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: "[When] Jonathan Harker, the young protagonist in Dracula, is approached by three lamias, the description is full of barely-sublimated sexuality. It is indeed dreamlike" (Twitchell, p. 88). This passage is indeed mirrored by the narrator's expression of Berenza's sensual desires regarding Victoria. In fact, one can read:

> "Her figure, though above the middle height, was symmetry itself; she was as the tall and graceful antelope […]. Living under his roof, almost perpetually in his company, she became daily a more dangerous object to the peace and to the forbearance of Berenza" (Dacre, pp. 76-77).

This quotation indeed illustrates the narrator's clever way of dissimulating the character's desire for sexual intercourse. This is made possible through the description of Victoria's body which is depicted as desirable. Her company is then said to disturb Berenza's "peace" and to make it harder and harder for him to repress her desires towards her. Therefore, if one acknowledges that passages in the novel which display references to sexuality are cleverly dissimulated, it is then possible to spot other instances of the characters' expression of their desire for physical proximity. For example, towards the end of the novel, Zofloya suggests to Victoria to

administrate drugs to Henriquez for him to believe that she is in fact his beloved Lilla. After spending the night dancing and drinking, he awakes, finding Victoria next to him in the bed:

> "Never had the sun risen on a day of equal horror to that which succeeded the one just described […]. Scarce could his phrenzied gaze believe the sight which presented itself. -Not the fair Lilla, the betrothed and heartwedded wife of his bosom, but Victoria! appearing Lilla no longer, blasting his strained eyes with her hated image! – […] those black fringed eyelids, reposing upon a cheek of dark and animated hue – those raven tresses hanging unconfined – oh, sad! oh, damaging proofs - […] Real madness now seized the brain of the wretched Henriquez […]." (Dacre, p. 221)

This passage indeed contains hints which may suggest that Henriquez and Victoria got involved into sexual intercourse. In fact, the first noticeable element is that he awakes in the same bed as Victoria. Then, his reaction and his disgust towards Victoria seem too strong to only result from having slept in the same bed as her. In fact, the narrator writes about the sight of Victoria's features next to him as "[…] sad [and] damaging proofs", which can only insinuate the idea that he betrayed his beloved Lilla by getting sexually involved in a relationship with Victoria. Finally, the apogee of his guilt can obviously be observed in the fact that he commits suicide by stabbing himself, directly after discovering what he had done. In this sense, even though the narrator dissimulated any proofs of the characters being involved in sexual intercourse, the readers can deduce that it indeed happened between Victoria and the object of her desires. Therefore, the fact that she is sexually assertive is attested through this passage since she went as far as drugging Henriquez in order to spend a night with him. This claim echoes this quotation from Twitchell's essay: "When [the female vampire] is the aggressor, the femme fatale, she does indeed live out a fantasy of power […]" (Twitchell, p. 90). The motive of the femme fatale is indeed clearly embodied by Dacre's heroine. Not content with being beautiful and seductive, she ends up being at the origin of the death of every single man who was once involved in a relationship with her. Victoria's sexual aggressivity can thus be said to assert her own power upon men, who are usually supposed to be the ones who render women submissive.

4. The ultimate reversal of roles: Victoria as the vampire versus Zofloya as the siren

The last section of this chapter will be aimed at comparing Zofloya with Victoria. In fact, the young woman was said to display both feminine and masculine characteristics, associated with an overall draining personality, which allows the readers to compare her to a vampire, which is a figure that is usually associated with men rather than with women. However, Zofloya seems to display characteristics which suggest that, regarding the narrator's emphasis on his voice and its hypnotizing power, he is in fact a siren-like figure, even though sirens are initially exclusively females.

The first passage which will be discussed happens when Zofloya suggests to Victoria that he might help her to get rid of her husband and to seduce Henriquez. There is indeed a strong focus on his voice:

> "Scarce had Zofloya opened his lips, ere uneasiness, as we have said, vanished from the mind of Victoria. As he proceeded, the most agreeable sensations fluttered through her frame, and in her brain floated fascinating visions of future bliss, that passed too rapidly to be identified. Scarce had his silver tones sunk on her ear in thrilling cadence, than she felt even eager to express to the Moor her inmost thoughts: excessive, yet confused pleasure filled her heart […]" (Dacre, p. 151).

The description which is given of the Moor's voice in this quotation could inevitably remind the readers of the myth of the siren. In fact, these young and beautiful women who lived in the depths of the sea were well-known and feared by sailors. They were said to use their charming voices to seduce and hypnotize the young men as to convince them to follow them into the water, where they led them to the bottom of the sea until they died, drowned. It is true that sirens are never mentioned in Dacre's novel. However, the fact that Zofloya's voice seems so enchanting actually echoes the myth which was described hereabove. Indeed, the way in which he speaks leads Victoria to have hallucinations and "fascinating visions" which seem to trouble her mind. Moreover, the narrator emphasizes the fact that hearing Zofloya's voice leads the young woman to be willing to reveal to him every desire and every secret that her subconscious nurtures, which is obviously quite convenient for Zofloya to be able to manipulate Victoria. This idea can be found in another passage of the novel, in which Victoria utters: "'Tis strange,

Zofloya! – I know not why, but thou soothest me ever, and attractest me irresistibly […]'" (Dacre, p. 199). This quotation indeed highlights the fact that the ways in which the Moor uses his charming voice are not innocuous since he usually uses it as a tool to convince the young woman to comply with his suggestions, which often involve terrible deeds such as murdering or sequestrating someone. Finally, the fact that sirens are deadly creatures is mirrored in Zofloya's being at the origin of Victoria's death. Indeed, after metaphorically leading her to the bottom of the sea by making her commit still more crimes, she becomes unable to come back to the surface to actually repent and express her guilt. In this sense, Zofloya can truly be considered the male version of a siren, while Victoria impersonates the initially masculine figure of the vampire, which only strengthens the idea that Female Gothic novels tend to disrupt gender boundaries as well as the patriarchal order.

All in all, it is not surprising to encounter so many references to supernatural, or at least non-human creatures in Female Gothic novels. In fact, as argued by Aktari:

> "All of these manifestations of the unconscious are peculiar to Gothic narratives. Besides, what is marginalized and repressed by society, in psychoanalytical terms by the super-ego, finds expression in the Gothic world of supernatural representations such as ghosts, specters, monsters, vampires, and doubles" (Aktari, pp. 48-49).

This quotation highlights the idea that these non-human figures are not actually used as monsters to terrify the readers, but rather as metaphors to illustrate the mechanisms of the unconscious mind of human beings. This is suggested by the comparison that exists between Victoria and a female vampire. In fact, while the readers associate her with this monstrous figure, it allows them to understand more easily the depth of the character's personality. Victoria's character can indeed be said to embody a strong duality between masculine and feminine features, which can be seen in her simultaneous submission to men's power and in the influence that she has upon them. Then, it was suggested that her thirst for blood is not a literal one but rather a metaphor behind which is disguised her draining personality, which results from her desire to fulfil her own needs in spite of the consequences it may have for her or for others. Finally, her sexual assertiveness can be seen in her interaction with men since she displays a tendency to seek sensual pleasures, which is even more striking when it is compared to male characters who rather seek love, such as Berenza. In this sense, Victoria's comparison with a female vampire can thus be said to enable the readers to get an insight in the unconscious

mind of Dacre's character whose independence and affirmation of her sexuality is aimed at disrupting society's well-established gender boundaries and roles.

Conclusion

This work was dedicated to comparing two novels which belong to the genre of the Female Gothic, namely Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*. Through the comparison of the female characters which are displayed in these novels, the present research made an attempt at spotting some characteristics of a genre which is often hard to define.

As for the results of this exploration of the Female Gothic genre, they may seem difficult to interpret since both heroines initially present more differences in their respective character traits than common points. In fact, the first chapter was dedicated to the comparison of the two young women. On the one hand, Catherine Morland is depicted as a young and innocent lady, whose interest in Gothic novels often seems to trigger her fantasies and her overflowing imagination which end up blinding her to what happens around her. The novel also depicts her efforts in trying to fit in Bath's society as well as her doubts and self-consciousness regarding the ways in which she is supposed to behave according to the tacit rules that the society she lives in imposes upon young women. On the other hand, Victoria is depicted as the archetype of the villain. In fact, despite her beauty and her charms, her personality is characterized by somber desires and jealousy, which are usually related to the pursuit of her love interests, and which often lead her to commit terrible crimes such as murdering other characters.

However, the second chapter focused on the idea that, even though these two characters initially seem to be purely and simply considered under a manichean point of view, they actually show signs that their personalities may be more dual than one may think. In fact, it was argued that when Catherine sees her environment in the light of her Gothic fantasies, she displays a tendency to be self-centered and focused on the fulfilment of her desire to become a Gothic heroine herself. This indeed leads her to occasionally hurt people around her, such as Henry and Eleanor Tilney when she asks them numerous questions about their deceased mother and insinuates that their father may have murdered her. Then, it could also be argued that Victoria is not a completely corrupted character since she sometimes is able to show remorse regarding the crimes she committed, especially with the young Lilla and the appearance of God's angel which proves that she indeed displayed some signs which indicated that she might be repentant. In this sense, it could be argued that both Female Gothic novels actually highlight the ambivalent and dual personalities of these two young women, therefore rendering them more human, which allows the readers to identify themselves to Victoria and Catherine.

Then, the third chapter underlined the influence that mother figures can have upon female characters in the novels. In fact, the analysis of *Northanger Abbey* highlighted the fact that Mrs. Morland can be considered the archetype of the absent mother. This claim is indeed supported by her literal absence from the structure of the novel, as well as the way in which she is depicted in the narrative since she is presented as a mother figure who is unable to fulfil the role which society assigns to women, which is to educate their daughters and make of them accomplished young women. Moreover, it was argued that the literal and metaphorical absence of Mrs. Morland was necessary for Catherine to be able to detach herself from her mother as well as from the familial house, so as to become more independent and to grow wiser. Regarding Dacre's *Zofloya*, it was claimed that Victoria's mother seems to be Mrs. Morland's opposite, especially regarding her omnipresence in the narrative of the novel. Laurina is in fact presented as the abject and deviant mother figure whose crimes are at the origin of the downfall of her daughter, since the narrator clearly highlights the fact that a stricter education could have counterbalanced Victoria's propensities to be impulsive and led by her desires no matter the consequences of her acts. However, both novels seem to be somehow similar in the ways in which both narrators underline the idea that these mother figures' failure to educating their children should not be condemned too harshly since their faults were induced by their human nature and that there is no such thing as a perfect mother in these Female Gothic novels.

Finally, the last chapter solely focused on Dacre's heroine, Victoria, who is presented as a female vampire. One of the main characteristics of the figure of the vampire which is displayed by the young woman is her thirst for human blood, though it is more metaphorical than literal. In fact, this comparison does not indicate that she actually drinks blood but rather that, because of her jealousy and her irrepressible need to fulfil her desires, she has acquired a draining personality which metaphorically feeds on the energy of the ones who surround her. Moreover, Victoria also fits the description of female vampires which depicts them as bestial creatures. In fact, it was argued that this so-called bestiality is related to the idea that, at this time period, society considered any woman who was sexually assertive as deviant or as perverted. Therefore, Victoria can be said to be a woman who transgresses societal boundaries which usually impose strict and definite roles to both genres since she displays both feminine and masculine personality traits.

All in all, this research particularly focused on a social and a psychoanalytical analysis of Dacre's *Zofloya* and Austen's *Northanger Abbey* by concentrating on their main female characters. The social part of the analysis indeed enabled this research to focus on some well-

established gender roles which are displayed in the novels such as the ones which are imposed upon young women and upon mother figures. In fact, Austen's *Northanger Abbey* displays society's expectations for young women to be accomplished (meaning that they should know how to draw, play music, etc.) in order to be accepted in social and public gatherings and in order to find a husband. Then, it also underlined the fact that mothers are the ones who are attributed the role of educating their children and of warning their daughters against the threat that making an entrée into society represents, especially regarding interactions with the opposite gender. Any failure at fulfilling this duty can thus be harshly criticized, even though Austen's novel rather seems to relativize the situation by underlining the idea that the role of the mother figure is not an easy one. Regarding Dacre's *Zofloya*, Victoria can be said to disrupt gender norms through her dual personality mixing both feminine and masculine personality traits. For example, by proposing to a man to become her husband, she strikingly destroys gender boundaries by reversing the roles which are usually attributed to each gender. Moreover, her cruel personality and her frustration whenever she cannot obtain the object of her desires lead her to commit crimes such as murder, and this actually interferes with the usual representation that society has of young women who are supposed to be gentle, nurturing and submissive. In a similar way to Mrs. Morland, Victoria's mother can then also be said to be criticized for her failure at educating her daughter, since Victoria's propensions to be cruel and self-centered are actually claimed to be due to a lack of strict and disciplined education.

Then, as for the psychoanalysis of Austen's characters, Catherine's personality can be said to develop throughout the narrative since she is initially depicted as a naïve young woman who struggles to find her place in society, but who finally ends up growing wiser through her own experience of the world and through her interactions with other characters. It could also be argued that such development was only made possible through her separation with the mother figure, and therefore with the familial house, to finally be able to meet a man who is to become her husband. The novel also focuses on the unconscious mind of the young woman which can be seen in her desire to become a Gothic heroine, therefore establishing the idea that the subconscious can happen to surpass common sense. Regarding *Zofloya*, Victoria can be said to be driven by her impulsive passions which result from the fact that she is unable to control her unconscious desires and her frustration. Moreover, unlike Catherine, Victoria is not actually separated from her mother since she her obsession about Laurina leads her to constantly attach the situations she encounters in her life to the influence of the mother figure. In this sense,

Victoria could be said to suffer from Jung's Electra complex since she is united to Laurina by a love-hate relationship which seems to be at the origin of the young woman's downfall.

All in all, these novels can thus be said to somehow depict traditional gender roles while slowly but surely deviate from it, which is not surprising for this early period in which social structures were not yet harshly challenged. Then, regarding the focus on the character's psyche, it could be argued that these novels display female character's tendency to underline the importance of the subconscious mind which often ends up taking over reason by rather concentrating on their wish to emancipate from parental and patriarchal control and to independently fulfil their own desires.

Bibliography

Primary sources:

Dacre, Charlotte. *Zofloya*. Oxford World's Classics, 1997.

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. Penguin Classics, 1995.

Secondary sources:

Aceves, Norma. "Feminist Disability Studies Goes Goth: The Hyperability of Female Monstrosity in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*". *Studies in Gothic Fiction*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2019, pp.19–29. DOI: http://doi.org/10.18573/sgf.16 . Accessed 24 May 2022.

Aktari, Selen. "Abject Representations of Female Desire in Postmodern British Female Gothic Fiction". Middle East Technical University, 2010, https://open.metu.edu.tr/handle/11511/20060 . Accessed 24 May 2022.

Anolik, Ruth Bienstock. "The Missing Mother: The Meanings of Maternal Absence in the Gothic Mode." *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1/2, 2003, pp. 25–43. JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/3195306. Accessed 23 May 2022.

Dunn, James A. "Charlotte Dacre and the Feminization of Violence." *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1998, pp. 307–27. JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/2903042. Accessed 23 May 2022.

Flax, Jane. "The Conflict between Nurturance and Autonomy in Mother-Daughter Relationships and within Feminism." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1978, pp. 171–89. JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/3177468. Accessed 23 May 2022.

Glock, Waldo S. "Catherine Morland's Gothic Delusions: A Defense of *Northanger Abbey*." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1978, pp. 33–46. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/1347760. Accessed 23 May 2022.

Hammack, Brenda Mann. "Florence Marryat's Female Vampire and the Scientizing of Hybridity." *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, vol. 48, no. 4, 2008, pp. 885–96. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40071373. Accessed 24 May 2022.

Moreno, Beatriz González. "Gothic Excess and Aesthetic Ambiguity in Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*". Women's Writing, vol. 14, no. 3, 2007, pp. 419-34, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/09699080701644931. Accessed 24 May 2022.

Scoggin, Daniel P. "A Speculative Resurrection: Death, Money, and the Vampiric Economy of *Our Mutual Friend*." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2002, pp. 99–125, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25058578. Accessed 18 May 2022.

Twitchell, James. "The Vampire Myth." American Imago, vol. 37, no. 1, 1980, pp. 83–92. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26303815. Accessed 23 May 2022.

Wallace, Diana. and Smith, Andrew. "Introduction: Defining the Female Gothic". *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 1-12.