KU LEUVEN

KU LEUVEN
FACULTY OF ARTS
BIJDE INKOMSTRAAT 21 BOX 3301
3000 LEUVEN, BELGIË

Between the Lines: Reconsidering Gender Relations in Mary Shelley's *Lodore*.

Melanie Asselmans

Presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Western Literature

Supervisor: Dr. Brecht de Groote

Academic year 2017-2018

124.596 characters

KU LEUVEN
FACULTY OF ARTS
BIJDE INKOMSTRAAT 21 BOX 3301
3000 LEUVEN, BELGIË

I hereby declare that, in line with the Faculty of Arts' code of conduct for research integrity, the work submitted here is my own original work and that any additional sources of information have been duly cited.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Brecht de Groote for the constructive feedback, the stimulating conversations and the continuous support. This thesis has given me the pleasure of once more immersing myself in the world of literature; which always has a way of revealing new perspectives on matters. Moreover, it has also given me the opportunity to focus on a topic that I find immensely important.
Secondly, I am also grateful to Jean-Baptiste Verroken and Jolien Kiekens for the many late night discussions about the complexities of this world and our place in it. Only by listening to each other, by learning from one another, and by questioning ourselves do we ultimately achieve a more inclusive and equal understanding of each other. As Mary Shelley herself has put it:

Words have more power than any one can guess; it is by words that the world's great fight, now in these civilized times, is carried on (*Lodore* 316).

Table of Contents

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 THE ROOTS OF MODERN FEMINISM 1
1.2 MARY SHELLEY 4
1.3 LODORE 6

2. A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO MARY SHELLEY'S SOCIETY 9

2.1 MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT'S "A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN" 9
2.2 PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY'S TRANSLATION OF PLATO'S "SYMPOSIUM" 14

3. *LODORE* AS A SILVER-FORK NOVEL 22

3.1 DOMESTIC IDEOLOGY AND "THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE" 24
3.2 FEMALE WRITERS AND FEMALE READERSHIP 29

4. ALTERNATIVE READING OF LODORE (FEMINIST/FEMININE PERSPECTIVE) 33

4.1 FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM 33
4.2 BETWEEN THE LINES: IDEAL FEMININITY IN MARY SHELLEY'S EYES 38
4.2.1 FANNY DERHAM 38
4.2.2 ETHEL FITZHENRY & LADY LODORE 45
4.3 WHAT'S IN A NAME? *LODORE* OR *THE BEAUTIFUL WIDOW* 48

5. CONCLUSION 51

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY 53

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION[1]

Throughout the history of feminism many figures have come to play an important part in the fight for social, political and economic equality of the sexes. Activists, writers, academics, etc. such as Sojourner Truth, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Bell Hooks are considered to have contributed immensely to the successes of the Feminist Movement. However, even before what is now commonly known as the three waves of feminism, discussion concerning the woman question was not out of the ordinary. Writers such as Aphra Behn (1640-1689), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and Jane Austen (1775-1817) did not shy away from drawing on themes such as gender and the position of women in society. Furthermore, the first half of the nineteenth century saw a period of literary feminism in which key novels handled these aforementioned themes extensively. Often considered as a part of zero-wave feminism or proto-feminism, this literary feminism – and zero-wave feminism in general – laid the groundwork for what eventually became the women's movement. In this thesis, I argue that Mary Shelley belongs in the list of authors linked with literary feminism and that she, and more specifically her novel *Lodore*, should be considered an important component of feminist literary history.

1.1 The roots of modern feminism[2]

From The Revolutions of the eighteenth century onwards, women (and men) as a group started to question the rigid gendered hierarchies and divisions more and more. Works such as Olympe de Gouges' "Déclaration des Droites de la Femme et de Citoyenneté" (1791), Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), Harriet Hardy Taylor Mill's "The Enfranchisement of Women" (1851) and her husband John

[1] The information provided in this chapter and subsequent chapters is gathered from several secondary sources listed in the bibliography at the end of this paper.

[2] This subchapter merely intends to give the reader a very brief overview of the roots of modern feminism and is thus far from being complete. A more complete overview can be found via the bibliographic sources at the end of this paper.

Stuart Mill's "On the Subjection of Women" (1869) protested against the exclusion of their sex and society's double standards of sexual morality. The fight for equal political and economic rights became the leitmotif of the nineteenth century women's movement. The word 'feminism', which originated from the French and only circulated for the first time in around 1880/1890, came to embody women's struggle for equality. Karen Offen defines the concept as:

> (. . . historically and comparatively) encompass[ing] both a system of ideas and a movement for sociopolitical change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society. It addresses imbalances of power between the sexes that disadvantage women (Quoted in Whithaeckx).

Though technically only in use at the turn of the twentieth century, the concept has been used anachronistically to refer to women's emancipation movements before that. However, the anachronistic use of the term has been perceived as problematic to some scholars because of the ambiguity of the concept itself and the differences in relation to, for example, American and European cultural history, where the position of women and the focus of goals and activities varied significantly. Still, Karen Offen's abovementioned definition provides an appropriate clarification that can be used when approaching the research topic of this specific paper. Therefore, with regards to Mary Shelley's *Lodore*, I will continue to adopt the concept anachronistically whenever I see fit.

Three main phases of social criticism can be discerned. The first half of the nineteenth century is often referred to as a phase of literary feminism, "Particularly between the 1830s and 1860s, and sometimes later, literary feminism had an enormous impact all over Europe. A publicly effective discussion of the role of women and gender relations took place in key novels" (Paletschek et al. 310). However, it was not until around the second half the century that an organised feminism established itself. Women (and men) grasped the importance of established organisations to advance their cause and transform society. Britain first saw the development of women's organisations only in the mid-1850s. Near the end of the century a movement developed, which mainly focussed on women's suffrage.

Additionally, the roots of modern feminism were influenced by at least two major developments. The first development is that of liberalism[3], which started to leave its mark in eighteenth century Enlightenment and spread quickly after the French and American Revolutions. This movement values individuals' self-determination. Liberal feminism, then, extends this ideology to equal rights for women. The abovementioned Harriet Taylor Mill and John Stuart Mill and their respective works can be considered to embody this liberal feminist position. Both British authors considered it women's right to have the same political and economic rights as men. A critique that often surrounds liberal feminism is that it proposes a very white, middle-class view on oppression by presenting it as a "one size fits all"-feminism that does not take into consideration the different crossroads of oppression such as class or ethnicity. A second development that shaped the feminist movement is the rise of socialism in the nineteenth century. As a reaction to liberal individualism, socialism sought to consider a just society as one that focuses on the common interest. The link between feminism and socialism first emerged in early-nineteenth-century utopian socialism (e.g. Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen), a socialism based on the idea of new communities that revolved around collective participation. Not only did it criticise the capitalist exploitation of women (and men) on the labour market and the gendered division of labour in se, it also considered women's emancipation of utter importance and stressed the value of mixed education, free love and women's right to vote. The rise of Marxist feminism around mid-nineteenth reflected the values of this early socialism. It considered marriage a form of private property, in which women were degraded to a state of slavery; the result of a capitalist society. Furthermore, Marxism also addressed women's double burden. Not only does the labour market exploit women; they are also responsible for domestic labour (e.g. taking care of children, washing up, cooking, etc.) for which they do not get paid. According to Marxist ideology, women's emancipation is thus rooted in economic inequality as well as existing class structures. In Britain, the socialist movement was not as deep-rooted during the nineteenth century as it was in other European countries since it did not have unified socialist parties until the twentieth century (Sowerwine 375-377). However, it did have a considerable link with feminism in certain areas, such as the suffragette movement.

---

[3] It needs to be acknowledged that liberalism has many sides to it (e.g. classical and egalitarian liberalism) and that this is merely a very broad sketch of the concept to prevent unnecessary digressions.

1.2 Mary Shelley

For a long time, the people in Mary Shelley's life dominated much of what has been written about the author. Apart from being the writer of the novel *Frankenstein*, Shelley[4] became known mostly as the daughter of proto-feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and political philosopher William Godwin and as the wife of the romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley rather than a renowned author herself. However, the development of a feminist literary criticism during Second Wave feminism has helped to put her and her lesser-known works on the map as an important part of literary history.

Mary Shelley (1797-1851), born in London at the turn of the nineteenth century, was an English romantic writer and editor. Losing her mother to puerperal fever only eleven days after her birth, Shelley spent her early years with her father William Godwin and Wollstonecraft's illegitimate daughter Fanny Godwin (Imlay). When her father eventually remarried in 1801, the family grew. Jane Clairmont, Shelley's stepmother, had two children from her previous marriage (Charles and Clair) and soon another child (William Godwin Junior) was born. Unconventional as the Godwin household may have been, it was to be reflected by Mary Shelley's similarly unorthodox life. From a very young age, Shelley's education demonstrated Godwin's encouragement to develop an awareness of socio-political issues and provided her with the means to do so. Betty Bennett writes:

> Under his tutelage, she achieved a solid foundation in history (ancient and modern), mythology, literature, and the Bible; visiting instructors provided art and French lessons. She also studied Latin, an uncommon subject for girls, and attended adult theatre and lectures with her father and family (Bennett).

When Shelley was fifteen, she very briefly met P. B. Shelley for the first time. Though it would ultimately take almost two years for the future partners to meet again, it did not prevent them from falling in love quickly once they did. Godwin, however, did not approve of the relationship and urged them to break it off, if to no avail: two months into

[4] For future reference, I will use "Shelley" to mean Mary Shelley and "P.B. Shelley" to mean Percy Bysshe Shelley.

the romance, the couple eloped to the continent. Godwin's disapproval not only stemmed from his views on marriage as an institution of slavery, in which women are considered nothing more than a piece of property, he also knew the negative effect it would have on his daughter's life to enter into a relationship with a married man.[5] In 1815, at only seventeen years old, a first tragedy occurred when Shelley's first daughter died after only a couple of days. It would not take long until other tragedies followed. A year later, both her half-sister Fanny Imlay and P. B. Shelley's first wife Harriet died of suicide. Additionally, Shelley had a near-fatal miscarriage, losing two more children as well as her husband by the end of 1822. Still, a few positive events ensued as well. Those years also saw the composition of Shelley's novels *Frankenstein* (1818), *Matilda*[6] and *Valperga* (1823). Her first novel already showed the author's considerable interest in socio-political issues and her ability to convey them. Furthermore, what makes this work even more interesting is the fact that it was believed to have been written by a man for quite some time because of the political topics instilled in its subject matter, which were considered "unfeminine". In addition, since the novel was originally published anonymously and a preface written by P.B. Shelley was added, many perceived him to be the author. Even after Shelley became known as *Frankenstein*'s author, "the power and imagination of her writing was recognized by various commentators with the dubious compliment that she had a 'masculine mind'" (Bennett).

Though very much grief-stricken over the death of her husband, P. B. Shelley's death also brought with it an eagerness to give recognition to his works. However, Shelley's work as an editor and publisher was not completely effortless. Firstly, her father-in-law cut off the allowance he granted her and her only surviving child, Percy Florence, after she published *Posthumous Poems* in 1824 and threatened do keep doing so if she published anything of P. B. Shelley in the future. Furthermore, Shelley also grasped the depth of the conservative nature of British society after the Revolutions and its implications for the ideas conveyed in her husband's works. This made editing his literary pieces quite challenging at times.[7] However, though Shelley was aware of the

[5] For more information on Percy Bysshe Shelley, see chapter two.

[6] First published only in 1959.

[7] When editing P.B. Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium", for example, she faced first-hand the difficulties that came along with this wave of conservatism. A more detailed account of these difficulties can be found in chapter two.

obstacles she faced, she thought it important to carry out the task. In a preface to the *Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1839), she writes:

> To defecate life of its misery and its evil was the ruling passion of his [P. B. Shelley's] soul . . . He looked on political freedom as the direct agent to effect the happiness of mankind; and thus any new-sprung hope of liberty inspired a joy and an exultation more intense and wild than he could have felt for any personal advantage. . . . it must be difficult of comprehension to the younger generation rising around, since they cannot remember the scorn and hatred with which the partisans of reform were regarded some few years ago, nor the persecutions to which they were exposed. He had been from youth the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution; and believing firmly in the justice and excellence of his views, it cannot be wondered that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems from which he had himself suffered. (Shelley, *Notes*)

This, in part, shows Shelley's adherence to the ideas of both P. B. Shelley and her parents. In addition to her work as an editor, Shelley also kept writing and was able to make a modest living out of it. In 1926, she published *The Last Man*, which is now generally considered her second best work after *Frankenstein*. Her last two novels, *Lodore* (1835) and *Falkner* (1837), are not very known to contemporary audiences but have slowly but surely gained the attention of critics. The last ten years of Mary Shelley's life were reasonably calm. The author published a travel memoir titled *Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840,1842, and 1843* (1844) and saw Percy Florence marry, among other things. Ultimately, in 1851, Mary Shelley died of a brain tumour at the age of 53.

1.3 *Lodore*

Lodore (1835), also titled *The Beautiful Widow*, is Mary Shelley's second to last novel, which she started writing in January of 1831. The novel tells the story of a young girl named Ethel on her journey to womanhood. At the beginning of the novel Ethel and her

father Lord Lodore are residing in Illinois after he fled from a duel with an admirer of his wife Cornelia, who stayed behind with her mother. Having decided to return to England, Lord Lodore is killed in a duel at the hands of an American who witnessed this challenge twelve years earlier. Ethel arrives in England to live with her father's sister and marries Edward Villiers, Lord Lodore's second in the duel. A period of hardship ensues when financial struggles lead to Villiers' arrest. However, Ethel stands by him through everything. Throughout the novel circumstances prevent mother and daughter from reconciling. Eventually, Cornelia hears of Ethel's circumstances and forgoes her fortune to her daughter, ultimately ensuring their reconciliation (*Lodore* 21-22).

Though many of Shelley's contemporaries appreciated the work, as can be observed by the favourable reviews, it soon fell into obscurity because of the success of her earlier novel *Frankenstein* and her endeavours as editor of Percy Shelley's works. Nowadays, little attention is given to *Lodore* besides to the insight it might give into Shelley's personal life and "what it adds to [our] knowledge" (*Lodore* 24) of her husband. Moreover, many critics consider the novel merely a product of its time. Jane Blumberg, author of *Mary Shelley's Early Novels*, writes:

> Shelley's late fictions are unquestionably formulaic genre novels. . . . she was no longer striving to express new or complex ideas. She had resolved her paradoxical relationship to her father and husband with *The Last Man*. . . . She never entered the ideological-political fray again. . . . She was finished with the intellectual and emotional struggle that had characterized her previous work and she settled into an artistically unchallenging, but emotional tranquil life (Quoted in *Lodore* 20-21).

The formulaic genre that is often ascribed to *Lodore* is that of the silver-fork novel, a genre that was very much in style during the 1820s and 1830s and which conveys the workings of middle-class ideology. Novels in this genre act as a sort of handbook on how to behave properly and form a response to the ideology of domesticity developing in the final decades of the Romantic period; an ideology that would go on to dominate Victorian society. Critics such as Mary Poovey, author of *The Proper Lady and The Woman Writer*, argue that Mary Shelley's later novels contribute to this history of the silver-fork genre, be it perhaps for different reasons (e.g. financial problems,

conformation to expectations, etc.). That Mary Shelley's novel is in part a demonstration of the genre of silver-fork bears truth. However, as I argue in this paper, it is much more than that. Lisa Vargo writes, "her novels and her outlook during the 1830s have been misread as reinforcing Victorian cultural stereotypes, rather than as advancing a critique from within them" (Vargo 428).

This thesis sets out to examine why Mary Shelley's novel *Lodore* cannot merely be read as a novel of its time. I argue that, even though Shelley does in fact adopt the characteristics of a silver-fork novel and the themes that came to dominate Victorian society, there is more to the novel than meets the eye. Aside from the first layer, it is possible to distinguish a second layer in which the author takes part in the growing socio-political discussion about the position of women in British society of the nineteenth century, connecting her and her novel to the history of literary feminism. Additionally, I seek to assess Mary Shelley's success in actively criticising this position and the traditional gender roles attached to it.
My research is divided into four chapters. In this chapter, I have introduced the concepts necessary to understand the ideas behind the research question. Chapter two presents a more personal approach to the climate of nineteenth century Britain through the analysis of two literary works by prominent people in Mary Shelley's life. I focus on both the proto-feminist work "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792) by Mary Wollstonecraft and Percy Bysshe Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium". I also give a brief background on both authors, which places them more clearly in their relation to Mary Shelley. In chapters three and four, then, I consider the two possible readings of *Lodore*. Chapter three studies the novel as a work dedicated to the silver-fork genre and the ideology of domesticity; chapter four introduces an alternative feminist reading in which Shelley criticises the traditional gender/social roles of Victorian women by means of the abovementioned genre. Both chapter three and four will make use of textual analysis to further aid the argumentation.

2. A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO MARY SHELLEY'S SOCIETY

Mary Shelley's *Lodore* (1835) was written during an intriguing time in history. On a socio-political level, the aftermath of the French Revolution (1789) and the Napoleonic Wars as well as the American Revolution (1775) reflected a change of thought on long-established issues such as monarchy. Furthermore, Western society experienced widespread secularisation and growing liberalism that stressed people's right to individual autonomy and self-fulfilment (Tong 11). The literary climate, in its turn, was characterised by a gradual shift from the Romantic period to the Victorian era, the latter showcasing in many ways the morals of Victorian society. In this chapter, I will concentrate on two works that illustrate from a more literary side what issues occupied early nineteenth-century society. The first work, Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), will examine the social and political climate of her time; the second work, Percy Bysshe Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium" (1818), whose view on love was regarded as scandalous in nineteenth-century ideology, sheds light on the literary climate. Not only is the focus on both Mary Wollstonecraft and Percy Shelley important in trying to understand what happened on a broader societal level, their association with Mary Shelley is also essential to my subsequent analysis of her novel *Lodore*.

2.1 Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was an English writer and philosopher. Though she has many works attached to her name, she is perhaps primarily known for her work "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), for which feminist critics credit her with the title of proto-feminist.[8] At the age of nineteen, Wollstonecraft, the daughter of a farmer and second oldest of five children, started working as a governess "where for the first time she had the opportunity to observe – and scorn – the social life of the upper classes" (*Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume D* 208). In 1784, she founded a girls' school at Newington Green with her childhood friend Fanny Blood. However, due

[8] See chapter one for more information on the concept of feminism.

to her friend's untimely death along with some financial problems, the school had to be closed down. Wollstonecraft later converted her acquired knowledge and experiences into a series of essays titled *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1786), which serve as an early testament of a commitment to social matters that would preoccupy her literary career. A year later, Wollstonecraft read Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, a work that would come to serve as an important source in her argumentation against women's inferiority set out in "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman". That same year, she moved to London to become "a self-supporting, professional woman writer" (Poovey 54-55). Through her friendship with the publisher Joseph Johnson, the author met many influential people, including Thomas Paine, William Blake, and her future companion, William Godwin by whom she got pregnant with Mary Shelley (Britannica Academic). Before meeting Godwin, however, Wollstonecraft travelled to France to experience the Revolution at first hand. She came into contact with revolutionaries in favour of political and social equality of the sexes, like Condorcet and Mme Roland, and it was there that she wrote her most famous philosophical work.

Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"[9] was published in 1792 and is considered a milestone in feminist writing. In reaction the French Revolution of 1789, that praised itself as the beacon of freedom and equality, Wollstonecraft's philosophical work acknowledges the shortcomings of a democratic system that excluded women from being recognised as citizens. Considering there was a strong symbolical, visual presence of women during this time[10], some could not help but to note the dissonance. Nonetheless, the natural inferiority of women's sex was given as a universal explanation not to grant them the political, economic and social rights granted to those of the opposite sex. Furthermore, the Industrial Revolution that further marked the second half of the eighteenth century brought about a gendered division of labour, which restricted women to the confines of their own home. Where men took part in public life, women were expected to take care of children and household duties. Though it did spark some reaction from her contemporaries, "AVROW" did not gain the recognition that it currently does until the feminist movement rediscovered the text around a century and a half later.

---

[9] For future reference, I will refer to this work as "AVROW".

[10] Marianne, for example, became the symbol of the French Revolution and personified freedom, liberty and reason.

In thirteen chapters, Wollstonecraft criticises the general assumption that the inferiority of her sex lies in their nature and argues against male writers such as Rousseau who view women solely as sexual beings:

> Rousseau declares that a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning, and made a coquetish [*sic*] slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a *sweeter* companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself (*Norton Anthology* 222).

Wollstonecraft's work very much reflects the growing frustration that became visible during the nineteenth century towards the "nature"-argument used to justify women's inferiority. According to her, women internalise the "sexual character" (Poovey 73) that is attributed to them and thus construct themselves only in their relationships to men (as wives, as mothers, as daughters, etc.). Not only were they depicted as objects of sexual desire, women were also taught to be passive, dependent creatures whose path ultimately leads to what was considered their greatest purpose – motherhood. As chapter three and four will demonstrate, this depiction of the passive, dependent woman is central to a silver-fork reading of *Lodore* and Mary Shelley's critique of it. In "AVROW", Wollstonecraft is conscious of the fact that "femininity" and the expectations surrounding it are institutionalised and constructed through language, texts, etc.; women are taught to behave according to androcentric ideals of feminine behaviour:

> Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain them the protection of a man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives (*Norton Anthology* 217).

Furthermore, Wollstonecraft also refers to the economic situation women are restricted to. According to the author, the dependence of women on the opposite sex reduces them to a state of legal prostitution (*Norton Anthology* 232), since they did not

have the legal advantages men had during that time.[11] In addition, the Industrial Revolution – the first signs of which began to tell on British society around the turn of the century – went hand in hand with the separation of the public (male) and private (female) sphere and made economic independence difficult to attain. Women were expected to stay home in order to fulfil their duty as wife and mother, while their husbands earned money:

> the patient drudge, who fulfils her task, like a blind horse in a mill, is defrauded of her just reward; for the wages due to her are the caresses of her husband; and women who have so few resources in themselves, do not very patiently bear this privation of a natural right (*Norton Anthology* 238).

However, although Wollstonecraft does mention the economic dependency of her sex, she does not seem to question this gendered division of labour in se; nor, for example, men's role in the household. Instead, the main message that Wollstonecraft addresses in "AVROW" is her belief that "all human beings are equal in their fundamental capacity to reason" (Poovey 70). It is not women's nature but rather the image that is drawn of them that causes them to not fully cultivate their rational selves. In her work, the author argues that reason is not merely in the nature of men but that it is socialisation that shaped this apparent truth: "if men were confined to the same cages women find themselves locked in, they would develop the same characters" (Quoted in Whithaeckx). According to Wollstonecraft, the solution to the problem of propriety and the general view of and on women lies in a reconsideration of the educational system. Women's education, which was limited to the teachings of what it meant to be a "proper woman", did not encourage a state of mind necessary to contribute to society. She is convinced that this is the outcome of "a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers" (*Norton Anthology* 213-214). Wollstonecraft pleads for an educational system that is focussed on cultivating that "capacity to reason" (Poovey 70) not only because it would make women better contributors to society, but also because

[11] This constitutes the marital power husbands had over their wives. For example, women were by law required to obey their husbands. Furthermore, they had no parental power or ownership over their own bodies.

it establishes them as possible contributors in the first place. It would earn them a citizenship that is on (a more) equal footing with the opposite sex. Mary Poovey sums up Wollstonecraft's arguments as follows:

> Only when women are considered—and consider themselves—human beings rather than sexual objects, only when their education develops rather than suppresses their reason, only when they are granted the legal equality they by nature deserve, will they be able to contribute to the overall improvement of humanity (Poovey 70).

However, it is important to acknowledge that Wollstonecraft does not want to fully do away with women's sensibility. To her, it is important that the relationship between reason and sensibility is a complementary one, where the existence of autonomy does not mean the exclusion of things such as motherhood, dependency or love. The author's plea for women's self-determination is not an either or story, but rather one where both abilities elevate each other.

Mary Wollstonecraft's "AVROW" very much reflects the discussions that were being held concerning women's position in society. Definitions of women in terms of "sexual difference" still prevailed at the end of the eighteenth century and would go on to occupy the social and political climate of the nineteenth century. Wollstonecraft questions the essentialist idea that men are active, rational and linked to culture, while women are passive, irrational and linked to nature, and argues that these characteristics merely arise from an ideology that perpetuates certain stereotypes. Not nature, but culture (e.g. language, literature, etc.) has dictated the position women have held. In this light, the French and American Revolution, which stood for freedom and acknowledged a rising individualism, promoted a false sense of equality. Both the American Declaration of Independence and the French motto "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" show the gendered nature of democracy. In her book *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French feminists and the rights of man*, Joan W. Scott writes, "maleness was equated with individuality, and femaleness with otherness in a fixed, hierarchical, and immobile position . . . The political individual was then taken to be both universal and male; the female was not an individual . . ." (Scott 8). It is exactly this "otherness" that Wollstonecraft argues against,

and by doing so, the author establishes the groundwork for the future feminist movement(s).

2.2 Percy Bysshe Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium"

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) is considered one of the greatest English poets of British Romanticism, alongside names such as John Keats and Lord Byron. Though he came from a conservative background, P.B. Shelley himself was radically progressive. While at Oxford, he and his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg collaborated on a pamphlet titled *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811), in which they claimed that "God's existence cannot be proved on empirical grounds" (*Norton Anthology* 749). P. B. Shelley was expelled, thus ending his time at university. In the summer of that same year, the poet went to London where he met his first wife, Harriet Westbrook. After moving around and travelling to Ireland to distribute his *Address to the Irish*, in which he argued for the political emancipation of Irish Catholics who were considered second-class citizens, they eventually returned to London in late 1812 on account of financial problems. Here, P.B. Shelley met William Godwin[12], a radical philosopher and writer as well as the father of Mary Shelley (née Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin) whom P. B. Shelley would marry in December 1816. However, seeing as he was previously married, in the nineteenth-century view on marriage and gender roles their commitment was considered scandalous. Godwin's philosophical anarchism left a considerable impact on P.B. Shelley's own views on politics. In his *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), for example, Godwin asserts that "history has seen gradual progress . . . as men and women have liberated themselves from their political chains and their subordination to the fraud and imposture of monarchical and aristocratic government and established religion" (Philp).[13] During his time in the metropolis, P.B. Shelley published his first notable poem, *Queen Mab* (1813), which attacks the institutions of marriage, religion and monarchy and argues for mankind to be liberated from such tyrannical social beliefs. It also "formulate[s] the first comprehensive statement of his radical social philosophy, and . . . was also his first real attempt to establish his voice among the poetic

[12] Though Shelley only met Godwin in late 1812, he was already corresponding with the philosopher before then.

[13] Still, it needs to be acknowledged that Percy Shelley's philosophy was not merely a copy of Godwin's.

and political discourses of the day" (Grimes). In 1818, Percy and Mary Shelley moved to Italy with their two children.[14] Unfortunately, both children died within nine months of having arrived in Italy, a consequence of the family's financial struggles and constant travelling. Their deaths left both parents in a state of despair. It is also in Italy that P.B. Shelley is said to have written his greatest works:

> Exile from England prompted him, one the one hand, to envision himself as an alien and outcast . . ., rejected by the human race to whose welfare he had dedicated his powers . . . on the other hand, to imagine and, to a lesser extent, initiate new kinds of intellectual alliances and forms of ethical and political community (*Norton Anthology* 750).

The fight for social justice would come to define his short but powerful literary career. During his stay in Florence in the autumn of 1819, the author finished one of his most known literary works, *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), a work about overcoming oppression without the means of revenge. Though the last years of P.B. Shelley's literary career were somewhat turbulent, they also unequivocally defined his oeuvre. His works showed an enormous influence of ancient philosophy, and Plato in particular. On July 8 1822, P.B. Shelley died suddenly after his boat got stuck in a storm on the Gulf of Spezia, causing his drowning.

Percy Shelley first read Plato's "Symposium" in 1817 but it was only until about a year later that he made an attempt at translating it. Whether or not it completely grasps Plato's original meaning seems to be at the centre of contemporary discussion, but one thing the majority of scholars agree on is that it constitutes an undeniable contribution to British Romanticism and the Platonic tradition. Plato's philosophical work revolves around a group of men who come together at a banquet to discuss the topic of love. However, Plato's understanding of love differed somewhat from early-nineteenth-century's views on it. The homoerotic sentiment that was attached to the notion of love in ancient Greece was something P.B. Shelley knew would be considered problematic. In an article titled "Shelley and Plato's Symposium: the Poet's Revenge" Stephanie Nelson writes, "He was deeply aware of the violent reaction that any attempt to publish such a

[14] Percy Shelley had six children, two with Harriet Westbrook (Ianthe and Charles) and four with Mary Shelley (unknown, Clara, William and Percy Florence). Only Ianthe and Percy Florence survived to adulthood.

work would cause" (Nelson 103). Because of the contested nature of the subject matter, it was difficult for the text to be published and only "by removing a number of sections" (Nelson 126) was Mary Shelley able to do so after Shelley's death. The full translation was not published until 1931. Still, while Percy Shelley knew he was treading on slippery ground, he thought it an important work to translate for several reasons. In a letter to Thomas Love Peacock, Shelley writes,

> I am proceeding to employ myself on a discourse, upon the subject of which the "Symposium" treats, considering the subject with reference to the difference of sentiments respecting it, existing between the Greeks and modern nations: a subject to be handled with that delicate caution which either I cannot or I will not practice in other matters, but which here I acknowledge to be necessary (Quoted in Gonda 337).

In this discourse, titled *Discourse on the Manners of the Ancient Greeks Relative to the Subject of Love*, which would accompany his translation, P.B. Shelley sought to explain Plato's importance as a writer as well as provide his contemporaries with a better understanding of Plato's "Symposium".

P.B. Shelley's dedication to Plato and his work is quite significant. Though literature of the Romantic era generally departed from the Classicist tradition, the author's interest in classical literature was considerable. Especially the second generation of romantic poets[15] showed a less outspoken detachment with the Classics, and they are commonly regarded as Hellenistic writers. P.B. Shelley himself, for example, was part of a group that called themselves "The Athenians", along with Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Thomas Love Peacock and Leigh Hunt. Their appreciation for Plato and all things Greek was immense. In a paper titled "Shelley and the 'Symposium' of Plato", James A. Notopoulos writes, "they passionately believed that Greek is the only remedy against the diseases and barbarities of the modern world" (Notopoulos 98). However, when it came to Plato, they were quite alone in their appreciation. The prevailing sentiments surrounding the philosopher had a negative tone to them. There were few translations of his works available; moreover, he was not on the curriculum at Oxford University.

[15] The second generation of romantic poets consisted chiefly of Percy Shelley, Lord Byron (1788-1824) and John Keats (1795-1821).

Precisely because of this, Percy Shelley found it of the greatest importance to reveal what people had been missing. In an unfinished preface to his translation, the poet writes, "Plato is eminently the greatest among Greek philosophers . . . Plato exhibits the rare union of close and subtle logic with the Pythian enthusiasm of poetry . . . His language is that of an immortal spirit, rather than a man" (P. B. Shelley, *On the Symposium*, sect. 2). Not only did Shelley want to inspire an interest in Plato; he also wanted to convey a message by translating Plato's "Symposium" in particular. This attaches a political connotation to his project, considering P.B. Shelley's views on love and the institution of marriage differed significantly from those of nineteenth century society.[16] Furthermore, this too displays a characteristic of the Romantic period and its literature; namely the tendency of a writer/poet to establish himself as a prophet of some sorts. Shelley wanted to bring to life a work that would not have been available to the majority of people were it not translated. To him, the act of translation was important because it became a gate to new worlds, a chance for readers to discover new cultures and alternative realities that would otherwise be left unexplored. In the last section of his *Defence*, he writes:

> Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world (P. B. Shelley sect. 49).

One example of Shelley's ability to convey Plato's message of love is how he construes the notion of love in English. In her article "Lodore and Fanny Derham's Story", Caroline Gonda remarks the difference in meaning between English and Greek when it comes to the word 'love'. In English 'love' has a quite straightforward meaning, while in Greek the same word can be expressed in several ways, "eros (erotic love, love as desire); philia (love as affection, regard or friendship); and paiderasteia (literally, boy-loving"; the love felt by an older man for a youth)" (Gonda 338). Especially the last term is problematic in Shelley's day and age and he was thus obligated to alter some segments. He does this by softening the dialogue's language, as Nelson demonstrates

[16] Though Shelley married twice, he considered marriage a repressive social institution.

multiple times in her article. One example that shows his approach is the following fragment:

> And someone might recognize even **in paiderastia itself** those incited by this love; for they do not love [them when they are still] boys, but only when they already begin to have intelligence; **this is when they grow near to having a beard** . . . (Nelson 112).[17]

In Shelley's translation this becomes:

> And it is easy to distinguish those who especially exist under the influence of this power, **by their choosing in early youth** as the objects of their love those in whom the intellectual facilities have begun to develop: in preference to mere youths . . . (Nelson 112).

What becomes clear from Nelson's example is that any direct relations to homoerotic sentiments are either completely left out or replaced by ambiguous phrasing. As chapter four will examine, Shelley gives one of her characters (Fanny Derham) access to Plato in Greek; consequently, Fanny has the means to interpret Plato's original meaning. In addition, by leaving out certain details or replacing them, P. B. Shelley also "de-emphasizes the physical" (Nelson 112). Instead, he attaches a transcendence to the notion of love. Where Plato's focus had been on the interplay between body and soul, Shelley seems to mainly, if not solely, focus on the soul. This spirituality that is very much present in Shelley's translation can be considered another characteristic of Romanticism. Love is part of and connected to a higher force. The fact that Romantic literature sees a revival of religiosity is interesting, considering the social and political field of early nineteenth century. The Revolutions that took place in the second half of the eighteenth century carried with them a more secular worldview that slowly but surely pushed religion to the background. However, perhaps more importantly, the aftermath of these events also generated a conservative backlash in Britain:

---

[17] This is a literal translation from Greek done by Nelson herself.

> During the decades following 1789, England was in a constant state of crisis. The French Revolution posed a serious ideological (and military) threat to the traditional religious and political centers of British society, and the increasingly frequent and sometimes violent eruptions of working-class un-rest . . . were a sign that England was swerving perilously close to widespread social collapse. One of the government's responses to these threats was to try to stifle any publications that might encourage the "lower orders" of society to doubt the wisdom and authority of religious and political institutions (Grimes).

Laws were implemented to aid the government’s repression and authors’ could be prosecuted if anything were that questioned moral authority to be published. Shelley’s cautiousness with Plato’s “Symposium” as well as, for example, his decision not to publish *Queen Mab* show his awareness of a traditional British society that did everything in its power to keep control over established principles.

Percy Shelley’s translation of Plato’s “Symposium” clearly shows the influence of a Romantic writer. Furthermore, not only does it display certain characteristics of Romanticism, it also shows the importance of Shelley’s translation in reference to the Platonic tradition. However, it does need to be acknowledged that Percy Shelley’s translation of Plato’s “Symposium” was written in 1818, which is still very much within the scope of Romantic literature, whereas Mary Shelley’s *Lodore* was published in 1835. Her work, along with other works around that period, already shows the transition towards Victorian literature and its main characteristics.

Both Mary Wollstonecraft’s “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman” (1792) and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s translation of Plato’s “Symposium” give us a look into the workings of nineteenth century Britain and its construction of social matters. What makes both these works important in light of the alternative reading of Mary Shelley’s *Lodore* can be broken down into two reasons: the content of these texts and Mary Shelley’s affiliation with both authors.

In the eyes of the Feminist movement, Mary Wollstonecraft’s “AVROW” (1792) is considered a ground breaking work. Not only does it set out the subordinate position women have held in society; it also actively criticises the “sexual difference”-argument behind this subordination and argues for a more active role of women in society.

Wollstonecraft rejects the patriarchal notion that women do not have the capacity to reason and instead identifies this merely as a result of socialisation. She thus advocates for women's right to an education that would cultivate this capacity. As I have already mentioned in the introductory chapter, Wollstonecraft was Mary Shelley's mother. Though she died only a few days after Shelley's birth, Wollstonecraft's – and Godwin's – ideas were instilled in Shelley through her education and the people she was surrounded by. In addition, Shelley read several of her mother's texts throughout her childhood, including "AVROW". Thus, Mary Shelley was at least partly influenced by her mother's work, and in extension her father's work. Furthermore, in light of Shelley's earlier works such as *Frankenstein* (1818) in which her critique of certain social matters – such as the idea that social behaviour is often culturally influenced – is more on the forefront, I argue that the presence of this influence in Shelley's later works, and in this specific case *Lodore,* cannot be underestimated.

Percy Bysshe Shelley's choice to translate Plato's "Symposium" during a time of overwhelming social and political upheaval in reaction to the Revolutions showcases the author's adherence to his beliefs. However, the carefulness with which he conveys the subject matter also shows the author's awareness of the difficulties inherent in these ideas. Since Plato's particular views on love exhibited in the work contested nineteenth-century Britain's idea of love, P. B. Shelley's translation was met with significant criticism. Not only the blatant homoerotic sentiment attached to the notion of love, but also the general view on Plato make P. B. Shelley's translation at least noteworthy when contemplating the period. Moreover, the author's translation also reveals something about Mary Shelley. The subtlety with which P.B. Shelley brings across his – and Plato's – message is something that also seems to be of similar significance to Mary Shelley's writing and especially her later works such as *Lodore*. Both authors are aware of the consequences of too blatantly establishing one's more 'liberal' views in a society that turned towards the assurance of the established order; this is showcased by the carefulness and subtlety in P.B. Shelley's translation, Shelley's editing of the translation and also, as the next two chapters will explicate further, *Lodore*. Often considered a step back from her socio-political criticism, *Lodore* demonstrates Mary Shelley's ability to use the conservative ideology of Victorian society to subtly transmit her critique of that same ideology. Furthermore, Mary Shelley's decision to edit her husband's work and the struggles she faced while doing so not only shed a light on the precariousness with

which certain subject matters had to be handled, they also demonstrate how she negotiated her position as a woman (writer) in the male-dominated field of literature. In addition, since there are several important references to Plato – and other authors from Antiquity – in *Lodore,* this is another argument for Shelley's social criticism when examining the character of Fanny Derham.

In the two subsequent chapters, I will consider aspects vital to both a traditional and an alternative feminist reading of Mary Shelley's novel and offer a basis for a critical view of *Lodore* as a work that is part of a literary history of social criticism, albeit perhaps not very straightforwardly or even successfully so.

3. *LODORE* AS A SILVER-FORK NOVEL

As the two previous chapters have established, the period in which Mary Shelley lived and wrote *Lodore* came with its own struggles and obstacles. Victorian culture and morality showcased Britain's return to a rather conservative outlook as a response to the socio-political upheaval that occurred at the turn of the century. A division of spheres slowly but surely came to define one's position in society; where men occupied the public sphere, women's place was in the home. Banished to the privacy of their own house, their voice became subdued. Women were taught a "proper" way of behaviour that entailed their devotion and submission, until ultimately they were seen merely in relation to their husbands and children. Victorian culture as well as its literature demonstrated a growing cult of domesticity that perpetuated the idea of women as devoted wives and mothers. One genre that became popular during the 1820s and 1830s and characterises the period's morality perfectly was that of the silver-fork. This chapter will analyse Mary Shelley's *Lodore* as an example of a silver-fork novel as a basis for chapter four, in which I will argue that Mary Shelley does not blindly adhere to the principles set out in these types of novels but rather uses this genre and medium to criticise women's position in British society of that period.

The silver-fork novel in many ways acted as an instruction manual to a growing middle-class seeking their place in society. Its rather sudden popularity coincides with what happened on a socio-political level. The rise of the middle-class, which was partly caused by "the rapid increase in wealth generated by the Industrial Revolution" (Langland 124), the Reform Bill of 1832 that brought about a political shift and the growing literacy of the population all influenced the genre's success. In light of class mobility and the shift in political landscape, social status came to be associated more and more with social etiquette. The term "silver-fork" was coined by writer William Hazlitt in an essay in which he criticised fellow writer Theodore Hook for his "depoliticised obsession" (Vargo 426) with the elite:

> Provided a few select persons eat fish with silver forks, he considers it a circumstance of no consequence if a whole country starves; but these privileged persons are not surely thinking all the time . . . of that which Mr. Theodore Hook

> has never forgotten since he first witnessed, viz. that they eat their fish with a silver-fork (Quoted in Vargo 426).

Through its handful of characters, this type of novel displays the appropriate ways to navigate oneself through upper class British society: "The novels were handbooks to the language of the beau monde, to the etiquette of chaperonage, to permissible and impermissible flirtations, . . . and they offered the middle class the fascination of voyeurism into upper-class life" (Quoted in Vargo 426). Two main subgenres can be discerned in the silver-fork genre. On the one hand, there is 'the dandy novel'; a novel with a male protagonist whose journey through life ultimately leaves him with a matured sense of self and often an awareness of his superior position in society. In many ways, the journey contains similarities to that of the Bildungsroman and its protagonist to that of the Byronic Hero. However, as the term "dandy" in this type of silver-fork novel reveals, egocentrism and vanity are central to the character's perception of himself; one example of this subcategory is Benjamin Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* (1826). On the other hand, the genre of the silver-fork can also be subcategorised into the 'novel of society'. Catherine Gore, whom Mary Shelley was well acquainted with, was among the best known writers of these novels of society. In contrast to the dandy novel, this type of novel narrates the interdependent lives of several characters, which in turn emphasises the strength of community. Still, a more central female heroine can be present in such stories. April Kendra briefly explains:

> The Dandy novel may well be considered a masculine fashionable novel, not because of the gender of the author or protagonist (although both are usually men), but because the text values the individual, independence, physical strength and conflict. . . . As we might expect, the feminine fashionable novel places greater value on community, family, cooperation and patience than on individual success in finance, politics, or fashion; in fact, the society novel argues that such success often requires a sacrifice of domestic affections which will become the source of regret (Kendra 28).

Even though Mary Shelley's *Lodore* does seem to incorporate a storyline that reminds the reader of the Bildungsroman-style, it can undoubtedly be placed in the tradition of

the society novel, seeing as its female protagonist Ethel places considerable importance on ideas of domesticity and companionship. While different with respect to their content, these types of novels nonetheless comprise of the same few ingredients. Firstly, there seem to be only a few meaningful characters present throughout the story, which provides the reader with a clear overview of these characters' individual journey and place in society. Secondly, silver-fork novels often alternate between or involve two locations, namely the countryside and the city. Thirdly, certain topoi frequently return in this genre. The notion of legacy, marriage, hardship, strained relationships and reconciliation of some sort, as well as a seemingly mandatory duelling scene, all seem to be integral to the genre. Because of *Lodore*'s connection with the society novel rather than with the dandy novel, this paper will solely focus on the former, which reflects above all society's attachment to domestic ideology and its view of ideal femininity.

3.1 Domestic ideology and "The Angel in the House"

Mary Shelley's *Lodore* makes use of the main ingredients of a silver-fork novel. Not only does it include a duelling scene at the end of the first volume work, which acts as a sort of albatross to kick-start the protagonist's journey through life, the novel's many allusions to the importance of inheritance and property as well as the presence of difficult relationships make for enough arguments to consider *Lodore* as an example of this genre. However, what makes Shelley's novel all the more intriguing and worth examining is its portrayal of social values connected to the cult of domesticity and femininity that is central to this genre as well.

Since the Industrial Revolution brought with it a gendered division of the private and the public sphere, women were increasingly confined to a domestic setting. Here, they undertook the household-related tasks and took care of the children, while their husbands went of to work. Because of a division of labour, a new definition of womanhood developed.[18] More and more, women's domesticity influenced the ideal of how a woman ought to behave. As Mary Wollstonecraft's "AVROW" indicates, the education of propriety taught the female sex to construct their sense of self through

[18] It is important to acknowledge that aspects such as race and class also influenced the picture of this ideal womanhood. Not only did the ideal woman embody certain characteristics, she was also considered to be white and bourgeois.

their relationships with others. In addition, women were the legal property of men and had little to no economic independence, thus stripping them of any autonomy and leaving them to be the dutiful Other. This image of the passive, dependent woman is an important characteristic of most women depicted in Shelley's novel, but it is especially Ethel, the protagonist, who embodies this image: "Nothing with her centred in self; she was always ready to give her soul away: to please her father was the unsleeping law of all her actions . . ." (*Lodore* 63). Throughout the first volume, it becomes apparent that Ethel's father thoroughly moulds his daughter into the ideal woman. Her education fully relies on her future duties as a wife and mother, rather than on cultivating an active and rational sense of self; a point of view that Mary Shelley's mother criticised greatly:

> It was Fitzhenry's [Lord Lodore] wish to educate his daughter to all perfection of which the feminine character is susceptible. . . . He resolved to make her all that woman can be of generous, soft, and devoted; to purge away every alloy of vanity and petty passion – to fill her with honour and yet to mould her to the sweetest gentleness: to cultivate her tastes and enlarge her mind, yet so to controul [*sic*] her acquirements, as to render her ever pliant to his will. . . . an enthusiastic being, who could give her life away for the sake of another . . . . He satisfied himself that his daughter would be the embodied ideal of all that is adorable and estimable in her sex (*Lodore* 65).

As the story unfolds, Lord Lodore succeeds in his intention to educate Ethel in society's image of ideal femininity. As a result, the reader is met with a symbol of propriety, which serves as the standard for every other female character in the novel. Shelley's many comparisons of Ethel to William Shakespeare's Miranda (*The Tempest*) – seen as a perfect example of the domestic woman – showcase this. Ethel has become a proper woman; so much so that when Lord Lodore eventually dies in a duel, she is left without a dominant male figure in her life and feels herself lost and without purpose, "He propped her entire world; the foundations must moulder and crumble without him – and he was gone – where then was she?" (*Lodore* 166). Here, it becomes apparent that Lord Lodore's actions have had lasting effects. In his article "Angelic Realism: Domestic idealization in Mary Shelley's *Lodore*", Nicholas M. Williams compares Lord Lodore's education of Ethel to the creation of Victor Frankenstein's monster. Though the outcome

of both "creations" and their journey might differ greatly, they are similar in the way they "tak[e] shape beneath a male hand . . . in a generative scene that stresses isolation and the all-in-all influence of the father" (Williams 402). Having grown up in Illinois with no one but her father by her side, Ethel was shaped to become a man's definition of a proper woman. Consequently, when Ethel is left by herself after Lord Lodore's death, she is simultaneously the most independent and the most miserable she has ever been or will be. However, this "miserable independence" remains brief as her father's second hand in the duel, Edward Villiers, takes up the position of dominant male character in her life soon after. Though she seems to regard him solely as "a fond, elder brother" (*Lodore* 182) in the early stages of their affiliation, Ethel eventually realises her dependency on him goes deeper than mere fraternal love when she learns of his apparent future marriage to someone else. When they ultimately marry, Lord Lodore's education has successfully sculpted her into a devoted wife:

> The first and only wish of her heart was to conduce his happiness. . . . "The aim of my heart and its only real joy," she said, "is to make your existence happier than it would have been without me. . . . and that through me, I have fulfilled the purpose of my destiny. Deprived of the opportunity to accomplish this, I am bereft of that for which I breathe (*Lodore* 288).

In the nineteenth-century ideology of domesticity, the proper Victorian woman that Ethel embodies came to be assigned the label of "angel in the house", a term that derived from Coventry Patmore's narrative poem of the same name. Patmore's poem was written between 1854 and 1862 and consists of two books each divided into twelve cantos. Through the eyes of Felix Vaughan, Patmore narrates the story of courtship and marriage between Vaughan and his wife. Though not very well known nowadays, the poem has served as an important component to the conversation about gender and femininity in nineteenth-century Victorian society. Throughout the poem, the morality of the Victorian era with regard to the role of men and women is displayed closely. The woman as a domestic angel is central to the narrator's view of his beloved:

> (…) a woman deck'd
>   With saintly honours, chaste and good,

Whose thoughts celestial things affect,
    Whose eyes express her heavenly mood!
Those lesser vaunts are dimm'd or lost
    Which plume her name or paint her lip,
Extinct in the deep-glowing boast
    Of her angelic fellowship (Patmore, book 2, canto 4.2, 134).

Though direct references to the divine, with words such as "celestial" or "angelic", are not frequently used throughout the poem, it "herald[s] a change of direction in representation of the domestic sphere, especially in terms of creating a pivotal role for the wife/ homemaker" (Hartnell 374). It needs to be acknowledged that Mary Shelley's novel was written in 1835 and she was thus clearly not aware of the term and its specific use. Still, considering Shelley's use of angelic/celestial imagery it is almost as if she's foreseeing the connection. Mary Shelley's use of the imagery of this Patmorian domestic angel is not only present in Ethel's behaviour, Shelley's language when describing her character's physical appearance also conveys this religious imagery. Furthermore, it is much more direct than in Patmore's poem. For example, whenever the narrator refers to Ethel, she is represented as an almost godlike creature, too beautiful and otherworldly to grasp with descriptions such as "celestial beauty of her nature" (*Lodore* 65) and "angelic perfection" (*Lodore* 66). This is also the case with another prominent character in Shelley's novel, namely Ethel's mother Cornelia, also known as Lady Lodore. However, in contrast to the ever-divine domestic angel that is Ethel, Lady Lodore's position seems to shift as the story evolves. In the beginning of the story, when Lord Lodore first meets his future wife, she is described as something so close to perfection she is almost unimaginable: "There was something of fiction in the way in which the appearance of the lady was recorded. An angel bright with celestial hues, breathing heaven, and spreading a halo of calm and light around, as it winged swift way amidst the dusky children of earth" (*Lodore* 52). Nonetheless, as the storyline progresses and an important decision needs to be made regarding the couple's departure to America, Lady Lodore's answer leaves her fallen from grace. Because of her decision to stay behind, she goes against the wishes of her husband and consequently abandons her role as devoted

wife.[19] This brings about a shift in language and tone as well. Lady Lodore becomes a "semi-gorgon, hid behind a deceptive mask – a Medea" (*Lodore* 273) in the eyes of many and her lack of "devotion, attention, love" (*Lodore* 103) towards her husband is recognised as the consequence of a bad education:

> She had been capable of the most admirable self-sacrifice, had she been taught the right shrine at which to devote herself; but her mind was narrowed by the mode of her bringing up, and her loftiest ideas were centred in worldly advantages the most worthless and pitiable (*Lodore* 135).

Here, Mary Shelley contradicts the view Mary Wollstonecraft occupied concerning women's education and adopts the general outlook of early-nineteenth society. Lady Lodore's improper education has left her obstinate and prideful, characteristics that do not befit a proper woman, and she thus needs to suffer the consequences: "She felt that she was deteriorated from the angelic being she had seemed when she first appeared as Lodore's bride" (*Lodore* 358). However, near the end of the novel, Lady Lodore realises that her pride has left her isolated and unhappy and her status as proper woman is eventually returned to her when she commits the ultimate act of self-sacrifice by giving her fortune to a poverty-stricken Ethel; an act that shows the strength of motherhood, "The scheme which she had planned, and was now proceeding to execute, was unbounded in generosity and self-sacrifice" (*Lodore* 378). Lady Lodore's journey and the relationship that it displays between a mother and her child undeniably becomes the heart of the story. Still, though Lady Lodore largely fits into the ideology of domesticity and serves as an example to point out the dangers of acting in an inappropriate manner, she does not fully conform to the image of the "angel in the house". The same goes for Ethel. As I will further analyse in chapter four, Mary Shelley draws on Lady Lodore and Ethel's characteristics to subtly communicate her social criticism.

---

[19] Ultimately she also abandons her role as mother when Lord Lodore decides to take Ethel with him to America.

3.2 Female writers and female readership

Taking into consideration her earlier novels and the circle of people she found herself in, Mary Shelley's choice to publish a novel like *Lodore*, which falls within the scope of the silver-fork genre, could be acknowledged as a quite peculiar move on her part. Shelley's decision is nowadays often regarded as a step back from her earlier socio-political criticism and endeavours. Nicholas Williams writes: "The novel has been seen as less daring politically than its predecessors and, as such, representative of Shelley's retreat into the safety of propriety in the face of social and financial pressure" (Williams 397). In *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, Mary Poovey articulates the notion of the proper woman and examines Shelley's later works as the culmination of the author's struggle to navigate through a Victorian Britain that idealised the principles of feminine propriety precisely by conforming to them:

> In [the] late novels Shelley rigorously compartmentalizes her "self" into a private, domestic Mary and a public author-persona, and the characters who represent the former in the productions of the latter serve primarily to revise the real Mary Shelley's past inadequacies and indiscretions so as to make her conform, in every sense, to the ideal of feminine propriety (Poovey 117).

Taking into account the societal pressures placed on women, Shelley's choice could be a plausible one. Furthermore, the concept of the woman writer and the potential need for financial assistance further supports the analysis of *Lodore* as a silver-fork novel. That is to say, Shelley's novel is consistent with what was considered "popular" in literature during that period, which would automatically generate enough money to make a precarious living from writing. Moreover, it also perfectly showcases the development of women's position as a professional writer and that of the genre of the novel that initially started in the literary field of eighteenth-century Britain.

As I have already mentioned, the division of the public and private sphere took up a central position in Victorian society. Women were excluded from public space and consequently also from most of the possibilities of earning money. However, as literacy increased and literature became available to the masses, writing became a way to break through the privacy of one's home and into the public sphere. Furthermore, writing also

came to function as “one of the ways in which women negotiated this seemingly rigid barrier” (Shattock 3) between the private and public sphere. Still, even in writing, women did not have the freedom to pursue just about anything. Though the evolution in the literary market from aristocratic patronage to a more open market facilitated women’s participation in it, this evolution simultaneously came to associate only certain kinds of writing as appropriate for the female writer, such as that of the conduct book, the diary and the letter. However, it was especially through the genre of the novel that women were able to somewhat precariously earn their place as a writer in a male-dominated profession. By all means, Mary Shelley had already undeniably established herself as a professional writer at the time of writing *Lodore* and was accordingly less “obliged” to follow the unwritten rules of women’s writing that many beginning writers might have followed to acquire success in the literary field. Nevertheless, the popularity and content of these types of writing could in many ways (e.g. financially, socially) benefit Shelley. Mary Poovey examines Shelley’s retreat into the world of feminine propriety as “enable[ing] her to win social approval” (Poovey 170) and rid herself of the “unladylike aggression” (Poovey 159) that overshadowed her earlier work.

Associated primarily with women in early nineteenth century, the novel not only became a medium that “offered women a sense of community” (Wynne 34), but also served to assign them certain authority within the confines of the domestic space; small and restrictive as it were, women claimed it as their territory:

> The redefinition of womanhood included a reappraisal of women’s proper authority, and women were now seen as having a legitimate authority within the private sphere: including the domestic life, emotions, romance and the young girl’s moral welfare. When that private sphere became the central concern of a literary genre, woman’s authority extended to that too (Spencer 21).

However, this also shows that, even when having entered the public space, women writers had to carefully negotiate their place in it. While seemingly having attained the label of professional writer, women were restricted in their occupancy of the public sphere in relation to their male colleagues. They were denied the opportunities and possibilities that male writers did have, such as give readings or become members of societies and clubs (Shattock 9). Consequently, because they

remained out of the limelight, few people knew the woman behind the book and fascination to reveal the private persona grew immensely during the nineteenth century. Hence, the life and works of Victorian women often became so closely intertwined that they were one and the same thing. Moreover, because they were confined in their literary means, "the charge that they could only write of what they knew, and that what they knew best was themselves, was made regularly by reviewers" (Shattock 8). Thus, many readers and critics alike came to scrutinise the biographical references in women's writing more than anything else. To this day, the same can be said of Mary Shelley's novel *Lodore*. Scholars have examined the novel mainly in terms of what it could communicate about the author's life and her relationship with Percy Bysshe Shelley. An 1886 statement from Irish poet and critic Edward Dowden illustrates the perspective that many twentieth-century critics have taken in relation to *Lodore*:

> In it [*Lodore*] . . . may be found an almost literal transcript from her life and that of [P.B.] Shelley during the weeks of distress and separation in London, which followed soon after their return from the Continent in 1814. In it may be found in transmuted form, the story of Emilia Viviani as well as a version of the story [P.B.] Shelley's marriage with Harriet Westbrook, and his parting from her (Quoted in *Lodore* 20).

While reading Shelley's novel, the reader is certainly able to connect various passages or characters in the novel to the author's personal life and relationships. Ethel's and Edward Villiers' financial struggles and the latter's encounter with bailiffs, for example, reminds one of Mary and Percy Shelley's own problems in the winter of 1814. Some excerpts of the novel, such as: "the waiter came in, and informed them, that his mistress declined serving their dinner, till her bill off the morning was paid . . ." (*Lodore* 342), even directly display real-life events, as Mary Shelley's journal reads on November 1st 1814: "People want their money; won't send up dinner, and we are all very hungry" (Quoted in Marshall 96). Furthermore, certain figure's characteristics echo those of people in the author's life. Lady Lodore, for example, seemingly functions as a partial reflection of Harriet Westbrook, P.B. Shelley's first wife; P.B. himself, then, is portrayed in both Lord Lodore and Mr Derham, according to Richard Holmes (*Lodore* 25).

Overall, Mary Shelley's *Lodore* does exhibit elements that can be tied to the silver-fork genre. The subject matter of the novel along with the allusion to the ideology of domesticity and the role of women as "angels in the house" serve as arguments to link *Lodore* to the genre. Ethel fully embodies the image of the "ductile and dependent" (*Lodore* 62) wife. Furthermore, Shelley also communicates the dangers of improper behaviour through the character of Lady Lodore, among others. In addition to the ideology of domesticity, *Lodore* also contains formal features that are typical of the silver-fork genre, such as the alternation of locations. In addition, the notion of the woman writer and readership in Victorian Britain as well as the financial benefits that could come from writing in such genre could contribute to the reading of *Lodore* as a silver-fork novel. However, unlike the more straightforward silver-fork novels, Shelley's novel does not seem to concern itself utterly with issues "such as the ways to negotiate rank position, class aspiration, and the anxieties characteristic of fashionable life during the season in London" (Sadoff 107). Moreover, to analyse *Lodore* merely as a novel in tune with what nineteenth-century readers expected and what it could disclose about Mary Shelley's personal life is to strip her not only of any autonomy but also of any ability to convey socio-political opinions in a manner fitted to her own authorship; which, as chapter four will demonstrate, is something she naturally possessed and expressed in *Lodore*. As the next chapter examines, some of the arguments used to link Shelley's novel to the genre of the silver-fork also serve as an argument for the author's criticism of the genre and the general depiction of women as domestic angels. Lastly, there is one element in Mary Shelley's *Lodore* that entirely calls into question a clear-cut silver-fork reading of the novel. The character of Fanny Derham, the daughter of Lord Lodore's childhood friend, does not fit into the genre and could even be considered the opposite of Victorian society's depiction of the proper woman.

4. ALTERNATIVE READING OF LODORE (FEMINIST/FEMININE PERSPECTIVE)

The previous chapter demonstrated that there is clear argumentation to consider Mary Shelley's *Lodore* as part of the literary genre of the silver-fork that was in vogue at the time the novel's publication. However, as I have previously mentioned, the apparent straightforwardness of it all is what needs to be called into question. To understand *Lodore* merely as a novel of its time is to not take into consideration the novel's strong socio-political character as well as Shelley's commitment to an ideology in line with that of her parents and husband and her ability to express this ideology and the critique that comes with it by means of a genre that perpetuated the dominant ideology of Victorian society. In this chapter, I argue that Shelley camouflages her social criticism through the form of the silver-fork novel so as to sidestep the obstacles that come along with voicing these ideas in a rather conservative Victorian Britain. Several elements in *Lodore* contribute to this consideration. Both Mary Wollstonecraft's "AVROW" and P. B. Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium" aid the alternative reading of *Lodore* not only through what they say about early-nineteenth British society and the authors' own negotiation of the socio-political climate, but also through the way their content provides a look into Mary Shelley's own critique present in her novel. Furthermore, it is also important to investigate Shelley's success in actively criticising Victorian gender roles and women's position in society. However, in order to examine *Lodore* as a part of the history of literary feminism and thus contemplate its underlying feminist perspective, it is necessary to first and foremost introduce the concept of feminist literary criticism and its impact on the study of women writers.

4.1 Feminist literary criticism[20]

Like many fields of study, literary criticism has commonly ignored the female voice in literature. Instead, the male perspective has been deemed the "universal" perspective. Consequently, this view of a male universality in Western literature has resulted in – and

[20] See *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* chapter 1 (Greene and Kahn) and chapter 2 (Kaplan); and D'hoker's classes on "Feminist Literary Criticism" and "Feminist Critique" for the general information on feminist literary criticism provided in this subchapter.

at the same time created – an ideology that identifies women as the inferior sex.[21] In other words, literary discourse influences the way in which we view the world not only because it describes said world but also because by describing it, it automatically participates in prescribing certain values, morals, etc.; in this case, the woman through patriarchal eyes. What feminist literary criticism does, then, is challenge this established universal male perspective and deconstruct it. It was especially during the 1970s and 1980s that the field of feminist literary criticism started to fully develop itself. Taking into account the growing attention to women's position in society as well as the sex-gender debate that developed into one of the focal points of the Second Wave Feminist Movement, critics increasingly came to realise that literature and its history was also not a level playing field. Through primarily a movement of activists and readers, feminist literary criticism slowly but surely started to flourish into an academic discipline. Especially concerned with the notion of gender, this discipline criticises an overtly male canon that reinforces patriarchal gender stereotypes. Not only does this type of criticism call into question the apparent inequality of the sexes as a consequence of biological difference, it also seeks to determine the mechanisms that have prevented women from acquiring a prominent position in literary history. Furthermore, feminist literary criticism also strives to recover those works of women writers who have been forgotten, marginalised or misrepresented. Sydney J. Kaplan considers the focus on a female perspective important in uncovering the other side of certain socio-cultural issues:

> Studying groups of women writers within a particular time-frame and social class may actually lead to a redefinition of periods in literary history. The traditional parameters of a period may be shifted or its predominant preoccupations reassessed if it is studied through the perspective of women writers (Kaplan 48).

In her book *Romanticism & Gender*, for example, Anne K. Mellor questions our excessively male construction of British Romanticism (e.g. Byron, Keats, P.B. Shelley, etc.), and examines what a difference in focus might bring to our understanding of the literary period. What Mellor refers to as "feminine Romanticism" is a Romanticism that is more subjective and less radical than its male counterpart. This is visible in, for

[21]Furthermore, it is important to recognise the racial/ethnic-perspective in Western literary history as well. Not only is it predominantly male, it is also almost exclusively white. However, considering the focal theme of gender in my thesis, I will not examine this further.

instance, Mary Wollstonecraft's "AVROW", which displays "a commitment to an ethic of care" (Mellor 209) and "insist[s] on the equal value and rational capacities of women" (Mellor 210). Conceivably, this less radical consideration of Romanticism is something that Mary Shelley adhered to in her writing as well. *Lodore* might perhaps serve as an example of this.

As I have already mentioned, feminist literary criticism has three aims: it criticises, it recovers, and it analyses. This last aim tries to find an answer as to why women's writing has been neglected and is often broken down into three main components. Firstly, the production of a literary work has long served as an obstacle. Not only was there a certain image attached to the quintessential writer, which did not equate with that of a woman, such as public, creative, original and authoritative; there were also considerable material constraints. A lack of money and "a room of one's own", as Virginia Woolf would put it in her 1929 essay of the same name, made it difficult for women to publish literature. Furthermore, the prevailing ideological imagery of the woman as mother and wife, which especially, as the previous chapters have clarified, defined nineteenth-century Britain, caused them to be discouraged when they wanted to pursue a career in writing. In addition, women did not have access to university and were consequently also excluded from an environment that generated a great deal of literary opportunities. Secondly, apart from the production, the reception of literary works also complicated women's participation. Books written by women were – and are still – not only reviewed less often than those written by men; they were often labelled as "women's books" as opposed to just books. Furthermore, even when these books were reviewed, the favourability of the reviews oftentimes seemed to correlate with how the author distinguished herself. Many women have navigated themselves through this dominantly male field by publishing their work anonymously; something that Mary Shelley herself was also very aware of when first publishing *Frankenstein*. As chapter one briefly acknowledges, Shelley's first novel was published anonymously. Furthermore, P. B. Shelley wrote a preface to the work that caused many readers to believe he was the author. In addition, many of the leading nineteenth-century female writers, for that matter, used pseudonyms. The Brontë sisters, for example, originally published much of their writings under the names of Currer (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily) and Acton (Anne) Bell. Lastly, the literary tradition and the formation of the literary canon also shed a light on the privileges male writers, plots and perspectives have had.

In the introductory chapter of *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn write:

> Even when literature is potentially subversive, it has been made to function as part of a literary tradition that inscribes the dominant ideology and marginalizes women. . . . The critical tradition reinforces – even when literature does not – images of character and behaviour that encourage women to accept their subordination . . . Moreover, literary history has canonized, designated as 'great', certain texts which are claimed to embody 'universal human truths'; but such truths only appear so because of their congruence with the dominant ideology (Greene & Kahn 21-22).

As Greene and Kahn assert, the traditional argument that is often given with regards to the canon is that it is an accumulation of the best that a culture has to offer; it assumes universality. However, feminist literary criticism has argued against this by illustrating that the literary canon is nothing more than a social construct. Similar to the notion of gender and the image of the woman writer, the formation of the canon and the literary tradition has been influenced by social structures.

The nineteenth century is an intriguing era to analyse when disputing the concept of the "woman writer", particularly because it could be considered the first century in which "female authorship was no longer in some sense anomalous" (Gilbert & Gubar xi). In *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), a fundamental work in the field of feminist literary criticism, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar study not only the social position women writers of the nineteenth century found themselves in, but also explore the notion of feminine imagination. It is especially Gilbert and Gubar's chapter about the "anxiety of authorship" that is significant to an alternative feminist reading of Mary Shelley's *Lodore*. In this chapter, the authors' question what it "mean[s] to be a woman writer in a culture whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are . . . both overtly and covertly patriarchal" (Gilbert & Gubar 45-46) and describe the difference between the position of male and female writers and their negotiation of that position. They refer to Harold Bloom's theory of "anxiety of influence" and proceed to assess its truthfulness in relation to the woman writer. Though Bloom's notion, which pertains to the anxieties and achievements that come with writing a piece of literature, corresponds

with the creative process of a male writer, it does not seem to fit that of a woman writer. Instead, Gilbert and Gubar argue that the latter experiences an "anxiety of authorship". Where male writers are in constant confrontation with their literary predecessors and evaluate their literary strength and creativity by "invalidating [their] poetic father" (Gilbert and Gubar 47) – an analysis that is linked to Freud's concept of the Oedipal struggle – women writers do not engage in a similar battle on the grounds that they essentially do not have foremothers to challenge. Rather, women's predecessors are almost exclusively male and thus different. What this entails is that their writing process is influenced by a patriarchal literary tradition that defines women from a male point of view (e.g. the angel or the monster[22]) and consequently leaves them battling their own sense of self: "[the woman writer's] battle, is not against her (male) precursor's reading of the world but against his reading of *her*. In order to define herself as an author she must redefine the terms of her socialization" (Gilbert and Gubar 49). A writer is defined by their creativity, and a woman is on the opposite scale of creativity according to nineteenth-century social structures. Eventually, the woman writer is left with two equally debilitating options; she either embraces a female modesty incited by a patriarchal tradition, and thus writes about topics that are appropriate to her sex, or she commits to a model of male mimicry. The latter, however, is contradictory in itself, because the woman writer ultimately adheres to the patriarchal plots, perspectives and structures – and hence the patriarchal authority – that have created her anxiety in the first place. Gender and genre seem to be in constant conflict.

However, Gilbert and Gubar argue that there was a way for nineteenth-century women writers to overcome that "anxiety of authorship". By creating texts with double layers, women were able to break free from certain patriarchal constraints:

> Women from Jane Austen and Mary Shelley to Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson produced literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning. Thus these authors managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards (Gilbert and Gubar 73).

[22] This imagery corresponds greatly with the dominant ideology of women as passive, domestic angels and is linked with the "female diseases" (e.g. hysteria, schizophrenia) that were commonly associated with women who did not embody this ideal. See Gilbert & Gubar, pp. 53-59.

Gilbert and Gubar's assertion that women writers of the nineteenth century used a form of literary concealment corresponds with what I argue in this thesis. Mary Shelley's *Lodore* is decidedly part of a long list of works in a genre that was "appropriate" for women; nevertheless, she does not readily adhere to the social constraints of her sex. The remainder of this chapter will examine Shelley's underlying social criticism by analysing elements that support an alternative feminist reading of *Lodore*.

4.2 Between the lines: Ideal femininity in Mary Shelley's eyes

As the short analysis of Mary Wollstonecraft's "AVROW" and P.B Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium" has demonstrated, nineteenth-century British society saw a considerable backlash in conservatism in the wake of the French and American Revolutions. Several factors contributed to the persistent consideration of women as inferior beings. Not only did the rise of the middle class and the development of the Industrial Revolution help bring about a more strict division of spheres; Victorian society developed an ideology of propriety and domesticity that any and all women were bound to; those who dared stray from their path would be considered unwomanly and devious. Mary Shelley's *Lodore* showcases the depth of this ideology and the consequences faced with deviating from the system. Characters such as the devoted Ethel and the proud Cornelia reflect the social norms that impacted Victorian women's day-to-day lives. Nevertheless, when reading Shelley's novel, the reader is met with certain peculiarities. Though at times perhaps somewhat more difficult to uncover, the author's social criticism lurks between the lines. At least one element distinctly challenges a clear-cut silver-fork reading of *Lodore*, namely the character of Fanny Derham. Still, even in Ethel and Lady Lodore, too, Shelley seems to incite subversive characteristics.

4.2.1 Fanny Derham

Because of the small number of characters in *Lodore* it is not only easy for the reader to follow Ethel's journey into womanhood, for Shelley it also makes for a greater possibility

to provide the other characters with a complex personality of their own. In chapter three, I have examined both Ethel and Lady Lodore as encompassing features of the "angel in the house". One character that does not entirely fit into the ideology of the domestic angel, however, is Fanny Derham. Here, I argue that where Ethel reflects Victorian society's image of the ideal woman, Fanny reflects Shelley's resistance to this ideology. A more in-depth reading of the novel exposes Fanny's seemingly out-of-place presence as a consequence of her complexity as a character. Though to the contemporary eye she might seem to stand out as the most realist figure in a sea of caricatures, in a Victorian novel like *Lodore*, she remains somewhat of an elusive element. To disclose Fanny's subversive character, it is firstly important to examine the differences between her unconventional self and the "angel in the house" Ethel Fitzhenry. When the reader is introduced to Fanny and Ethel, Shelley describes both characters' personalities partly by means of referring to their education. As chapter three has already established, Ethel's education very much focuses on the dominant ideology of domesticity; "she had received, so to speak, a sexual education" (*Lodore* 321). Lord Lodore ultimately moulded his daughter into the ideal woman by leaving "her spirit ductile and dependent" (*Lodore* 62). Though Fanny embodies certain "womanly" characteristics, such as devotion and gentleness, her upbringing is not set on her developing into a devoted housewife and mother:

> Fanny nursed her father, watched over his health with the tenderness and indulgence of a mother; while he instructed her in the dead languages . . ., which seldom make[s] part of a girl's education. Fanny, to use her own singular language, loves philosophy, and pants after knowledge, and indulges in a thousand Platonic dreams" (*Lodore* 144).

From this fragment, it becomes apparent that Mary Shelley does not devalue characteristics that embody an "ethic of care", as Anne K. Mellor puts it. However, Shelley shows that firmness of mind is something that is of equal importance to exhibit; something, which renders her as capable as figures like Ethel. Where straightforward silver-fork novels often leave the impression that "an absolute dichotomy exists between the angelic protagonist and her monstrous foil" (quoted in Vargo 436),

Shelley's novel does not invalidate the rationalism and "independence of thought" (*Lodore* 145) demonstrated by Fanny.

Fanny's character reflects Shelley's own social-political ideas and those of her immediate environment. As the short fragment above displays, Mr Derham educated his daughter in both Greek and Latin; languages that only few women had access to in (early) nineteenth-century Britain. Fanny's knowledge of philosophers such as "Plato, and Cicero, and Epictetus" (*Lodore* 317) tells us a great deal. The topics she dedicates her time to are topics for and of men; for a woman to claim these as her own is a statement in itself. Moreover, Shelley's references to the dead languages and philosophers from the Antiquity period emphasise the connection with her husband's ideas and interests. Chapter two examined P.B. Shelley's particular affinity with classical literature and his understanding that his translation of Plato's "Symposium" served as a bridge between the modern period and that of ancient Greece. P. B. Shelley thought it important to translate the work despite the negativity surrounding both the philosopher and topic the work itself. Fanny's dedication to these philosophers' teachings and her "determin[ation] to be true to [her]self to the end" despite the predominant belief that she's "wast[ing] [her] life in vain regrets" (*Lodore* 316) mirrors P.B. Shelley's determination. Furthermore, it also reflects Shelley's own ordeals as an intellectual woman in British society of that period. As Wollstonecraft's "AVROW" critiqued, women were inferior to men in all aspects of life, serving as "a *sweeter* companion to man" (*Norton Anthology* 222) but never treated as an equal. The ideology of domesticity that dominated the nineteenth century magnified women's subordinate position even further and the ideas concerning women's behaviour were regulated by a patriarchal image of them as all that is dependable and sweet. Consequently, Fanny's independent disposition and intellectualism, which reflects that of Mary Shelley, could be considered rather "unwomanly". As Bennet says in a biographical reference about Shelley's possible authorship of *Frankenstein*, it would be recognised by "the dubious compliment that she had a 'masculine mind'" (Bennett). Shelley is very aware of the dominant societal belief that women are inferior and is not afraid to acknowledge it. On the contrary, the narrator articulates it rather straightforwardly:

> Such a woman as Fanny was more made to be loved by her own sex than by the opposite one. Superiority of intellect, joined to acquisitions beyond those usual

> even to men; (…) forms a kind of anomaly little in accord with masculine taste. Fanny could not be the rival of women, and, therefore, all her merits were appreciated by them. They love to look up to a superior being, to rest on a firmer support than their own minds can afford; and they are glad to find such in one of their own sex (…) (*Lodore* 317).

Shelley goes even further than acknowledging the mere fact; she critiques it as well. In the last few lines, Shelley alludes to a firmness of mind and the need for a female role model whom women can look up to. Fanny is that role model in the author's eyes, and P. B. Shelley's, Wollstonecraft's and Godwin's ideas shine through in this.

However, what this fragment also suggests is that Fanny's independent disposition has effectively desexualised her. Because of her learning, Fanny is no longer an object of desire for the opposite sex and thus no longer "a rival" for other women. Caroline Gonda examines the first sentence of this fragment, "Such a woman as Fanny was more made to be loved by her own sex than by the opposite one" (*Lodore* 317), and the open ending of *Lodore* as an argument for a possible queer reading of Fanny. Gonda does this by analysing Fanny's connection with ancient philosophy. As I have already stated above, Fanny knows Greek and, furthermore, she reads Plato. The analysis of P.B. Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium" demonstrates the difficulty with which the philosopher was received. Not only that, this particular work also gives us an insight as to how society dealt with the topic of homoeroticism; a slippery ground to tread on in nineteenth century Britain. The way P.B. Shelley construes his translation of the work shows his awareness of the controversy surrounding the topic. In addition, as editor of the "Symposium", Mary Shelley herself was also aware of the problematic nature "of translating and interpreting another, earlier culture's language of feeling" (Gonda 336). Her work as editor confronted her directly with the complexity of the notions of love and friendship in nineteenth century Britain. With Plato's "Symposium", the difficulty of translation lies in the differences between the English and Greek words for 'love'. Gonda argues that the notion of love in Greek is difficult to straightforwardly translate in English, "at least three important Greek terms are translated by the English word 'love': eros (erotic love, love as desire); philia (love as affection, regard or friendship); and paiderasteia (literally, boy-loving"; the love felt by an older man for a youth)" (Gonda 338). It was especially the last term that was most troublesome because of the

homoerotic sentiment. In P.B. Shelley's translation, any direct reference to homoerotic sentiments is either left out or replaced by ambiguous words. Thus, by giving Fanny direct access to Greek, Shelley gives her direct access to Plato and the views on love in Ancient Greece. Consequently, according to Gonda, Fanny could learn about the possibilities of same-sex relationships. However, because inclinations of same-sex love could not be articulated in Shelley's novel – or P.B. Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium" for that matter – Fanny's story cannot be told, "Fanny's life, the life without men, is in many ways heroic and admirable; but it is a life whose freedom the heterosexual narrative prefers to contemplate from a safe distance, a kind of lesbian 'wild zone' which cannot be fully imagined or fully articulated (Gonda 340-341).

Though a queer reading of Fanny is perhaps possible, I think Shelley's statement about "[being] more made to be loved by her own sex" (*Lodore* 317) pertains more to feelings of admiration than to feelings of same-sex desire. Fanny embodies a femininity that is admirable and encouraged. Her knowledge of subjects that are considered 'male' and 'public' do not fit into a patriarchal society that defines womanhood by all that is private and subordinate. However, while she is a force to be reckoned with, she does not lose her 'femininity' because of it. On the contrary, Fanny is both fiercely independent and extremely caring.[23] Her support for Ethel when the latter encounters financial difficulties displays her loyalty to those she cares about: "it was an unspeakable comfort to have one as intelligent and kind as Fanny, to communicate with, during Edward's absence" (*Lodore* 314). Fanny is an example of a woman whose education has cultivated her "capacity to reason" (Poovey 70), and it awakens an admiration in other women, including Ethel. In short, she embodies an ideology in line with that of Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft's "AVROW" criticises the dominant belief that women's inferiority lies in their nature. Instead, she argues that socialisation is what has created and what feeds their inferiority; women receive a sexual education that focuses on their duty as housewife and mother. Wollstonecraft argues that the solution exists in cultivating women's inherent capacity to reason so as to be able to contribute to society on an equal footing with the opposite sex. Contrary to Ethel, Fanny thus constitutes the perfect example of a successful education:

[23] I am aware of the paradoxical nature of my statement. Although I do believe 'femininity' is a social construct and consider the distinction between what is "masculine" and what is "feminine" not so black-and-white, I am examining this from a nineteenth-century perspective in which it was just that.

> The one [Lord Lodore] fashioned his offspring to be the wife of a frail human being, and instructed her to be yielding, and to make it her duty to devote herself to his happiness, and to obey his will. The other [Mr Derham] sought to guard his from all weakness, to make her complete in herself and render her independent and self-sufficing (*Lodore* 322).

Shelley's allusions to Wollstonecraft ideals are ever present in Fanny. Moreover, even Fanny's name might imply a connection with her mother. Not only did Shelley have a half-sister named Fanny Godwin (Imlay) – Wollstonecraft's daughter with Gilbert Imlay – but her mother also had a childhood friend named Fanny Blood with whom she had founded a girls' school. Wollstonecraft's friendship with Fanny Blood is said to have awakened her intellectual genius. In a biography on the proto-feminist's life, Elizabeth Robins Pennell writes, "This [their friendship] it was which first aroused her love of study and of independence . . . . Her love for Fanny Blood was the spark which kindled the latent fire of her genius" (Pennell 22)[24]. Wollstonecraft considered Fanny Blood an intelligent, independent spirit whose equal in intellectualism she aspired to be. In *Lodore*, Shelley gives Fanny Derham qualities that are in line with her mother's views on her friend. Fanny Godwin, then, was named after Wollstonecraft's closest friend.[25] Shelley's half-sister's place in the Godwin household became rather burdensome towards the end of her still very young life. Not only did she become a mediator between Mary Shelley and her father after the former eloped with P. B. Shelley; Fanny also "became increasingly one of household management and provid[ed] for her adoptive father on whose income the family depended" (Faubert). Still, William Godwin held her in high regard and her opinions were welcomed. It is reasonable to assume that Shelley's Fanny Derham might be her celebration of Fanny Blood and Fanny Godwin, who both died too young.

From the perspective of a silver-fork reading, Fanny Derham does not embody the ideal domestic "angel in the house" and thus does not fit into the story. However, a more in-depth reading reveals a second layer to *Lodore* in which not Ethel but Fanny constitutes

---

[24] Elizabeth Robins Pennell's *Mary Wollstonecraft* (1884) was one of the first major biographies about the author's life since William Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman'* (1798), on which she relied for her own work.

[25] Fanny was born Françoise, which was eventually changed to Frances and then shortened to Fanny in memory of Fanny Blood; See Faubert.

the heroine of Shelley's story. The question that arises, then, is whether or not the author succeeds in conveying that message. Here, a more in depth look at the ending of *Lodore* could shed some light on the matter. What is interesting is Shelley's decision to end her novel with Fanny. While this character was introduced only near the end of volume one and overall appeared but scarcely throughout the narrative, the author still dedicates the last lines of *Lodore* to her:

> One only remains to be mentioned: but it is not in a few tame lines that we can revert to the varied fate of Fanny Derham. . . . What the events are, that have already diversified her existence cannot now be recounted; and it would require the gift of prophecy to foretell the conclusion. In after times these may be told, and the life of Fanny Derham be presented as a useful lesson . . . (*Lodore* 448).

Shelley not only ends her novel with a reference to Fanny, but, contrary to the other characters, Fanny's storyline is left open-ended. Furthermore, Shelley refers to Fanny's possible future endeavours as something that "cannot now be recounted" (*Lodore* 448). This gives reason to believe that Shelley might have contemplated the difficulty that such a character poses in British Victorian society. Though Shelley considers Fanny a role model, she is a role model that is confined by the social rules of a society that has the means to undermine any woman who does not follow them. Still, the author hints at the value of a character such as Fanny and the possibility to eventually make her the heroine of her own story, albeit "in after times" (*Lodore* 448). With *Lodore*, she seems to lend the reader – and the future generation – a helping hand by providing them with the basis to ultimately tell Fanny's full story:

> Words have more power than anyone can guess; it is by words that the world's great fight, now in these civilized times, is carried on; I never hesitated to use them, when I fought a battle for the miserable and oppressed. People are so afraid to speak, it would seem as if half our fellow-creatures were born with deficient organs; like parrots they can repeat a lesson, but their voice fails them, when that alone is wanting to make the tyrant quail (*Lodore* 316).

4.2.2 Ethel Fitzhenry & Lady Lodore

Fanny is not the only way through which Mary Shelley conveys her socio-political critique on the Victorian ideology of domesticity and the subordinate position of women. Even in the seemingly perfect example of feminine propriety that is Ethel and the fallen angel that is Lady Lodore does Mary Shelley embed certain subversive qualities. Chapter three has already established Ethel's sweet and "womanly" disposition in that she is a devoted daughter to Lord Lodore and a devoted wife to Edward Villiers. However, Ethel is not completely stripped of any agency of her own. In her relationship with Villiers, for example, her faithful devotion towards her husband allows for some influence on him and his regard of her as a possible authoritative voice in their marriage. Though finances were a responsibility that befell the man, Ethel carefully enters the male domain in this novel by means of her position as a wife. When their financial situation is still in the early stages of complication, Ethel struggles to adhere to her husband's wishes. However, she does comply; if rather unwillingly: "They [Villiers' letters] were imperative with his wife – she obeyed; yet she did so, she told him, against her will and against her sense of right. She ought to be at his side to cheer him under his difficulties" (*Lodore* 287). Nevertheless, when the situation aggravates, Ethel persuades him to agree with her requests to help him the only way a woman in her position can:

> "Do not ask it of me, Edward . . . I cannot leave you." . . .
> "What can we do? What would you have me do?"
> "Any thing, so that we remain together. It is of so little consequence where we pass the next twenty-four hours, so that we are together. There are many hotels in town."
> "I must not venture to any of these; and then to take you in this miserable manner, without servants, or any thing to command attendance. But you shall have your own way; having deprived you of every other luxury, at least, you shall have your will; which, you know, compensates for everything with your obstinate sex (*Lodore* 334).

By being able to have Villiers utter the words "you shall have your own way . . . you shall have your will" (*Lodore* 334), she effectively uses her position as devoted wife to obtain

some authority in the marriage, small as it may be. Ethel questions certain decisions and voices her opinions on certain ways of thinking,: "'I yield to all you [Villiers] say, . . . yet this is strange morality. Are generosity, benevolence, and gratitude, to be exploded among us? Is justice, which orders that the rich give of his superfluity to the poor, to be banished from the world?'" (*Lodore* 337). Still, Ethel's behaviour could easily be confused for certain ignorance in the world's matters. Overall, there does seem to be a want in Ethel, but it never seems to manifest itself completely. Instead, Fanny serves as a sort of depository for Ethel's feminist character.[26] The relationship between Ethel and Fanny is particularly interesting for what it expresses about the concept of female friendships in the nineteenth century as well as about the way women negotiated their position in society. Sharon Marcus writes, "Female friendship reinforced gender roles and consolidated class status, but it also provided women with socially permissible opportunities to engage in behaviour commonly seen as the monopoly of men: competition, active choice, . . ." (Marcus 26). Though feminist studies tend to focus on the ambiguity of the term "friend" in Victorian society and the possible erotic attachment to it, I believe the friendship between Ethel and Fanny more so provides the former with a different perspective on matters and a necessary calmness, and the latter with a possibility to instil some knowledge of her own in Ethel:

> She could never forget herself while away from him, or find the slightest alleviation to her disquietude, except while conversing with Fanny Derham, or rather while drawing her out, and listening to her, and wondering at a mechanism of mind so different from her own" (*Lodore* 321)

When Fanny talks about how her father raised her to "never fear any thing but [her]self' (*Lodore* 316) and to speak her mind, Ethel is somewhat perplexed: ". . . her words moved Ethel strangely, and she looked on her with wonder as a superior being" (*Lodore* 316). However, Fanny is not the only one who contributes something to their friendship; Ethel teaches Fanny some values that are important to her own self, which Fanny acknowledges:

[26] Though, referring to it as a 'feminist' voice might be a bit too generous perhaps.

> I know my fate in this world, I [Fanny] am determined to be true to myself to the end. Yet I am not ungrateful to you, even while I declare, that I shall do my best to forget this brief interval, during which, I have no longer, like Demogorgon, lived alone in my own world, but become aware that there are ties of sympathy between me and my fellow-creatures, in whose existence I did not believe before (*Lodore* 332)

Aside from Ethel, Lady Lodore also exhibits certain subversive characteristics. Though her pride is considered the source of the improper behaviour that leaves her temporarily fallen from grace, Shelley attaches a "firmness of purpose" (*Lodore* 207) to Lady Lodore that, in the end, works in her favour. As chapter three has already established, Lady Lodore's decision not to accompany her husband to America left her "unwomanly" in society's eyes. As a domestic angel, a woman's duty is to her husband above all else: "'the simple question is, whether you [Lady Lodore] are prepared on a sudden to accompany me [Lord Lodore]? I would not ask this of your generosity, but that, married as we are, our destinies are linked, far beyond any power we possess to sunder them" (*Lodore* 115). However, at times Lady Lodore appears to question certain societal structures and standards. When Lord Lodore sends her a letter, once more pleading her to leave behind her mother and come to America with him and Ethel, the narrator exclaims: "was she to be dictated thus? And to follow, an obedient slave, the master that deigned to recall her to his presence, after he had . . . deserted her?" (*Lodore* 128). Lady Lodore does not feel she is being treated as an equal in marriage and feels herself deceived. The answer she sends him very nearly demands a sense of respect towards her:

> You well know that I cannot, and will not, desert my mother; but by calling on me for this dereliction of all duty and virtuous affection, you contrive to throw on me the odium of refusing to accompany you . . . I demand my child – restore her to me. It is cruelty beyond compare, to separate one so young from maternal tenderness and fosterage. . . . You alone must reign, be feared, be thought of; all others are to be sacrificed, living victims, at the shrine of your self-love. What have you done to merit so much devotion? (*Lodore* 131)

This might relate to Mary Shelley's broader critique on gender relations in Victorian society. From time to time, Lady Lodore appears to contemplate her place as a woman in society. Even after she has decided to give Ethel most of her fortune, and is thus restored in her womanhood according to Victorian ideals, Lady Lodore considers the trials she went through and the sentiments they brought about and how it pertains to the differences between men and women:

> To one of another sex, the name of loneliness can never convey the idea of desolation and disregard, which gives it so painful a meaning in a woman's mind. They have not been taught always to look up to others, and to do nothing for themselves; so that business becomes a matter of heroism to a woman . . . (*Lodore* 384).

Women receive a sexual education that does not prepare them for the situation Lady Lodore has found herself in. Rather than merely accepting the fact, she does not shy away from – at the very least – pondering the consequences of such societal structures. Still, though Shelley acknowledges a subversive potential in Lady Lodore, regarding her as "a woman who in Sparta had formed a heroine; who in periods of war and revolution, would unflinchingly have met calamity, sustaining and leading her own sex" (*Lodore* 135), she also acknowledges the limits to this potential. Considering the dominant ideology, Lady Lodore's position as mother and wife leaves her unable to act on that potential, contrary to Fanny.

4.3 What's in a name? *Lodore* or *The Beautiful Widow*

Another thought-provoking issue is Mary Shelley's choice to title her penultimate novel *Lodore*. Since the character that is mentioned in the title is but physically present in the first one hundred pages or so, the question arises as to why Shelley would ultimately name the novel after him. Not Lord Lodore, but Ethel acts as the principal character of the story. In his work about Mary Shelley, William A. Walling refers to the "curious inexactness of the title to *Lodore*" (Walling 107) as an indication that Shelley "failed to control the theme she had originally planned" (Walling 107). Lord Lodore's death seemingly constitutes the point of no return as Shelley tries to "desperately improvise"

her way through the novel. According to Walling, this inexactness becomes even clearer when taking into account the title of the pirated American edition titled *The Beautiful Widow*. Considering the content of the novel and the considerable difference in presence between Ethel's father and mother, the latter title might have been a more obvious choice. Still, there could be a reason as to why Shelley ultimately chose *Lodore*. In her introduction to Shelley's novel, Lisa Vargo notes that the title reminds of the waterfall of the same name located in the Lake District; a hub of inspiration for not only Coleridge but also Byron and P.B. Shelley. The view of Lodore Falls and the scenery surrounding it is said to have inspired a "mood of Miltonic awe" (*Lodore* 22). Vargo notes that Shelley regards this feeling of grandeur that the falls evoke as characteristic "of the Byronic character of Fitzhenry [Lord Lodore]" (*Lodore* 22). An 1835 review of Shelley's novel in *Leigh Hunt's London Journal* acknowledged the comparison as well:

> the name of her work, we suspect was selected merely from its noble and harmonious sound: for it has nothing to do with it's namesake the lake, though the "falls" of Lodore are something analogous to her hero's grand and impetuous spirit, and his proneness to mingle with his mother earth (*Lodore* 541).

Lord Lodore constitutes the lone, the passionate and the revengeful that is so typical of the Byronic character. It is these sentiments that play part in the decisions he makes in relation to Lady Lodore and the bitterness he feels towards her. Moreover, these decisions influence Ethel's relationship with her mother as well. As the narrative progresses, the depth of his influence on both characters becomes perceivable. In contrast to Walling's ridicule that Lord Lodore's death ends the novel's relevance, Vargo argues that Shelley uses the character of Lodore to express "the lasting effects of people's actions" (*Lodore* 23). Actions have consequences; and with regards to Lord Lodore, the consequences can be felt even after he has passed away. The reader is told as such right before he dies, when the narrator declares:

> A strange distortion of vision blinded this unfortunate man to the truth, which experience so perpetually teaches us, that the consequences of our actions *never die*: that repentance and time may paint them to us in different shapes; but though we shut our eyes, they are still beside us, helping the inexorable destinies

> to spin the fatal thread, and sharpening the implement which is to cut asunder (*Lodore* 156).

The power he holds over both female characters is showcased by the continuous separation of mother and daughter long after he is gone. With this, Shelley alludes to Wollstonecraft's critique on female education and her plea for an education that acquires women a more independent position. By using *Lodore* as a title, Shelley criticised the deep-rooted patriarchal power over women.

In addition to the choice of title, Shelley's consideration of the consequences of individual actions also says something about the difference between the male and female characters in *Lodore*. As the previous subchapter has examined, Shelley's women certainly have subversive qualities and the actions they take throughout the narrative have some force. Not taking into account the influence Lord Lodore's decisions have had on the women in his life after he has passed, his course of action has ultimately contributed to his own death. Mr Villiers, then, is seemingly only able to worry about his and Ethel's financial condition rather than actively correcting the situation. Likewise, Horatio Saville lacks initiative in his relationship with Lady Lodore; instead, he leaves for Italy and marries Clorinda. The female characters' actions, however, elicit genuine change. This difference in the portrayal of female and male characters' actions once more hints at Shelley's critique on patriarchal culture.

5. Conclusion

Mary Shelley's *Lodore* was written in 1835 and showcases the general views on and of women in nineteenth-century Britain. Published at the start of what has come to be known as the Victorian Era, Shelley's novel was written in a genre that gained popularity in the 1820s and presents the reader with a look into the ideology of domesticity and the imagery of the "angel in the house" that prevailed during this era. This thesis has set out to expose the underlying critique present in Shelley's novel, which criticises this Victorian ideology of propriety. I have argued that, while *Lodore* might be considered a seemingly straight-forward silver-fork novel, there is a second layer to the work that contributes to the growing discussion that was being held concerning the subordinate position of women in nineteenth-century Britain. Taking into account Mary Shelley's life, work, and environment gives reason to question her clear acceptance of this ideology. Chapter one has provided a basic explanation of the concepts necessary to understand the ideas behind the research topic. The second chapter, then, has shed a light on early-nineteenth-century British society and its construction of social matters. The analysis of both Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792) and Percy Bysshe Shelley's translation of Plato's "Symposium" has served to establish the backlash of conservatism that came to govern British society. Furthermore, Wollstonecraft's reaction against women's natural inferiority and her denunciation of a female education that perpetuated the idea of women as sweet and dependent; and P. B. Shelley's determination to translate a work that was considered tasteless for its content and its philosopher, are valuable elements to consider in my alternative reading of *Lodore*. Before ultimately examining Mary Shelley's underlying social critique in chapter four, chapter three has analysed Shelley's *Lodore* as an example of a silver-fork novel. For the growing middle-class, these types of novels served as a glimpse into the world of the *beau monde*; moreover, they showcase the depth of Victorian morality. A look into *Lodore* has demonstrated that several characters in Shelley's novel embody this morality and its attachment to domestic ideology. Ethel Fitzhenry serves as an example of the ideal domestic woman; and Lady Lodore seems to communicate the dangers that come with behaving improperly. The novel's allusions to the ideology of domesticity along with Shelley's position as a woman writer serve as arguments to link *Lodore* to the

silver-fork genre. However, the novel does not have a straightforward association with the genre. As I have argued in the last chapter, there is reason to believe Shelley's *Lodore* is part of a broader discussion surrounding women's inferior position in society. By reading *Lodore* merely as a 'novel of society', which perpetuates the ideal of feminine propriety, one does not take into consideration the author's own socio-political character. An alternative reading of *Lodore* reveals a second layer in which Mary Shelley criticises society's view on and of women. Not only through the intellectual Fanny; but also through the sweet Ethel and the prideful Cornelia does Shelley incite her critique on the traditional gender/social roles of nineteenth-century women. Fanny, whose education consisted in developing an intellectual and independent disposition, constitutes the ideal woman in the author's eyes. Still, even Ethel and Lady Lodore exhibit subversive qualities. Shelley ascribes certain agency to both characters that allows for some authority within their seemingly subordinate disposition. In addition, the possible reasoning behind the author's decision to title her novel *Lodore* leads to believe there is more to the novel than meets the eye.

A more in-depth analysis of Mary Shelley's *Lodore* has thus exposed the author's contribution to the discussion on gender relations and women's role in society that was being held in nineteenth-century Britain. This connects the novel to the history of literary feminism. Whether or not Mary Shelley was successful in actively conveying her socio-political critique is rather difficult to establish. Fanny Derham's open-ended storyline serves as a basis to further examine the extent to which Shelley was successful. By leaving Fanny's future open, the author seems to suggest a comprehension of the difficulty that such a character poses in British society of that time. However, Shelley's language hints at the value of Fanny as a role model and the possibility that the story of such a character could eventually be fully told. Future research on this particular finding and a more in-depth focus on Mary Shelley's other works could contribute to a more complete understanding of the author's contribution to "The Woman Question". Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates the need for continuous focus on literature from a feminist literary criticism point of view to uncover more works such as Mary Shelley's *Lodore*.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bennett, Betty T. “Shelley [*née* Godwin], Mary Wollstonecraft.” Oxford *Dictionary of National Biography,* 2004, pp. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

Carlier, Julie. “Les 2: Het vrouwenvraagstuk en de beweging voor vrouwenrechten (19e eeuw – WOI).” 6 Oct. 2017. Feminisime en diversiteit in transnationaal historich perspectief, Universiteit Gent.

“Declaration of Independence.” *Britannica Online Academic Edition*, 2018, pp. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

Deneckere, Gita. “Les 6: Geschiedenis van de arbeidersbeweging en het socialisme (19e eeuw – WOI).” Feminisme en diversiteit in transnational historisch perspectief, Universiteit Gent.

D’hoker, Elke et al. “Feminist Literary Criticism: Gilbert & Gubar.” 28 Oct. 2016. Gender, Literature and Theory, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

D’hoker, Elke et al. “The Feminist Critique Part 1.” 18 Nov. 2017. Concepts & Questions, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

D’hoker, Elke et al. “The Feminist Critique Part 2.” 2 Dec. 2017. Concepts & Questions, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

Eger, Elizabeth, et al. *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Faubert, Michelle. “Godwin, Frances [Fanny] [Known as Fanny Imlay] (1794-1816), Adopted Daughter of William Godwin.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2012, pp. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

Ghesquière, Rita. *Literaire Verbeelding: Een geschiedenis van de Europese literatuur en cultuur vanaf 1750.* Leuven, Uitgeverij Acco, 2006.

Gilbert, Sandra M, and Gubar, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. 2nd ed., Yale University Press, 2000.

Godwin, William. *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Project Gutenberg, 2005.

Gonda, Caroline. “Lodore and Fanny Derham's Story [1].” *Women's Writing*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1999, pp. 329–344.

Greene, Gayle, and Coppélia Kahn. “Feminist scholarship and the social construction of woman.” *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, Routledge, 1985, pp. 1-36.

Greenblatt, Stephen, editor. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period (Volume D)*. 9th ed., New York, W.W. Norton &Amp; Co, 2012.

Grimes, Kelly. "'Queen Mab', the Law of Libel and the forms of Shelley's Politics." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 94, no. 1, 1995, p. 1+. *Literature Resource Center*, http://link.galegroup.com.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/apps/doc/A16870549/LitRC?u=leuven&sid=LitRC&xid=69ca84c0. Accessed 18 May 2018.

Hartnell, Elaine. "Nothing but Sweet and Womanly: A Hagiography of Patmore's Angel." *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 34, no. 4, 1996, pp. 457–476.

Hopkins, Lisa. "'A Medea, in More Senses than the More Obvious One': Motherhood in Mary Shelley's *Lodore* and *Falkner*." *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, edited by Russel Whitaker and Kathy D. Darrow, vol. 176, Gale, 2007, pp. 383-405.

Hughes, Winifred. "Silver Fork Writers and Readers: Social Contexts of a Best Seller." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1992, pp. 328–47.

Kaplan, Sydney J. "Varieties of feminist criticism." *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, Routledge, 1985, pp. 37-58.

Kelly, Gary. *Women, Writing, and Revolution 1790-1827*. Repr. ed., Clarendon, 1997.

Kendra, April. "Gendering the Silver Fork: Catherine Gore and the Society Novel." *Women's Writing*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2004, pp. 25–38.

Kucich, John, and Jenny Borne Taylor, editors. *The Nineteenth-Century Novel 1820-1880.* Oxford University Press, 2012.

Langland, Elizabeth. "Chapter Six: Women's writing and the domestic sphere." *Women and Literature in Britain: 1800-1900,* edited by Joanne Shattock, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 119-141.

Marcus, Sharon. "Chapter One: Friendship and the Play of the System." *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*, Princeton University Press, 2009, Google Books, pp. 25-66, books.google.be/books?id=sFRWylXaAtAC&printsec=frontcover&hl=nl&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false. Accessed 25 July 2018.

Marshall, Florence A. (Thomas). *The Life and letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Volume I (of 2).* Project Gutenberg, 2011.

"Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley." *Poetry Foundation*, www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/mary-wollstonecraft-shelley. Accessed 10 June 2018.

Mellor, Anne K. *Romanticism & Gender*. Routledge, 1993.

Moore, Natasha. "The Realism of the Angel in The House: Coventry Patmore's Poem Reconsidered." Vol. 43, no. 1, 2015, pp. 41–61.

Nelson, Stephanie. "Shelley and Plato's Symposium: the Poet's Revenge." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, vol. 14, no. 1/2, 2007, pp. 100–129.

Notopoulos, James A. "Shelley and the 'Symposium' of Plato." *The Classical Weekly*, vol. 42, no. 7, 1949, pp. 98–102.

Offen, Karen. "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach." *Signs*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1988, pp. 119–157. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3174664.

O'Neill, Michael. "Shelley, Percy Bysshe (1792-1822), Poet." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, pp. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

Paletschek, Sylvia, and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker. "Chapter 16: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century: Conclusions". *Women's emancipation movements in the nineteenth century: a European perspective*, Stanford University Press, 2004, pp. 301-333.

Patmore, Coventry. *Angel in the House*. Project Gutenberg, 2003.

"P. B. Shelley's *An Address to the Irish People*." *British Library,* www.bl.uk/collection-items/p-b-shelleys-address-to-the-irish-people. Accessed 18 May 2018.

Pennell, Elizabeth R. *Mary Wollstonecraft*. Project Gutenberg, 2007.

"Percy Bysshe Shelley." *Poetry Foundation*. www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/percy-bysshe-shelley. Accessed 18 May 2018.

Philp, Mark. "William Godwin." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 16 Jan 2000, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/godwin/. Accessed 18 May 2018.

Poovey, Mary. *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984.

Reiman, Donald H. "Shelley, Percy Bysshe." *Britannica Online Academic Edition*, 2018, pp. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

Sadoff, Dianne F. "The Silver Fork Novel." *The Nineteenth-Century Novel 1820-1880,* edited by John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 106-121.

Scott, Joan W. "Chapter 1: Rereading the History of Feminism." *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French feminists and the rights of man,* Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 1-18.

Shattock, Joan, editor. *Women and Literature in Britain: 1800-1900.* Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Penguin Books, 2003.

Shelley, Mary. *Notes to The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* Project Gutenberg, 2003.

Shelley, Percy B. *A Defence of Poetry and Other Essays: Includes on Love, on Life, on a Future State, on the Punishment of Death, Speculations on Metaphysics and More*. Project Gutenberg, 2009.

Sowerwine, Charles. "Chapter 13: Socialism, Feminism, and the Socialist Women's Movement from the French Revolution to World War II." *Becoming Visible: Women in European History.* Edited by Renate Bridenthal et al., Houghton Mifflin, 1997, pp. 357-387.

Spencer, Jane. *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen*. Blackwell, 1986.

Sustein, Emily. *Mary Shelley: Romance and Reality.* John Hopkins University Press, 1991, Google Books, https://books.google.be/books?id=S4Q0Yv_7tawC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Mary+Shelley:+Romance+and+Reality&hl=nl&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiR-vb-2OfcAhXQ_aQKHTgpA-8Q6AEIKzAA#v=onepage&q&f=false. Accessed 25 July 2018.

Tong, Rosemarie. "Liberal feminism." *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, Westview Press, 2009, pp. 11-47.

Vargo, Lisa. "Lodore and the "Novel of Society"" *Women's Writing*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1999, pp. 425–440.

Walling, William. *Mary Shelley*. Twayne Publishers Inc., 1972.

Whithaeckx, Sophie. "Les 2: Vrijheid, gelijkheid en verschil." 11 Oct. 2017. Overzicht van het Feministisch Denken, Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Whithaecks, Sophie. "Les 3: De langste revolutie: Socialisme en feminisme." 17 Oct. 2017. Overzicht van het Feministisch Denken, Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Williams, Nicholas M. "Angelic Realism: Domestic Idealization in Mary Shelley's Lodore." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2007, pp. 397–415.

"Wollstonecraft, Mary." *Britannica Online Academic Edition*, 2018, pp. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. "*From* A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt et al., W. W. Norton & Company, 2012, pp. 211-239.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. "Of the Pernicious Effects which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society." *Feminist Theory. A Political Anthology,* edited by Ann E. Cudd et al., Blackwell Publishing, pp. 11-17.

Wynne, Deborah. "Readers and Reading Practices." *The Nineteenth-Century Novel 1820-1880,* edited by John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 22-36.