

Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts by Nina Auerbach, Columbia University Press NY 1986

Chapters 1-3: Jane Austen

Chapter 4: Incarnations of the Orphan

“Only in the novel do we find the orphan emerging as the primary metaphor for the dispossessed, detached self” (Page 57). “He first appears in the 18th century as a slyly potent underground figure, who does not show himself as a waif until the early 19th century...his solitude energized him as a visionary, artist, and silent schemer” (Page 58).

Page 66: *The Outlaw With the Broom: From Jane Eyre to Pip*

Jane is a soul, not like the 18th century orphan an artifact or, as she declares on page 222 of *Jane Eyre*, an automaton. She is supernaturally sanctioned. “The portraits she sketches throughout the novel are compelling vehicles of truth for all who see them,” page 68, unlike Moll from Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*. “She recoils from Rochester’s attempt to dress her as a lady” (Page 68). Jane becomes an independent woman rather than a lady like the male novels’ protagonists. She ceases confusing Rochester with God, inspiration “Jane is close to the supernatural; by being truly inspired, of course, she would never try to trespass on a sacrament, as Rochester does” (Page 68). Bessie’s words in the beginning of the novel- “God is a friend to the poor orphan child.”

Instances of supernaturalism in *Jane Eyre*:

Red room vision

Mother’s spirit telling her to flee temptation

Her appearing at her cousins house when she was in need

““God directed me to a correct choice: I thank His providence for the guidance”” page 316 of JE.

Rochester’s call and Jane’s answer “God reveals to his divinely inspired orphan that martyrdom and sanctification are indeed ‘Possible’ for her, but then informs her through the nature that she loves that he does not require them of her” (Page 69). Not JCB approved, doesn’t think that God is requiring that of her. Jane refuses to be Rochester’s mistress or second wife

“Rochester is drawn not to her beauty or her manner- Charlotte Bronte deliberately endows her with neither- but to her otherworldliness” (Page 69). He calls her elfin, angel, witch, innkeeper near Thornfield says she bewitched Rochester, Mrs. Reed is scared of her

“She is called a witch at least as often as she is called an angel, and many critics have pointed out that the book’s symbolism also links her to the thoroughly demonic Bertha” (Page 70). So how then are they linked?... “In 19th century supernatural literature, the demonic and the divine tend to merge...the 19th century orphan, then, retains some of his amphibious nature, but in early Victorian literature, instead of being gentleman-whore, he becomes angel-demon.” **Just like Thackeray’s Becky Sharp and Emily Bronte’s Heathcliff.**

Heathcliff’s vaguely supernatural aura as Mr. Earnshaw’s proclaimed “gift of God, though it’s as dark almost as if it came from the devil.” Heathcliff, like Jane, enters a

great house and destroys it, then renovating it by his “soul naked and exposed within the social medium” (Page 72). “At the end of the three novels we have looked at, a calmer new society emerges out of the whirlwind the orphan has inadvertently sown” (Page 73).

“the Victorians emphasized the supernatural nimbus surrounding the orphan’s loneliness” (Page 73).

Chapter 5- Women on Women’s Destiny: Maturity as Penance

Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics*- are women created by male writers accurate? Kate Millet believes that literary women are not women, but who women are and as they exist only in relation to the male protagonist. But Nina says that “in excluding male visions from its canon, it may also be dismissing a **faith** in growth, freedom, and fun, of which women’s worlds, in literature at any rate, are in general sadly deprived” (Page 84).

Nina Auerbach is saying that male writers give women more freedom and boundlessness than women writers tend to, since that’s all women (or Victorian women at any rate) have known- “marriage, motherhood, and home” (Page 84). “psychic and social boundaries tend to close quickly and ruthlessly in women’s novels.”

Woman-defined woman versus woman-destroyed woman

Jo in Little Women and Dorothea Brooks in Middlemarch- page 85 they both “are endowed with all the fervor in their worlds, and both mature to renounce their early powers through penitential marriages which subdue them to commonality” and both faced inevitable defeat.

“Though male Victorian writers similarly immolate their spirited heroines in marriage, they do not always let them go gentle into that good night” (Page 87). (Dylan Thomas poem)

Chapter 6- Robert Browning’s Last Word

Were the Brownings really married?

“Along with the jailer/father who once loomed so large in Freudian reconstructions of Elizabeth Barrett’s life, the redemptive husband is diminishing to a mere distraction in the woman poet’s quest for her lost female inheritance” (Page 92).

Nina looks “at the poems to see whether they agree on a unified story, or whether they embody two versions of reality in tacit but radical conflict” (Page 94)- *The Ring and the Book* (1868-69) and Elizabeth’s *Aurora Leigh* (1853-56).

Chapter 7- Dickens and Dombey: A Daughter After All

“Two nations” of England during Dickens’ time- “Men and women were allotted different boundaries, different dreams, different vices and virtues; the ideal woman revolved alone in her unique ‘sphere,’ suggesting a cosmic dimension to the home she created and purified as an intermittent refuge for men from the machinery in their lives” (Page 107). Even though Dickens’ novels are filled with love and weddings, Auerbach argues that there is this “sexual sadness” and “loss of the heart

of all his work" present because of "isolation inherent in this sexual division" (Page 107).

Men and women separate, **separate spheres** – accurately and thoroughly explained in Dickens' *Dombey and Son*.

Chapter 8- Alice and Wonderland: A Curious Child

An example of the Victorian mind with its mix of literal mindedness and dream with etiquette and the logic of insanity (page 130)

"Alice herself, **prim and earnest in a pinafore and pumps**, confronting a world out of control by looking for the rules and murmuring her lessons, stands as one image of the Victorian middle class child" (Page 130).

Auerbach says that in this pure image of Alice as a child lies both "Wordsworth's 'seer Blessed,' the child fresh from the Imperial Palace and still washed by his continuing contact with 'that immortal sea,' and the pure woman Alice will become" (Page 131).

Little girls as pure members of "species of a questionable origin" (Page 131), as opposed to the ugliness and uncleanness of little boys Alice holds purity and spirituality of women and children, comparable to Dickens' Little Nell and George Eliot's Eppie "who embody the poise of original innocent in a fallen, sooty world" (Page 131).

"The question who dreamed it underlies all of Carroll's dream tales, part of a pervasive Victorian quest for the origins of the self that culminates in the controlled regression of Freudian analysis" (Page 132).

Alice represents the fabulous monster of the Victorian child. Many view her as a sentimentalized Wordsworth example. Other little girls travelling in literature (Dorothy or Princess Irene) ask where am I, **but Alice asks who am I?** turning her eyes inward- "the mystery of her surroundings is the mystery of her identity" (Page 132). Alice often speaks to herself (I give myself very good advice) and has a sort of **double personality** (curiouser and curiouser), **she is the act and the causer of the act**- the one who floats away in the sea and the one who cried tears to create the sea, the one who is almost obliterated in a dream and the one who made up the dream. She almost becomes Dinah- talking to herself as Dinah impersonated (Page 56?).

Auerbach says that they are both predatory- Dinah eats rats and small animals, and Alice is almost cruel to the animals- songs, drowns them in her tears, changes sizes in the White Rabbit's house. (I don't see her as cruel- just oblivious, like a child.)

The Cheshire Cat is the only character she calls her friend, like a "dream Dinah," yet in all adaptations the cat is cunning and self-absorbed, and they are not friends.

Mouths- the cat disappears leaving only his mouth, Alice's mouth controls her changing size, Alice's first song of the crocodile's grin, the serpent eating eggs- **martin gardner** says that this is because children are obsessed with eating and like to read about it in their books (in The Annotated Alice)

"The pure little girl of Victorian convention" (Page 145) and "Victorian concepts of the child tended to swing back and forth between extremes of original innocence and original sin-" seen and not heard. Innocent purity versus Victorian monster.

Sexual division:

-Little boys allied with devil or animals, insane- novels of development that show character growth out of their violent nature such as Wordsworth's *Prelude*, David Copperfield, Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days*

-Little girls aren't usually allowed to develop- Becky Sharp, or grow up- Florence Dombey in *Dombey and Son* and Little Nell and Little Dorrit, Jane Eyre and Eliot's Maggie Tulliver- they grow in the novel but they "represent...nothing but love" (Page 148). They are redeemed through their love for a man.

Alexander Pope's quote- "most women have no characters at all"

-“Little boys were allowed, even encouraged, to partake of original sin; but little girls rarely were” (Page 148).

Chapter 9- Falling Alice, Fallen Women, and Victorian Dream Children

The Fallen Woman- pre-Raphaelite, scandalous, and blessed, Alice

Rossetti's *Found*, depicting a prostitute

“By convention, the fallen woman must writhe in tortured postures of remorse until she dies penitent at the end of her story” (Page 151). Auerbach says that Alice has to go through this writhing and torture of her body before she can save herself from her dream by awakening into normality.

The fallen woman is dooming as well as doomed.

Fallen woman and unfallen child-“his Alice is most insistently herself when she is placed among other, more untroubledly adorable Victorian children” (page 152). Auerbach says that she is often seen rather than heard, and more comfortable looking than she is speaking- but that's not really true, since Alice often talks to herself and is an unusual child in this regard.

“Alice's purity does not align her with the ephemeral; like her hunger, it gives her power over size and scale. Like the grandly metamorphic fallen woman, she can make daily reality softly and suddenly vanish away as she unexpectedly, and threateningly, grows” (Page 153).

Pre-Raphaelite Madonna such as Rossetti's *Astarte Syriaca*- **depiction of female growth. Carroll's interest in young girls “stems not from her littleness but from her potential to grow big”** (Page 155)- pre-Raphaelite obsession with women and their powers of impassive womanhood- little girls possess adult potential. **The Victorian question of when does childhood end and adulthood begin?** This question intensified the idea of childhood purity and was represented through art.

“In the ideology of Victorian womanhood, marriage signified not maturity but death into a perpetual nursery” (Page 156)- intro poem of through the looking glass.

Marriage associated with a deathbed- death of not only the innocent child but also of her adult future. **Ellen Moers *Literary Women*** about Rossetti's poems and WH of a protest against adulthood that “censors the intense erotic violence permitted to little girls” page 157. Auerbach is saying here that Victorian culture and adulthood tries to censor the bestowal of eroticism on little girls, that these works of literature are trying to bring to light the eroticism surrounding little girls...

Transformations and dreams- The Goblin Market, Dracula's vampire women, Jabberwocky poem, George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil," Beauty and the Beast, WH- "I am Heathcliff"

SO- dreams of monstrosity- what is the point here? This theme, what does it say about the Victorian era?- the little girl can dream to become someone or something else

Monster- Thomas Hardy's Tess of d'Urbervilles commits murder

SEE ->>>

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person?LinkID=mp01321&role=art&wPage=3> Lewis Carroll's photographs of Liddell girls

The Annotated Alice by Lewis Carroll edited by Martin Gardner, New Jersey Wings Books, 1960

Carroll was interested in psychic phenomena and automatic writing, but "books of nonsense fantasy for children are not such fruitful sources of psychoanalytic insight as one might suppose them to be. They are much too rich in symbols. The symbols have too many explanations" (Pages 10-11).

"The last level or metaphor in the Alice books is this: that life, viewed rationally and without illusion, appears to be a nonsense take told by an idiot mathematician" (Page 15).

<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/ojs/index.php/tlg/article/view/595/556>

Pre-Raphaelite Women

Artists like Dante Gabriel Rossetti using nature as their source of inspiration and medieval mysticism, mainly using the female face. "unconventional beauty"- painting women as Shakespearean or medieval heroines. "In his paintings, the unearthly is brought close to home, swaying between what is real and what is imagined."

William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* – woman's job to flee temptation and keep pure

Woman's position of seductress or temptress- mermaid, siren, witch, "femme fatale"

According to Edward Guiliano's *Lewis Carroll the Complete Illustrated Works*, Carroll met John Ruskin and Holman Hunt in 1857, one year after he starts his

correspondence with Alice Pleasance Liddell. Also meets Rossetti (and Christina!) in 1863 and PHOTOGRAPHS THEM

**From *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* by Nina Auerbach
Howard University Press, Massachusetts 1982**

From Chapter 1: The Myth of Womanhood: Victims

Angels, mermaids

“Angels were thought to be meekly self-sacrificial...pious emblems of a good woman’s submergence in her family. Mermaids, on the other hand, submerge themselves not to negate their power, but to conceal it” (Page 7).

Serpent-woman Medusa – looking at her face and her mysterious power “of a woman with a demon’s gifts” (Page 9). These character types “intensify power rather than limiting it”

“The very rigidity of the categories of victim and queen, domestic angel and demonic outcast, old maid and fallen woman, concentrates itself into a myth of transfiguration that glorified the women it seemed to suppress” (Page 9). She uses character types to highlight the alliance between the woman and the Victorian character. “woman’s power of self-transformation...associate her with a literary dream in which personality and eternity meet” (Page 9).

Dracula reading:

The vampire women are more scary to Jonathan than Dracula himself, and as the novel goes on it focuses more on Mina and Lucy’s transformations, while “the Count is reduced to an increasingly immobilized catalyst” (Page 22).

Lucy has two selves- “She is all silly and sweetness in the daylight, but as Dracula’s powers invade her, she becomes a florid predator at night” (Page 22). Each of the three men Lucy had to choose between end up giving her blood

Echoes Freudian influence, especially Seward:

Freud and Breuer’s “Preliminary Communication” to *Studies on Hysteria*

<http://www.richardwebster.net/freudandcharcot.html>- Freud and Breuer’s Anna O in 1880s

“She can be said to be a ‘different being’ every time she appears” (Page 23).

“though he is the object of pursuit, Lucy, and then the vampirized Mina, are the objects of attention” (Page 22).

“Heroes and villains recede as the metamorphosed Mina appropriates the qualities of all groups. As Van Helsing says of her: ‘we want all her great brain which is trained like a man’s brain, but is of sweet woman and have a special power which the Count give her, and which he may not take away altogether’ (p. 298). In Stoker’s influential literary myth the apparently helpless woman assumes male, female, and preternatural powers, taking away from the now-paralyzed Dracula the magus’ potency” (Page 23-24).

Mina and Lucy change from victims to instigators

Renfield and the Russian sailors don’t turn into vampires, only the women Dracula captures.

Chapter 2- The Myth of Womanhood: Queens

Page 35- Alice as one metamorphosis of the Victorian woman- constantly having to change herself to move forward. Example- "Alice cannot enter the giant chess game that is her story until she assumes the frail identity of Lily, the white pawn." Gets to turn into a queen at the 8th square. Lucy Westenra also "enlarges herself into a queen"

These victims, Nina is saying, have a secret, mystic power to control that is hidden under the label of victim that Victorianism has bestowed upon them.

This chapter's all about transformations, and about how literary queens reflect Queen Victoria's power.

"Victorian culture abounds in icons of beautiful corpselike women" (Page 41).

Nina talks about how everything is domesticated- even foreignism, like with the Great Exhibition of 1851, and through artists and writers like Wilde and James Barrie. Women were too- mid-century, the New Woman wasn't yet a thing, "Mid-century feminist policy worked toward greater equity for women within existing institutions of education, marriage, and law, but the fundamental equivalence of woman and home was scarcely questioned. Even Charlotte Bronte's Bertha Mason, that paradigm of incendiary womanhood who sprang out of the revolutionary forties, is in her mad confinement the spirit of home, not, like Stoker's Lucy Westenra, a solitary nocturnal prowler out-of-doors. Our queenly types, like Victoria herself, are exalted only as queens of home, not yet of empire" (Page 43).

"In Victorian fiction these central, interdependent paradigms of victim and queen are further narrowed into three character types specific to the needs and institutions of their age: the angel/demon, the old maid, and the fallen woman. The angel/demon is the composite creation of a peculiarly Victorian theology. The old maid and the fallen woman are peculiarly Victorian social types...though they are responsive to cultural needs, these three central paradigms have virtually nothing to do with Victorian pieties about womanliness: women were exhorted to live in and through patriarchal family roles and exalted above all as mothers, but the three paradigms that animate the fictional imagination are outcasts from domesticity, self-creating rather than selflessly nurturing, regal but never maternal. Solitaries by nature and essence, they transcend the culture that creates them" (Pages 61-62). "Womanhood was an idea made flesh, influencing the shapes of actual lives" (Page 62).

Chapter 3- Angels and Demons: Woman's Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Chapter 4- Old Maids and the Wish for Wings

Page 118- comparing George Eliot and Christina Rossetti

"The grandiose self-presentations

Chapter 5- The Rise of the Fallen Woman

"galvanic outcast, blend of innocence and experience...beyond social boundaries" (Page 150).

"An exile from woman's conventional family-bounded existence" like the old maid (Page 150)- **Rossetti's "A Triad"** and Annie E Holdsworth's *Joanna Trail, Spinster, Eat Lynne* by Ellen Wood, **Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh***

Art reflecting this social experience – female community of old maid and fallen woman – both existing apart from usual female identities of wife and mother or daughter, but also in a state of exile (page 153)

Past and Present painted by Augustus Egg 1858

"What a fall hers has been!" This tenderly punitive note, in which admiration mingles with condemnation, recurs again and again in Victorian treatments of the fallen woman" (Page 154).

Victorian fallen woman usually depicted as a mute, enigmatic icon, such as in DG Rossetti's Jenny (Page 155). A Woman's fall ends in death

The Ring and the Book by Browning depicts a fallen wife, and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* depicts a remastered King Arthur story and a society brought down by the fallen woman and her revolutionary and ambiguous powers. Fallen woman = fallen culture, "Her imaginative resonance justifies the punishment to which she is subjected " (Page 157).

Victim versus agent, the idea of prostitution as a morally corruptive lifestyle, a temptress and ruiner, versus a part time until she gets married on the road to respectability. "No doubt the Victorian imagination isolated the fallen woman pitilessly from a social context, preferring to imagine her as destitute and drowned prostitute or errant wife cast beyond the human community, because of her uneasy implications for wives who stayed home" (Page 159).

Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*'s Becky Sharp and **Dickens' *Dombey and Son*'s prostitute Alice Marwood**

Transforming power of the fall (page 160) in the Bible and in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

"Once cast into solitude, the fallen woman, like Milton's Eden, is irretrievably metamorphosed" (Page 160). Like **Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles***

"Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from simple girl to complex woman."

The New Magdalen 1873 by Wilkie Collins

She must die at the end, because "Death does not simply punish or obliterate the fallen woman: its ritual appearance alone does her justice" (Page 161).

Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* 1850

Auerbach's argument for Alice as a fallen woman:

She falls down, allows her to metamorphosize throughout the book into different versions of herself as both an **outcast and creator**. "Wonderland is ruled by potentially murderous women"- Queen, Duchess, Cook, and Cheshire cat as version of Dinah (Page 167)

"The demonic energy of the fallen woman shares some of the preternatural purity Carroll located in little girls" (Page 167). Auerbach is associating Alice with Carroll's obsession with girlhood innocence and purity, and his photographs.

Reading of Tess in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and DGR's *Found* and George Eliot's *Hetty Sorrel* in *Adam Bede*

Pages 180-184 look at George Eliot and Charles Dickens' lives reflected by the fallen woman

Chapter 6- Victorian Womanhood and Literary Character

Angel, angelic demon, old maid, fallen woman- based on novels by both men and women

"IN the Victorian imagination the danger of woman;s special powers produced the foot-binding of her officially approved image" (Page 186). – why would she have to be bound and constricted? Because she was once so powerful? "perceptions of power cannot be untangled from the impulse to suppress it" (Page 186).

"The repressiveness of Victorian culture is a measure of its faith in the special powers of woman" (Page 188).

Queen Victoria's comments on womanhood were "wails of needy femininity"

Womanhood as a myth

"a belief in the immortal life...of its transfiguration into fictional character" (Page 190). "I associate literary character with Victorian womanhood because in a spiritual landscape of fallen gods, both came to symbolize a genuine, if instinctive and virtually unformulated, faith in the metaphoric potential of transfigured humanity" (Page 190).

"It is in the Victorian theatre, dominated by the overpowering individuality of the actor, and in the sorts of writing the theatre inspired, that our myths of womanhood and of literary character converge most visibly. Acting was one of the few professions whereby a woman could transcend her prescribed social function of self-negating service to live out her own myth: to an intelligent, passionate woman the stage offered authority and fame, wealth, glamour, emotional and sexual freedom, and even, in the 'Ibsenized' theatre of the 1880s and 90s, a network of feminist thought and activity. The questionable social position of the early Victorian actress enhanced her mythic freedom" (Page 205).- Wilkie Collins' *No Name* and *The New Magdalen*

Epilogue: The Death of Character and the Fight for Womanhood

From *Inhabited by Stories: Critical Essays on Tales Retold*, edited by Nancy A. Barta-Smith and Danette DiMarco, Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Chapter 7- Third-Wave Feminists in Corsets: Libba Bray's *Gemma Doyle* Trilogy by Cheryl A. Wilson

"Neo-Victorian studies closely relates to the idea of being inhabited by stories because it considers how contemporary artists remake Victorian texts, histories, and cultures in an attempt to better understand both the Victorians and ourselves. As Miles Taylor writes in *The Victorians since 1901*, 'What we know and understand as the Victorian age is not an exhibit left in a glass case in 1901. On the contrary, the

Victorians have been made and remade throughout the twentieth century, as successive generations have used the Victorian past in order to locate themselves in the present” (Pages 119-120).

Increasing interest in Victorianism, like in recent resurge of victorian stories in film- Sherlock Holmes and tim Burton’s Alice in Wonderland. “Such processes of writing are often politicized because writers working in this genre approach their Victorian subject matter from an overtly critical perspective” (Page 120). (think wide Sargasso sea-the politics of 1960s britain given to characters of jane eyre)

Chapter 8- Clothes Make the Girl: Fashion and Growing Pains in Wonderland, by Valerie Estelle Frankel – see printout

Suffer and Be Still:

Intro Page ix has GREAT definiton on the ideal victorian woman