

The relevance of gothic novels for the entire field of literature cannot be underestimated, given the historical and cultural values of this genre. Since the end of the XVIII century, the artistic significance of the gothic literature had been clearly identified, while the popularity of gothic novels increased in the unbelievable proportion. Stemming from the audience's pleasurable and distinguishable feeling of unexplainable horror, the conventional and classic gothic novels incorporated the important elements of romanticism, fiction, supernatural forces and mystical phenomena. Nevertheless, gender classification and gender's conceptual focus had become a new ideological paradigm in the British-American novels, including gothic literature. With an evident frequency, female authors of gothic novels put explicit and uncovered ideals of feminism, what reflected on the image of the heroines and perception of the audience over the female sensitivity. Thus, women with mysterious past or secret life became the irreplaceable attributes of the 'female gothic' literature, where the accents to formal femininity were made. By comparing three gothic pieces of art, – "Jane Eyre" by Charlotte Bronte, "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and "Rebecca" by Daphne Du Maurier – there is a clear common argument that female gothic novel is a dark romanticism shown through the prism of feminine identity, which can be attributed to women's social position, mystery, perception of entourage, madness and desperate love.

The ideological correlation between the traditional "male gothic" and conventional "female gothic" literature is, obviously, characterized by differentiated focus on gender and sexual identity of the novel's protagonist. Undoubtedly, female authors of the novels faced the strict and disorganized conditions of living in the XVIII century because of the weaker gender's social regulation in terms of politics, economy, culture and family. In the meantime, this was connected with paradoxical

idealization of women in the literature and poetry that grew on the concepts of masculine domination and Puritan principles of life (Szalay, 2010). The formulation of bourgeoisie society was practically inevitable, but it was also the chance to change the woman's social role suppressed by decades and centuries of masculine domination. The role of literature, as an instrument of formulating new moral orientations and social vectors of ethical human relations, was grandiose and fundamental. That is why many European and American resourceful women took a pen in their hands and began illustrating female protagonists in their literature works to shift social mechanism of perception.

Regarding female gothic literature, the establishment and promotion of the gothic novels from women was important for entire communities to re-consider the system of human ideals. Thus, the complex and tangled reality of the bourgeoisie life was reflected through irrational and surrealistic form of narrative, where the essential part of the story was taken by the female protagonist (Smith & Wallace, 2004). Elements of fiction, secrets, and a doomed intrigue became the obligatory traits of dark romanticists who, eventually, deepened and intensified the challenges of gender relations. The orientation on individuals with feminine identity ultimately helped the Victorian authors to promote a new, socially equalized and prioritized image of women that challenges the suppressive social position in the masculine environment (Bottling, Townsend, & Moers, 2004). It was reinforced by the feministic position of female authors engaged in writing of gothic novels. Therefore, it was associated not only with ideological ground of the novels, but also reflected on the style of narration, expression forms, and textual techniques of description.

One of the important traits attributed to the female gothic novels was the narration in the first person aimed to reinforce subjective but sentimental and

vulnerable position of the female protagonist. Gender positioning is an important component of the gothic novel, as it helps to see the story and surrounding environment through the eyes of the heroine. In “Jane Eyre”, Bronte establishes ‘I-position’ in the third sentence of the first chapter: “I was glad of it: I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons” (Bronte 1864, p.3). The first person narrative in the female context is crucial for the audience’s immediate integration in the heroine’s image. The same actual method is used in Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper”: “I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but that would be asking too much of fate!” (Gilman, 2012, p.3). Once again, I-position in the gothic novel fixes the reader’s focus. This technique of intriguing narrative is well promoted by Du Maurier’s “Rebecca” stating from the very beginning that “Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again” (Du Maurier, 2005, p.2). The lack of practical explanation and focus on the unidentified position of the heroine in the beginning of the story is the factor that ties all three works together.

Nevertheless, positioning and integration into the protagonist’s fate is made intentionally to introduce the fundamental component of the novel what makes it dark, romantic, and gothic – a mystery. The plot of all three works is based and developed around the mystery that tends to catch the audience’s attention and underline the mysteriousness and unpredictability of women’s nature (Holland & Sherman, 1977). In the novel “Jane Eyre”, the central mystery revolves around the night screams, demonic noises, and unexplained events that take place in the house of Mr. Rochester: “The sounds I had heard after the scream, and the words that had been uttered, had probably been heard only by me; for they had proceeded from the room above mine: but they assured me that it was not a servant’s dream which had thus struck horror through the house” (Bronte 1864, p.218). The inability to explain

what is going on emphasizes the important sensitivity of the female protagonist that has been suppressed by social restrictions and other external factors. In the meantime, the ambition and determination of the heroine to learn the truth is actualized in the gothic novel, and these aspirations are unveiled in the end, as a rule. The mysterious epicenter of the narrative is kept within “The Yellow Wallpaper” as well: the move of the heroine’s family into the strange hostile rental house is accompanied by weird conditions of living: “It was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls” (Gilman, 2012, p.4). As opposed to “Jane Eyre”, “The Yellow Wallpaper” focuses on the clear materialistic subject – the wallpaper and their design – that breeds superstitions, prejudices, and secrets. It is possible to see that it is exactly wallpaper that influence the behavior and attitude of the nameless heroine and cause a mysterious impact on her psychology throughout the story.

The events that surround the heroine in “Rebecca” also incorporate precise elements of mystery. Moreover, the story provided by Du Maurier is complex from the beginning and weird till the ending, since news and revelations create a new mysterious context in the novel. Formally, the mystery emerges from the strange death of the Maxim’s beloved Rebecca who, for some unexplained and unusual reasons, had been sunken in the boat. The behavior and hard feelings of Maxim became the trigger for causing disturbance: “Once again I saw the inscription on the fly-leaf of that book of poems, and the curious slanting R.” (Du Maurier 2005, p.23). The mysterious shape centers on the protagonist’s tragedy, as the spirit and shadow of the Maxim’s dead wife pursues her in Manderley, without explaining the precise reasons of such challenging perception. This creates a specific gothic atmosphere,

while female sensations and women's defensive psychology to the mystery are well reflected in the gothic literature.

The style of narration in the female gothic novels is tightly correlated with historical periods when they were written. The attitude to women in the bourgeoisie society put some marks and ethical obligations on authors who intended to reconsider women's rights and social awareness via surrealistic and mysterious shapes of text. Jane Eyre in the work of Bronte is a freedom-loving, independent, and equal-to-male-intelligence personality, what was reflected through the period of the XVIII century and the epoch of Enlightenment (Hogle, 2006). Therefore, Jane Eyre is described as a person equal to men in terms of spirituality and emotionality, specifically love relationships: "I had not intended to love him; the reader knows I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, great and strong!" (Bronte 1864, p.183). Evidently, to underline the clearness of Jane's independent emotionality, Bronte uses a lot of linguistic pauses prompted by frequent semicolons. Still, the semantic connection of several ideas in one big sentence allowed the author to idealize somehow the feminine image of Jane Eyre. As a result, the novel concentrates on the image of the poor but proud and determined heroine: she is trapped in the unfavorable social conditions, but due to the personal moral qualities she overcomes the challenges and formally succeeds in the end.

The traditional literature-historical postulates grounded by Charlotte Bronte in "Jane Eyre" were successfully continued and maintained by female community in Europe and the United States. For instance, it is irrational to exclude Du Maurier's style of narration which is a clear conceptual tribute to Bronte: the same sentencing and similar wording; the same structure of the text; a similar minimization of

dialogues and maximization of the heroine's personal reflections. Similar to Bronte, Du Maurier philosophizes about love which develops in the dark and mysterious social context: "I am glad it cannot happen twice, the fever of first love. For it is a fever, and a burden, too, whatever the poets may say." (Du Maurier 2005, p.21). However, the social terms of the XX century brought also literature modifications and amendments. For example, semicolons were replaced by periods, even though author's ideas became fragmented. In the meantime, Du Maurier develops a story as a flashback, while Bronte describes the life of Jane Eyre in the biographic mode. Still, the heroine of "Rebecca" pursues the same values emphasized by Jane Eyre a century ago – the social equality with men. Nevertheless, this equality does not cover definite political fields; instead it rather actualizes family well-being and material sufficiency. In this sense, there is an ideological distinction between "Jane Eyre" and "Rebecca" given the historical emancipations: Bronte formally romanticizes the women's attempts and labor toward independence; meanwhile, Du Maurier romanticizes the success as an outcome, what breeds even more complex social consequences (Rubik & Mettinger-Schartmann, 2007).

Regarding "The Yellow Wallpaper", the similar romantization of women's success – a new house, a family, and well-to-do husband – is related to the restless social transformations in the American community in the end of the XIX century. Therefore, the idealization of bourgeoisie family relationships is somehow mocked in the work of Gilman: "He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction. I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more" (Gilman 2012, p.7). Despite the feminization motives, Gilman clarifies that men's support is still significant for women. On the other hand, the value of care is intensified by unknown

mental disorder kept by the protagonist. This even enhances the text with a help of the specialized emotional diary-based narration of the story, improving the cohesion with the heroine's psychology. However, such literature technique is justified by the format of the novel which is short story, and diary reflections perfectly highlight the mysterious disturbance and anxiety of a woman (Davison, 2010).

The feminization through the use of dark gothic atmosphere is not only the tribute to the literature genre: the desperate, weird, and gloomy setting is utilized by authors to motivate the heroines toward painful spiritual transformation. The elements of old medieval antiquity, the rudiments of the historical past, are often associated with a mysterious house or a mansion, where the heroine has to adapt to the new challenge. In "Jane Eyre", there is an old house: "It was three storeys high, of proportions not vast, though considerable: a gentleman's manor-house, not a nobleman's seat: battlements round the top gave it a picturesque look" (Bronte 1864, p.103). The same ancient building is presented in "The Yellow Wallpaper": "It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village" (Gilman, 2012, p.3). The spirit of isolation is quite palpable in such moments. "No wild flowers came in the house at Manderley. He had special cultivated flowers, grown for the house alone, in the walled garden" (Du Maurier, 2005, p.19) - author describes the cold atmosphere of the house. As oppose to male perception of the environment, women have a sensitive interpretation of the things, and these detailed interpretation is strengthened with a female's inherited sense of emotional disturbance.

Nevertheless, one of the most substantial ideological 'female gothic' connections is the strong link between the madness and love, what definitely distinguishes the selected literature novels from classic gothic works such as "Frankenstein" by Merry Shelley, for example. Instead of the explicit supernatural

subjects, female gothic writers confront madness to love feelings and vice versa, what makes their writing truly dark and romantic (Hogle, 2006). Jane Eyre falls in love with Mr. Rochester not because of the physical attractiveness but due to the uncommon reputation and his masculine enigmatic personality: "He made me love him without looking at me" (Bronte 1864, p.183). However, their loving relationships are hindered by his legal marriage with insane Mrs. Rochester, bringing mysterious paranoia into the situation. Similarly, the heroine of "Rebecca" struggles between the love to Maxim and hostile and mad attitude of entourage, the sinister housekeeper Mrs. Danvers. Then it extends by mad story of Rebecca's suicide. In the meantime, the entire short story of Gilman is grounded on controversy between the protagonist's psychical disorder and loving family relationships with a husband John: "He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me" (Gilman 2012, p.9). Notably, every ending of the story is accompanied by gloomy and pessimistic culmination: Jane Eyre has to marry Mr. Rochester who became a cripple; the heroine of "Rebecca" finds Mandelley being burned; and the heroine "The Yellow Wallpaper" goes fully insane with making her husband unconsciousness. Thus, the surrealistic description makes the ending quite vivid and palpable in return.

There is a clear common argument that female gothic novel is a dark romanticism shown through the prism of feminine identity, which can be allegorized with women's social position, mystery, perception of entourage, madness and desperate love. Female gothic is an illustration of the challenging social world and development of a heroine as an independent and self-aware personality. In "Jane Eyre", "The Yellow Wallpaper", and "Rebecca", the female protagonists are described in similar social contexts, and their life achievements are different.

Nevertheless, these female gothic novels reveal the natural and irreplaceable feministic sensitivity of heroines, what makes them interesting and realistic figures in the mysterious dark context.

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