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para chicos, adolescentes y adultos

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Welcome to Our English Club Magazine. The December 2020 issue has the most engaging and thought-provoking essays written by the best students ever. So grab a cuppa and enjoy!

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Good and Evil in The Picture of Dorian Gray

Beatriz Gil



According to the dictionary, 'duality' refers to having two parts, often with opposite meanings, like the duality of good and evil, peace and war, love and hate, up and down, black and white. Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, represents the dichotomy of the double life led by Dorian Gray. Many examples of duality can be seen in the novel and perhaps the most evident example is the struggle between good and evil. This essay focuses on how Dorian Gray represents the every-man that deals with the battle of having to pick a side between those two forces.

To start with, Dorian is under the negative influence of Lord Henry whose words only feed his vanity despite Basil's effort to persuade him to remain on a good path by promoting love and kindness. The conflict is evident due to the oppositions that Basil and Henry depict. In his work *Character Design in the picture of Dorian Gray*, Sheldon Liebman says, 'Their principal task is to articulate mutually exclusive moral positions and in so doing, to define the moral options available to Dorian. Basil and Henry represent the opposing forces of good and evil and in a way they fight over Dorian's soul.'

Therefore, Dorian is caught between Henry and Basil; He symbolizes a man who wrestles to live his life surrounded by the temptation of pleasures. He is the only character that faces this decision since Basil and Lord Henry have already chosen sides. They simply demonstrate by their actions the consequences of thinking and living as they do. They reveal the sacrifice and the cost of choosing one position over the other. If Dorian had chosen Basil's moralism, he would not have lived the life of sin that he has. On the other hand, if he had chosen to follow Henry's advice he would have never felt remorse or guilt and asked for redemption. However, he is unable to deny his guilt and yet he cannot repress his desires. He is unable to pick sides.

A crucial moment in the novel is Sybil's suicide. When Dorian notices a change in the portrait, he feels remorse and guilt and regrets how cruel he has been to her. As the narrator says, "a feeling of infinite regret seized him, thinking of her lying at his feet crying like a little girl" (DG CH 7 page 83). At that moment, he wants to do the right thing, but it is too late, Sybil has died. He is very upset but with the help of Lord Henry he puts the incident behind him. Lord Henry advises him "not to waste his tears on Sibyl Vane." After talking to him, Dorian admits that the tragedy has not affected him as he thought it would. This is the moment to choose between good and evil, but his curiosity about life has decided for him. "Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasure subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins – he was to have all these things. Dorian is aware of his decision; he does not want to be controlled by emotions, he wants to enjoy and dominate them (DG chapter 9 page 98)." In the end, he decides to continue living a hedonistic life of pleasure, tipping the balance to the evil side.

Another critical point is Basil's murder. Dorian feels guilty and tries to push the emotion away. He knows his soul is 'sick to death' and as he knows he could not be forgiven. He tries to forget. How could he forget? "To cure the soul by means of the sense, and the sense by means of the soul, so he decides to numb his guilt by visiting an opium den 'where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new'" (DG chapter 16 page 165).

On two occasions, he manages to escape James Vane's revenge and feeling as if he has gotten a second chance he decides he wants to change and be good. He wants to clean his soul and the only way is to confess the crime but he is aware that he cannot deal with the social rejection and public shame. He is a coward. Dorian wonders if Lord Henry is right when he says that he cannot change and become good. His attempts to change with Hetty Merton are not reflected in the portrait.

On the contrary, a new feature appears in the painting, "it would be vanity, hypocrisy, curiosity as the Dorian Gray himself states" (DG chapter 20 page 197).

Even though he wants to change, he cannot confess. The only bit of evidence left against him is the picture. So in a mood of remorse combined with the realization that he cannot stop sinning, he decides to kill his conscience by destroying the portrait. It is the only witness of his sins, his moral sense, his soul. Of course, acting on this desperate impulse, he kills himself because as Sheldon Liebman eloquently states, "he has been, all along, a child of both Henry and Basil, and, unlike either of his mentors, both a hearty sinner and a reluctant penitent."

In conclusion, Dorian represents both good and evil, and through his acts proves that nothing is absolute but relative as he says, "Each of us has heaven and hell in him Basil" (DG chapter 13 page 141). His body is led by evil forces, but in his soul, there is a trace of good in him. They coexist as one person. Good and evil are usually held in balance: as one increases, the other decreases. That is how life works. Sometimes we are led by forces of good, sometimes by forces of evil, but that is what makes us a person. I believe that we need both, good and evil, to survive because the absolute division between them is artificial. At the end of the history we can see that the portrait (soul) transforms into the real person (body) and when Dorian stabs it, it is actually the moment when he commits suicide because he tries to kill a part of himself. His death is caused only by his own decision. He wanted to put an end to his constant doubts about good and evil, to his sins and the conscience about those sins, and he managed to do that; he puts an end to his existence by destroying what was meant to exist.

Beatrice and the Outside World

Gisela Godoy



A patriarchal model can be defined as a system where men are in authority over women in all aspects of society. In this model, there is the idea that men "should" care for and protect women, who are thought to be weak. Female beauty is admired, but at the same time, it is feared. In any patriarchal system, men will be the focus, the heroes, and the center of social engagement, fun, and entertainment. It is the purpose of this paper to show that Beatrice, the main character in Rappaccini's Daughter by Nathaniel Hawthorne, is trapped in a society rooted in male superiority, but at the same time, that she is not a weak, rather, she is able to make her own decisions and express her voice. In the end, Beatrice decides for herself and frees from society although she pays a high price: she finds her own death.

In the first place, we are presented with the idea that women are weak, and as a result, they need protection. Such is the case of Beatrice whose father, Rapaccini, wants to protect her from the outside world by forcing her to live in a garden, isolated from the outside world. "Rappaccini erred, as many fathers do, in imagining that he could protect his daughter from the world. And he erred even further in his preternatural fear that the world outside his isolated garden, the world of human relationships, would be so evil as to require such extreme protection." (p. 68). At the same time, it seems that her father's enemy, Professor Baglioni, intends to free her from her father's control and the garden. "It is not yet too late for the rescue. Possibly we may even succeed in bringing back this miserable child within the limits of ordinary nature, from which her father's madness has estranged her." However, this reinforces the idea that women need to be rescued by men.

Secondly, Beatrice is described as a beautiful young woman but dangerous in the eyes of men, just as patriarchal society describes. When Giovanni meets her, he falls in love with her beauty and compares her to an angel. Yet he never trusts her because of the way she connects with the plants and the garden. "Intrigued by Beatrice's beauty and her apparently poisonous nature, Giovanni makes frequent but brief visitations to her father's garden. There, he not only becomes infatuated with Beatrice, he also by degrees becomes imbued with the same poison." (p. 66). For him, everything she does is strange and dark, causing fear.

In spite of what men think of her, Beatrice is very strong as, in the end, she decides on her own. She takes Baglioni's potion and dies. Her death somehow frees her from the control that men have always wanted to exert over her. She manages to make her own decision despite the consequences.

In conclusion, as mentioned above, patriarchy will always focus on everything that women cannot do, on their weaknesses; but as Beatrice, women are strong enough to decide on own and fight every day to make their voices heard.

So Far From God: The Construction of the Homeplace Julieta Volpe



Throughout the twentieth century, the subject of home space and its significance for the working-class women of color was revisited by many cultural theorists and novelists. It is the case of bell hooks, for example, who defines the homeplace of African American women as a "site of resistance and liberation struggle." [hooks, bell. "Homeplace: a Site of Resistance"] Likewise, Chicana feminism challenges the prescribed role of women in the family structure, and questions gender roles, racism, and spirituality. As pointed out by Carmela Delia Lanza in her article "Hearing the Voices", it is possible to explore the domestic world that Ana Castillo has created in her novel *So Far From God*, through bell hooks' s theory. Taking this approach into account, the aim of this paper is to discuss the construction of the home place as a site of refuge, healing, and political resistance in Castillo's novel mentioned above. Since the beginning of the story, the place where Sofi and her four daughters develop their lives is described as an underprivileged place at a dead end of the road, with a lot of animals and modest accommodation. However, it is that same place that offers all of the characters security, health, and spiritual comfort. The old house that once belonged

to Sofi's family is built up as a refuge, where she raises her children and where each of them becomes an adult and faces the white world and the mainstream culture. La Loca, for example, rarely leaves the house and since she was a child she used to help her mother take care of the animals and cook for her sisters. The homeplace is her shelter. As the narrator points out:

She had grown up in a world of women who went out into the bigger world and came back disappointed, disillusioned, devastated, and eventually not at all. She did not regret not being part of that society, never having found any use for it. At home, she had everything she needed. Her mother's care and love, her sisters, who, each in their way, had shown their affection and concern for her, and she, in turn, for them. (p. 1900)

A further example that reinforces the theory of the homeplace is the death of both Fe and Esperanza. Fe spent all her life rejecting her heritage, trying desperately to escape from the house-world and fit into the white American standard life. However, when the cancer diagnosis arrives and her entire world crumbles, "Sofia's chaotic home became a sanctuary" (p. 2174) and it is where she decides to spend her last days.

In the case of Esperanza, after a life chasing recognition and validation in a man's world she finds her death really far away from her home but her spirit discovers a way to come back, "Sofi also saw Esperanza down there. And once, although she had thought at first it was a dream, Esperanza came and lay down next to her mother, cuddled up as she had when she was a little girl and had had a nightmare and went to be near her mother for comfort" (p. 2071).

Following our hypothesis, it is possible to observe that the homeplace is described as a site where the characters heal themselves using their inner strength. In contrast to what the reader would expect, the family cannot find an answer to their ailment in the hands of traditional medicine or through the help of the town's cleric. For example, after being declared dead and during her wake, La Loca not only manages to bring herself back to life but announces to the savior priest, "Remember, it is I who am here to pray for you." (p. 130), establishing herself with a very clear spiritual superiority. This may be the first situation that marks the rift between the family and both institutions: the hospital and the Catholic Church. This view is also supported by what the narrator describes as "A crime against man if not a sin against God" (p. 163). This refers to the abortions that La Loca performed on Caridad, once again in the privacy of the homeplace. Also, the healing process of Caridad and Fe takes place in the shelter of their house. Neither medicine nor religion offers any answers to the tragedies that fall over this family. They can only overcome the difficulties by helping each other and discovering their own path:

The three women huddled together went to the bedroom where Caridad was. Sofi stepped back when she saw, not what had been left of her daughter, half repaired by modern medical technology, tubes through her throat, bandages over skin that was gone, surgery piecing together flesh that was once her daughter's breasts, but Caridad as she was before. Furthermore, a calm Fe was holding her sister, rocking her, stroking her forehead, humming softly to her. (p. 333)

Throughout the story, Castillo describes several alternative treatments and homemade remedies that complement the healing process of the women and help them to cure the body, mind, and spirit, without using traditional medicine. Throughout Caridad's recovery, we can appreciate that her "life became a rhythm of scented baths, tea remedies, rubdowns, and general good feeling [..]. Her body, already externally repaired from the mutilation it had undergone, now was slowly restored internally by the psychic attentiveness she received from her teacher and which she learned to give herself." (p. 681)

Last of all, it is through the evolution of the character of Sofi that we can acknowledge how the home-space becomes a place where political resistance is built. Centering the novel around a single working mother is a political declaration itself. Sofi constantly struggles to raise her children against all the difficulties that life and society impose on her: not having a husband around, being Chicana, and living in a peripheral zone. She is judged for every decision she has made regarding her daughters' health, education, and behavior. In spite of all struggles and judgments, Sofi becomes a wise resilient woman, capable of understanding the needs of her own family and even her community:

It was exactly two days after her fifty-third birthday, while Sofi was putting another load into the washer out in the enclosed back porch, shooing away the moscas and saying to herself things like, "If that Domingo doesn't fix the screen door this week, I'm gonna have to do it myself; then I'll throw his butt out for sure; what do I want him for then anyhow?" and things like that, just before the old wringer went out with a big shake and clank (not too surprising considering its age) and she said aloud, "God damn ...!", quickly pulling out her scapular from inside her white blouse and kissing it to heaven, that she decided she was going to run for la mayor of Tome and make some changes around there. (p. 1598)

As we can appreciate in this last quotation, it is in the intimacy of her home, facing her daily problems, that Sofi discovers her potential and stands up in front of the world as a political subject. Not only does she succeed in representing the interest of her community, but she is also the one that comes up with trading operations between neighbors, improving people's eating habits, commerce, and working organization. Furthermore, she creates M.O.M.A.S., establishing an association where mothers of saints and martyrs can assemble and share encounters. She transforms her pain in the driving force of financial and social change in the community.

To conclude, when talking about the homeplace it is inevitable to ask ourselves "what do women learn in the home?". bell hooks would answer "It is the place where all that truly mattered in life took place – the warmth and comfort of shelter, the feeding of our bodies, the nurturing of our souls. There we learn dignity, the integrity of being; there we learn to have faith." [hooks, bell. "Homeplace: a Site of Resistance"]. Ana Castillo beautifully evokes this idea, sharing with her readers the story of these women, not as a tale of self-improvement but as a story of struggle and search for identity.

Identity and the Holocaust

Lucía Alessandrelli

The Holocaust was the genocide of the Jews during World War II. Throughout this period, they were denigrated, segregated, and humiliated by the Nazis, who tried to exterminate them through concentration camps, such as Auschwitz, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, among others. To fulfill their goal, the Germans gave the Jewish people a new "identity", i.e., citizen status was removed as an excuse to massacre them. The Nazis believed they were better than the Jews. This led to trauma among the survivors, first-generation, which was later passed on to their children, second generation. The aim of this paper is to show how this trauma was transmitted from father, Vladek, to son, Artie, in *Maus* by Art Spiegelman. In relation to this, we can analyze how postmemory and memory appeared in that relationship.



From the very beginning of the story, we can see how difficult it was for Vladek and Artie to understand each other. As a consequence of having tried to survive at any cost in the concentration camp, Vladek never managed to stay put. He was always very busy working, counting his pills, exercising, etc., which his son found unbearable.

Moreover, Vladek was betrayed by many people inside and outside the concentration camp, so did not believe in friendship. In the following vignette, the reader can see how Vladek's trauma did not allow him to understand why his son was sad over an argument, "Another aspect of the trauma was Vladek's guilt as he survived while other people did not, his first son and late wife included. This is important to bear in mind as Art also felt guilty, which is the result of the transmissions of the trauma as explained by Kolar, "Art's story confirms the assertion that generations which have never been exposed to a traumatic event can 'inherit' the trauma of their ancestors (...)" (p.228), and goes on to say, "Vladek has transmitted his own survivor's guilt onto Art in the form of scolding" (p.232).



It is also important to mention that even though Vladek went through the Holocaust while his son did not, they were not antagonistic characters as both were affected by trauma. "The memory of the survivor (Vladek) and the postmemory of his child (Art) do not appear to be in opposition, despite the obvious tension and very complicated relationship between father and his son" (Kolar, p.237). The tension between them was the result of the different experiences of the Holocaust.

As explained in Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma in Maus " Postmemory reflects the level of identification with the original recipients of trauma and is often characterized by the feeling of displacement, living in temporal and spatial exile, estrangement, and the experience of a lack and absence which frequently leads to an identity crisis." (Kolar, p. 228-229)

In conclusion, in the Second World War, the Nazis managed to exterminate a large number of Jews. They did so by creating a new category of Jewish identity. Those who managed to survive were traumatized by the atrocities they lived while being prisoners. To make matters worse, this was transmitted to relatives who did not directly experience the Holocaust, thus generating a gap between them. That is why Vladek's trauma is passed down to Arty, making communication between father and son almost impossible, which made them grow apart.



Anja, Art, Vladek.

The Misfortune of the Silenced

Bianca Venerus



The Victorian era has been described as a period of profound changes in concerning cultural sensitivities and political concerns. It was a time of extraordinary economic, technological, and scientific growth. However, it wasn't all roses. Deep down, a largely marginalized group was swept away by the "glorious" changes that the British state promised. Among these people, chimney sweepers -little boys who were orphaned or had been abandoned by their parents- were suffocated by the risky and inhumane work they were exposed to. It is the purpose of this essay to trace the despicable exploitation of these children during the heyday of the Industrial Revolution and to analyze the social factors that allowed this distressing inequality. The axis of study of this project will be the poem *Songs of Innocence* by William Blake.

Firstly, it is essential to focus on how discrimination against chimney sweeps was socially and naturally accepted. The reader is invited to reflect on the following: How could such an adverse situation become "the new normal"? Who allowed that to happen? Not surprising, in a context where much attention had been drawn to concepts such as modernity and the increase in wealth, was poverty being considered a crime. In particular, the State and the Church themselves categorized it as subversive, a threat that altered the economic and social organization, and therefore chimney sweepers were ignored and silenced. In the first stanza of the poem *Songs of Innocence* it can be observed how society corrupts the innocence of a child from an early age:

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep." (William Blake, pp. 1)

As is evident in this first quote, so vicious was the situation, that even the abandoned children were considered just numbers. The violence against these children, left on the street by their own family and forced to work from childhood under exhausting conditions, evinces how society ignored the misfortune of chimney sweeps. As William Blake describes in his poem, children from poor families, orphans, "locked up in coffins of black" (pp. 1), seemed invisible in the face of "progress". The children had been turned into an object of work, where the only concern was to keep the coffin of black, the chimney, clean of ash and soot.

Secondly, within this context, we can highlight institutions of indoctrination, namely, the State and the Church were the main promoters of discrimination against chimney sweeps. According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of the best-known philosophers in history, "human beings were born naturally good and they were corrupted by bad institutions". In his work *Emile: or On Education* (1762) he identified how inequalities of wealth and power were instituted as a result of the process of "civilization". Thus, civilization caused the origin of social inequality, suffering, and injustice, situations that according to Rousseau have prevailed since society corrupts the pure individual. In such a manner, both the State and the Church created that narrative to make abuse seem natural. This concept of "naturalness" among so much violence was used to justify their action. In this way, chimney sweeps were deceived. The following quotation shows how children, from their innocence, were indoctrinated and corrupted by these institutions:

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm. (William Blake, pp. 1)

As can be seen from the stanza above, the indoctrination tactics used by the institutions took effect from the moment the innocent child accepted their share; when violence against them was normalized and when they were manipulated by promising them a false future. In such a way, every poor child was enslaved from an early age: at no time did they stop working although their health was in danger and their rights violated. As discussed above, the Church played a fundamental role in this injustice. When writing "Songs of Innocence", Blake was clear in his message:

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins & set them all free;
(...)And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father & never want joy." (William Blake, pp. 1)

Above is evidenced Blake's tragic understanding of freedom restrictions for those children. He analyses how the naturally good are deceived by such theories and so corrupted by them. He also depicts the chimney sweepers as the oppressed victims of that system. Blake emphasizes precisely how the Church comforted them by saying "God is on your side" when, hypocritically, it was the Church itself that paid the master sweeper to teach orphans and poor children the office of sweeping chimneys.

Finally, the chimney sweepers represented what has been called the abject by Julia Kristeva, which means: "the state of being cast off". It was Julia Kristeva who developed the theory of one of the most popular interpretations of abjection. This was particularly embodied in her work *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980). She was the first to apply the abject to cultural analysis: "It is not lack of

cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite." (Julia Kristeva, pp. 4).

As can be seen from the analysis above, in the search for "the disciplinary", the only concern was to remove or keep controlled the ambiguous. It is a result of the struggle to preserve an exclusive identity that chimney sweeps were cast out and did not have a place in society but a chimney where they worked until their violent and swift death. Thus, the abject can be analyzed as an object of exclusion which is borne by the existence of a superego, the representative of culture, and of the symbolic order.

This conception reverberates with what British identity meant back then. Throughout history, Great Britain has been characterized by the exclusion of so-called ethnic minorities in reference to this cultural concept based on racial and historical arguments. The presence of certain symbolic aspects, be it the language, the Christian religion, belonging to an upper class, among others, connoted a certain prestige or "purity" to a certain social group. In this way, the rules of inclusion and exclusion operated on the assumption of the superiority of Britain's culture. While the other social sectors, those who according to British culture did not belong because they were impure to its rules, were considered the abject.

Returning to the case, we can identify certain parallelism with the exclusive actions of the State and the Church: the "necessary" oppression and discrimination against children to create an identity where otherness is a threat to the system. It should be borne in mind that the term abjection has been described as something that essentially disturbs conventional identity and cultural concepts. Seldom did the disgrace of chimney sweepers draw attention due to the fact they had already been categorized as the others.

We can conclude that the State, the Church, and the cultural rules of Great Britain, through methods of coercive allocation and social marking, were the ones that condemned the chimney sweepers to a life of misery before the blind eyes of society. In the utopia of a perfectly ruled city in the Victorian era, abandoned, poor, or orphaned children were discriminated against and imprisoned in a dark, narrow, and sooty four-walled conduit. Only later did a few stop this false reality. Among them, William Blake was not silent, and in every verse of Songs of Innocence, he criticized the cruel lives of those children.

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Oppression of Women in *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Daniela Calderón



The growth of new social classes began towards the end of the XVIII century. New industries, businesses, and professions helped to create a new middle class in America. This created new ideologies and concepts. This should be borne in mind in reference to the family which adapted to these changes, but adaptation did not mean equality between women and men. That is to say, women had a particular role in the private sphere, while men had a role in the public sphere. For instance, women could not go out to work or study. They had to stay home and take care of the welfare of their children and their husband. Personal and professional growth as well as decision-making was not something that women were allowed to do. The purpose of this essay is to analyze the oppression of women in *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and explain how, in the end, the protagonist succeeds in breaking free.

In the first place, the protagonist is not taken seriously. She suffers from postpartum depression and feels very sad but is ignored by John—her husband—who underestimates her illness. He is a doctor who spends most of his time away from home. The protagonist is left to deal with her illness by herself, "John is away all day, (...) You see he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do?"

Besides, the protagonist is seen as a fragile person who cannot make her own decisions. For instance, she is made to sleep in a room she hates. She explains, "I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! But John would not hear of it" The protagonist cannot go against the decisions made by her husband. In addition, John forbids her to write, which she loves doing. So she has to hide every time she writes as can be seen in the following quotation, "There comes John, and I must put this away, he hates to have me write a word."

However, in the end, although the protagonist pays with her sanity, she finds her voice and manages to break free. After ripping the wallpaper off in the room she hates so much, she turns around and whispers to her husband, "I've got out at last."

In conclusion, I believe John represents a patriarchal society, where women are oppressed and overlooked; where they have to make drastic decisions to have their voices heard.

Postcolonial Conflicts in *The thing around your neck* and *A private experience*

Marcela Osa



For centuries, the literature produced in the countries colonized by different world powers was narrated by writers who—consciously or not—became representatives of the conquering perspective. Postcolonial literature focuses on the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country, especially issues related to the political and cultural independence of previously dominated people. In this way, this approach highlights the meaning and implications of living—in many senses—on the periphery of the world. As pointed out by Lois Tyson in his book *Critical theory today*, a user-friendly guide.

Postcolonial criticism is particularly effective at helping us see connections among all the domains of our experience—the psychological, ideological, social, political, intellectual, and aesthetic—in ways that show us just how inseparable these categories are in our lived experience of ourselves and our world (...) As a subject matter, postcolonial criticism analyzes literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination, from the first point of colonial contact to the present.”(Tyson, 418)

The aim of this paper is to explore postcolonialism conflicts in two short stories by the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie: *The thing around your neck* and *A private experience*.

Firstly, it might be good to remind ourselves that one of the main consequences of colonization is the overlapping of a new identity in the conquered places, both in culture and language. In postcolonial literature, the imposition of forging identities is denounced. Special emphasis is placed on the economic and political interests behind those impositions because this advance also supposes the superiority of the new customs coming from the center of the empire and the inferiority of the native people. Throughout the short story *A Private Experience*, it is possible to notice the cultural differences between two women with the same birth origin, but with different social status, that have led them along different paths

in life. In the case of the onion seller, a Hausa and Muslim woman, she is poor, speaks English with difficulty, and wears traditional clothes. On the other hand, Chika, belonging to a higher social class, she is Igbo and Christian, has been educated abroad and both her dress and her cultural references are assimilated to the English or North American way. In the following quotations we can clearly see Chika's personality and thinking:

"I dropped everything", Chika says. I was buying oranges and I dropped the oranges and my handbag. She does not add that the handbag was a Burberry, an original one that her mother had bought on a recent trip to London." (A private experience, 1)

She looks down at her own denim skirt and ref T-shirt embossed with a picture of the Statue of Liberty, both of which she bought when she and Nnedi spent a few summer weeks with relatives in New York. (A private experience, 4)

In the quotations above, the importance which Chika gives to foreign brands is highlighted: her outfit is expensive, inaccessible even for ordinary people in her hometown. But her way of dressing says even more since exposing the Statue of Liberty also speaks to us of Western values, as market freedom, self-improvement, democracy.

But on the other hand, the onion seller wears cheap and garish clothes, symbolized by the scarf. This outfit also reflects the restrictions of her tradition and the Muslim religion.

It hangs around the woman's neck now, but it was probably wound loosely around her face before, covering her ears. A long, flimsy pink and white scarf, with the garish prettiness of cheap things. (A private experience, 2)

It seems to me that denying tradition is a way of showing social class superiority. This view is supported by Lois Tyson, who explains in her essay:

What has been left behind is a deeply embedded cultural colonization: the inculcation of a British system of government and education, British culture, and British values that denigrate the culture, morals, and even physical appearance of formerly subjugated peoples. Thus, ex-colonials often were left with a psychological "inheritance" of a negative self-image and alienation from their own indigenous cultures, which had been forbidden or devalued for so long that much pre-colonial culture has been lost. (Tyson, 419)

Cultural imperialism, a direct result of economic domination, consists of the "takeover" of one culture by another: the food, clothing, customs, recreation, and values of the economically dominant culture increasingly replace those of the economically vulnerable culture until the latter appears to be a kind of imitation of the former. American cultural imperialism has been one of the most pervasive forms of this phenomenon, as we see American fashions, movies, music, sports, fast food, and consumerism squeeze out indigenous cultural traditions all over the world. (Tyson, 426)

Secondly, the colonialist narratives have shown the conquered peoples as uncivilized, savage, cannibals, rude, and cruel. These representations served the purpose of justifying the need to civilize them, and teach them the true values expressed, also, in the colonizing language. And they also create stereotypes that do not allow us to appreciate the individuality not only of each people but also of individuals.

In an earlier scene of *The thing around your neck*, Akunna leaves his uncle's house and finds a job in a restaurant as a waitress. She recently came from Nigeria to the United States and she is faced to cultural shock and discrimination, as we can observe in the following quotation:

Many people at the restaurant asked when you had come from Jamaica, because they thought that every black person with a foreign accent was Jamaican. Or some who guessed that you were African told you that they loved elephants and wanted to go on a safari. (The thing around your neck, 5)

In my opinion, the quotation above is an example of how common places imposed by narratives that confuse and massify prevail, ignoring singularities. Here is another quotation that supports that point of view, focusing on the question of language:

They asked where you learn to speak English and if you had real houses back in Africa and if you'd seen a car before you came to America. (The thing around your neck, 2)

In the context of native people from countries that have colonized African nations, it shows a lack of historical knowledge and even a lack of interest in the actions of their own countries.

In addition to that, in her conference *The danger of the single story*, Chimamanda Adichie refers to the texts of British conquerors in the XVI century that paint African people literally as beasts and monsters

and other writers that defined them as children and devils. She puts the following words in the mouth of Akunna:

Then he told you how the neighbors said, a few months after he moved into his house, that the squirrels had started to disappear. They have heard that Africans ate all kind of wild animals. (From *The thing around your neck*, 2)

Thirdly, among the stereotypes generated by the hegemonic discourse, ignorance about the true roots of ethnic-religious conflicts in the former African colonies stands out. In this way, it is implicit that the tribes fight each other for no more valid reasons than superstition, according to the definition of colonized people as savages.

In *A private experience*, Chika wonders if the onion seller attributes the conflicts to her belief in the devil. And she contrasts it with the analytical gaze of her student sister who criticizes these inter-tribal religious struggles from a social and political point of view, as can be seen in the following quotes.

Chika wonders if that is all the woman thinks of the riots, if that is all she sees them as--evil. (...) She imagines the cocoa brown of Nnedi's eyes lighting up, her lips moving quickly, explaining that riots do not happen in a vacuum, that religion and ethnicity are often politicized because the ruler is safe if the hungry ruled are killing one another. Then Chika feels a prick of guilt for wondering if this woman's mind is large enough to grasp any of that. (*A private experience*, 6)

In my view, Chika's character assumes the point of view of the conqueror due to her mentality identified with the stereotypical gaze, while historical criticism is put in Akunna's words. Because in fact, the origin of the inter-tribal and religious conflicts lies in the appropriation of natural resources by powerful forces.

"European domination of the New World began in the late fifteenth century. Spain, France, England, Portugal, and the Netherlands were the main contenders for the plunder of natural and human resources, and over the next few centuries European empires extended themselves around the globe", affirms Lois Tyson. (418)

But these speeches about ignorance as the main cause of internal conflicts are validated by English literary canons and also by the great world media. The author represents this situation in the following sentences, in which the lack of precision in the information provided by the media can be appreciated.

She will look at only one of the corpses, naked, stiff, facedown, and it will strike her that she cannot tell if the partially burned man is Igbo or Hausa, Christian or Muslim, from looking at the charred flesh. She will listen to BBC radio and hear the accounts of the deaths and the riots “religious with undertones of ethnic tension” the voice will say. (A private experience, 11)

Later, Chika will read in *The Guardian* that “the reactionary Hausa-speaking Muslims in the North have a history of violence against non-Muslims”, and in the middle of her grief, she will stop to remember that she examines the nipples and experienced the gentleness of a woman who is Hausa and Muslim. (A private experience, 12)

In conclusion, the two stories by Chimamanda Adichie highlight fundamental aspects of postcolonial literature. In them, the implications of colonialism both in culture and in power relations are clearly exposed, since the author ruthlessly shows the tension that persists today, and that goes beyond the geographical context. Discrimination, lack of identity, internal wars are wrapped by a hegemonic discourse that confirms the stereotypes. In these two stories, Chimamanda Adichie uses her literary talent as an invisible mirror that reflects the dark areas of a history that has not yet healed its wounds.

Poinsettias: The True Story of Veronica's Rites

Marcia Casto



Can you imagine a linear life without any change? A life with obvious steps to follow? I am sure you would answer “no” because, as indicated by Van Gennep “all life is transition, with rhythmic periods of quiescence and heightened activity.” (p. ix).

This means we do not know the destiny of our life but we know there will be obstacles to overcome. Van Gennep developed a theory known as “the rites of passage” in which he established three different stages: separation, transition, and incorporation. The aim of this paper is to analyse how a little girl called Veronica goes through these stages in the story *Poinsettias*.

At the beginning of the story, Veronica goes through an unconscious rite called the ‘rite of separation’. Veronica starts separating from her peers. She and Marika have been friends since they can remember.

Marika's parents have a farm and let out a small cottage where Veronica's parents go two or three times a year. Although Marika and Veronica have generated a bond as strong as the one created between siblings, the 'rite' of separation interferes and makes them grow apart. Van Gennep argues that "rites of union similar to those creating a fraternal bond [...] cannot be broken except by a special rite of separation" (p. 31). For example, when Marika shows Veronica a bug in a jar, she feels repulsed, "Marika thrust the glass jar up to Veronica's face. 'Caught it last week!' Veronica stared at the coiled brown shape slithering inside the greenish liquid. She felt sick. (...) She didn't know which were worse, Marika's or those of the dead creature in the jar." This quotation shows how Veronica has stopped being interested in the same things Marika is. However, Marika does not realize things have changed.

Veronica experiences the transition from one stage, that of separation, to another stage, that of integration. Van Gennep argues, "Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence" (p. 3). Marika's oldest brother, Anton, decides to challenge Veronica so that she can be part of the gang, "We've made a new rule. Girls have to do a dare before they join our gang.'[...] 'You've got to get one of his poinsettia flowers.'" As she does not have any friends or siblings and her only "friend" is a doll called Margaret, she accepts to steal a flower from Van Venter's garden despite how dangerous it was as "The rumour amongst the local children was that he had murdered his wife and buried her in front of his house - under a poinsettia bush which now had brighter than usual red flowers." When Venter realizes he has been robbed he accuses a black child, just because of the colour of his skin:

"Meneer Venter was shouting about people who stole from him. [...] Veronica was trembling but she had to find out what was happening [...] In front of him stood a black child with thin spindly legs, wearing a pair of torn khaki shorts, his eyes fixed on the ground. [...] Veronica did not look after the first two strikes. [...] To her horror Meneer Venter was walking in her direction in a slow swagger. [...] Standing transfixed, she dropped the flower in her hand. [...] Before Veronica could even think what to say, he patted her hair lightly and walked on, up the steps and into the house."

At this moment, she realizes she is a white girl and she could get away with anything if she wanted.

The last stage that Veronica goes through is the 'rite of incorporation'. The moment she understands she is a white little girl, she is incorporated into a new world, a white world. Van Gennep developed the

notion of "rite of incorporation" and he considered that "Ceremonies to [...] insure all sorts of future security, are followed by rites of incorporation" (p. 24). The fact that Veronica plucks four more flowers strengthens this stage. There is one specific sequence that determines the end of the 'rite of transition' to get to the rite of incorporation, "Veronica [...] snapped off four more stems, careless of the sticky sap. A flower each. [...] She stopped running. She could walk the rest of the way now and give herself time to regain her breath."

All things considered, we can note how at the end of the story, something changes in Veronica although she still is an eleven-year old girl. Veronica goes through different stages. At first, she separates from Marika; then she begins a transition period in which she separates from one group to be incorporated into a new world. In Van Gennep words "The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages" (p.2-3); Veronica goes through the three stages and at the end she realizes how different she is from the rest.

Frankenstein and his outcast Doppelganger
Natalia Cabrera



"The 'double' has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons." Sigmund Freud

Connecting with our unconscious is one of the most fascinating things of life, but when people discover what is going on inside them they feel terrified, because meeting with ourselves face-to-face, can surface our darkest side. As far as Freud's psychoanalytic theory is concerned, repression is a defense mechanism that occurs when the Ego, the psychic apparatus that is in charge of mediating between our primitive drives and social impositions, keeps unacceptable desires out of the conscious mind allowing us to be part of society. But what happens when those feelings and thoughts leave the unconscious? From that moment on, such thoughts turn into actions, sometimes carried out by our "Double" or "Doppelganger" which is a mysterious, exact double of a living person. As a consequence, when the Doppelganger takes over, we lose control of our actions.

The aim of this paper is to show that in the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelly, Victor and the creature are each other's Doppelganger, and that Victor represents the evil side in that binary opposition.

Frankenstein is a gothic novel with two central characters. Victor, a hard-working scientist with dreams, family and friends, who tries to prove his knowledge throughout an experiment that consists of giving

life to a dead body; and his Doppelganger—the result of his experiment—who is created with an uncanny appearance, that torments not only his creator but also society.

One of the most striking elements in the novel is that the Creature and Victor *Frankenstein* share the same identity, which means they are the same person. As Muriel Spark explains in *The shifting roles of Frankenstein and his monster*, "There are two central figures - or rather two in one, for Frankenstein and his significantly unnamed Monster are bound together by the nature of their relationship." This can be seen in the fact that Victor does not assign his creature his own identity. As a consequence, Victor's is attributed to the monster, called "Demon" and "Monster" by his "father". This attribution is a mistake: "Frankenstein's plight resides in the Monster, and the Monster's in Frankenstein. That this fact has received wide, if unwitting, recognition is apparent from the common mistake of naming the Monster "Frankenstein" and emanates from the first principle of the story that Frankenstein is perpetuated in the Monster (...). So the title implies, the Monster is an alternative Frankenstein." (Muriel Spark p.)

In addition, after finding out the monster has killed his little brother, Victor realises that the creature is part of him. The behaviour of both is almost the same, Victor tries to play god by giving life to a person and then tries to kill him too, and the monster, affected by Victor's indifference, decides to take revenge and express his feelings killing everyone that Victor loves.

I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me. (p.60)

Another interesting element that shows the Monster and Victor are each other's Doppelganger is their physical appearance. Although Victor's first intention is to give life to someone who is his spitting image, he ends up creating someone who is "gigantic in stature", "distorted in its proportions", "in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy." According to the Doppelganger concept, by giving life to this monster he frees his unconscious and his worst fears, such as not being loved, recognized, and accepted by society.

Finally, contrary to what might be believed it is Victor and not the creature that constitutes the dark side in this binary opposition. For instance, the creature becomes a killer due to Victor's heartless actions. To begin with, not only does he despise his creation but also he abandons him without providing him any resources to survive in such a cruel society. Moreover, both William's death and Justine's accusation are caused by Victor's behaviour.

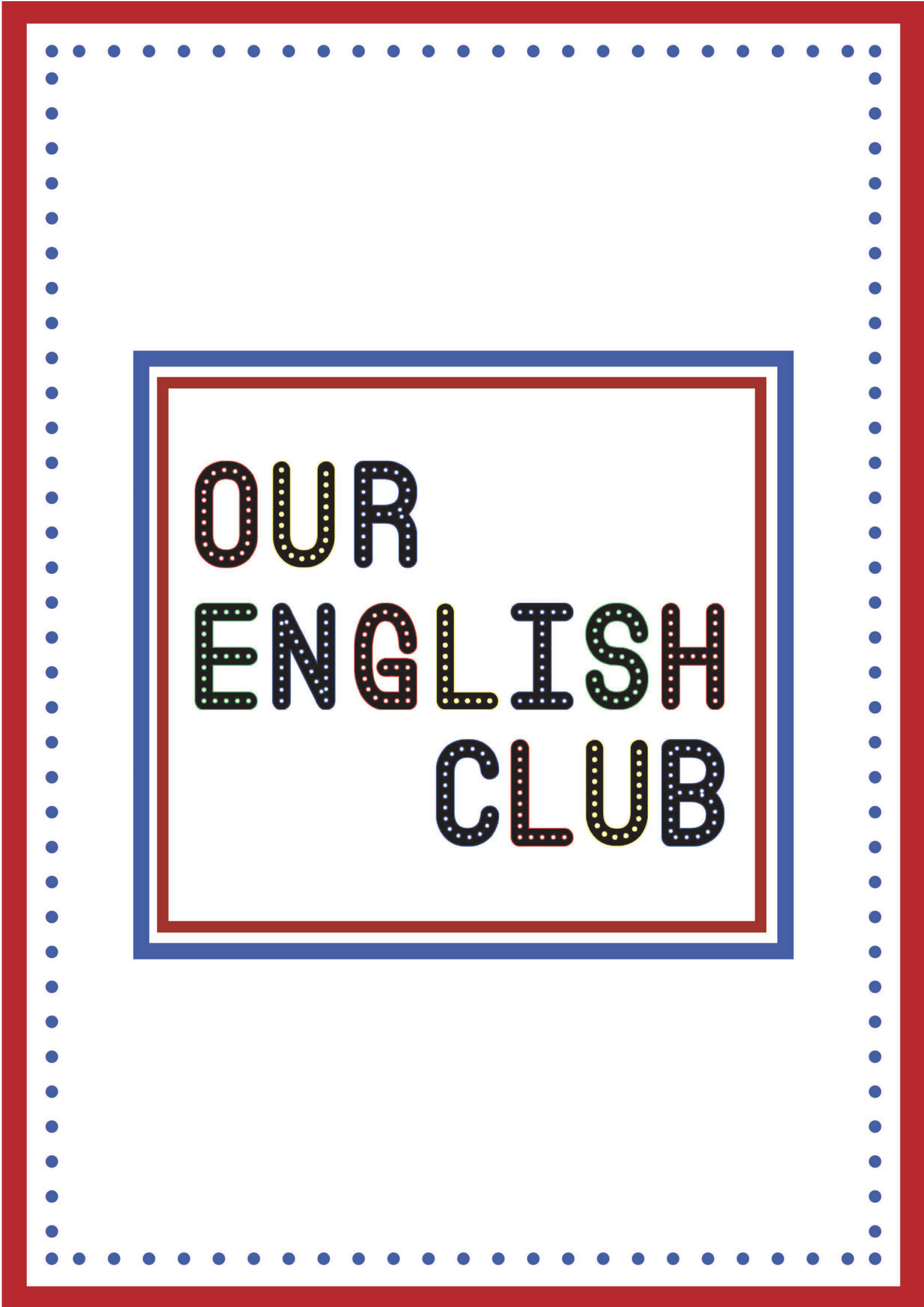
In fact, after these tragedies he admits he is the true murderer "I listened to this discourse with the extremest agony. I, not in deed, but in effect, was the true murderer." (p.72)

To sum up, as explained by Victor he aims to create a human being who looks just like him. However, he gives life to his unconscious mind, personified by a creature; does, making them each other's Doppelganger. It should be taken into account that the double is made up of two sides, the dark one and the good one. In my opinion, the monster represents the good side whereas Victor represents the evil side because the creature's behavior is the result of Victor's repressed feelings.

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