

Frankenstein's Personality/ies: Romantic "Dæmons" and Contemporary Psychiatrics

Within the critical realm focusing on Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), there is a strong emphasis on the symbolic link between Victor Frankenstein and his "Creature," concentrating on the representational separateness of two entities (Bowerbank, 1979; Brooks, 1978; Dolar, 1991; Hacking, 1991; Herdman, 1990; Newman, 1986; Oates, 1984). While these emblematic conversations directs one's thinking to the psychic dynamic existing between Victor and the Creature (Sherwin, 1981), they have a limited focus overlooking the possibility that the characters are two dimensions of a single being. While critics focus on the literal or symbolic bodily separation of Victor and his Creature, none thoroughly, explicitly develop the possibility of Victor suffering from dissociative identity disorder, a psychiatric illness in which one has at least two distinct personalities that alternate having control over a single body. Combining early nineteenth century intrigue and present-day psychiatry, the contradictions, gaps, and irregularities within Victor's narrative go beyond accounts of the theoretical psychology of sublime transcendence (Weiskel, 1976) and the Romantic literary device of the "Doppelgänger" (Herdman, 1990), and into the realm of a rare psychiatric abnormality. Within this merging of the Romantic interest in the "second self" (Crabtree, 1985) and contemporary diagnostic criteria for the infirmity, Victor's inconsistent construction of time and memories, strange recounts of the deaths of those around him, anxious interactions with the Creature, details of the Creature itself, the Creature's unusual report of his stay in the French forest, as well as large gaps within memory, can all be accounted for under the heading of dissociative identity disorder and the dissociative fugue (Kaplan, 1995). Utilizing the American Psychiatric Association's (2000) criteria for diagnosing dissociative identity disorder as a springboard for consideration of Victor's divided self, one arrives at new perspectives of Victor's character and the issues of agency in a realm of insanity, expanding the critical arena surrounding *Frankenstein*.

Abstract

Narrating Madness: The Narrative Voice of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Although many critics have noted the narrative contradictions in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," few have seen the relationship between these contradictions and the central theme of madness in the text. Wiesenthal, Feldstein and Treichler have all commented on the "impossible form" of this narration: The narrator stops writing after her third "journal entry" and the narrative continues in a paradoxical form that is "not written". Treichler posits Gilman's narrative language as a possible counter-discourse to the dominant medical-patriarchal discourse while Golden argues that the emergence of the language of madness marks the protagonist's growing self awareness. For both critics the implications of madness in the text are deeply feminist and not textual. However, the narrative ambiguity of the text reaches beyond a simple assertion of the self. Wiesenthal sees the text's contradictions as the "discourse of madness" and argues that this discourse of madness is projected onto the wallpaper while the logical voice continues the story after the protagonist's breakdown. Feldstein argues that the text resists a "univocal meaning" by a "proliferation of signifiers" creating a central ambiguity regarding its referentiality. Both critics locate the madness of the text within the pattern of the wallpaper and see this madness as essentially subversive of linear, patriarchal language. Dekovan sees the text's "self-contradictory doubleness" as an ambivalence towards the then emerging feminist and socialist thought. I locate the text's self-contradictory nature in the madness of the narrative structure which contains irreconcilable contradictions. These contradictions are sustained by a complicated narrative mechanism that has three entities –author, narrator, and protagonist- as the speaking subject of the "I" in the story. These three entities can only be separated by seeing the story as a double narrative despite its first person speaker. The temporal structure of the story is both linear and retroactive. The spatial distance between the imaginary characters in the story become problematic within this retroactive time as the reader realizes that these characters are the protagonist herself. The reader's attention is diverted away from these contradictions by the seeming clarity of the protagonist's voice, destabilizing the boundary between the language of sanity and the language of madness.

Rhyme Her Deadly: Collusive Strongholds in Fantasy and the Language of Folklore

The fiction of Shirley Jackson, who was branded in one obituary the “Virginia Werewolf of séance-fiction writers” (Hyman), has undergone repeated genre compartmentalizations and reductive biographical readings. Scant criticism for her last completed novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), centers primarily upon the manipulation of gothic conventions to reflect gender and class conflict (Hattenhauer, Parks, Rubenstein) and psychoanalysis of the Blackwood characters (Hall). In the murderous collusion of Mary Katherine and Constance Blackwood, the sororal bond is indeed subversive in its resistance to masculine village authority and its overthrow of the Blackwood patriarch (Carpenter, Hall), but the sisters are not subjugated in their seclusion as fairy tale captives, merely reinscribed into a patriarchal system of domination for the sake of “juvenile fiction” readers, as Hall suggests. Metaphorical associations of witchcraft and Mary Katherine’s “largely ineffectual magic” of words in the novel (Carpenter) align the sisters with historically oppressed women, but the literal application of children’s oral culture affects the sisters’ emotional livelihoods more significantly. Nursery rhymes’ lasting power and developmental benefit for children (Reichert), combined with the rhymes’ conventions themselves, including “general pessimism” (Rollin), manifest throughout the hostile environment in Jackson’s novel. Although contemporary with the Opies’ reintroduction of nursery rhymes to scholarly discourses, Jackson’s novel has never been examined for its concern with nursery rhymes and folklore. The novel’s intertextuality with these forms elevates the sisters to legendary proportion, even as it reinforces learned hatred, violent wish-fulfilling fantasies, and physically destructive attacks by the village community. Through the vehicle of the spoken word, the sisters ultimately reconstruct their collusive emotional stronghold.