

Reading Over to the Dark Side: The Complexity of the Male Villain in Film and Literature

Independent Research Project

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6 December 2011



Acknowledgments

My thanks go to...

...*Dr. Ewa Tak-Ignaczak*,

for a smooth, pleasurable and inspiring supervision, for consistently guiding me through every single semester of my undergraduate career, and for giving me much needed time to spend with her three adorable (and just as inspiring) cats

...*Anna Sweers*,

for motivational guidance, uplifting inspiration, welcomed distraction and advice during our writing sessions with much coffee, and for always being a good friend to me

...*Annelies Keizer*,

for necessary study breaks, for taking much other stress off my shoulders as my Assistant Director, for being there when I needed a hug, and for generally good times with candles and tea

...*Evert Velthuisen*,

for always reminding me with motivating enthusiasm of the ‘epicness’ of my research even in those times when I found it hard to detect myself

...*Danou Duifhuisen*,

for being so excited about this project that I could not even try to lack motivation and enthusiasm for it myself

...*Britta Schießelmann*,

for supporting me in my daily problems and providing me with creative energy even from afar

...*Franziska Loos*,

for being there for me, day and night, despite us living in different countries

...*Ilse Ras*,

for sorting out my problems with *The Godfather* before I even knew I had any

...*Terence Burggraaf*,

for refreshing and expanding my childhood’s *Star Wars* knowledge

...my many beta-readers, for making sure that my sometimes much too random thoughts could finally find some structure

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I. Introduction

For as long as I can remember, I have always been slightly disappointed in what happened to my favourite characters in novels and films. As soon as I had identified my favourite, I immediately understood that, in conventional stories, he (or in rare cases she) was quite likely destined to die, and to this day I still read and watch in the framework of the ‘bad guy’, hoping that he would not, but knowing that he would eventually be defeated. Interestingly, I seem to have developed a sense to pick out villainous characters even long before reader or viewer is made aware of the respective roles in the narrative. Be it Darth Vader, Hannibal Lecter or the Joker, I have always had a tendency to openly root for villains. In spite of what I used to think about this issue, I am not an outlier in this sense. In fact, I have discovered that there are indeed many who share my strong fascination for such characters.

I have often tried to explain this phenomenon to myself. How can evil characters consistently be perceived as such on a subconscious level even before their function in the narrative has been established? And why can evil and its agents captivate so many people’s interests? Is fascination with villains dependent on some inherent quality of the specific reader or spectator, or is there something essential in evil that draws people to it, whereas some people react more strongly to it than others? When looking at villains that are generally perceived as popular, are there certain characteristics that they share and that make them interesting and fascinating enough to demand one’s attention?

Curiously, little research has been conducted in this field of ‘villainology’, the study of the phenomenon of the villain. This is especially striking given that it is an occurrence that can be repeatedly witnessed. In the past few years there even seems to be a greater trend towards ‘bad guys’ in films in general, which might imply that such (at least partly) evil characters become increasingly popular. This research project demonstrates an approach to

combine the investigation of some of these questions to establish a general, basic theory why villains can be such a popular and intriguing object of interest. It shall by no means give an exhaustive answer to all of them. Instead, it might serve as a useful starting point and inspiration for further research. It goes beyond the scope of this study to investigate into exact spectator and reader responses to villains, but further empirical research is highly encouraged.

The first part of this work establishes a general framework of character studies and the concept of evil through which villains are defined. In the second part, I use the understanding of these theories to provide detailed analyses of popular villains in literature and film, focusing on the general relationship between reader and spectator to the characters and specifically the features commonly found in villains. Aspects of successful, popular villains are determined on the basis of formalistic literary or filmic analyses to explore what features are necessary to invite reader or spectator involvement.

The analysis of each of the seven villains is twofold. The literary analyses are concerned with formal aspects of the texts in general, including narrator type and structure. The filmic analyses are concerned with narrative and structural aspects as well as the director's choice of the actor and the implications of the specific performance. Both literary and filmic analyses also deal with character development, the relationships and interactions with others, and the different roles the villain fulfils in the work. Those aspects are used to investigate issues of complexity and (in)accessibility, followed by conclusions regarding the reader's or spectator's possible involvement with the villain. Once the character concept in the original has been established, the implementation in the adaptation is analysed in a comparative manner in order to determine the different approaches to the character for readers and spectators.¹ Here, one cannot avoid but address the issue of fidelity as well. I determine

¹ Most of the case studies use a literary text as the original and a film as an adaptation. A reversed relationship of novelisation is only the case with the *Star Wars* saga.

whether an adaptation is close, intermediate or loose based on the concepts established by Desmond and Hawkes:

A film is a close adaptation when most story elements in the literary text are kept in the film and few elements are dropped or added. A film is a loose interpretation when most story elements are dropped and the literary text is used as a point of departure. A film is an intermediate adaptation when it neither conforms exactly nor departs entirely from the literary text but stays in the middle of the sliding scale between close and loose. (3)

The study focuses on only male characters because female villains represent a minority. It can be assumed that female villains differ considerably from male villains. This distinction might be an interesting subject for further studies as well. A character exists because of and depends on the relation to the reader or spectator. Therefore it is important to include people's evaluations and recognition of villains in popular culture. Thus, the selection of villains to be analysed is made on two grounds. Michael Corleone, Hannibal Lecter, Darth Vader and the Joker are chosen on the basis of a popularity voting conducted by the American Film Institute. For the purpose of this voting, a villain is seen as "a character(s) whose wickedness of mind, selfishness of character and will to power are sometimes masked by beauty and nobility, while others may rage unmasked. They can be horribly evil or grandiosely funny, but are ultimately tragic" (AFI). The resulting list was investigated for villains that are consistent with the literary theory to be explained in the next chapter. I therefore attempted to include a fair number of villains that are generally considered popular. Jonathan Teatime, Lestat and Heathcliff were chosen in accordance with my personal preferences of villainous characters.

II. The Dynamics of Evil

1. The Literary Concept and Functions of Character

In the broadest sense, stories are propelled forward by two components: the plot itself, and the characters that execute the actions necessary to complete it. Without characters, be they human or non-human, there can be no action, and although this is an inherent part of what ties people to a story, it is the *characters'* actions, their relationships with each other and their inner lives that sustain the reader's interest.

Forster describes the creation of a character in the sense that

The novelist, unlike many of his colleagues, makes up a number of word-masses roughly describing himself (roughly: niceties shall come later) gives them names and sex, assigns them plausible gestures, and causes them to speak by the use of inverted commas, and perhaps to behave consistently. (64)

He further explains that characters are so attractive to readers because they can be completely understood: the nature of literature makes it possible to show their inner and outer life, thus giving off a more complete impression than in real life (68). In modern terms, this means that only literature can make a character's psyche completely accessible, which means that the inward life is a driving force that can be complemented with plot, commentary, description, allusion, and rhetoric (Scholes, Phelan and Kellogg 171). According to Forster, "that is why novels, even when they are about wicked people, can solace us; they suggest a more comprehensible and thus a more manageable human race, they give us the illusion of perspicacity and of power" (Forster 89). He divides characters into the categories 'flat' and 'round'. Flat characters show no development whatsoever. They are "constructed round a single idea or quality" (93), being thus easily accessible, but not very entertaining except

when understood comically (100). Round characters show development, are complex and thus more challenging and entertaining for the reader.

This is a debatable and quite inflexible stance on fiction. Considering that writers' creativity can take enormous, surprising and unprecedented leaps, such a static understanding of characters is not quite appropriate. Development, which determines the distinction of 'flat' and 'round', does not necessarily have an influence on the relationship to the reader:

If I try to distinguish between major and minor characters – round and flat characters – and claim that these differ in terms of subtlety, depth, time allowed on the page, I must concede that many so-called flat characters seem more alive to me, and more interesting as human studies, however short-lived, than the round characters they are supposedly subservient to. (Wood 83)

Wood criticises Forster's condemnation of flat characters. He points out that "if by flatness we mean a character, often but not always a minor one, often but not always comic, who serves to illuminate an essential human truth or characteristic, then many of the most interesting characters are flat" (99). Instead of establishing the ideal of roundness, "impossible in fiction, because fictional characters, while very alive in their way, are not the same as real people" (ibid.), a greater focus should be placed on "subtlety of analysis, of inquiry, of concern, of felt pressure – and for subtlety a very small point of entry will do" (ibid).

While Forster only presents a general theory, more recent investigations go more into depth into the nature of character itself. Todorov, as explained by Culler and quoted by Phelan, proposes to "treat characters as proper names to which certain *qualities* are attached during the course of the narrative. Characters are not heroes, villains, or helpers; they are simply subjects of a group of predicates which the reader adds up as he goes along" (qtd. in Phelan 3-4, emphasis in the original). While this is true on a basic, non-interpretative level, it

is interpretation that makes characters real for us, which is why this notion shall not be addressed further here.

Phelan distinguishes between three components of a character: synthetic, mimetic, and thematic. The synthetic level addresses the fictionality and artificiality of the character, the conscious knowledge that he or she is not a real person. The mimetic level, on the other hand, revolves around the life-like quality of characters, “the way characters are images of possible people” (Phelan 2). The third, thematic level is concerned with the character as “a representative figure, as standing for a class” (3) supporting ideas or themes the author wants to address. Phelan concludes from this “that character can be multichromatic, that it is a literary element composed of three components, the mimetic, thematic, and synthetic, and that the mimetic and thematic components may be more or less developed, whereas the synthetic component, though always present, may be more or less foregrounded” (ibid). He further makes a distinction between a character’s dimension and function. He uses the word ‘dimension’ to address a character’s single attributes, which are then applied to the novel as a particular function within the work. Once again, Phelan can make a distinction between those based on the levels he has established. Mimetic dimensions – character traits – lead to functions that are related to “the way these traits are used together in creating the illusion of a plausible person and, for works depicting actions, in making particular traits relevant to later actions, including of course the development of new traits” (11), but it is important to note that not all traits have to lead to an action. Thematic dimensions consist of specific attributes that are used to express ideas or represent a certain class (12), and thematic functions can “emerge more gradually. In works that strive to give characters a strong overt mimetic function, thematic functions develop from thematic dimensions as a character’s traits and actions also demonstrate, usually implicitly, some proposition or propositions about the class of people or the dramatized ideas” (13). Synthetic dimensions are always functions as well

(14). Dimension and function are linked together by the work's progression, making it necessary that "every function depends upon a dimension but not every dimension will necessarily correspond to a function" (9). Therefore, plot and characters are closely related since progression is one of the means by which their traits are further established (20).

Thus, in order to understand a character, one needs to investigate what makes a narrative dynamic and ensures its progression. According to Lothe, events and their functions are closely linked to characters because they are action-initiating (75). He distinguishes between two types of events: kernel, which has a cardinal function and promotes action by giving the characters certain choices, and catalyst, an event that accompanies the kernel, but does not signify an alternative choice. Events can be an important mode of characterisation (75-76).

Lothe distinguishes between direct definition, i.e. the character is characterised in a direct, summarising way "for instance by means of adjectives or abstract nouns" (81), and indirect presentation, i.e. actions, speech, external appearance and milieu (82-84). In literature, events are shaped through narrative devices such as "plot and character components, and metaphorical patterns to which the reader is invited to respond as he or she works through the text" (85). In film, events are definite, visually presented characterisations that "'hit' the viewer" (ibid). External features can be shown better than in literature, but film also renders the spectator unable to access characters' thoughts as effectively as in literature, where they are spelled out for the reader – and quite literally so (86).

Narrative can be seen as a means of communication as well. Characters are not static; their interpretation depends on the interaction with the reader. In this cognitive, reader-focused approach, a character cannot exist in its entirety without a reader who assembles the author's clues in his mind – or, to put it differently, "[t]o read about a character is to imagine and create a character in reading: it is to create a person" (Bennett and Royle 69). This means that in creating such a person, the reader is actively involved with the text. According to

Schneider, “understanding literary character requires our forming some kind of mental representation of them, attributing dispositions and motivations to them, understanding and explaining their actions, forming expectations about what they will do next and why, and, of course, reacting emotionally to them” (608). The main focus is placed “on psychological traits, emotions, and aims of characters that are more abstract and less dependent on the immediate circumstantial conditions of individual situations” (610). When reading, all direct or indirect sources add up to the multimodal mental character model (611).

Schneider points out that there are two ways of character reception to form an appropriate mental model: categorisation and personalisation. In categorisation, the reader tries to establish a holistic model of the character using top-down processing. Those categorisations can be social, i.e. professions, social roles, or stereotypical character traits (619), literary, i.e. the recognition of stock characters or characters that fit in a certain genre schema, and text-specific, where reliable cues establish habits or stable character dispositions (620). The latter also refers to other characters characterising a character, where it is important that the reader has a higher regard for the characterising character in order for it to be reliable (621). When the character model has to be modified because of further cues that add a different dimension, this is called individuation. Decategorisation takes place when the reader’s expectations are not met, thus raising his awareness (624). Personalisation, then, establishes a character in bottom-up processing and takes place when a reader is unwilling or unable to categorise a character (625). When the reader overlooks categorisation clues and no further character cues are available, depersonalisation takes place (626).

2. The Villain and the Concept of Evil

A character can be screened for physical, behavioural, communicative, and mental properties (Margolin 72). Its general functions are verisimilar, ideological, thematic, aesthetic, and inter-literary (68). Taking a step back from the nature of character itself, there are certain active functions that characters fulfil in a story. A protagonist can be seen as the main focus of the action. He or she can be heroic or anti-heroic, i.e. characterised by specific failures and weaknesses rather than strengths (Mullan 90). Thus, an anti-hero is generally “a protagonist who draws us into sympathy despite doing things that should appal us” (91).

Some people tend to confuse anti-heroes with the villains, simply seeing a villain as a ‘bad’ character and using the terms interchangeably instead of acknowledging the different roles they fulfil in narratives. The function of a villain is clearly defined and differs significantly from that of an anti-hero. The main difference is that “[t]he anti-hero takes possession of a narrative without any effective opposition. Villains, in contrast, are set against representatives of good. In the great majority of cases, a villain, however fascinating, exists to be defeated” (Mullan 91). This means that a villain necessarily has to be set against the active, positive forces of the text and actively work against them in order to defeat their purpose. This creates a conflict that drives the plot forward. Furthermore, “[v]illains are not to be quite human” (94). They are generally perceived as more powerful than other characters and are not necessarily subject to the frame in which others act and are evaluated. Villains give off a certain aura of evilness and shrewd morality, a sort of “intellectual energy fretting to express itself” (96), all of which do not meet society’s standards. Also, “[t]he true villain is driven not only by simple greed or lust for power, but also by a kind of glee at his own badness” (94). He is “above all a plotter and therefore we are obliged to him (or in rare cases her) for many of the pleasures of the story. The villain has made the plot for us” (96). Because he drives forward the plot through conflict, he necessarily has to be intellectually gifted to some extent.

But what makes a truly evil and villainous character appealing and intriguing to the reader? While the case studies in this project shall attempt to answer this question in parts, the underlying concept of evil has to be investigated first to understand what the villain embodies.

In *Vader, Voldemort and Other Villains: Essays on Evil in Popular Media*, edited by Jamey Heit, he claims that the conflict between good and evil as personified by God and the devil respectively is the very basis of the stories prevailing in the Western culture nowadays. In those, “[g]rounded firmly within the Judeo-Christian tradition, the devil (or, more broadly, evil) has his moments, but in the end, good people and their values prevail when facing the devil’s challenges” (5). However, he points out that concepts other than just good and evil as universal scapegoats or acting forces are at hand. It is ultimately the individual’s choice that can turn a character evil. This demonstrates that the capacity of good and the temptation of evil are combined in everyone and an implicit or explicit choice is necessary to follow either. He further explains that “[e]vil’s purpose is not to doom the victim, but to provide a gauge that upsets an established moral order. [...] Evil, then, reflects the desires that the narrator knows not to speak” (ibid). This implies that apart from the specific plot-building function within the narrative, the villain is necessary for the author to investigate his or her evil side as well, thus providing a suitable outlet for a characteristic that can be interpreted as an inherent part of human nature. He confirms Sartre’s theory, which Heit describes in the sense that “evil captures our attention by questioning subtly the cultural standard that good will prevail” (6).

In basic terms,

evil occupies a central position in our cultural conception of narrative and morality in its capacity to interrogate the moral assumptions underlying a simplified notion of the good. Though consistently the marginalized component of our tradition’s moral binary, evil’s presence is undeniable and

sometimes necessary, a reality that problematizes the tendency to dismiss it out of hand. (ibid.)

Following the Judeo-Christian understanding of evil, its cause or origin is not necessary to understand it. It is mainly viewed through the consequences that follow it. Our Western perception of evil is fairly universal within the society and easily accessible to everyone through sustained investigation and re-evaluation of prevailing moral standards.

Characteristically, in popular media “the evil characters frequently steal the show, even if they ultimately fail in their various plots to subvert their good foils” (8). The general manner in which evil characters are shown here is that it is often due to “some inherent quality that predisposes them to evil, a deficiency that inhibits their free choice. Those evil people cannot help what they do, which, in a tradition that emphasises free will, disrupts how we evaluate the perpetrators in question” (ibid). This would mean that a character has *no choice* but to follow an evil path, which stands in strong contrast to Heit’s claim that the acceptance of evil relies on an individual’s choice. He questions this concept in the way that a predisposition, a ‘genetic flaw’ that makes a character evil, would take away the cause of evil. External or internal circumstances or even a choice would not be an issue then, which again would question his status as a villain as such. In this, Heit seems to suggest that a mechanism other than just the existence of good and evil forces has to be taken into consideration. He further states that “evil is not simply the antitype of good. Often, the clearly evil characters behave in a way that is, apart from the respective ends, ‘better’ than the good hero” (ibid). This means that both villains and heroes partly use despicable methods to achieve their goals, and sometimes those of the heroes can be even more unethical than or at least equal to those of the antagonists. This forces the readers or spectators to re-examine their understanding of good and evil. The problem that he sees, then, is that people have a tendency to identify with such evil characters, through which he concludes that the binary concept of good and evil is not

necessarily valid, that evil “affords specific *value* within our cultural consciousness” (9, emphasis in the original).

In the next chapter of the book, Forbes deals with the essential question of why there is a tendency to identify with villains, or why we at least tend to find them appealing or even intriguing. Prevailing moral standards that can be investigated and understood by anyone present a problem in this context because it does not seem conceivable how anyone would identify with something that he or she knows to be wrong. He mainly focuses on the presentation of evil in television and cinema. Here, villains are often presented in a more appealing way than the heroes in both appearance and behaviour:

If good and evil have intrinsic natures that oppose one another, and we understand that there are compelling reasons to favor good over evil, evil shouldn't seem so intriguing. Or if good and evil are not intrinsic characters, but simply a way of depicting difference and opposition, then it's not clear why the bad guys should be any more cool than the good guys – it should just be a matter of preference. (Heit 14)

One of the possible reasons for involvement that he discusses draws once again on the nature of evil itself. He claims that evil is defined by the very fact that it cannot be defined. Therefore, “evil [...] should not make sense; it is in fact our frustration with its inexplicability and nonsensicality that incites us to struggle against it in an effort to eliminate it” (15). He further examines the possibility of good and evil as being relative, depending on the viewer's preferences. Trying to see good and evil as different perspectives rather than inherent unchanging and opposing characteristics, he finds

that both [heroes and villains] resort to similar methods for achieving their goals. This suggests that perhaps they are simply at odds with one another because their goals are different and incompatible. Sometimes we characterize

acts of force, violence, and deception as evil, but frequently both good and evil characters will resort to these methods. (16)

Both goals and methods, depending on the perspective that is assumed, are similar for good and evil characters. The perception of good and evil as relative forces, however, presents the problem of why villainous characters are universally perceived as such and furthermore such a popular object of identification. It does not seem logical that openly evil forces, such as the Dark Side of the Force in *Star Wars*, might be perceived as a potentially good force if a different viewpoint than that of the rebels would be assumed (18). Here, I believe that the problem at hand might be to justify the acceptance of this different perspective as acceptable and reliable, especially because of the general understanding of good and evil forces.

The ready recognition of evil characters is also based on the way they are presented, as generally much more intriguing than the heroes themselves. This can be due to the different narrative functions of heroes and villains. Forbes links the character functions to the way they are embodied as well as to the reaction and desires it evokes in the spectator, thus generating an intriguing appearance:

The villain is characterized by power, whether it is the overt power of the Dark Side of the Force which Darth Vader wields, or the cunning planning of the otherwise ordinarily empowered Joker in *The Dark Knight*. The villain's use of power to achieve his or her own ends initiates the plot of a narrative in which good and evil square off. The villain's actions create a problem, and the hero's story is the process of resolving the problem by thwarting the villain's plans. Since the villain's power generates narrative drama, perhaps we find the villain appealing because *we* would like to enjoy that sort of power. (18, emphasis in the original)

He eventually draws on the philosopher Dewey, pointing out that “evil is representative of the danger and instability that threaten our society, and our existing values are reinforced through the hero’s victory. In this sort of narrative, evil has value simply [...] as a necessary symbolic component of the plot” (19). However, there is more to evil than simply being a necessary plot component. Depending on the narrative’s goal, the existence of the villain might also function as an incentive for the spectator “to examine the evil that is supposed to be rejected, and at the same time invite us to examine the values we take for granted. In these cases the villain may represent an opposing perspective – and by exploring the narrative we take on the danger of examining our values and possibly changing them” (ibid). This solves the puzzling appearance of the villain: in order for this alternative perception to be investigated, it has to be taken seriously, which is achieved by physically presenting the villain as an intriguing character.

This narrative role, then, paves the way for the villain’s interestingness, both in character and in appearance:

Characters like Boba Fett and Darth Maul from the *Star Wars* movies are mysterious and hidden from us by helmets and armor, or a disguise of intricate tattoos. We don’t know much about them, and so we are left to speculate about how they came to be who they are – and even who they are in the first place. Their mysterious threat to the heroes symbolizes the open-endedness and precariousness that define their role in the narrative space. They symbolize the danger that can threaten our values – or provoke us to reassess them. (20)

Forbes mainly deals with the examination of *appealing* evil. However, not all evil is appealing even to those spectators who are prone to identify with or be fascinated by evil in the first place. Such villains are presented in a rather repelling way. As examples, he investigates Göth from *Schindler’s List* and Dr Lessing from *Life Is Beautiful*. In both cases,

“the villain makes a choice that derails the narrative. It’s not simply a surprise of a ‘plot twist,’ but a feeling that something has gone wrong with the story itself, something that *ought not* to have happened” (22, emphasis in the original). Such a villain requires an active moral judgement, an active standpoint instead of an examination of standards, on the spectator’s part. Therefore, “[w]e find these characters and their actions horrifying because they represent deep moral cowardice. These villains commit atrocities against persons who are unable to resist. What more, they were in a position to do real good” (23).

The way Forbes presents them, the intriguing and the repellent villains seem to be rather similar in the way they are created and presented, which poses the question of what exactly makes them one or the other. Since they are entirely different kinds of villains both in their nature and in their effect on the spectator, good and evil *cannot* only be a binary concept. He therefore introduces the third layer, the one of meaning. This complicates the character and provides a lens through which the events and characters, and eventually the villain, are seen. He defines meaning as “the common denominator between narratives with intriguing villains and narratives with repellent villains. In narratives where evil is appealing, we perceive the presence of the villain as making sense within the plot. The villain is an essential part in such narratives and hence has a well-defined and important role” (24). A repellent villain, then, denies such meaning and his evil actions do not contribute to the plot in a way that we would find satisfying. This might for instance require a basis that the spectator has strong feelings about. Holocaust narratives can be seen as such because of the horrifying effect this period has had on the world as we see it nowadays, and is an issue that, due to its universally accepted horror, people will continue to feel strongly about (ibid). This effect can even be intended by the filmmaker to encourage an action or change in attitude (25).

Combining the theories that have been examined here, the main characteristics of a villain can be summarised as a character, sometimes only presented as an abstraction, that works against the protagonist, the ‘good’ forces of the novel. He is an antagonist to the protagonist, in some cases even to the whole society that is depicted in the novel. In order to fulfil this function, he needs to present the perspective or alternative that evil embodies. He needs to have certain immoral qualities that, with focus on narrative structure, lead to actions. Those in turn lead to conflict, which organises the plot as such. The villain is therefore the necessary embodiment of the narrative concept of conflict. This, and his distorted or neglected sense of morality and pure evilness, can make him quite attractive as a character: “Give the representative of evil the intellect and perceptiveness that make him a worthy antagonist and he might well become all too intriguing” (Mullan 94). Other than simply being intriguing due to his characteristics, the villain is further appealing due to the role that he plays in terms of meaning:

A narrative that takes advantage of the importance of the role of evil to drive narrative can also be used to invite us to reflect on ideas and values that we take for granted. Where our ideas of ‘good’ may need critical analysis, an evil that seems ‘cool’ can help us to see the chinks in the White Knight’s armor. In this way such narratives can show that evil is not good, but it is nevertheless meaningful. (Heit 25-26)

The concept of the intriguing rather than the repellent villain shall be applied in this study in the close examination of the case studies provided. This project only focuses on the narrative and meaning components instead of the actual mechanics of spectator and reader involvement. A short note nonetheless has to be made regarding the mechanics of involvement in literature and film respectively.

In reader-response theory, Holland provides a good psychoanalytical basis through which the fascination with evil characters might be examined. According to him, a text has to be filtered through and meet four different criteria in order to be properly assumed by the reader. The first principle is that of style, which means that the text needs to fulfil the stylistic expectations the reader has towards it. The next two principles – the defences and the projection of the reader's own fantasies onto the text – are based on the hypothesis “that any individual shapes the materials the literary work offers him – including its author – to give him what he characteristically both wishes and fears” (“Unity”, 817). This means that the text is filtered and changed through the defence mechanisms to match the inner and outer reality of the reader, thus enabling him to avoid pain (*5 Readers*, 116). This influences the rejection or acceptance of parts of the text, including the reader's attitude towards certain characters or character types. Once adapted to the reader's defences, their own fears and possibly hidden desires are projected into the work (120) to make it accessible and real, thus increasing its meaning for the reader as well. The projection of guilty pleasures into a text results in the necessity of justifying those. They are transformed into “a total experience of esthetic, moral, intellectual, or social coherence and significance” (“Unity”, 818). In the last principle, the reader “transform[s] the fantasy content, which he has created from the materials of the story his defenses admitted, into some literary point or theme or interpretation” (*5 Readers*, 121-122). This is based on the reader's interpretive skills and reading experience. A story can only be synthesised when all four principles are completed. The interaction of these helps the reader “to re-create himself, that is, to make yet another variation in his single, enduring identity” (“Unity”, 129).

When dealing with the medium of film, involvement can be assumed on the basis of several different concepts: identification, empathy, and sympathy. Identification can take place on various levels. Heath, Baudrey and Metz identify the primary identification with the

camera where “identification with characters and stories is based on an identification with the process of viewing itself and ultimately with what the camera views” (Andrew 149). It can also take place with a character. For example, Schoenmakers sees identification as “a process in which spectators experience similarity between their own interests, perspectives, sensitivities and other cognitions and the interests, perspectives, sensitivities and other cognitions of their object of involvement” (“I Am the Other (Sometimes)” 10). This results in the spectator’s experience of the same emotions as the object of identification which, in turn, leads to a monoperspective view because the focus lies on one character alone. However, there is much disagreement among scholars regarding the definitions and dynamics of identificatory processes. Zillmann even challenges the possibility of identification with characters in film and does not consider it a useful concept to study involvement (Zillmann 39).

Empathy is defined as “a process in which the spectators understand the interests, perspectives, sensitivities and other cognitions of their object of involvement. They experience differences in those aspects, however. Their view and experience is different from the view and the emotions the characters seem to experience” (Schoenmakers, “I Am the Other (Sometimes)” 10). This results in a multi-perspective experience when different characters are in the spectator’s mental focus at the same time.

In Carroll’s theory, as explained by Neill, sympathy is the process of feeling something for or towards somebody regardless of their own feelings, whereas in empathy, the spectator shares a certain feeling with a character (Neill 241). It is important to note that in this case, sympathy can be seen as what Schoenmakers terms empathy, and empathy coincides with the concept that he calls identification. According to Neill, empathy paves a way to understanding a character’s internal situation, but in order to do so, one must be willing to assume the other’s position. In order to feel and understand what the character feels,

one has to be able to understand him or her in the first place. In literature, the reader mostly gains a detailed knowledge of a character's situation, which, on the one hand, can lead to a greater chance of empathising. On the other hand "we may be told so much about such characters that we do not *need* to empathize with them in order to understand them" (255, emphasis in the original). In film, there is normally less information given about the character's situation or state of mind – a situation that is significantly closer to everyday situations (ibid). Neill concludes that "empathy is *essentially* an imaginative matter, and that the imaginative activity characteristic of empathy both presupposes and is constrained by belief. Not only does empathizing with actual persons involve imagination as well as belief, but empathizing with fictional characters involves belief as well as imagination" (257, emphasis in the original).

Another important concept, mentioned by Andringa, is involvement, which she understands as "an emotional consequence of the processes of identification and empathy, whereas these processes themselves are defined as the establishment of a *relationship* between the recipient and the world of fiction. The type of relationship is determined in terms of similarity, desirability, or understanding as a witness" (210, emphasis in the original). It can take place on a different level than the purely empathetic or identificatory processes suggest. Those always seem to involve a similarity component between the spectator and the character. Andringa claims that "[r]eaders can be strongly fascinated by characters and worlds that are unfamiliar to them" (ibid.) as well, which means that "a recipient can simply be fascinated by the strangeness and otherness of the world of fiction without wanting to take part in this world" (ibid). Although she applies this concept to literature, I believe it can also hold true for film. In this case, not similarity, but dissimilarity is a cause of involvement in its broadest sense – not of identification, but of the reader's or spectator's attachment with the character.

Those involvement concepts are not universally accepted, and every scholar seems to use the concepts differently without establishing clear definitions (Schoenmakers, “Held im roten Plüsch” 211). While they are important when dealing with the mechanics of involvement processes, they are not necessary for this study. Since the aim is to determine the reason – psychologically and literary – why villains tend to invite readers to get emotionally involved with them, regardless of the specific way in which they get involved, Holland’s theory provides a more useful point of departure. The relationship between the reader or spectator and the villain shall be determined in terms of general involvement, encompassing all the identificatory and empathetic processes and adding another cognitive component to them instead of analysing the different processes individually. Such an approach may be attempted in further research, but goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

III. Evil on Paper and Screen: Literary and Filmic Analyses of Popular Villains

1. The Emerging Villain: Dynamics of Character Development

A. Michael Corleone

Mario Puzo – *The Godfather* (1969), Book 1

Introduction

The Godfather deals with the dynamics between different American Mafia families in New York and focuses especially on how their business affects their personal family life. This is exemplified in the story of the Corleone family. The novel is formally divided into nine books and served as a basis for the three *Godfather* films². It begins with the depiction of Don Vito Corleone's business affairs during his daughter Conny's wedding, signifying how closely private and business life is linked in such an environment. Various people ask for his help, which he may or may not refuse depending on the offer they make him. The trade-off for such a favour is that they owe the family something in return. This way, he secures their future support of him. The other family members are introduced in much detail, focusing on the distinction between Santino 'Sonny' and Fredo, the sons who actively participate in the Mafia business, and Michael, who rejects any kind of connection with it and defies his family by having an American girlfriend named Kay. Several days after the wedding, Vito is approached by Sollozzo, who wants the family's financial aid in his narcotics trade. He rejects the deal despite the risks he takes by doing so. The consequences follow shortly afterwards: his consigliere and adopted son Tom Hagen is kidnapped. In the meantime, Michael and Kay enjoy their night together and find out that Vito has been shot. This causes his son to return to

² The novel is divided into nine books, and three movies are a result thereof. This study only focuses on the first book and the first movie respectively because they both constitute completed narratives within the overall work that are, however, connected to the other narratives as well. Here, both are analysed as more or less independent works to investigate the plot manipulation in the presentation of each unit, which can be seen as the first unit of each work.

the family. It turns out that he has been shot several times while buying some fruit, which results in his heavy injuries and Fredo's nervous breakdown. Sollozzo finally releases Tom Hagen, instructing him to make the deal with Sonny instead, now that Vito is hospitalised. Sonny's counter-plan includes the death of Sollozzo, certain members of the Tattaglia family, and Paulie, the family soldier that betrayed the Corleones, thus making the shooting possible in the first place. Paulie is killed and replaced, and Luca Brasi is strangled during a meeting with Sollozzo and Bruno Tattaglia. Michael, now very much involved in the family business revolving around his father's shooting, explains the situation to Kay and promises to get married once it has been resolved. However, it turns out that this is the last time they see each other for the next years. Michael goes to see his father at the hospital, but finds out that he is unprotected. Knowing that Sollozzo is behind this, he informs Sonny and moves him to a different room to prevent another assassination attempt. Outside, he is approached by police captain McCluskey, employed by Sollozzo, who beats him up. Consequently, Michael presents his new plan at a meeting with Sonny, Clemenza and Tessio: he personally wants to assassinate Sollozzo and McCluskey, partly because he has never taken an active role in the Mafia business and is therefore able to get closer to them without their feeling too endangered. After Clemenza instructs Michael in all details on how to accomplish this plan, the meeting takes place at an Italian restaurant. Michael and Sollozzo discuss the deal in Italian. Afterwards he excuses himself to go to the bathroom, where he finds the gun that Clemenza has planted for him. Coming back, he shoots both without hesitation and is taken to Sicily to avoid police investigation. The first book ends with the statement that the war of the five families has begun, triggered specifically by this event.³

³ As this thesis only focuses on the first book, the other books shall not be summarised, but when discussing the adaptation, plot elements and manipulation of the other books are pointed out.

Formal Aspects of the Novel

The novel is told by an omniscient third-person narrator who is able to explore and access the actions and thoughts of all characters. The focus is thus placed on different figures and their functions within the story. While the main focus is placed on characters from or related to the Corleone family, others are explored occasionally, too. In general, the reader gets quite an extensive overview of the interactions within the Corleone family specifically. The other characters are mainly explored in relation to it.

Character Analysis

The main conflict Michael Corleone constantly deals with is his cognitive alienation from and his emotional loyalty to his family. When compared to other relatives, he is presented as an outsider. He is introduced as the third son of the Corleone family, which puts his character in relation to his brothers. Already his outer appearance claims a difference between them:

He did not have the heavy, Cupid-shaped face of the other children, and his jet black hair was straight rather than curly. His skin was a clear olive-brown that would have been called beautiful in a girl. He was handsome in a delicate way. Indeed there had been a time when the Don had worried about his youngest son's masculinity. A worry that was put to rest when Michael Corleone became seventeen years old. (Puzo 10)

His differences, apart from his outer appearance, are especially focused on in the issue of masculinity. All the sons' characterisations are strongly based on their sexual prowess, and any doubts of his own sexuality qualify him as a potential outsider long before he has made a conscious choice to alienate himself. Not only does his appearance make him different, he consciously chooses to be different. Even at his sister's wedding, he "did not stand with his father and his two brothers but sat at a table in the most secluded corner of the garden. [...]"

Michael Corleone was the youngest son of the Don and the only child who had refused the great man's direction" (ibid). This clarifies that he makes a conscious choice of alienation by refusing his father's guidance that the other brothers seek. He further rejects his family by establishing a relationship with an American girl instead of a Sicilian. Despite this, he wants his girlfriend Kay to understand what his family is like because he recognises the great role it has in his life and personality after all. This is one of the reasons why he invites her to his sister's wedding. However, "[h]e had never been completely honest with her about his family. He had told her about them but always with little jokes and colorful anecdotes that made them seem more like adventurers in a Technicolor movie than what they really were" (121). He even thinks of potential further measures such as changing his name. He is fully aware of the fact that his relationship with Kay implies a stronger distance to his family than he already demonstrates: "Michael would have to cut his close ties with his family. They both understood that Michael had already done so to some extent and yet they both felt guilty about this fact" (75).

He is nevertheless still respected and loved in his father's world and Vito has high expectations of him: "He had led her to believe that he was an alien in his father's world. Now Clemenza was assuring her in his wheezing guttural voice that the 'old man' thought Mike was the best of his sons, the one who would surely inherit the family business" (43-44). This is further complicated by his behaviour. He laughs off his public image of "a civilian" (120) and "the sissy of the Corleone family" (114). Even though Don Vito considers him a worthy successor, Michael does not even know Mafia customs: "What the hell does the fish mean?" (120) He is uncomfortable with the family business and wants to start a life disconnected from it. This is the personality he tries to show to Kay, how he wants to be perceived socially:

Just say that you've met a brave, handsome guy of Italian descent. Top marks at Dartmouth. Distinguished Service Cross during the war plus the Purple

Heart. Honest. Hardworking. But his father is a Mafia chief who has to kill bad people, sometimes bribe high government officials and in his line of work gets shot full of holes himself. But that has nothing to do with his honest hardworking son. (123)

Apart from his conscious alienation, he is openly characterised as a potential Don, which foreshadows his role as a potential villain⁴. This is especially shown in the similarities between Don Vito and Michael:

Every guest noticed that the Don paid no particular attention to this third son. Michael had been his favorite before the war and obviously the chosen heir to run the family business when the proper moment came. He had all the quiet force and intelligence of his great father, the born instinct to act in such a way that men had no recourse but to respect him. (10)

Despite the strong similarity to his father, Michael openly defies him by going to college. He still assesses his father more realistically than others, as demonstrated by Sonny: “he [Fredo] always thought the Don was God. He wasn’t like you and me, Mike” (97). He also understands his father best although he has not been actively involved in the business: “Michael, better than anyone else, understood when Tom had said it was just business, not personal. That his father had paid for the power he had wielded all his life, the respect he had extorted from all those around him” (122). In spite of his distance, he cannot deny the influences that his father has had on his life and openly states this, too: “I listened to the old man just as hard as you did. How do you think I got so smart?” (139)

Michael begins as a character that embodies certain features of a good protagonist. He rejects his family not based on emotional, but moral standards and makes every conscious

⁴ The perspective that is assumed in the novel is that of the Corleone family, which makes the other Mafia families the villains. However, all characters display actions that can be seen as morally unjustified. Even though Michael is not an active villain, he develops into a *villainous character*, only partly seen as a real villain depending on the perspective that is assumed in the scene. This term shall be further used to classify him in order to avoid confusion with the active function of a villain.

effort not to get involved in the Mafia business. His transformation to a villainous character takes place only on the basis of emotional issues, which reinforces the inner conflict that he presents throughout the whole novel. Upon seeing his father's injury in the paper, he "felt his body turning to ice. There was no grief, no fear, just cold rage" (77). Curious for a morally good person, his instinctive reaction is rage, not grief. This foreshadows that he will later on take the emotional and impulsive, not the moral and contemplated path. His family tries to protect him from the business because he never wanted to get involved in it. Love and loyalty to his father are the forces that eventually win over his moral reservations:

You lousy bastard, he's my father. I'm not supposed to help him? I can help. I don't have to go out and kill people but I can help. Stop treating me like a kid brother. I was in the war. I got shot, remember? I killed some Japs. What the hell do you think I'll do when you knock somebody off? Faint? (91)

At first, it is hard for him to take part in such a business. He even refuses to decide on a hypothetical death sentence for either Clemenza or Paulie. Despite his apparent willingness to help out, he does not really want to. At the same time he is embarrassed by his non-involvement as "[h]e felt awkward, almost ashamed, and he noticed Clemenza and Tessio with faces so carefully impassive that he was sure that they were hiding their contempt" (99). His standpoint on his involvement in the business is very contradictory. On the one hand, he wants to help due to his strong sense of loyalty, and "he was annoyed with the role assigned to him, that of the privileged noncombatant, the excused conscientious objector" (122). On the other hand, "[h]e felt uncomfortable being on the inside of the Family councils as if he could be absolutely trusted with such secrets as murder" (121). He goes back and forth between wanting and not wanting to be involved.

His visit at the hospital constitutes the second turning point in his transformation. He discovers that his father is unprotected and takes initiative. While clearly calculated with a

more or less level head, his reactions are initialised by his emotions: “For the first time since it had all started he felt a furious anger rising in him, a cold hatred for his father’s enemies” (125). He gets beaten up by McCluskey, but decides not to fight back or press charges against him. Instead, he takes the less civilised approach by volunteering to take action: “‘Then I’ll take both of them.’ All four heads turned and stared at him. Clemenza and Tessio were gravely astonished. Hagen looked a little sad but not surprised” (136). In the course of this plan, he turns more and more into a figure resembling Don Vito, which confirms the foreshadowing of his potential role as head of the family:

The change in him was so extraordinary that the smiles vanished from the faces of Clemenza and Tessio. Michael was not tall or heavily built but his presence seemed to radiate danger. In that moment he was a reincarnation of Don Corleone himself. His eyes had gone a pale tan and his face was bleached of color. He seemed at any moment about to fling himself on his older and stronger brother. [...] For the second time he saw Michael Corleone’s face freeze into a mask that resembled uncannily the Don’s. ‘Tom, don’t let anybody kid you. It’s all personal, every bit of business. Every piece of shit every man has to eat every day of his life is personal. They call it business. OK. But it’s personal as hell. You know where I learned that from? The Don. My old man. The Godfather. If a bolt of lightning hit a friend of his the old man would take it personal. He took my going into the Marines personal. That’s what makes him great. The Great Don. He takes everything personal. Like God. He knows every feather that falls from the tail of a sparrow or however the hell it goes. Right? And you know something? Accidents don’t happen to people who take accidents as a personal insult. So I came late, OK, but I’m coming all the way. (137, 150)

By sticking to his plan and committing both murders in cold blood, Michael actively overcomes his reservations towards his family and becomes one of them. As the first book ends with his committing the murder, it only paves the way for his future development from a morally good to a villainous character. The rest of his development is explored in Book 6, which focuses on his stay in Sicily where he truly becomes ‘his father’s son’.

The Godfather Part I (1972), directed by Francis Ford Coppola

The first film encompasses plot elements from the other books as well; the plot of the first book is only a part of the whole film. On the other hand, some of the other books are hardly explored in the film. After Michael’s murder of Sollozzo and McCluskey, his taking refuge in Sicily as well as his marriage to a Sicilian girl is depicted, while Fredo is sent to Las Vegas. Meanwhile, the war between the Five Families goes on. Sonny takes matters into his own impulsive hands, attacking his sister’s husband Carlo because he had been abusing her. Sonny is murdered thereafter. Michael’s wife is killed by a car bomb originally intended for him. After Vito settles the dispute between the Five Families during a conference, Michael is allowed back in New York⁵. He marries Kay, whom he had not had any contact with during his absence, and gradually replaces Vito as head of the family after the latter’s semi-retirement. Making use of his new powers, he replaces Tom Hagen with his father. However, Vito soon dies a natural death. At his funeral, Michael finds out that Tessio has betrayed him. He is also asked to become godfather to Carlo and Connie’s son. On the day of the christening, the Dons of the other families, Tessio, and Carlo, who confesses to have betrayed Sonny, are assassinated. When accused by his upset sister about her husband’s assassination,

⁵ The film depicts Michael as a simple refugee in Sicily, where he gets married and leads an ordinary life. In the novel, he is mentored by old-fashioned Mafia Dons, thus getting deeper to the roots of his family’s origins and learning their ways. This shows how readily he is able to accept this role after all and prepares him for his position after his return.

Kay confronts him as well. He denies his involvement and is soon after officially accepted as Don Corleone.

The plot, encompassing other books as well, is presented in a linear fashion with a focus on causality. Only some explicit plot manipulations can be detected, such as the announcement of Don Vito's injury after Christmas shopping instead of the sexually loaded evening with Kay⁶. Just like the novel, the film attempts to represent reality as closely as possible. However, some aspects of the film seem less credible than others and are more dominant in the film because they are shown visually, not written down. It would seem that a family with such strong Sicilian ties would speak Italian whenever they are not in public. Nevertheless, all characters speak English with each other, only occasionally switching back and forth. This coincides with some instances in the book, where it is pointed out that they speak Italian. For Vito, it seems important that they talk in English as well. This would then be a choice of his upbringing, but it can be a distracting and confusing element when heard in the film. Through the omniscient narration, demonstrated in also depicting scenes outside the family, the spectator gains more information than Michael, who knows even less than the other characters. On the other hand, the spectator knows and understands significantly less of the events when they speak Italian and it is, occasionally, not subtitled, for instance in the scene at the restaurant.

Michael Corleone demonstrates all character traits that the novel ascribes to him. He is calm, even under stress, humorous, loving and charming towards Kay, but also very secretive about his family. He is openly detached from it and demonstrates strong intelligence and good instincts. For instance, he realises that the car bomb is there shortly before it goes off. Even his outer appearance is in accordance with the novel. It is significant that he is first introduced while wearing his military jacket, reminding the spectator of his courage as a war hero. Later

⁶ Apart from this, the overall plot of the novel is selectively manipulated, not even touching on many aspects of the books.

on, his former charismatic appearance is deteriorated by his broken jaw. Al Pacino, instructed in Method Acting (2007 *Inside the Actors Studio: Al Pacino*), contributes to the convincing elements in the film. He assumes the character completely and does not overplay any aspect. In fact, he tones down his acting to make Michael realistic and convincing. In his speech, he is straightforward, which manifests itself for instance by telling the story of Johnny Fontane. His choice of words and manner of speaking are rather careful at the beginning, but become more assertive and dominant as the film goes on. He only talks when necessary and never says more than needed, which makes it hard to understand what is going on inside him as he does not voice his thoughts. He only raises his voice once he is the head of the family during negotiations, and his choice of words is manipulative and characteristic of the Mafia: "I'll make him an offer he can't refuse."⁷ The omniscient narrator in the novel gives many important insights into his internal world. This element is lacking in the film. This, too, leads to the spectator's inability to understand the internal struggle between morality and emotions that is such a dominant part of his character in the novel. While the issue of morality is hardly explored, his alienation despite his family's love and efforts is explored well. Like in the novel, his relationship with Kay can be seen as a form of defiance. It reinforces his conflict because he is unable to tell her the truth. Michael appears to still love her after the time he spent in Sicily, but only comes to see her after he has returned for a year already. He immediately asks her to marry him, to which she consents, leading to their establishing a family with children. Here, he emphasises the American instead of the Sicilian family; when talking about his first wife while she is still alive, he says she will be a good *American* wife.

The Corleone family tries not to get him involved in the family business, and he only takes an active role late in the film. The novel places a strong focus on his similarity to Vito as perceived by other characters. Lacking the immediate access to their thoughts in the film,

⁷ All transcripts that follow in this paper are my own.

the spectator has to draw his own conclusions about his father as a dramatic foil to Michael. Vito is established as the head of the Corleone family, which includes mutual respect, reason, cruelty and empathy. The first time he loses his temper is not during a negotiation, as is the case with Michael, but when his godson Johnny Fontane cries. He is very weak at the hospital, but his condition improves significantly. Even in this situation, his main concern is Michael. He finds out about Barzini's involvement, but decides not to retaliate and instead semi-retires from the family business. He coaches Michael into the role of a Don. They get closer to one another here, and their relationship becomes more emotional. He starts voicing his regrets, claiming that he never wanted 'this' for Michael; he had plans for him to become Senator or Governor instead. In the last moments of his life, Vito is portrayed in his role as grandfather, not as a Mafia boss. He happily plays with his grandson and has a heart attack, resulting in a big, respectful funeral. Only after his death does Michael really become the head of the family. Before, everybody still turned to Vito for advice despite his semi-retirement.

Another dramatic foil can be found in Tom Hagen on the basis of their dissimilarities. His decisions are essentially different from Michael's. He is not connected to the family by birth, which is Michael's main source of loyalty, but is willingly and emotionally part of it: "I'm as much a son to him as you or Mike." He is in Vito's closest inner circle and differs from the family in his appearance stemming from his German-Irish heritage. He has more reason to feel alienated from the family, but consciously chooses the life that Michael has a hard time accepting.

Unlike the novel, the film shows Michael's development to a full-fledged villain by introducing plot elements from the other books. He first displays a strong alienation from his family, but becomes more assertive later on, takes control of situations, and becomes professional in Mafia business. There is a distinction between personal issues and business. Michael, for instance, takes the news about Sonny's death much better than Vito. The more

the film progresses, the more cold-hearted he becomes. This presents a strong contrast to his character at the beginning of the film.

Most characteristic of his transformation into a villain is the scene of the christening during which, using cross-cuts, parallel action shows the baptism, i.e. his becoming a godfather, while murders in his name are committed. It especially shows how cold-hearted he has become, and how his conscience does not seem troubled by the recent events:

Priest: Do you renounce Satan?

Michael: I do renounce him.

Priest: And all his works?

Michael: I do renounce them.

Priest: And all his poms?

Michael: I do renounce them.

After the christening, he threatens Carlo, the father of the baby, for having a role in Sonny's death: "Today I settle all family business." He has him killed despite ensuring him that he will not. Connie openly accuses him, but when he is in turn confronted by Kay, he lies to her, further stating: "Don't ask me about my business!" The last shot of the film completes his transformation to a full-fledged villain. It shows various people coming up and embracing him, kissing his hand, and openly acknowledging his position by calling him "Don Corleone."

Conclusion

While the first book only paves the way for Michael's development to a villainous character, merely showing the beginning of his Mafia career, the first film establishes his full villainous character. He undergoes an enormous change in this film, whereas he stays a rather stable villainous figure in the others. Michael's complexity in the novel stems from his strong inner conflict between morality and loyalty. One of the main forces that drive him is his strong

sense of loyalty, to his father especially, that overcomes his moral reservations. His strong aversion to organised crime, around which his family revolves, makes him an outsider both physically and mentally in the family circle. Since organised crime is a main plot element, and all conflicts arise from it, his rejection makes him inaccessible to both spectator and the other characters. In the novel, a greater understanding of his motivations is possible due to the fact that the narrator gives crucial insight into his mind. His attitude towards the family business and his changes are understandable in the novel, but lacking such special insight, he is quite inaccessible to the spectator. This in turn calls for the viewer's active cognitive involvement in order to make sense of the change he undergoes.

B. Heathcliff

Emily Brontë – *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

Introduction

Wuthering Heights is nowadays seen as a classic of British literature. It deals with the dynamics within and between the Earnshaw and Linton families in North England, and especially the conflict between each family and their landlord Heathcliff. Its frame narration is set by Mr Lockwood who comes to live at Thrushcross Grange. After his arrival, he travels to Wuthering Heights to see his landlord, and is repelled by his behaviour and the disorganised state his family is in. Upon his return, his housekeeper Mrs Dean tells him the story of the strange family for which she has worked for many years.

She begins with Heathcliff's arrival at Wuthering Heights. As a child, he is taken in and adopted by Mr Earnshaw, who found him homeless in Liverpool. While he becomes very attached to Earnshaw's daughter Catherine⁸, the son of the family, Hindley, develops a strong hatred towards him. Earnshaw favours him over his other children. After his death, Hindley becomes the despotic head of the family and takes away Heathcliff's status, turning him into a mere servant. The latter still spends much time with Cathy until an incident at Thrushcross Grange, owned and inhabited by the Lintons, forces her to stay there for her recovery. When she returns, she has adapted the mannerisms of a lady and shuns Heathcliff's attempts to impress or spend time with her. Hindley excessively turns to alcohol after his wife died in childbirth. Cathy eventually accepts Edgar Linton's marriage proposal, but confides her doubts to Mrs Dean. She claims that Heathcliff's servant status would degrade her, although her eternal love belongs to him. Having only accidentally heard her statement about her possible degradation, he runs away, not staying to hear the rest of her declaration.

⁸ In order to maintain clarity, Catherine Earnshaw shall only be referred to as Cathy, whereas her daughter shall be referred to as Catherine.

He returns after three years, shortly after Edgar and Cathy's wedding. He has turned into a gentleman and acquired large amounts of money. He refuses to give any information about his absence. Cathy becomes infatuated with Heathcliff once again, but their change brings much conflict between the two. Edgar's sister Isabella falls in love with Heathcliff, who despises her but courts her to take revenge on Edgar. After a harsh confrontation between the two men, Cathy becomes fatally ill, and Heathcliff and Isabella run away to get married. This prompts Edgar to disown his sister. On their return, Heathcliff forces Mrs Dean to arrange a private meeting with Cathy. They share some romantic moments before Cathy finally dies giving birth to her daughter Catherine. Isabella escapes her violent husband, and Hindley dies soon after, leaving the property and his son Hareton to Heathcliff.

Catherine is raised by Edgar. He wants to take in his sister's son Linton after her death, but Heathcliff claims him for himself. Catherine meets Heathcliff by accident during one of her walks years later. He devises another revenge scheme of marrying Catherine and Linton to become master of both properties. Catherine and Linton's relationship is frowned upon by Edgar, who senses foul play. When he is on the point of death, Heathcliff keeps Catherine and Ellen captive at Wuthering Heights, forcing the execution of his plan. Catherine is married to Heathcliff's sickly son. With Linton's help, she manages to spend the last days of his life with her father. After Edgar's death, she has to permanently live at Wuthering Heights. Linton dies soon after, leaving his wife's property to Heathcliff.

The plot reaches the present again. Lockwood, repelled by Heathcliff's actions, returns to his old home. On his return months later, Mrs Dean explains that a romantic relationship started to develop between Hareton and Catherine in his absence, while Heathcliff's state of mind deteriorated due to his continuous obsession with Cathy. He displayed strange behaviour, including hallucinations and a refusal to eat. He eventually died in his room and was buried next to Cathy, leaving the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights to start a new life.

Formal Aspects of the Novel

The novel is constructed with Lockwood's diary entries, which constitute the frame narrative. Ellen Dean's narrative is recorded by him in long direct quotations to the extent that the reader may easily forget the existence of the frame narrative. Both are first-person narratives. Lockwood and Mrs Dean attempt to recount the story as objectively as possible. However, since they present the events from their point of view, their own judgements strongly influence the way it is told. Both are very detailed narratives. Especially in Ellen's narrative, this might reduce her reliability to the sceptical reader given that she comprises several decades in such a detailed manner. However, I did not find this factor disturbing at all, and accepted her voice of wisdom as a reliable source.

Character Analysis

In the present, Lockwood is the main source of information regarding Heathcliff's character at the end of all the changes he has undergone in his life. He is straightforward and suspicious of everyone around him, claiming that "[a] stranger is a stranger, be he rich or poor: it will not suit me to permit any one the range of the place while I am off guard!" (Brontë 11). He is solitary, reserved and hostile: "The 'walk in' was uttered with closed teeth, and expressed the sentiment, 'Go to the Deuce'" (1). In his treatment of others, he is unfriendly and deliberately provocative, even resorting to physical violence. For instance, he is characterised "with an almost diabolical sneer on his face" (8), revealing his "genuine bad nature" (ibid.), and his violence is exemplified when "Heathcliff lifted his hand, and the speaker sprang to a safer distance, obviously acquainted with its weight" (21). He is bitter and sarcastic, laughs at others' misfortunes and has a strict routine in life. On the other hand, he displays some characteristics of a gentleman as well, such as intelligence and wealth. Lockwood gives a rather extensive evaluation of him upon meeting him for the first time:

But Mr Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a dark- skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman: that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure; and rather morose. [...] I know, by instinct, his reserve springs from an aversion to showy displays of feeling – to manifestations of mutual kindness. He'll love and hate equally under cover, and esteem it a species of impertinence to be loved or hated again. (3)

However, he admits that he might project his own attributes onto him, thus discrediting his evaluation and inviting the reader to form one of their own. Heathcliff only openly shows emotions when Lockwood has a nightmare in Cathy's old room:

He got on to the bed, and wrenched open the lattice, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears. 'Come in! come in!' he sobbed. 'Cathy, do come. Oh, do – *once* more! Oh! my heart's darling! hear me *this* time, Catherine, at last! (20, emphasis in the original)

All these events remain unexplained at the beginning. Lockwood does not understand what is going on, and neither does the reader, calling for the necessity of the full story to be told to make sense of Heathcliff's behaviour and lack of emotional attachment. The first hints about his past are given in Cathy's diary entries that Lockwood finds. She writes that "Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won't let him sit with us, nor eat with us any more; and, he says, he and I must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house if we break his orders" (15). This sets the tone for his tragic, emotional and complex background story.

Ellen Dean claims to know all about Heathcliff, "except where he was born, and who were his parents, and how he got his money at first" (23). This characterises her as a reliable source of information due to her involvement with most of his life. When she recounts his

coming to the family, it becomes clear that his heritage presents an obstacle to his acceptance; in this tale, she frequently calls him ‘it’. Mr Earnshaw overcomes his family’s rejection and even gives him the “name of a son who died in childhood, and it has served him ever since, both for Christian and surname” (26).

Mrs Dean recounts his whole personality development, sure to show that external forces were mostly responsible for who he became. At the beginning, he was “a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment” (26) and “*he* was as uncomplaining as a lamb; though hardness, not gentleness, made him give little trouble” (27, emphasis in the original). After Earnshaw’s death, Hindley’s treatment and lifestyle make a lasting impression on Heathcliff:

he contrived to convey an impression of inward and outward repulsiveness that his present aspect retains no traces of. In the first place, he had by that time lost the benefit of his early education: continual hard work, begun soon and concluded late, had extinguished any curiosity he once possessed in pursuit of knowledge, and any love for books or learning. His childhood's sense of superiority [...] was faded away. He struggled long to keep up an equality with Catherine in her studies, and yielded with poignant though silent regret [...] there was no prevailing on him to take a step in the way of moving upward, when he found he must, necessarily, sink beneath his former level. (47-48)

Mrs Dean can account for his development in those years. There is a gap in her knowledge however, constituted by the three years of his absence. After these, a much more prominent change can be detected, and because of his secrecy, it cannot be accounted for. All of a sudden, he is a gentleman, much closer to his present self than before his escape. Apart from his status, he is perceived as deliberately evil: “His visits were a continual nightmare to me [...] His abode at the Heights was an oppression past explaining. I felt that God had

forsaken the stray sheep there to its own wicked wanderings, and an evil beast prowled between it and the fold, waiting his time to spring and destroy” (78). Isabella even characterises him as a devil and does not acknowledge him as being entirely human (99). He is manipulative, demonstrating his intelligence. Once his money and behaviour secure him the status of the properties’ master, he completely assumes this role, a strong contrast to his former servant role. Another decisive personality change takes place after Cathy’s death. He has a complete nervous breakdown and does not care whether people see his emotional state. He even resorts to hurting himself physically. This shall be discussed further on, when his special relationship with Cathy is explored in greater detail.

His physical appearance changes along with his personality, emphasising the great alteration he undergoes that affects him not only mentally, but completely engulfs him. Mrs Dean points this out explicitly:

Then personal appearance sympathised with mental deterioration: he acquired a slouching gait, and ignoble look; his naturally reserved disposition was exaggerated into an almost idiotic excess of unsociable moroseness; and he took a grim pleasure, apparently, in exciting the aversion rather than the esteem of his few acquaintance. (48)

After his return, his posture is quite athletic and impressive and “[h]is upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army. His countenance [...] looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilised ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified” (69). Cathy’s death, then, does not only result in emotional, but also physical deterioration:

His hair and clothes were whitened with snow, and his sharp cannibal teeth, revealed by cold and wrath, gleamed through the dark [...] his basilisk eyes were nearly quenched by sleeplessness – and weeping, perhaps, for the lashes

were wet then; his lips devoid of their ferocious sneer, and sealed in an expression of unspeakable sadness. (128, 130)

Heathcliff mainly characterises himself through his relationship with Cathy and his strong obsession with her. Their friendship starts as children, where he almost seems to worship her, saying that “she is so immeasurably superior to them – to everybody on earth, is she not, Nelly?” (35) While impassive whenever maltreated by anyone else, he is clearly hurt when she returns from her extended stays at the Linton’s. This demonstrates that she is the only one who can get close to him. When she makes fun of him, he withdraws from her, claiming, “I shall not stand to be laughed at. I shall not bear it! [...] You needn’t have touched me! [...] I shall be as dirty as I please: and I like to be dirty, and I will be dirty” (37). He is shocked and hurt by her new attire. Nevertheless, he is willing to change for her, though unsuccessfully. He grows jealous of Edgar and Isabella and sees that their friendship suffers enormously from this: “look at the almanack on that wall [...] The crosses are for the evenings you have spent with the Lintons, the dots for those spent with me. Do you see? I’ve marked every day [...] to show that I *do* take notice” (49, emphasis in the original). Cathy, however, becomes increasingly arrogant and is unaffected by his efforts. She even insults and rejects him openly: “You might be dumb, or a baby, for anything you say to amuse me, or for anything you do, either! [...] It’s no company at all, when people know nothing and say nothing” (ibid). Despite this, she secretly confesses to Mrs Dean the strong love between them:

It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him [...] because he’s more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same [...] My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff! He’s always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more

than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. (57, 59, emphasis in the original)

He only stays to hear that their marriage would be a degradation and leaves, unable to bear any more of it. When he returns years later, they still have affection for each other, but cannot be together because of her marriage. She has never left his mind though, and he claims to have thought much more of her than she has of him (69). He even explains that Cathy is the only reason he changed and survived in those years: “I’ve fought through a bitter life since I last heard your voice; and you must forgive me, for I struggled only for you!” (70) Cathy defies her husband’s reservations and sees Heathcliff regularly. She still understands him and his motives better than anyone else. This, but probably also her own feelings for him, is the reason she tries to save Isabella from him: “Pray, don’t imagine that he conceals depths of benevolence and affection beneath a stern exterior! He’s not a rough diamond – a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic: he’s a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. [...] he’d crush you like a sparrow’s egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge” (74).

At first, they do not talk about their conflict in the past, how Cathy’s behaviour made him run away. He is still hurt though, and in a heated confrontation, he accuses her:

I want you to be aware that I *know* you have treated me infernally – infernally! Do you hear? And if you flatter yourself that I don’t perceive it, you are a fool; and if you think I can be consoled by sweet words, you are an idiot; and if you fancy I’ll suffer unrevenged, I’ll convince you of the contrary, in a very little while! [...] I seek no revenge on you [...] That’s not the plan. The tyrant grinds down his slaves and they don’t turn against him; they crush those beneath them. You are welcome to torture me to death for your amusement, only allow me to amuse myself a little in the same style, and refrain from insult as much as you are able. (81, emphasis in the original)

His disrespectful and vengeful behaviour then is a result not only of the treatment he has received by Hindley when growing up, but also of Cathy's rejection. She still has influence on him, but he takes his bitterness and frustration out on others. Although their love has neither future nor present because of the circumstances, she is an inherent part of his life. She is the *only* person whose existence can give him happiness. He is aware of this fact, too: "Two words would comprehend my future – *death* and *hell*: existence, after losing her, would be hell" (108, emphasis in the original). On her deathbed, he repeatedly visits her in secret. Now that they have the necessary privacy, and knowing that she will not live much longer, they are finally able to express their feelings for each other passionately. Here, "[h]e neither spoke nor loosed his hold for some five minutes, during which period he bestowed more kisses than ever he gave in his life before [...] my mistress had kissed him first, and I plainly saw that he could hardly bear, for downright agony, to look into her face!" (115)

The last living moments of Cathy are crucial to the further understanding of his character. Despite the strong love they share, they also share disappointment and anger. Heathcliff sums up the interplay of emotions that is at stake of their love-hate relationship:

You teach me now how cruel you've been – cruel and false. *Why* did you despise me? *Why* did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort. You deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my kisses and tears: they'll blight you – they'll damn you. You loved me – then what *right* had you to leave me? [...] Because misery, and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or satan [*sic*] could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart – *you* have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine. [...] Do I want to live? [...] would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave? [...] I

forgive what you have done to me. I love *my* murderer - but *yours*! How can I?
(117, emphasis in the original)

How strongly love and hate intertwines in their relationship is demonstrated after her death. Heathcliff curses her soul to be with her: “may you not rest as long as I am living! You said I killed you – haunt me, then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers. [...] Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad! only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you!” (122, emphasis in the original) He even disturbs her coffin to replace Edgar’s lock with his.

As pointed out before, Heathcliff’s behaviour changes after Cathy’s death. For more than a decade, he maintains his hateful attitude towards everyone else, finding only pleasure and meaning in revenge. Since Cathy is the core of his world even after her death, his attitude towards the other characters puts them in relation to her. The rivalry between Edgar Linton and Heathcliff goes back to their youth, both fighting for Cathy’s attention when “even Heathcliff kept his hold on her affections unalterably; and young Linton, with all his superiority, found it difficult to make an equally deep impression” (46). He feels threatened by him because of his higher social status, which eventually makes Cathy choose Edgar over Heathcliff. After his return, Edgar is barely able to tolerate him and finally forbids him entrance to Thrushcross Grange, claiming that his “presence is a moral poison that would contaminate the most virtuous” (83). Heathcliff, on the other hand, only has contempt for Edgar, describing him as a “slavering, shivering thing” (84). He manages to turn this rivalry against Edgar and secures Catherine with it, forbidding her to mention her visits to prevent his interference. Even here, he twists the truth to manipulate her, only mentioning a small part of the problem they have: “He thought me too poor to wed his sister [...] and was grieved that I got her: his pride was hurt, and he’ll never forgive it” (158). He utterly despises Isabella Linton and only takes her as his wife in order to follow his evil scheme. According to her account, he abuses her both physically and mentally:

The adjective *our* gave mortal offence. He swore it was not, nor ever should be mine; and he'd – but I'll not repeat his language, nor describe his habitual conduct: he is ingenious and unresting in seeking to gain my abhorrence! I sometimes wonder at him with an intensity that deadens my fear: yet, I assure you, a tiger or a venomous serpent could not rouse terror in me equal to that which he wakens. (105-106, emphasis in the original)

She finally manages to escape from him. Heathcliff does not go after her even though he knows where she lives, demonstrating how little he cares for her (133). He does not treat his son any differently. He describes him as his “property” (150). His lack of affection is explained by their dissimilarities: “Thou art thy mother's child, entirely! Where is *my* share in thee, puling chicken? [...Y]our mother was a wicked slut to leave you in ignorance of the sort of father you possessed” (151, emphasis in the original). His scheme for Linton's treatment is clear: “I'll be *very* kind to him, you needn't fear [...] Only nobody else must be kind to him: I'm jealous of monopolising his affection [...] I despise him for himself, and hate him for the memories he revives!” (ibid., emphasis in the original). He does not spend much time with his son hereafter, unable to deal with him in a civilised manner. The only use he has for Linton is for him to marry Catherine, securing Heathcliff's ownership of the estates. He manipulates this relationship to the extent that he dictates Linton's letters to her to prompt her affection. His maltreatment of his son becomes obvious in the latter's reactions: “But my father threatened me [...] and I dread him – I dread him! I *dare* not tell!” (194, emphasis in the original).

One would expect Heathcliff's attitude to Catherine to be more favourable than it is, considering that she is Cathy's daughter. However, he blames her for Cathy's death, which sets the tone for their further relationship. He deliberately tries to hurt her by talking ill of her father: “He cursed you, I dare say, for coming into the world (I did, at least). And it would just

do if he cursed you as *he* went out of it. I'd join him. I don't love you!" (199, emphasis in the original) Cathy's influence over him can only partly be extended to Catherine. She is frightened by him, and after a while she learns to accept this treatment, even enduring his teasing her after his son's death. Catherine is her mother's daughter at least in the insight she has into Heathcliff:

Mr. Heathcliff, *you* have *nobody* to love you; and, however miserable you make us, we shall still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty arises from your greater misery! You are miserable, are you not? Lonely, like the devil, and envious like him? *Nobody* loves you – *nobody* will cry for you when you die! I wouldn't be you!" (208, emphasis in the original)

Apart from his love for Cathy, his hate for Hindley is another factor that constitutes his personality and explains his choices. Hindley has always treated him badly. Their confrontation finally comes to a climax, at which Heathcliff formulated his future path: "I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do!" (42) He avoids his anger at all cost when growing up, even to the point of shock at accidentally saving Hindley's son Hareton from a potentially deadly fall: "Had it been dark, I dare say, he would have tried to remedy the mistake by smashing Hareton's skull on the steps" (53). His vengeful plan is initiated on his return. Hindley, now a wasteful drunk, is dependent on Heathcliff's money and finds himself in his debt. This is the reason why he is allowed to live at Wuthering Heights despite their mutual dislike. Hindley explains that he is repeatedly tempted to kill him; the only thing preventing him from doing so is the fact that Heathcliff locks his door at night. Hindley's death does not affect him at all. In fact, his behaviour "expressed a flinty gratification at a piece of difficult work successfully executed. [...] He had the hypocrisy to represent a mourner" (136).

His revenge on Hindley for having made him the person that he is does not stop with his death. He now projects his revenge on Hareton by treating him the same way he was treated: “Now, my bonny lad, you are *mine!* And we’ll see if one tree won’t grow as crooked as another, with the same wind to twist it!” (ibid., emphasis in the original) Although he does not abuse him physically, he does not give him the chance to become a decent person either as “he was never taught to read or write; never rebuked for any bad habit which did not annoy his keeper; never led a single step towards virtue, or guarded by a single precept against vice” (143). And indeed, his social experiment with Hareton is a success in his eyes:

He has satisfied my expectations. If he were a born fool I should not enjoy it half so much. But he’s no fool; and I can sympathise with all his feelings, having felt them myself. I know what he suffers now, for instance, exactly: it is merely a beginning of what he shall suffer, though. And he’ll never be able to emerge from his bathos of coarseness and ignorance. I’ve got him faster than his scoundrel of a father secured me, and lower; for he takes a pride in his brutishness. (159)

His treatment of Hareton is especially tragic given their affection for one another. Heathcliff values him more than his own son: “Do you know that, twenty times a day, I covet Hareton, with all his degradation? I’d have loved the lad had he been some one else [...] one is gold put to the use of paving-stones, and the other is tin polished to ape a service of silver” (158-159). Hareton’s affection is real. He is the only one to honestly mourn his death:

But poor Hareton, the most wronged, was the only one that really suffered much. He sat by the corpse all night, weeping in bitter earnest. He pressed its hand, and kissed the sarcastic, savage face that every one else shrank from contemplating; and bemoaned him with that strong grief which springs naturally from a generous heart, though it be tough as tempered steel. (244)

While his revenge schemes distract him over the years, Cathy's death never loosens its impact on him. He claims to have been tormented by her memories for years. This can partly be explained by his reaction to the harsh words on her deathbed: "Do you reflect that all those words will be branded in my memory, and eating deeper eternally after you have left me? [...] Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell?" (116) Not only the good memories of her, but especially the bad memories of her accusations are bound to stay with him until his own death. His grief reaches its climax in the last year of his life. He gradually withdraws from the world, becomes more and more absorbed in his suffering. Hareton and Catherine grow closer to each other and start to defy him. At some point, he simply seems to give up:

My old enemies have not beaten me; now would be the precise time to revenge myself on their representatives: I could do it; and none could hinder me. But where is the use? [...] I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing. (234)

Meanwhile, his obsession with Cathy's ghost grows to the point of frequent hallucinations and reminders wherever he looks: "The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her!" (235) He loses his will to live and neglects his physical needs. Shortly before his death, he grows cheerful for the last time: "Last night, I was on the threshold of hell. Today, I am within sight of my heaven. I have my eyes on it hardly three feet to sever me!" (238) In spite of his impending death, he does not make amends for his past actions, claiming, "I've done no injustice, and I repent of nothing – I'm too happy, and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but does not satisfy itself" (242).

The doctor is unable to proclaim the cause of death. Heathcliff is buried next to Cathy, in accordance with the arrangements he had made previously. The life at Wuthering Heights

goes on, happier and better than ever possible in his presence, and Hareton and Catherine are free. However, it is not clear whether he actually found peace, considering that “the country folks [...] would swear on their bible that he *walks*. There are those who speak to having met him near the church, and on the moor, and even within this house” (244, emphasis in the original). The idea of a happy ending, induced by his strong wish to be reunited with Cathy in death, is not necessarily confirmed here, leaving the final interpretation open to the reader.

Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights (1992), directed by Peter Kosminsky

Wuthering Heights is an intermediate adaptation of the novel. Many plot manipulations can be detected: the film focuses only on the love story between Heathcliff and Cathy. In order to clarify this, scenes are added exploring their relationship in depth. All the other sub-plots and societal dynamics are largely neglected, although the general storyline is maintained. Ellen Dean’s perspective is not assumed at all in the film. It is not framed by Lockwood’s diary entries either. Instead, a focus is placed on the fact that the story is an imaginary tale, not a representation of reality. This is achieved by assuming the frame narrative of Emily Brontë’s narration of the story. At the beginning, she is shown entering an old estate, wondering what characters might have lived there. Her authorship is exemplified in her voiceovers during the first lines of dialogue, although it is used less frequently thereafter. To remind the spectator of the artificiality of the story, the film ends with her closure of the narrative, too. Like the novel, the story begins when Lockwood arrives at Wuthering Heights and the present-day Heathcliff is introduced. After his nightmares the film shows a flashback to Heathcliff’s life which is then followed chronologically up to the repetition of the first scene. This time, though, it is shown from Catherine’s perspective, and only then assumes Heathcliff’s perspective, too.

His overall character development is captured well in the film. In the present, he is rude and arrogant. In the past, he is silent, detached from everyone except Cathy, and treats

other life with disrespect, for instance when he starves the birds because he cannot show them to her. He grows bitterer the more arrogant she becomes after her stay at Thrushcross Grange. When he returns – after two, not after the three years the novel dictates – he is a changed man, much more a gentleman than a servant. At the same time, he is openly crueller than before. Like in the novel, he does not say where he has been in the meantime. He does agree to all the background questions he is asked, but does not volunteer any information himself.

Heathcliff's appearance, too, captures the essence of his character well, although all characters appear much older than in the novel. He has long hair and slightly darker skin than the others, which presents him as an outsider. He has attentive, angry eyes and an impassive face, demonstrating how little he cares for his surroundings unless Cathy is involved. His return as a gentleman is emphasised by his elegant clothing and grooming. This presents a stark contrast to his present appearance, which is still elegant, but at the same time shabby; he does not take good care of himself anymore. He tends to be shown in low-angle shots. This extends the effect he has on the other characters, which resent and are frightened of him, to the spectator. He is briefly in focus during Mrs Dean's and Cathy's conversation, emphasising that he has heard about her refusal to marry him. Heathcliff is largely quiet and only speaks when necessary. His formerly uneducated choice of words changes when he returns and adapts his dialogue to a gentleman fashion as well, demonstrating calmness most of the time and using well-chosen elaborate words. Some of the dialogues are kept quite close to the novel, mainly when dealing with the expression of their relationship. Ralph Fiennes's acting is not very pronounced in general. However, he does an exceptionally good job in showing Heathcliff's complete nervous and physical breakdown after Cathy's death. In such emotional situations, the acting complements the story well. Throughout the rest of the film, his acting is reserved and low-key, but consistently so. This might add to the perception of Heathcliff's restricted character as well, but does not leave a strong overall impression.

The main focus is on Cathy and Heathcliff's romantic relationship. This is established early on, and much more explicitly. Their relationship is more physical than in the novel. The main difference between film and novel is that they are aware of their mutual feelings and openly display them. For instance, they kiss in the open, lie in bed together, and share a very passionate kiss before she dies. The other characters' outrage is understandable under those circumstances. They seem to live their relationship to the fullest before Cathy's change. A decisive moment for the turning point of their relationship is the scene they spend in the countryside. Heathcliff tells her to close her eyes and let the sky, up to this point blue and cloudless, decide their future. When she opens her eyes, dark storm clouds are ahead. This moment of premonition is crucial to their further development. Briefly after this, they go to Thrushcross Grange, which slowly leads to the deterioration of their relationship.

Even after their separation, they continue to have feelings for each other and are open about this fact. Heathcliff, for instance, confesses his love for Cathy in Isabella's presence, but Cathy merely rejects him due to her marriage. Their relationship in general is displayed much deeper and more prominent than in the novel. They even seem to share a mental connection shortly before Cathy's death, reinforcing the superstitious element that has already been explored in the premonition. Their mutual feelings are shown stylistically by the repetition of the line "I cannot live without my life. I cannot live without my soul." It is first spoken by either Cathy or Brontë and repeated by Heathcliff after her death.

Similar to the novel, his love is explored even after her death. The manipulation of his son's letter to Catherine is not only a manipulation, but also partly expresses his feelings for Cathy and his wish to see her again. In fact, it did not become clear to me that he is manipulating a letter, not praying, until he is explicitly shown to do so. He gets quite emotional when reminded of Cathy, but does not allow himself to show feelings. This seems especially difficult considering that Cathy and Catherine look very similar and he is

constantly reminded of his lost love⁹. His mental deterioration after years of waiting becomes evident once he starts to have hallucinations. He stares off into nothingness and frequently returns to their meeting place. Only Hareton tries to make him come back. Heathcliff soon gives up on his revenge, which constitutes the only real conversation between Mrs Dean and him in the film. When the story catches up with the present again, he goes into Cathy's old room and sees her ghost there. She opens the window and they hold hands, turning to the window. This suggests a potential of suicide, but he is later merely found dead on his bed. Their souls meet at their romantic location and they kiss. Brontë ends the story by mentioning the country folk's superstition that is mentioned in the novel as well.

As the film focuses on their romantic involvement, many other dynamics of his character development are neglected. Although his main motive in the novel is his love of Cathy, there are other figures that drive his personality into the particular direction he takes. I believe this is not explored well in the film. However, Hindley can still be established as a dramatic foil in the film. Heathcliff becomes just as cruel as he used to be, and Hindley degenerates after his wife's death. While maintaining his physical health, Heathcliff degenerates mentally and emotionally after this trauma as well. The motive of revenge is only partly shown in his treatment of Hareton. He treats him badly, causing him to develop the way Heathcliff does, although he is capable of showing love and happiness towards a baby goat. Possibly because of their similarity, he is the only character to show true affection for Heathcliff, stating: "He's my true father." The relationship between Hareton and Catherine is used as a symbol of Cathy and Heathcliff's relationship. This is implied by Heathcliff when he tells him, "I don't know how you can bear to leave her."

⁹ This is further demonstrated by double-casting Juliette Binoche as both Cathy and Catherine.

Conclusion

Heathcliff is a complex character in the sense that many different aspects are at play in his development. In both the novel and the film, he has potential to be a good character. External influences shape him into a villainous character. Those influences are Cathy, Hindley and his general perception as an outsider. While Cathy is the greatest influence, the others cannot be neglected for a full understanding of him. However, the film does so largely, reducing him to a romantic, tragic hero whose only motive is the protection and loss of Cathy. In the novel, he is explicitly vicious and may be repellent to the reader due to his openly negative choices. In the film, his violence towards Isabella is shown in her physical state, and direct violence is only directed against Catherine later on. While he is clear about his ill intentions in the novel and presents them as a conscious scheme to get revenge, merely Edgar and Linton explain his plans in the film, which takes some conscious responsibility away from him.

The film, then, only focuses on Heathcliff's romantic side and explores the theme of love beyond death, but does not take into consideration other dynamics at play. Here, he is not so much a villainous character as a tragic hero in a love story. In order to understand him as a villain who works against all the openly positive forces of the story, it is necessary to focus on the role he has in the novel where he develops into a clearly villainous character. His development is not completely straightforward. The reader has the same state of information about Heathcliff until he runs away. The three years that follow present a gap in which a significant change took place, of which he refuses any explanation. Before, he had the potential of a good person; now, his change to a villainous character is completed. This presents a mystery to the reader, but does not discredit the change in itself because the initial reasons for his change – Cathy, Hindley, his being an outsider – have been established beforehand. Therefore, his villainy can be understood by the reader. It seems natural that he

should eventually bend under all those external influences, taking away only some responsibility of his actions.

2. The Core Villain: Evil for the Sake of Evil

A. Dr. Hannibal Lecter

Thomas Harris – *Silence of the Lambs* (1988)

Introduction

Silence of the Lambs is the second novel of Thomas Harris's series that features the cannibalistic psychiatrist Dr. Hannibal Lecter. It deals with the FBI trainee Clarice Starling, who is asked to analyse Lecter with a newly developed questionnaire. He is a patient in a mental institution because of his cannibalistic background. Soon, Starling realises that she was originally sent to Lecter because of his potential help with the current FBI investigation of a serial killer commonly known as Buffalo Bill, who kidnaps women, skins them and eventually dumps them in various rivers. Because Starling is the only person who Lecter accepts conversations with, she frequently returns to the institution to get more information and is soon caught in Lecter's cruel game of exchanging painful, personal details for cryptic information regarding Buffalo Bill. Several of Lecter's predictions are confirmed in the course of the investigation, which leads Starling to believe that Lecter might have known the killer personally. When the senator's daughter Catherine is kidnapped in a similar fashion as the previous victims, the investigation becomes even more urgent than before and Starling lies to Lecter, having him believe that the senator would make special arrangements to reward him if he helped them catch Buffalo Bill. His memories, once Starling is gone, reveal that he indeed knows who the killer is. Before the FBI can get this knowledge from him, their plans are thwarted by the head of the asylum, Dr Chilton. He has eavesdropped on Starling's and Lecter's conversations and explains that the deal she offers is not real. He then makes a deal of his own with Lecter. The latter pretends to accept it, but demands to speak to the senator in person. Once in Memphis, Lecter deliberately gives the senator false information and an accurate physical description of the killer. Starling detects the lie and goes to see Lecter

without the FBI's approval. He gives her a final clue, but cannot give more detailed information because Starling is discovered and led out of the room. Briefly after her visit, Lecter escapes from his cell, brutally killing the guards. Thanks to Lecter's clues, Starling deduces the identity and location of Buffalo Bill, whose real name is Jame Gumb, and tracks him down almost by accident, while other FBI agents fruitlessly try to track him down in the wrong place. She manages to rescue Catherine and can finally take up her studies again, which have suffered from her involvement in the case. Lecter flees to St Louis and makes a last communication attempt with her by sending her a letter.

Formal Aspects of the Novel

The novel is told by a limited third-person narrator who mainly focuses on the protagonist Clarice Starling, but in a scene that does not involve her, he focuses on the main character of the respective scene. Therefore, the perspectives are frequently alternating and the story is explored from different angles within the storyline. The main storyline focuses on the investigation and a series of murders that Jame Gumb commits. His perspective is also assumed at times: his preparation of his victims' skinning is told with the focus limited on his perception and interpretation of the events. The reader therefore gets a rather universal understanding of the story which is narrated chronologically with a strong focus on causality except for the occasional flashback.

Character Analysis

Hannibal Lecter only becomes an active villain in the second half of the novel, when he starts to plan and execute his escape in the most brutal fashion. The main villain of the novel is Jame Gumb. However, as I will argue in this chapter, Lecter, though only a secondary villain, is the most intriguing and most dominant of the two.

Lecter's escape is merely a secondary storyline, and his perspective is only assumed four times in the whole novel: the clean-up of his cell, his escape, his stay at St Louis, and the last scene of the novel, still in St Louis. Although this scene focuses on him, it ends with a hint of Starling's romance with Pilcher. His perspective is first shown quite late in the novel. Until then, he is a mystery to the reader just as much as he is to the other characters. Narrating parts of the story from his angle gives some access to his mind and way of thinking, but not enough to demystify him.

Lecter's mind is by far the strongest part of him; his physical description does not necessarily characterise him as extraordinary, except for the fact that he has six fingers on his left hand (Harris 14). He is presented as "small, sleek; in his hands and arms she saw wiry strength like her own" (ibid.) and "[h]is cultured voice has a slight metallic rasp beneath it, possibly from disuse" (15). His appearance as such is not exceptionally scary. However, a greater focus is put on his eyes which greatly improve his impressiveness: "Dr Lecter's eyes are maroon and they reflect the light in pinpoints of red. Sometimes the points of light seem to fly like sparks to his center. His eyes held Starling whole" (ibid). Harris uses the setting to give the reader a better view on the psychiatrist:

Dr Lecter wore the white asylum pajamas in his white cell. The only colors in the cell were his hair and eyes and his red mouth, in a face so long out of the sun it bleached into the surrounding whiteness; his features seemed suspended above the collar of his shirt. [...] For Starling every shadow in the cell flew into his eyes and widow's peak. (137-38)

With a strong focus on dialogues, the main sources of Lecter's characterisation can be found in others' reactions towards him, as well as his interaction with them. He is first introduced because of a questionnaire regarding serial killers and is dubbed "Hannibal the Cannibal" (4). When Starling first hears his name, she reacts with shocked silence and

displays fear. The FBI agent from the Behavioural Science Unit, Jack Crawford, characterises him as “a monster” (6), and Dr Chilton explains that he is “[a] pure sociopath [... B]ut ... impenetrable, much too sophisticated for the standard tests. And, my, does he hate us. He thinks I’m his nemesis” (10). Later on, Chilton is the only one to directly confront Lecter with an evaluation of his personality: “I know what you’re afraid of. It’s not pain, or solitude. It’s *indignity* you can’t stand, Hannibal, you’re like a cat that way” (170, emphasis in the original). Not only his personality, but also his interaction with other people is quite unnerving to them, as he openly plays with them and their feelings. Before even considering talking to her, he asks for Starling’s credentials, and while normally downright refusing to talk to anyone, he accepts her as a conversation partner for unexplained reasons. Throughout the novel, they start to develop a sort of mentor-student relationship, with Lecter’s coaching her investigation process. He immediately starts asking her personal, intimate questions, not even giving her the possibility to become the dominant conversation partner, thus reversing their roles as investigator and the investigated. Lecter is very straightforward and deliberately shocks her with the truth to savour her reaction: “[a] census taker tried to quantify me once. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a big Amarone. Go back to school, little Starling” (23). Nevertheless, he is extremely polite, even thanking his overseer Barney and asking him to say good-bye to one of the inmates when he is transferred. Only one thing makes him agitated and fall out of his calm, polite behaviour; he claims that “[d]iscourtesy is unspeakably ugly to [him]” (24). As a reaction to Miggs’s unfavourable behaviour towards Starling, he gives her the first important clue about Buffalo Bill, which he had refused her before. Since he disregards discourtesy of any kind, he is unforgiving in this matter, using his manipulative skills as a psychopath, strengthened by his psychiatric skills, to get through to Miggs and talk him into committing suicide:

Swallowed his tongue sometime before daylight. Lecter suggested it to him, Chilton thinks. The overnight orderly heard Lecter talking softly to Miggs. Lecter knew a lot about Miggs. He talked to him for a little while, but the overnight couldn't hear what Lecter said. Miggs was crying for a while, and then he stopped. (37)

His main objective seems to be to escape from boredom, and other people are the toys he uses for pastime. For instance, he writes a letter to Crawford and teases Starling with information on Buffalo Bill that Lecter could have deducted logically, while he only waits with his information long enough for her to find out that he has greater knowledge than anyone expects. Crawford is well aware of the way Lecter works here: "First, we go on the premise that Dr Lecter really knows something concrete. Second, we remember that Lecter looks only for the fun" (124). Savouring people's painful memories, Lecter makes an offer to Starling that she cannot refuse, given that he does not present her with an alternative how she could get information from him. He wants to get under her skin by trading his knowledge for her worst, painful childhood memories. It does not suffice to only give him general memories: he specifically demands details until he is satisfied and gives her another piece of information. He never gives her enough hints to get the whole picture of Buffalo Bill however, merely enough for her to work on. Starling tries to offer him a trade of her own by suggesting a transfer to a different clinic, a cell with a view and visits to Plum Island, but she is not as successful as Lecter, who is still dominant in the conversation. He deliberately keeps switching topics, demonstrating that he is the only one who has power over where their interviews lead to. If Lecter cannot dominate the exchange because he is pressured into answering, which is the case during his conversation with the senator, he simply chooses not to answer: "Dr Lecter simply went away. He thought about something else – Géricault's anatomical studies for *The Raft of the Medusa* – and if he heard the questions that followed,

he didn't show it" (191). Even in Memphis, knowing that she is there on her own account and won't have much time to stay, he insists on completing their memory-information trade, and starts to mock her, saying that "[p]eople will say we're in love"¹⁰ (216). During this final personal confrontation between the two, they transgress the barrier between them when he hands her the case file and "[s]he reached across the barrier and took it. For an instant the tip of her forefinger touched Dr Lecter's. The touch crackled in his eyes" (222). This moment is a crucial one for Starling's perception of him, "[a]nd that is how he remained in Starling's mind. Caught in the instant when he did not mock" (ibid). He once again establishes contact with her by writing a letter, in which he declares that "I have no plans to call on you, Clarice, the world being more interesting with you in it. Be sure you extend me the same courtesy" (351). He also finalises his correspondences with Barney and Dr Chilton.

Lecter fulfils several roles in the story, and each of these generates another level of interpretation. First of all, he can be seen as simply an abnormal human being. He has an exceptionally good sensory perception, smelling every little detail that other people might not notice: "[y]ou use Evyan skin cream, and sometimes you wear L' Air du Temps, but not today. Today you are determinedly unperfumed" (16-17). Another abnormality that makes him superior to other people is his extraordinary memory: "[m]emory, Officer Starling, is what I have instead of a view" (17). His inner life is very complex and resourceful, which explains why he can still remain calm and dominant although he has been an inmate for several years:

Dr Lecter amused himself – he has extensive internal resources and can entertain himself for years at a time. His thoughts were no more bound by fear or kindness than Milton's were by physics. He was free in his head.

His inner world has intense colors and smells, and not much sound. In fact, he had to strain a bit to hear the voice of the late Benjamin Raspail. Dr Lecter was

¹⁰ In this context, this statement appears to be rather mocking her, but it might explain part of his interest in Starling, too. This becomes especially clear during his sexual advances to her in the sequel.

musings on how he would give Jame Gumb to Clarice Starling, and it was useful to remember Raspail. Here was the fat flutist on the last day of his life, lying on Lecter's therapy couch, telling him about Jame Gumb. (165)

This is followed by a detailed recording of the respective scene in his mind. All those mental resources make him a very dominant and superior character and put him beyond other people's standards: "Senator Martin and Hannibal Lecter considered each other, one extremely bright and the other not measurable by any means known to man" (190).

The second level on which Lecter can be understood is his role as a psychiatrist. Even whilst an inmate, he still actively fulfils this profession by writing insightful articles for psychiatric journals and answering correspondence about all sorts of issues related to his field, but he never provides any insight into himself. As soon as Starling arrives, he starts to analyse her and her interview tactics thoroughly, not influenced by them at all. During their first conversation, he sees right through Starling, and deflects with such insights whenever he does not want to answer one of her questions:

Do you know what you look like to me, with your good bag and your cheap shoes? You look like a rube. You're a well-scrubbed, hustling rube with a little taste. Your eyes are like cheap birthstones – all surface shine when you stalk some little answer. And you're bright behind them, aren't you? Desperate not to be like your mother. [...] Let me tell you something specific about yourself, Student Starling. Back in your room, you have a string of gold add-a-beads and you feel an ugly little thump when you look at how tacky they are now, isn't that so? All those tedious thank-yous, permitting all that sincere fumbling, getting all sticky for one bead. Tedious. Tedious. Bo-o-o-o-r-i-ing. Being smart spoils a lot of things, doesn't it? And taste isn't kind. When you think about

this conversation, you'll remember the dumb animal hurt in his face when you got rid of him. (21)

He even analyses his fellow inmates more accurately than Chilton does. Lecter's being a psychiatrist also contributes to the FBI's notion that he might know more about the case than he is willing to admit because "[h]e's seen a lot of the criminally insane. Who knows what he turned loose, just for fun? [...] Also, he knew Raspail socially and Raspail told him things in therapy. Maybe Raspail told him who killed Klaus" (124). This is an accurate assessment of the situation, since Lecter knew that Gumb committed the murders at the very moment the first victim was found (345).

The final level, which is especially foregrounded in the characters' reactions in the beginning, is that of a dangerous sociopath. There is a strict protocol in the interaction with Lecter and one is under no circumstances supposed to deviate from it:

Do not reach through the bars, do not touch the bars. You pass him nothing but soft paper. No pens, no pencils. He has his own felt-tipped pens some of the time. The paper you pass him must be free of staples, paper clips, or pins. Items come back out through the sliding food carrier. No exceptions. Do not accept anything he attempts to hold out to you through the barrier. [...] Lecter is never outside his cell without wearing full restrains and a mouthpiece. (10-11)

He is further characterised this way with the help of the restriction clothing that is used during his transfer. Chilton explains that killing or hurting people in any other way seems normal to Lecter: "[h]is pulse never got over eighty-five, even when he swallowed [the tongue]" (11). Also, he displays a very sadistic pleasure, which is his main motive for asking painful, uncomfortable questions, for instance to the Senator: "[w]hen her pupils darkened, Dr Lecter took a single sip of her pain and found it exquisite. That was enough for today" (191).

The few direct insights into Lecter's mind clearly classify him as a sociopath or at least as a sadist, showing how he only waits for an opportunity to hurt people:

Dr Lecter watched Chilton's eyes moving over the straps that held on the mask. Clearly Chilton wanted to remove it so he could watch Lecter's face. Lecter wondered if Chilton would do it the safe way, from behind. If he did it from the front, he'd have to reach around Dr Lecter's head, with the blue-veined insides of his forearms close to Lecter's face. Come, doctor. Come close. No, he's decided against it. (169, emphasis in the original)

He pretends to cooperate in order to escape, and only Barney realises how much danger lies in this, hoping that “[t]hey better pay attention [...] *He will*” (179, emphasis in the original).

Because of this pretended cooperation, he is able to prepare and execute his escape brutally, taking advantage of the two security lapses in the past. His escape is violent, but also shows how creative and ruthless he is in getting what he wants. It is summarised by Crawford:

He put on Pembry's uniform and part of Pembry's face. And about a pound off Boyle, too. He wrapped Pembry's body in the waterproof mattress cover and the sheets from his cell to keep it from dripping and stuffed it on top of the elevator. He put on the uniform, got himself fixed up, laid on the floor and fired shots into the ceiling to start the stampede. [...] The ambulance crew came in fast and did what they're trained to do under fire – they stuffed in an airway, slapped a bandage over the worst of it, pressure to stop bleeding, and hauled out of there. They did their job. The ambulance never made it to the hospital. The police are still looking for it. [...] *Dr Lecter likes his fun.*” (243-44, emphasis in the original)

His escape plan includes changing his outer appearance so he would remain unrecognised. He does not rely on other people for those changes, but executes them himself, including the

plastic surgery: “[t]omorrow he would shop for things he needed, hair bleach, barbering supplies, a sunlamp, and there were other, prescription, items that he would obtain to make some immediate changes in his appearance” (262). He thus ensures that he is not found again anytime soon.

Lecter’s character is not straightforward or clear to the reader at all. In fact, the reader hardly gains any access to him personally. A factor that complicates this is that each reader can interpret Lecter completely differently. He can be understood separately on each of those different levels and it is the reader’s task to actively choose which one to foreground in his interpretation. This, then, poses a complication that actively calls for cognitive involvement with the character. While all those levels interact to constitute his whole personality, foregrounding a different aspect might significantly change the way he is perceived. Another point of fascination that challenges the reader’s own beliefs is his standpoint on evil. He never analyses himself, only others, but he gives his most valuable insight about himself to Starling:

Nothing happened to me, Officer Starling. *I* happened. You can’t reduce me to a set of influences. You’ve given up good and evil for behaviorism, Officer Starling. You’ve got everybody in moral dignity pants- nothing is ever anybody’s fault. Look at me, Officer Starling. Can you stand to say I’m evil? Am I evil, Officer Starling? (20, emphasis in the original)

He states that his being ‘evil’, as he is commonly classified as, is *not* due to external influences; that he was not *made* evil, which implies that evil is inherent to his character. On the one hand, this takes away responsibility for his actions. On the other hand, his ability to intellectualise this suggests that there is a moral choice involved. He clearly works with the opposing concepts of good and evil, which leaves the personal choice of whether or not to give in to this evil up to him:

When his hobbies began to absorb him – long before his first arrest – Dr Lecter had made provisions for a time when he might be a fugitive. In the wall of a vacation cottage on the banks of the Susquehanna River were money and the credentials of another identity, including a passport and the cosmetic aids he's worn in the passport photos. The passport would have expired by now, but it could be renewed very quickly. (350)

This shows that he was perfectly aware of the possible consequences of his actions and the fact that they are commonly categorised as evil, and still executed them, simply making provisions for when it might go wrong. His clear moral choice, the decision not to accept the common system of justice and standards of morality, challenges the reader to investigate his own standpoint on moral issues, which calls for even greater cognitive involvement with the character and the conscious act of trying to understand the way he functions.

***The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), directed by Jonathan Demme**

Silence of the Lambs is a close adaptation of the novel: it follows the plot strictly, and even the dialogues are sometimes completely identical to their literary counterpart. Just like the novel, the film thematises the underlying psychological conditions of murderers, i.e. both works explore the violent, deviant aspects of human nature. It is a psychological thriller and not particularly violent. This means that the plot is driven by psychological conditions, not by violence, and they – including the FBI investigation and Starling's studies – are presented quite realistically. Following the plot rather rigidly, the film's dramatic structure is linear and clearly focused on the chronological depiction of the investigation, except for the occasional flashback to Starling's past. Chilton's eavesdropping on Lecter's and Starling's conversation is shown simultaneously to their situation instead of presenting Chilton's explanation of his questionable methods, i.e. the illegal recording of their conversation, later on. Despite the

close adaptation, there are some slight plot changes, for instance the kidnapping of Catherine Martin. This is probably due to the conventions that the novel had to be adapted to the audience' standards on screen; Catherine driving a car would be less frowned upon than her taking drugs. Other plot manipulations involve the ending, which in the film presents Starling's graduation ceremony where she receives a phone call from Lecter. Thus, their final interaction in the film is not via letter, but via phone, which constitutes a more direct and more personal contact. This makes their relationship more intimate, but with less focus on Lecter than on Starling. In the novel, this is one of the few scenes that focalises his perspective. Since *he* contacts *her*, he demonstrates that he is still superior to her and that he could find her if he chose to, whereas she would not be able to trace back the telephone conversation even with the advanced equipment of the FBI, just as little as she can trace back the letter.

Lecter's inaccessibility in the novel makes it easy for the director to depict his character faithfully. In the novel, he is mainly characterised through his interaction with others and their reactions, and this is the case in the film, too. He is presented as a dangerous sociopath, a psychiatrist, and an abnormally intelligent human being. The choice of the actor, Anthony Hopkins, is appropriate as well: he doesn't look particularly strong, but he has very piercing eyes. This is especially explored in many close-ups of his face to focalise the disconcerting effect of his gaze. When he speaks, his mouth may be out of focus, but the eyes are often in the very centre of the frame. In those close-ups, he stares straight at the camera and, by extension, the spectator, thus breaking the artefact level and the fourth wall. While he often looks straight at the camera, other characters are occasionally filmed from a high angle, further exploring the issue of Lecter's superiority and everybody else's inferiority.

Anthony Hopkins portrays the character appropriately and close to the novel. He portrays Lecter as having an unnervingly static behaviour. His tone of voice hardly ever

changes, and his words are clearly enunciated. Especially the 's' is always pronounced long, which is a reminiscent of a snake-like predator.

Intertextuality is another issue that should be addressed here. *Silence of the Lambs* is widely known as a thriller that gets under the spectator's skin. In fact, Anthony Hopkins's acting is powerful enough here to make Hannibal Lecter his public image, the one that people mostly connect him with whenever his name is mentioned, typecasting him as some sort of potential 'creep'.

Dr Lecter is already a fully developed villain at the beginning of the film and does not develop as a character. He is only presented as an increasingly more active villain throughout the film. No character really manages to mirror him because he is superior to all of them, but one possible dramatic foil can be seen in Jame Gumb as the 'inferior' villain. He is shown consistently, but not as prominently as Lecter. He is openly crazy and weird judging from his behaviour and appearance, whereas the psychiatrist might still pass as normal precisely because he knows and understands social conventions. Gumb has a clear motive, which is made accessible by Lecter, but Lecter himself refuses to provide any analysis of himself or his own reasons to act as he does. Gumb, then, is the active villain. However, he does not seem as dangerous as Lecter. His villainy is more personal, and furthermore *explained*. Lecter may be the less active villain, but more intriguing because of his inaccessibility. The spectator learns, with Lecter's help, to understand Gumb to some extent, but Lecter's motivations are entirely unclear. Nothing ever makes his mind accessible. This inaccessibility leads to the spectator's state of information as being significantly inferior to Lecter's. Although the spectator knows about the FBI's actions and Lecter doesn't, he *always* seems superior to the FBI, and consequently superior to the spectator as well. Since there is no way to access Lecter's mind in both the novel and the film – but even less in the latter because his perspective fails to be

shown at all – the spectator inevitably knows little or nothing about his own motives or background.

Conclusion

Lecter is an interesting case in both the novel and the film; he has a strong effect on both reader and spectator. Involvement on the spectator's part might be triggered because of his direct interaction with the camera, and thus the spectator, establishing a direct, more personal link between the two. This forced involvement is similar to the fashion in which the novel demands the spectator to select an aspect of his personality as more dominant and choose how to interpret him. Because his character is not straightforward at all, his great inaccessibility complicates the interpretation of him significantly. Another form of direct involvement is Lecter's inherent evil that motivates each of his actions. However, his moral incapacity, or rather his detachment from morality, is very open and honest. This is only dealt with implicitly in the film; his crucial statement on evil which can be found in the novel is not explored in the film at all. His external actions, though, and his open lack of regret characterise this just as well, challenging spectator and reader to investigate themselves, especially their standpoint on morality, first in order to investigate him.

B. Lestat

Anne Rice – *Interview with the Vampire*

Introduction

Interview with the Vampire is the first novel of Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*. It explores the life story of the vampire Louis, including how he became a vampire and everything that happened afterwards. Louis explains to a young interviewer how, 200 years ago, he owned a plantation near New Orleans. After his brother's death, of which Louis is partially guilty, he develops a strong death wish, which draws the vampire Lestat's attention to him. In order to have a companion who can take care of earthly matters better than he does, such as finances and a proper place for him and his blind father to live, he makes Louis a vampire. They soon discover that there are vital differences between them, such as the fact that Lestat frequently feeds on humans and deliberately plays with their lives, whereas Louis is repelled by such a way of living and survives by draining animals. Lestat, on the other hand, finds Louis's behaviour repelling. The slaves on the plantation gradually begin to suspect that there is more to the two than meets the eye, considering that they are only up at night and dine from empty plates to keep up an appearance for the blind father. The situation finally escalates the night Lestat's father dies and they have to flee from a burning plantation after killing all the slaves. After Louis is rejected by Babette – a friend he was close to and who now considers him the devil – the two settle down in New Orleans. During the many years they live there, Louis becomes gradually wearier of what he perceives as Lestat's bad and repulsive personality and decides to leave him. In order to prevent him from this, Lestat turns an orphaned five-year old girl into a vampire, a girl that Louis had previously fed on after having overcome his inhibition to feed on humans. Lestat names her Claudia and she continues to live with the two, growing close and loving to Louis. She turns out to be an excellent pupil for Lestat, who instructs her in the art of killing. As the years pass, she

becomes more and more frustrated with her mind growing up in her never-aging body. She blames Lestat for her state of being, who refuses to assume responsibility or show the guilt that Louis frequently feels. In addition to that, Lestat always teases the others with knowledge about their vampire nature. His potential knowledge forces them to stay with him, but he never explicitly tells them anything. Louis and Claudia seek to leave Lestat to travel and find answers to their questions themselves by finding other vampires and communicating with them. Knowing that he would never allow it, Claudia finally decides to kill him by poisoning him with dead blood and slitting his throat. Afterwards they dump him in the swamps close to a cemetery. Shortly before they board a ship to Europe, Lestat returns to them with a new vampire companion. Terrified, they fight him, setting their house on fire and leaving Lestat there to die. Louis, unlike Claudia, is convinced that Lestat survived the flames, but their former companion does not come after them. Their travels in Europe are fruitless. Claudia and Louis indeed meet vampires; however they are regenerate vampires – corpses without a mind of their own. In Paris, they are finally invited to the Théâtre des Vampires, a theatre inhabited by a coven of vampires like themselves, more or less led by Armand, the oldest living vampire. They turn the art of killing into a public spectacle, presenting themselves in their theatre as humans that pretend to be vampires while, in reality, they actually feed on humans in front of a live human audience. Claudia is disgusted and bored by them, but Louis and Armand develop a strong bond and become closer and seemingly dependent to each other. The other vampires are suspicious about Louis and Claudia because they are secretive about the vampire who made them, and because the worst crime among vampires, punishable by death, is to kill other vampires. As Louis and Armand's relationship develops further, Claudia fears of losing Louis and being on her own, so she manipulates him into making her a vampire companion, a woman called Madeleine. One night shortly after her turning, the vampires from the coven kidnap the three. It turns out that Lestat has survived their second

murder attempt as well and followed them all the way to Paris, demanding Claudia to be punished by death because she was the one who initially tried to kill him. Claudia and Madeleine are locked up in a courtyard where they are burnt by the sun; Louis, left in a coffin to starve, is rescued by Armand. While Lestat is desperate to talk to Louis, he despises and ignores him, and his former mentor is sent away. The next night, Louis takes his revenge for Claudia by burning down the theatre and fleeing with Armand. They travel together for many years. After deliberately turning Madeleine and losing Claudia, Louis's emotional attachment to the world and to Armand grows weaker. He returns to New Orleans, where he meets Lestat one last time. However, he has changed completely: he does not dare to go outside, only feeds on animals, and cannot come to terms with the technical progress of the world around him. He begs Louis to stay with him, but once again he rejects him, leaving him alone after Lestat's companion leaves him as well. Armand leaves Louis shortly after this, realising that their companionship is not fulfilling for him anymore. Louis's story ends here, and he is shocked upon seeing that the interviewer, desiring the power that Louis has described, demands to be made a vampire as well. Louis is frustrated because he has failed his purpose in telling this story, which was meant to show the dangers of vampirism, and refuses to turn him, but drains the reporter until he loses consciousness. The novel ends with the reporter's awakening in the empty hotel room where the interview took place. He writes down the address where Louis's last encounter with Lestat took place and leaves.

Formal Aspects of the Novel

Interview with the Vampire assumes Louis's perspective and is narrated in a first-person point of view. The frame narration takes place in the present time, where Louis is interviewed by a reporter in a hotel room. Louis deliberately wants the world to know his story and gives an incredibly detailed account of his life. His detailed memory is an important aspect of the

novel, and the novel would have been completely different without it. Even if his extraordinary memory could be accounted for by his vampire powers, there is such a density of details in his accounts of his life before he was turned that it does not appear logical anymore. He also seems to claim to have the only complete and correct knowledge of all the events and characters that happened throughout his life. Those factors might greatly compromise his reliability as a narrator to some readers.

Character Analysis

Lestat is first mentioned briefly through his attack on Louis, and described in more detail from Louis's human perspective when he comes to the plantation, as "a tall fair-skinned man with a mass of blond hair and a graceful, almost feline quality to his movements" (Rice 13) whose "gray eyes burned with an incandescence, and the long white hands which hung by his sides were not those of a human being" (14). He is thus already introduced as a supernatural and impressive being. This is normalised and simultaneously intensified once Louis becomes a vampire, as he recounts how "now [he] saw him filled with his own life and own blood: he was radiant, not luminous. And then [he] saw that not only Lestat had changed, but all things had changed" (21). He wears elegant and extravagant clothes, and black is always his colour of choice. Lestat is not always a beautiful being, though; his physical appearance is more animalistic and impulsive when angry, for instance when "he hissed at [Louis] with blazing eyes" (92).

Lestat is a central character in Louis's story and he is always present in his narrative up to the point of his supposed death. According to Louis, his motivations for choosing him as companion are simple, even though Lestat constantly seems to deny this: "You couldn't live by yourself, you couldn't manage even the simplest things. For years now, I've managed everything while you sat about making a pretense of superiority. There's nothing left for you

to tell me about life” (60). For this reason, Lestat holds onto his company even though they do not get along with each other. Narrated from Louis’s point of view, the characterisation of Lestat is strongly influenced by the younger vampire’s negative attitude towards him. He does not take him very seriously, claiming that he lacks depth and insight of any kind: “Well, that was positively the most intelligent and useful thing Lestat ever said in my presence” (25). He explicitly states that he does not like Lestat and arrogantly thinks of himself as a better vampire: “I was far from being his equal yet, but I was infinitely closer to him than I had been before the death of my body” (ibid). One significant characteristic that he attributes to him is that he is boring and dull, claiming that “the constant chatter of Lestat was positively the most boring and disheartening thing I experienced” (26). He criticises his reaction to Louis’s turning in the way that

Lestat, *had he any native intelligence*, might have explained things to me patiently and gently – that I had no need to fear the swamps, that to snakes and insects I was utterly invulnerable, and that I must concentrate on my new ability to see in total darkness. Instead, he harassed me with condemnations. He was concerned only with our victims, with finishing my initiation and getting on with it. (28, emphasis mine)

Louis does not make an effort to credit Lestat with any kind of interesting personality at all. He even explicitly states this in his narrative: “But Lestat, how we might have known each other, had he been a man of character, a man of even a little thought” (63), further stating that his “motives for everything revolved around revenge” (96). Thinking of himself as having understood Lestat completely due to the lack of depth he attributes to him, he ventures to make psychological evaluations of his character:

Lestat was a person who preferred not to think or talk about his motives or beliefs, even to himself. One of those people who must act. Such a person must

be pushed considerably before he will open up and confess that there is method and thought to the way he lives. [...H]e himself wanted to know his own reasons for killing, wanted to examine his own life. He was discovering when he spoke what he did believe. (95-96)

Only later in the novel does he see Lestat's importance in his own vampire life when he and Claudia have trouble finding other vampires, but he seems to prefer not to acknowledge this fact.

Apart from the relationship to Louis, Lestat is characterised through his relationship to Claudia as well. When Louis first drains her, Lestat is delighted and goes on to tease him about casting aside his moral reservations. He consciously hurts his confused companion by taunting him. He anticipates Louis's desire to leave him after this, commenting, "I thought as much [...] and I thought as well that you would make a flowery announcement. Tell me what a monster I am; what a vulgar fiend" (80). At this moment, he does not seem to care about this, and it soon becomes clear why: because he has saved Claudia, making Louis drain her. He finalises the change by giving her his own blood against Louis's will. He does not seem to care about Claudia as a person; after making her a vampire "his eyes were cold, as if it were all a horrible joke; then he looked at me, and his face had conviction" (93). He therefore manipulates Louis into staying and taking care of Claudia because he can anticipate his fledgling's reaction. Knowing that Louis despises him for what he is, he also knows that Louis would never leave Claudia alone with him. Nevertheless, because of the different conditions that set the tone of their relationship, he treats Claudia significantly differently than Louis. He acts as an almost loving father and teaches her all he knows about killing. Most of his attitude towards her is partly based on the fact that she has the body of a child, and although her mind and personality change significantly, he keeps seeing and treating her as such. When Claudia finally turns impassive towards him, their "fragile domestic tranquility

erupted with his outrage. He did not have to be loved, but he would not be ignored” (105).

There is a lot of tension between the three, especially after Claudia becomes inquisitive about their vampire nature and the existence of other vampires. He grows aggressive and cold towards her, and when she approaches him to pretend to make peace with him, he acknowledges: “That can be. Just stop asking me questions. Stop following me. Stop searching in every alleyway for other vampires. There are no other vampires! And this is where you live and this is where you stay! [...] I take care of you. You don’t need anything” (132). Lestat actively tries to crush their desire to get away from him and lead a different life.

Since Louis doesn’t attribute much complexity to Lestat, he can be characterised in simple terms. First and foremost, he is disrespecting of other people and the value of their lives, which results in his not taking anything seriously and laughing at most matters. He is determined and does not accept refusal, and especially despises it when things do not go according to his wishes, for “there was no time in Lestat’s plan for anything but his plan” (18). He is frequently radical and insensitive. When Louis feels guilty and wants to die, for instance, he attacks him, thus provoking Louis to admit his wish to live on. This also shows that he strongly despises any kind of weakness, a characteristic that he frequently sees, despises and criticises in Louis. Part of this results in his having no sense for Louis’s sentimentality and fascination that possesses him after he was turned. This leads to the narrator’s probably most devastating and most arrogant judgement about Lestat’s personality: “Lestat was never the vampire that I am” (22). He further attributes to him a “stubborn ignorance of what I felt and longed to know” (38). Lestat not only disregards Louis’s sentimentality, he practically despises him for it:

You whining coward of a vampire who prowls the night killing alley cats and rats and staring for hours at candles as if they were people and standing in the

rain like a zombie until your clothes are drenched and you smell like old wardrobe trunks in attics and have the look of a baffled idiot at the zoo. (51)

In line with his disrespect of anything but himself, he is very openly blasphemous: “‘I’d like to meet the devil some night,’ he said once with a malignant smile. ‘I’d chase him from here to the wilds of the Pacific. *I am the devil*’” (37, emphasis mine). This way, he deliberately compares himself to the ultimate evil, clearly pointing out how he understands himself without feeling bad about it.

Louis presents Lestat as a very superficial character of gentleman status with a high focus on wealth and style without actually being able to deal with money effectively. He is wasteful, for instance deliberately destroying things like glasses: “‘You don’t mind, do you?’ He gestured to the broken glass with a sarcastic smile. ‘I surely hope you don’t, because there’s nothing much you can do about it if you do mind’” (33). Here, Louis and Lestat complement each other perfectly – Lestat is able to gain money, Louis is able to invest it. In line with his gentleman persona, he still manages to be polite to most other people, except for Louis, but is also extremely short-tempered. Despite his apparent politeness in some cases, “Lestat trusted no one [...] He was like a cat, by his own admission, a lone predator” (96).

Despite Louis’s claim that he is not able to acknowledge anything positive, he seems to be a somewhat cultured man, although he does get angry whenever Louis reads a book. This is exemplified through his extraordinary ability to play the piano and his high regard for Shakespeare and performances of his plays, especially *Macbeth*, after which he tends to “stride home afterwards, repeating the lines to [Louis] and even shouting out to passers-by with an outstretched finger, ‘Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow!’ until they skirted him as if he were drunk” (128).

An important factor in the characterisation of Lestat are the problems that he has, given that “[h]e didn’t consider the world’s small population of vampires as being a select

club [...] He had human problems, a blind father who did not know his son was a vampire and must not find out” (16). His father is the only clue that Lestat ever gives about his past, the only way that some background story can be established. Because his father is blind, he does not know that his son is a vampire, and Lestat has no intention of letting him know. Louis and Lestat go out of their way to pretend to lead a more or less normal life when the father is around. The father-son relationship here is extremely difficult. On the one hand, Lestat has antagonistic feelings toward his father and is impatient and rude to him: “Before this, he’d been gracious to the old man, almost to the point of sickening one, but now he became a bully. ‘I take care of you, don’t I? I’ve put a better roof over your head than you ever put over mine! If I want to sleep all day and drink all night, I’ll do it, damn you!’” (22-23) On the other hand, “he seemed [...] to push luxury upon his father to an almost ludicrous point” (36). Lestat’s attitude towards his father seems to change as frequently as the weather, and Louis observes that “a great gulf existed between father and son, both in education and refinement, but how it came about, I could not quite guess” (37). Lestat’s dislike of his father is pushed to extremes when the old man is finally at the point of dying and his own son refuses to grant him a final conversation. To help him in his agony, Louis pretends to be Lestat in order to soothe him. In this crucial dying moment, his father confesses to have made a mistake by preventing Lestat’s education at a monastery although he was thirsty for knowledge and eager to stay, even burning his books. After this, his character changed significantly:

You have it all to live for, but you are as cold and brutal as I was then with the work always there and the cold and hunger! Lestat, you must remember. You were the gentlest of them all! God will forgive me if you forgive me. [...] You were Joseph among your brothers [...] The best of them, but how was I to know? It was when you were gone I knew, when all those years passed and

they could offer me no comfort, no solace. And then you came back to me and took me from the farm, but it wasn't you. It wasn't the same boy. (55-56)

This revelation, this drastic change is especially apparent given the fact that Lestat frequently ridicules Louis's reading and philosophical questions. Not wanting to give his father the forgiveness that he so desperately begs for, but at the same time not being able to kill him, he grows quite desperate: "Kill him, Louis!" he said to me, his voice touched with the first pleading I'd ever heard in it. Then he bit down in rage. 'Do it!'" (56) Only when Louis refuses to take his father's life does he reluctantly tell him that he does forgive him after all, even though he might not mean it. This simple remark is painful for Lestat, hinting at his the emotional depth he might, after all, possess: "Never had I seen him so weak, and at the same time enraged. He shook me off and then knelt down near the pillow, glowering at me. [...] 'It's all right, Father. You must rest easy. I hold nothing against you,' he said, his voice thin and strained over his anger" (56). This scene is very emotionally charged and crucial for the proper understanding of his character. It hints at the person he could have been, and the influence that others have had on his development to the villain that he is now. This issue is never further explored than this, but it does offer grounds for interpretation and even for beginning to understand his character better.

Because Lestat is secretive about his background, his only current connection to his past is cut once his father dies. There is only one other issue that Claudia and Louis try to investigate: the vampire who made him. Lestat is even more secretive about this than his mortal life, and once again shows unexpected emotions by becoming afraid and angry when asked about this aspect. He downright refuses to talk about it, deflecting the original question about himself to point out Louis's and Claudia's flaws. He even openly threatens them with the power that he has over them, once again hinting at hidden knowledge that he does not share:

‘You’re greedy, both of you! [...] Immortality is not enough for you! No, you would look the Gift Horse of God in the mouth! [...] I can give you death more easily than I gave you life! [...] Do you want death?’

‘Consciousness is not death,’ she whispered.

‘Answer me! Do you want death!’

‘And you give all these things. They proceed from you. Life and death,’ she whispered, mocking him.

‘I have,’ he said. ‘I do.’ (120)

Claudia later explains to Louis the most probable scenario that happened between Lestat and his master, once again paving the way for deeper and more understandable emotional motives than the ones Louis ascribes to him: “The vampire made a slave of him, and he would no more be a slave than I would be a slave, and so he killed him. Killed him before he knew what he might know, and then in panic made a slave of you. And you’ve been his slave” (122). Even after supposedly killing him, Claudia goes through his possessions and realises that there are no clues or remainders of his past; that he has consciously distanced himself from it, for (possibly traumatic) reasons that are never explained.

Not only is a former character development hinted at through the little exploration of the past that the reader gets a glimpse at, another transformation takes place in the novel.

After a gory and detailed death scene, Lestat first changes physically:

He lay now on his back. And his entire body was shriveling, drying up, the skin thick and wrinkled, and so white that all the tiny veins showed through it [...] the shape of the bones began to show through, his lips drawing back from his teeth, the flesh of his nose drying to two gaping holes. But his eyes, they remained the same, staring wildly at the ceiling, the irises dancing from side to side, even as the flesh cleaved to the bones, became nothing but a parchment

wrapping for the bones, the clothes hollow and limp over the skeleton that remained. (135-37)

This is the physical description the reader is left with, assuming that Lestat has died properly. Even when he surprisingly comes back to Louis and Claudia, his appearance has not changed for the better, as “[h]is skin was a mass of scars, a hideous covering of injured flesh, as though every wrinkle of his ‘death’ had left marks upon him. He was seared and marked [...] and his once clear gray eyes were shot with hemorrhaged vessels” (157). After setting the house – and Lestat – on fire, Claudia and Louis escape, but Louis is convinced that he has survived, now knowing that Lestat’s wish to be alive is too strong to be surpassed that easily. He does not volunteer any information about what has happened, partly because he is immediately attacked by Louis and Claudia. The vampire girl describes in shocking detail what Lestat has probably gone through, accounting for his whole further character development:

Suppose, though, he had ceased to fight us [...] that he was still living, locked in that helpless dried corpse, conscious and calculating [...] And suppose, when he reached the swamp waters and heard the sounds of our carriage going away, that he had strength enough to propel those limbs to move. [...] Can you imagine the tenacity of the will to live in him, his hands groping in that water for anything that moved? [...] If he could not have gotten back to New Orleans in time, he could most definitely have reached the Old Bayou cemetery. [...] And I can see him clawing his way through the moist earth for such a coffin, dumping the fresh contents out in the swamps, and securing himself until the next nightfall in that shallow grave where no manner of man would be wont to disturb him. (164-65)

This painfully realistic description is crucial for Lestat’s next two appearances in the novel. When he comes to Paris, his demeanour is closer to his former self than shortly after death,

but his body still carries the marks of the previous fights and his time in the swamps. The only aspect that does not seem affected anymore is “the eyes, they burned with a silent rage that seemed infused with vanity, an awful relentless vanity that said, ‘See what I am’” (295). He does speak to Louis this time, and is incredibly desperate to talk to him: “Louis, you must come back to me. There’s something I must tell you... about that night in the swamp.’ But then he stopped and looked about again, as though he were caged, wounded, desperate” (296). Whatever he has to say to Louis is evidently important enough for him to go to Paris and seek out other vampires, even though he has always been firmly against this. This is possibly due to the fact that he might, as Claudia suspected, have killed his master, which constitutes the only crime that is punishable by death among vampires. The notion of his killing his master is further supported by the extraordinary fear and insecurity that possesses him among those vampires leading him even to the point of crying. He has no intention of taking revenge on Louis, but the other vampires disregard his wishes, fool him, and do not give him Louis back. Instead, they are determined to kill both Claudia and Louis. Lestat is not the impressive vampire anymore, but rather “some wounded, feeling creature [Louis had] never known. [...] ‘I can’t talk to you here! I can’t make you understand. You’ll come with me... for only a little while... until I am myself again?’” (303) Louis downright refuses to come back with him, and his former master is cast out from the vampire society in Paris.

He encounters him again in New Orleans, after many years of separation, years that have changed Louis and made him cold and detached. He finds him in a terrible physical and mental state. A sharp contrast to his normally impeccable style, he wears a “shabby blue robe” and his “rich blond hair hung down in loose waves covering his face. [...] ‘You all leave me!’ he *whined* now in a thin, high-pitched voice” (326, emphasis mine). His scars do not show as prominently anymore, i.e. his physical appearance has improved and gone almost back to his old self. However, he takes poor care of himself, is dependent on his reluctant and disgusted

companion, and feeds on animals, even refusing to drain the baby that the latter has brought him. These are weaknesses that he has always despised earlier. It turns out that he never leaves his house. He cannot even bear to hear the sound of a siren, which frightens him enormously. Lestat is glad to see Louis, emphasising that he had only come back to their home in New Orleans to talk to him the night they set him on fire, without any ill intentions. Even though it has been deadly important to him at the time, he does not say what it was that he wanted to talk about. During this scene, Lestat is established as a pathetic, weak, disoriented and lost character. This is further intensified by Louis's memory of Lestat as he had been, and everything that he lost in the meantime:

I had a vision of him from long ago, that tall, stately gentleman in the swirling black cape, with his head thrown back, his rich, flawless voice singing the lilting air of the opera from which we'd only just come, his walking stick tapping the cobblestones in time with the music, his large, sparkling eye catching the young woman who stood by, enrapt, so that a smile spread over his face as the song died on his lips; and for one moment, that one moment when his eye met hers, all evil seemed obliterated in that flush of pleasure, that passion for merely being alive. (329-30)

Louis clearly suggests what has happened to him: "He's dying, dying of rigidity, of fear. His mind cannot accept this time. [...] I think he is dying as clumsily and grotesquely as humans often die in this century... of old age" (333). The former Lestat is gone by the time the novel ends, and the reporter's determination to go and seek out Lestat raises curiosity and possibly hope that he might have changed, might have eventually come to terms with his nature again.

Aside from his character development within the plot, Lestat fulfils several roles within the novel that characterise his villainy. First, Louis presents him as a killer who goes after his victims in abundance:

The better the human, as he would say in his vulgar way, the more he liked it. A fresh young girl, that was his favorite food the first of the evening; but the triumphant kill for Lestat was a young man. [...] You see, they represented the greatest loss to Lestat, because they stood on the threshold of the maximum possibility of life. (41-42)

He is an extraordinary predator, “drawn to weakness like a parched man to water” (65) and “masterfully clever and utterly vicious” (78) when concerned with killing. He deliberately plays with his prey in innovative, morbid ways. He gets a very sadistic pleasure out of this, and does not claim to have a specific reason for playing with his prey; he simply enjoys doing so. Especially here, he enjoys taunting Louis in order to make him kill, in order to turn him into the kind of killer that he is. Apart from his feeding on animals after his transformation later in the novel, the only instance where he holds himself back is in his unique friendship with a musician. He spends many nights with him, but only turns him into a vampire when there is need, i.e. once Claudia has tried to kill him and he needs a companion to deal with them. He is clear about the fact that his fascination with the musician is not his personality, but the thrill of having the possibility to kill him: “It excites me to be close to him, to think over and over, I can kill him and I will kill him but not now. And then to leave him and find someone who looks as nearly like him as possible” (130). His obsession with killing, however, turns against him once he has instructed Claudia in the pleasure of taking a life. In fact, he has taught her to be so cunning that she manages to trick even him, leading to his tragic downfall.

The other role that Lestat assumes is that of a mentor, or at least of a superior vampire. Louis’s relationship to Lestat is very much based on his own weakness that results in his dependence on him. Louis does not like Lestat and wants to leave him, yet he fears to do so because he is afraid that his maker might have important information that he withholds from

him. Lestat makes use of this fear and deliberately hints at knowledge he might have, but never gives any specifics.

You don't know everything yet... do you? [...] You don't know, for example, all the ways you can die. And dying now would be *such* a calamity, wouldn't it? [...] And do you think you can find other vampires by yourself? They might see you coming, my friend, but you won't see them. No, I don't think you have much choice about things at this point, friend. I'm your teacher and you need me, and there isn't much you can do about it either way. (33-34, emphasis in the original)

Louis does recognise that Lestat teaches him practical things such as travel and shops that admit them at night, and that “in all these mundane matters, Lestat was an adequate teacher” (36), but he stays with him “because [he] was afraid he did know essential secrets as a vampire which [he] could not discover alone and, more important, because he was the only one of [his] kind whom [he] knew” (63). He does not make his plans of leaving true until Claudia does not leave him any choice at all, and it is questionable whether he had been able to leave him without Claudia's input. Louis, then, does not think that Lestat has any knowledge, but stays out of fear that he might have. This assumption however is logical, given that Lestat is in many ways a superior, more powerful vampire than Claudia and Louis are. He frequently threatens them with his powers simply to shut them up: “Be glad I made you what you are [...]r I'll break you in a thousand pieces!” (110) Even Louis has no way of estimating Lestat's powers, and it makes sense that he is afraid of them given that Lestat points out that he does have more information, namely that there is a difference between them that he does not care to explain: “You don't have the power. *Either* of you” (132, emphasis in the original). Even his survival of Claudia's attack and the subsequent fire might be one of his extraordinary powers. It is never explored whether any of the other vampires possess those

traits, and after all, Louis does manage to kill the vampires in Paris by setting the theatre on fire. Although not characterised as a good mentor because he deliberately withholds information, if he has any, this role ensures that Louis stays his companion for much longer than he would like to, and demonstrates the major source of power that Lestat has over him.

All these traits – his flawed personality of a deceptive killer – account for a strong, prominent and powerful villain, but there is more to Lestat than this. Throughout the whole novel, Louis consequently denies him any kind of insightfulness, making discriminatory statements: “Lestat didn’t understand this himself. I came to understand it. Lestat understood nothing” (41-42). While this holds true most of the time, at least to the extent that Louis presents the story, Lestat *does* demonstrate some surprisingly intelligent insight, which discredits the narrator’s judgement of him. For instance, he explains to Louis why he behaves the way he does: “But you shouldn’t be feeling this fear at all. I think you’re like a man who loses an arm or a leg and keeps insisting that he can feel pain where the arm or leg used to be” (25).

His most significant insights can be found in his attitude towards vampire nature as such. Louis claims that “he appreciated something, but very little [...] of what there is to know” (30), focusing on the motive of revenge that seems to be part of Lestat’s every action:

Being a vampire for him meant revenge. Revenge against life itself. Every time he took a life it was revenge. It was no wonder, then, that he appreciated nothing. The nuances of vampire existence weren’t even available to him because he was focused with a maniacal vengeance upon the mortal life he’d left. Consumed with hatred, he looked back. Consumed with envy, nothing pleased him unless he could take it from others; and once having it, he grew cold and dissatisfied, not loving the thing for itself, and so he went after something else. Vengeance, blind and sterile and contemptible. (46)

When being this judgemental, it is important to note that Louis merely judges Lestat based on his own standards, assuming them to be some sort of universal truth. As it turns out, Lestat *does* appreciate his vampire nature, but in a significantly different way than Louis does, and for radically different reasons. He scolds his fledgling for clinging to his human life too much and proposes that he should open up to his vampire life. This suggests that what Louis appreciates is not his actual vampire nature at all:

You are an intellect. I've never been. What I've learned I've learned from listening to men talk, not from books. I never went to school long enough. But I'm not stupid, and you must listen to me because you are in danger. [...] You are like an adult who, looking back on his childhood, realizes that he never appreciated it. You cannot, as a man, go back to the nursery and play with your toys, asking for the love and care to be showered on you again simply because now you know their worth. So it is with you and mortal nature. You've given it up. You no longer look "through a glass darkly." But you cannot pass back to the world of human warmth with your new eyes. [...] And what truly lies before you is vampire nature, which is killing. (82)

Being a killer, then, is not only something that Lestat enjoys, but something that he inherently *has* to enjoy because it is in his very nature to do so. The vampires' powers give them power over life and death, which he demonstrates by an impressive comparison: "You alone of all creatures can see death that way with impunity. You... alone... under the rising moon... can strike like the hand of God!" (83) The way he lives his life is exactly what his vampire nature demands from him, and his insights show that he has, indeed, put thought into this. His nature dictates to him practically everything he enjoys doing – he sees vampires as predators that are not prone to Louis's sentimentality, and once again he warns him about other vampires: "They'll see you coming long before you see them, and they'll see your flaw;

and, distrusting you, they'll seek to kill you. They'd seek to kill you even if you were like me. Because they are lone predators and seek for companionship no more than cats in the jungle" (ibid). Possibly speaking from experience, he explains that one will never come to terms with his vampire nature unless he embraces the essence of killing. Lestat is fully aware of Louis's moral reservations and rejects them. They do not apply to him because of the very philosophy that stands behind his every behaviour, the one explanation that fully explains his character:

'Evil is a point of view,' he whispered now. 'We are immortal. And what we have before us are the rich feasts that conscience cannot appreciate and mortal men cannot know without regret. God kills, and so shall we; indiscriminately He takes the richest and the poorest, and so shall we; for no creatures under God are as we are, none so like Him as ourselves, dark angels not confined to the stinking limits of hell but wandering His earth and all its kingdoms. (89, emphasis mine)

This statement – that evil is simply a matter of perspective – presents the core of his character concept. Lestat is a killer, a ruthless murderer, but he is like this for a reason. On the one hand, he claims that it is in his nature to enjoy it, thus, in a way, avoiding direct moral accountability for his actions. On the other hand, he does claim that there is a conscious process involved, not so much a choice but a point of view. Fully aware of his nature, he does not only explain why he is the way he is, but also the underlying dynamics of his character. Evil, then, is relative, not a determined, fixed, unchanging matter. Different moral standards and the different states of conscience influence any decision, making it either good or bad. Lestat does not seem to care for any of those standards at all, although he is aware of them. He truly embraces his nature and has come to terms with it in ways that Louis never does. This is a conscious choice that he makes; he might as well have largely rejected this part of his nature like Louis does. He does not refuse it; he deliberately accepts what he is, is not

ashamed of anything, therefore consciously choosing to be what society's popular standpoint characterises as *evil*, making him a villain to the very core of his existence.

Lestat does give important insights after all, and they are crucial to understanding him as well as Louis. The latter frequently discredits him. True; he does have valuable evaluations of Lestat, but due to his attitude towards him he refuses to acknowledge anything else but his interpretation. Even setting aside my strong aversion against Louis's character, seeing actual proof that Lestat possesses much more depth than he accounts for significantly reduces his reliability as a narrator. At the same time, discrediting him as a narrator might increase the involvement with Lestat on several levels. Knowing that there is much more to Lestat than is accounted for in the novel, the reader might get more interested in him because one wants to find out about his character dynamics as well as his background. The influence of past events and relationships is only touched upon briefly, raising many questions that the reader longs to be answered. Given that there is obviously much more to Lestat than meets Louis's eye, the interest in his character might increase in case the reader manages to cast aside some moral reservations of his own. Morality is another appealing issue when it comes to Lestat. He deliberately casts aside conventional moral standards as an obstacle to his actions and refuses to be compromised by them, thus making deliberately morally objectionable choices. The pure evil that Lestat demonstrates might be one of the characteristics that turn him into an appealing character worth of more attention¹¹.

¹¹ Lestat's potential as an interesting, appealing character is further explored in Anne Rice's second novel, *The Vampire Lestat* (1985). The novel deals with his own background story, not only his vampire life, but also his human life before that. The second novel, then, explores all the depth of character that has been hinted at, but not always acknowledged in *Interview with the Vampire*, opening up greater possibilities of understanding the dynamics of his character. Louis's misinterpretation is especially obvious here because Lestat shows extraordinary insight and depth regarding vampirism, a quality that Louis denies him. The many inconsistencies between the novels force the reader to actively choose for a side. Both narrators are potentially unreliable, and it is the reader's decision which version should be believed more.

***Interview with the Vampire*, directed by Neil Jordan**

Interview with the Vampire is an intermediate adaptation of the novel. Given the novel's dense plot, the two-hour film sacrifices a large part of the original story in order to stay within the appropriate time frame. Therefore, many plot manipulations can be detected. The story in general is shortened significantly and many elements have been eliminated, or are not even mentioned. Those include Louis's human life, which is only briefly hinted at. Their life at the plantation is shortened, and neither Lestat's father nor Babette are part of it. In New Orleans, too, only the most important events are explored in depth. After Lestat's alleged death and before Louis and Claudia's departure to Europe, the doorbell rings. Louis, expecting the carriage, opens the door, but he does not see anyone there. He is then surprisingly grabbed by Lestat, who later waits for Louis and Claudia in the living room while playing the piano. The musician is not part of this either although he has been hinted at before. Unlike in the novel, he talks, but merely about trivial things: he explains what happened after Claudia attempted to kill him, which is shown in a flashback with his voiceover. He then attacks them. They set him on fire and he is shown burning and screaming. A large part without Lestat follows this scene. Louis explains that they did not find any vampires in Transylvania, whereas in the novel they at least found degenerate vampires. Lestat does not show up in Paris, and Louis, after losing Claudia, deliberately rejects Armand's offer of staying or travelling with him, claiming that he doesn't want Armand to take his suffering away. He travels Europe without him and finally finds Lestat again in New Orleans. He is presented as pathetically as in the novel – he looks much older and weaker, and is extremely afraid of Louis, demonstrated by his quick backing away from him while still in his armchair. He is without another vampire. Lestat sits in darkness and reminisces about the life he had, the person he had been. It is not a siren, but a helicopter that drives him crazy, both with its terrifying sound and its light. Louis leaves him and attacks the interviewer in the present when he is asked to turn him into a

vampire as well. The manipulated ending is very significant. After the interview, the reporter listens to the tape while driving away. All of a sudden, Lestat appears in his car and feeds on him while driving, saying: "I assume you need no introduction. I feel better already." He then takes over the car, still dressed in the old clothes that he had worn in the last scene with Louis, and comments on the tape that is still on: "Oh Louis, Louis. Still whining, Louis. Have you heard enough? I've had to listen to that for centuries." He finishes off with a laugh, turns on music, and keeps driving.

The film has to deal with the problem of showing fantastic elements while trying to keep other aspects as realistic as possible. Indeed, fantastic elements – the vampires and their powers – are introduced and, for instance, specifically demonstrated when Santiago is shown walking up a wall, but within the real world, an illusion of a more or less close representation of historically accurate conditions is attempted to be shown. I believe that this is done well, too. In fact, the presence of vampires in the real world was depicted so naturally that I do not necessarily feel compromised in viewing a representation of a plausible world.

The frame narrative is the same and the first-person point of view is maintained well throughout the film. Because of the interview, past and present are constantly alternating, like in the novel, and while the flashbacks are shown, Louis frequently comments on the story through voiceovers. This constantly reminds the spectator of the fact that it is *his* perspective, *his* memory that is shown. This is even introduced at the beginning with the camera assuming Louis's gaze and, therefore, his point of view, giving the spectator the feeling that they are seeing through his eyes.

Interestingly, even though Louis's perspective is shown and it is supposed to be his story, there is a much greater focus on Lestat's than on Louis's life. He first appears seven minutes into the film when watching Louis. After this, he saves him from a thief and drains his future companion. This action sets the tone for Lestat's character as the villain, seeing that

his first action is a purely selfish one. He indeed rescues Louis from being killed, but only because he needs him, and he immediately drains him. The concept of draining him physically can also be extended in an analogical sense, since he later ‘drains’ him in terms of friendship, goodwill, and money as well.

In some aspects, Lestat’s character is captured well; other aspects from the novel are ignored completely¹². His outer appearance is close to how he is described in the novel. He has long, blond hair, is always dressed elegantly, and his vampire teeth are pronounced and animalistic when he bites his victims. He is just as animalistic, impressive and impulsive when he is angry. Lestat has sharp, attentive eyes. His appearance already characterises him as a killer through the sharp thumb ring that he uses to open wounds to get better and more stylish access to the blood. His appearance changes significantly after being poisoned. He dries up eerily, and once Claudia cuts his throat, an enormous amount of blood spreads all over the floor.

Tom Cruise’s acting is very pronounced and versatile, and he presents Lestat convincingly and consistently. He manages to explore all of Lestat’s character traits that the film wants to foreground. In the film, just like the novel, he is clearly presented as a villainous character with a range of traits to emphasise this personality. He is a cultured bisexual vampire with an inappropriate and sometimes even sick and morbid humour. He does not respect others or any other form of life, and is generally quite easy-going. This is especially shown in his relationship to Claudia, which is first portrayed as a rather parodic parent-child relationship. Despite his easy-goingness, which makes his character quite likeable at times, he is also short-tempered, provocative, manipulative and cruel. Together with his other character traits, this provides a high potential for deception, and he deliberately uses other people to

¹² It is important to note that this is not solely the director’s choice. Anne Rice wrote the script as well, therefore deliberately choosing *how* to represent the characters, and which aspects to foreground to achieve the desired effects.

fulfil his own plans. This selfish, cruel attitude, paired with his impressive appearance, clearly characterises him as evil, as a conventional villain. His speech is villainous as well. Most of the time, he speaks in a calm and manipulative voice that is at the same time seductive and sarcastic. He openly shows his social status through an elegant choice of words. He does not lose his temper often, but when he does, he loses it very easily.

Another significant aspect of his characterisation in the novel is his relationship to Louis. Once again, this is not explored well in the film. Although Louis is disgusted and repelled of Lestat, he still seems attached to his 'maker', as he thinks of him. Louis's growing arrogance towards Lestat and his weariness with his character is not conveyed as prominently as in the novel. Armand, however, explicitly mentions that he knew Lestat, and that he knows him well enough not to mourn his death in any way, implying that he has been like this for a long time. It does not become clear in which context they knew each other. However, Lestat does give crucial background information that is not given in the novel, where he is very secretive about his whole background. He casually tells Louis that he came from Paris, and that the vampire that made him came from there as well¹³. This suggests a connection to the Théâtre des Vampires and explains a possible connection to Armand, which is not further explored. The leader of the Parisian vampire coven, characterised as a better teacher than Lestat, is therefore an important key character to his past and, apart from the younger vampire's nonchalant comment about his maker, the only clue the spectator gets about him at all. This, however, might not generate enough interest in Lestat's background story, since the emotionally significant elements are cut from the story.

The novel presents two significant character changes in Lestat. The first one is hinted at, but not explored in detail and deals with his childhood and his relationship to his father.

¹³ This is not entirely accurate. *The Vampire Lestat* explains that he grew up in the countryside and came to Paris to escape his family. Although he met his maker Magnus there and transformed into a villainous vampire there, it is never clear where Magnus himself came from.

This element is completely eliminated from the film, not giving much room for explanations of how he became the villain that he turns out to be. The second change happens after Claudia's attempted murder. He gradually loses his strength and his established intriguing and superior personality until, by the end of the novel, he has turned into a completely pathetic, pitiable character. The second change is indeed present in the film, but it is not a definite change. He regains his strength at the end, although it is not clear why and how he managed to seek out the reporter's car. Therefore, although some character change takes place, he is fairly consistent throughout the whole film because no matter how much he changes, he eventually goes back to his old self and leaves the spectator with a strong impression of his unexpected re-appearance.

Conclusion

Because so many elements are eliminated from his characterisation, the film presents Lestat as a simple, straightforward villain. Just like Louis, it doesn't attribute too much complexity to him, and the potential of a deep character is not explored. He does not even try to talk to Louis about his near-death experience, whereas in the novel he is quite desperate to do so. All aspects of his bad personality are foregrounded, which says a lot about his detachment from any form of morality. The essential statement that characterises his kind of villainy can indeed be found in the film, stating that evil is merely a matter of perspective. Therefore, the film does manage to capture the essence, although not all the complementing details, of his character: that he is deliberately evil; that being evil is presented, even more than in the novel, as his own choice, and that he does not have any regrets. This conscious living outside of moral standards, not his potentially deep background story, makes Lestat an intriguing villain in this work. The spectator's knowledge in regard to Lestat's character is significantly more disadvantaged than in the novel as he and his past are completely inaccessible. What makes

him a fascinating villain in both the novel and the film, however, is his concept of evil and morality that challenges the spectator to re-evaluate his own standards, not the intriguing background story that he hints at.

C. Darth Vader

Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back, directed by Irvin Kershner

Introduction

Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back was the second film to be released in the original Star Wars saga and, as the title suggests, the fifth in the internal chronology of the overall science-fiction saga¹⁴. Characteristic of the Star Wars films, it starts with a written summary of what has happened before to give the unfamiliar spectator the necessary background knowledge to understand the film and to refresh the familiar spectator's memory. Its dramatic structure is straightforward and linear, putting a strong emphasis on causality. Different storylines – i.e. Luke's, Han and Leia's, and Darth Vader's – are shown as parallel as possible using a lot of cross-cuts. The Rebel Alliance temporarily settles, under the leadership of Princess Leia, on an ice planet. Their life and preparation there is disturbed by a droid sent by Darth Vader to seek out Luke Skywalker and the other rebels, including the bounty hunter Han Solo. During a near-death experience from which Han Solo rescues him, Luke is instructed by the spirit of his dead mentor Obi-Wan Kenobi to go to the Dagobah planet and start his training in the Force under the great Jedi Master Yoda. The Rebel base is annexed by Imperial Troops. Han Solo, Princess Leia and Chewbacca, together with the droid C-3PO, escape on Han Solo's ship, the Millenium Falcon. However, it displays severe dysfunctions and makes their escape significantly harder and more dangerous. Han and Leia grow much closer during the escape. Luke manages to flee together with the droid R2-D2 and starts his intensive training under Yoda, surprised that the great Jedi Master is a diminutive creature of unknown species instead of the impressive being he expects to meet. Not having been able to find the Millenium Falcon with the help of his troops, Darth Vader employs a number of bounty hunters to find it. Furthermore, he is instructed by the Emperor to

¹⁴ This analysis only focuses on the movie in the context of the original saga and does not take into account the series of prequels that was released later on, or the third movie of the original saga.

specifically find Luke Skywalker, who poses a threat to the Empire, and either kill or bring him over to the Dark Side of the Force. During his training, Luke is confronted with a vision of Darth Vader that implies some sort of connection to him, as well as Han Solo's and Leia's being in danger. The Millennium Falcon finds refuge in Cloud City, run by Lando Calrissian, an old friend of Han's, but it soon turns out that they have run into a trap set up by Darth Vader to capture them. He intends to use them to lure Luke to Cloud City and capture him as well. In the process, Han Solo is frozen in carbonite and handed over to the bounty hunter Boba Fett. Leia and Chewbacca are freed by Lando and have to flee without Han. Once Luke arrives in Cloud City, an epic duel between him and Darth Vader ensues. During this, Luke loses his arm and is confronted with the fact that the Dark Lord is his father, even though Luke had always been told that it was Darth Vader who *killed* his father. He tries to persuade him to join the Dark Side, but Luke rejects him, jumping down an air shaft to escape. Leia rescues him and they escape together.

Character Analysis

Darth Vader is explicitly mentioned in the summary at the beginning of the film, but actively he only appears 20 minutes into the film. He is presented as a tall, imposing figure, dressed completely in black armour with a breathing helmet. His face is never shown, suggesting him to be very mysterious. This can also be seen as taking some of his humanity from him, as the spectator does not know what kind of creature is hiding underneath all the armour. There is only one scene in which he is shown without his helmet: it shows the process of a droid putting it on. This reveals the back of his head, which is deformed. To me, the revelation of his natural appearance is a crucial aspect of his character. His head, and possibly the rest of his body, is deformed, which can be extrapolated to his human side as well. He is deformed

not by nature, but by external influences, i.e. his armour, indicating that his 'deformed' humanity is a result of external influences, not an inherent character flaw.

He hardly does anything to support this notion, though. In fact, he is shown as more inhuman than human when it comes to his behaviour and characteristics. He is powerful with the Dark Side of the Force, to the extent that he is able to telepathically strangle and murder people who are not even in the same room and whom he only sees on screen, and he deflects all sorts of attacks with ease. He is reckless, impassionate and cruel, does not accept failure of any kind, and resorts to immediate punishments by death. He is sophisticated and displays perfect military leadership in devising his plan to capture Luke. Even in this process, he is very cruel. He does not attribute any value to other people's lives and even resorts to putting Han Solo into a test chamber with a low probability of his survival. The only person that he is humble towards is the Emperor, and sees everybody else hierarchically underneath him. This attitude is supported by the others' reactions towards him. His subjects are fearful and respectful when around him; only the Emperor treats him as a subject. Luke, however, is not afraid when confronting Vader, and the revelation of his being his father comes as a shock to him. He still manages to refuse him. The ruthless aspect of his character is further intensified by David Prowse's acting. His movements are controlled and forceful to improve his impressiveness. He is shown in many full shots, encompassing his whole imposing being. His walk is strict and reminds of the military, and is mostly accompanied by the characteristic imperial music.

His dialogue, too, completes his image as a ruthless military leader. Because of his helmet, he speaks in a metallic, heavily breathing manner, which further characterises him as an artificially created automaton rather than a human being. He does not engage in redundant conversations, which means that he cannot establish any personal relationships either. He only speaks more softly to the Emperor and displays extreme humility: "What is thy bidding, my

master?” When talking to other people, however, he appears arrogant and superior, and towards Lando he partly uses the majestic plural. His choice of words is accurate and reminds of military education, but he is also dangerously seductive and provocative when talking to Luke: “Now release your anger. Only your hatred can destroy me.” Here, he uses ‘we’ to encompass Luke and him, to refer to their blood relation. When revealing this, though, he does not care to display any emotions at all: “No. I am your father. [...] Together we can rule the galaxy as father and son.” This revelation provokes curiosity about his personal background, given that he is perfectly aware of the fact that he has a son, but only approaches him to lure him over to the Dark Side of the Force. This is the only clue he gives about his background. Yoda obviously has most knowledge about him at this point in time, but does not share much of it apart from the fact that the Dark Side has consumed his will. This characterises the Dark Side (and, by extrapolation, Darth Vader as a representative thereof) as stronger and more seductive than the Light Side. At the end of the film, he initiates telepathic contact with Luke:

Darth Vader: Luke.

Luke: Father.

Darth Vader: Son. Come with me.

Luke: Ben. Why didn't you tell me?

Darth Vader: Luke. It's your destiny.

The film places a strong focus on external action, and there are many fighting scenes between the Imperial troops and the Rebels with many special effects. Darth Vader personally invades the Rebel base, but he has other people fight *for* him. His first personal fight, although not real, is the fight against Luke during the latter's vision at the tree, and picked up in their epic confrontation later on. Since the action itself does not explore his personality in depth, Luke can be seen as a dramatic foil to Vader in the way that he does not cave when he tries to

lure him over to the Dark Side of the Force. Their situation is proposed to be similar, but their choices are radically different. This is further implied by Yoda, who points out that the future is fluctuating and constantly in movement, provoking the spectator's speculations as to whether or not Darth Vader's decisions could have been different to make him a different person. It is implied that Vader has faced the same choice as Luke at some point in his life, and consciously chose for the Dark Side, making him responsible for his character as he is presented now.

Darth Vader thus remains a mystery throughout the whole film, and his personality is not explored in depth. Therefore, the spectator's information state, while having more knowledge about the Rebels than Vader has, is significantly inferior to Vader and his plans. The only time that he displays any kind of internal conflict is when he meets the Emperor. He kneels down in a clearly submissive gesture, which shows the conflict between his role as a Dark Lord and his role as a servant, further raising the question of what has happened to make him such a slave. One would expect another internal conflict to be his relationship to Luke, but he is fairly impassive towards him. He tries to persuade him by appealing to their blood bonds, but does not seem to care about him personally, which is shown in his uncaring reaction when Luke defies him and jumps to his possible death. Instead of putting any more thought into this, Darth Vader regards this confrontation as over and leaves him behind.

There is no character development on Vader's side throughout the film, except for his meeting with the Emperor where he for once is presented not as the cold-hearted Dark Lord, but as a submissive servant who is not free to choose his own actions. The revelation of being Luke's father does not constitute development either, since he is just as uncaring as before,

but it gives room for further character development in the saga. Here, though, he is fairly static¹⁵.

While Darth Vader offers more possibilities for emotional involvement in *Episode VI* and in the prequels, this analysis only focuses on him during this one film because it is specifically mentioned in the AFI list. It suggests that he was an *especially* popular villain in this film, although the others do significantly contribute to the understanding of his character. Here, he does not display much depth, and his complex background story is not explored. There is however a level of complexity other than possible character development that can be attributed to him, although it is fairly straightforward in itself. The film thematises the fight between good and evil in a dualistic way. Good and evil is seen as the Light and the Dark Side of the Force, and the fight between the representatives thereof is the main conflict of the film. Darth Vader is the major representative of the Dark Side, which characterises him as downright evil to his very core. It shows the peak of his evilness throughout his life. It is proposed (and confirmed in the prequels) that he *did* have a conscious choice of whether or not to join the Dark Side, having formerly been assigned to the Light Side and fully aware of the consequences of such a choice. Although his choice depended on many events that have shaped him throughout his young life, he chose evil over good. His moral standards might have been different back then, but he willingly cast them aside, assuming a different perspective on the Force and choosing power over happiness. It is this foil of a twisted morality and a conscious choice for evil – to willingly become evil for the sake of evil –, not his actions or lack of relationships with other characters, that constitutes the complicating layer of his character in the film.

¹⁵ Darth Vader is an interesting villain in general taking into account the other films. The possibility for character development as shown here is explored in *Episode VI*, where he sacrifices himself in the process of killing the Emperor to save his son from suffering. In his last dying moments, Luke removes his helmet, which is a symbol of the Dark Side's power over him that is now broken. He therefore redeems himself shortly before his death. In the prequels, his whole development from the boy Anakin Skywalker to Darth Vader is shown, making him a more understandable and more tragic character.

Donald F. Glut – *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*

The novelisation of the film is close and makes an attempt to literally translate the film's characters and plot onto paper. It is narrated by an omniscient, neutral narrator who, due to his non-involvement in the story itself, is invisible and reliable. He is able to portray the thoughts of all characters, which constitutes the main difference between the film as a visual and the novel as a literary product. The novel is able to explore the characters more in-depth, but does not venture further than the film dictates. The rapid switching of scenes within different storylines sometimes gives the impression of crosscutting, which is frequently used in the film as well.

While completely inaccessible in the film, Darth Vader is adapted quite well in the novel and does offer more character depth. His physical description is largely based on the film and combined with the immediate effect he has on his inferiors when “[t]owering above them in his black cloak and concealing black headgear, Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith, entered the main control deck, and the men around him fell silent” (Glut 41), with “his voice somewhat distorted by the breath mask” (42). His inferiors are clearly frightened of and cautious around him, and Veers’ impression of Vader is that “the dark figure seated inside the mouthlike cocoon hardly seemed alive, though a powerful aura of sheer evil emanated from him, sending a chilling fear through the officer” (45). He is further characterised as a “raven specter” (74) or “like a great silent god” (95). Those descriptions, while all accurately describing his effect and appearance, appear rather clinical and fairly neutral, which is in accordance with his ordered, disciplined behaviour. One description, however, has a much greater effect than the respective scene has in the film:

His master stood silhouetted so that Piett could just barely make out the lines of a set of mechanical appendages as they retracted a respirator tube from

Vader's head. He shuddered when he realized that he might be the first ever to have seen his master unmasked.

The sight was horrifying. Vader, his back turned to Piett, was entirely clothed in black; but above his studded black neck band gleamed his naked head.

Though the admiral tried to avert his eyes, *morbid fascination* forced him to look at that hairless, skull-like head. It was covered with a maze of thick scar tissue that twisted around against Vader's corpse-pale skin. The thought crossed Piett's mind that there might be a heavy price for viewing what no one else had seen. Just then, the robot hands grasped the black helmet and gently lowered it over the Dark Lord's head. (84-85, emphasis mine)

Seen through an inferior's eyes, the morbid fascination described here might be a reflection on viewer and reader, explaining where part of the appeal of this character comes from.

Vader fulfils several roles in the story: master, servant, and representative of the Dark Side. As a master, he is universally feared, which suggests his cruelty before he actually resorts to action. For instance, the “[c]rew members dreaded these footfalls and shuddered whenever they were heard approaching, bringing their much feared, but much respected leader” (41). His character traits as presented in the film are fully explored here as well; he resorts to quick punishment and is portrayed as an impressive, feared character. He shows no sign of emotions in, for instance, a scene with Han Solo, where “[s]eeming neither pleased nor displeased, he watched until he had seen enough, and then the Dark Lord turned his back on the writhing figure and left the cell, the door sliding behind him to muffle Solo's anguished screams” (173). The only time he more or less openly shows emotions is in his scene with the Emperor, which has a much more intense effect on the reader due to the narrator's assuming Darth Vader's perspective: “Only one being in the entire universe could instill fear in the dark spirit of Darth Vader. As he stood, silent and alone in his dim chamber, the Dark Lord of the

Sith waited for a visit from his own dreaded master” (114), and while waiting, one “might have detected a slight trembling in that black-cloaked frame. And there might even have been a hint of terror to be seen upon his visage, had anyone been able to see through his concealing black breath mask” (ibid). This scene explores him much more in depth than the film, where his emotional reactions are not hinted at. Even the Emperor’s hologram “towered above him” (ibid.), a description that would normally be reserved for Darth Vader’s impressive appearance, and “the sound of his voice sent a thrill of terror coursing through Vader’s powerful frame” (115). The master-servant relationship is made clear when the Emperor directly addresses him as a servant. The fact that Darth Vader is afraid of the Emperor himself and cautious in even his holographic presence implies that the two have a very intensive history together. Here, the reader might be invited to feel pity for Vader, to speculate about his past, and to find an explanation for the nature of their relationship.

Vader, although restricted by the even more powerful character of the Emperor, is more active than the latter and should therefore still be seen as an emblem of the Dark Side. Yoda characterises his turning to the Dark Side, saying that “if once start you down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny. Consume you it will... as it did Obi-Wan’s apprentice” (136). The Dark Side is “[e]asier, quicker, more seductive” (136), all characteristics that can be attributed to Vader, to whom the Force seems to come easily and powerfully in general. Obi-Wan, too, has learned from Vader’s past decisions and tells Luke that “[he] will not lose [him] to the Emperor as [he] once lost Vader” (167). The Dark Side is with Vader in every single moment. Especially when he consciously uses this power, he is almost irresistible. This is shown in the confrontation with Luke: “Vader’s influence was incredibly strong; it seemed to Luke like a thing alive” (195). He knows how to easily provoke people, which is one of the major ways to recruit people to the Dark Side: “Ben has taught you well. You have controlled your fear. Now release your anger. I destroyed your

family. Take your revenge” (196). The Dark Side, then, is shown as being powerful, manipulative, and dangerous to anyone who falls prey to it: “But the grimly cloaked specter stalked toward him along the narrow gantry, and it seemed he wanted the young Jedi’s life. Or worse, his fragile soul” (199-200).

This fragile soul can be another reference to Darth Vader’s past, for he has been in a similar situation, and *his* fragile soul has been consumed completely. His past is further explored in Luke’s knowledge of his father at the beginning of the film, based on the slightly twisted tale that Obi-Wan has told him: “The object [Luke’s light saber] had once belonged to his father, a former Jedi Knight who had been betrayed and murdered by the young Darth Vader” (18). During his training, too, Luke’s vision and his reaction to it foreshadow their relation more explicitly than the film:

As Luke watched in shocked disbelief, the broken helmet fell aside to reveal, not the unknown, imagined face of Darth Vader, but Luke’s own face, looking up at him. [...] He wondered if he were really fighting himself, or if he had fallen prey to the temptations of the dark side of the Force. He might himself become a figure as evil as Darth Vader. And he wondered if there might be some even darker meaning behind the unsettling vision. (146)

Just like in the film, after telling Luke that he is his father, he remains uncaring for his son’s fate: “The Dark Lord watched until he saw the youth’s body sucked into a large exhaust pipe in the side of the reactor shaft. When Luke vanished, Vader quickly turned and hurried off the platform” (204). His last appearance in the novel, however, displays contemplation on Vader’s part. It does not become clear what the subject of his pondering might be, which leaves open the question of whether or not there might already be some kind of change in him after their encounter.

Even though he is explored in greater depth in the novel, the reader is left with the last impression of Vader as an inaccessible, mysterious character whose inner life cannot be accessed anymore. The reader did have valuable insight into a part of Vader's inner life, but is once again cut off from the powerful figure that seems just as uncaring as any representative of the Dark Side should be.

Conclusion

The novel allows for more emotional involvement with Darth Vader due to the fact that he is at least partly presented as a more tragic, more pitiable creature. The overall theme has not changed though. The greater involvement might have reduced his evil effect to some extent, but the actions that follow after this speak for themselves and do not present Vader as a character who might even consider doing some good to people. He can thus still mainly be seen as the major evil force in the novel, as the portentous villain that stands against the positive forces in the story. Being a perfect agent as well as servant of the Dark Force, he has a different stand on morality, and might fascinate readers not only because of his impressive, powerful appearance, but also because of his being evil to his very core due to his connection to the Dark Force.

3. The Philosophical Villain: Evil as Criticism of Human Nature

A. Jonathan Teatime

Terry Pratchett – *Hogfather*

Introduction

Hogfather is a novel from the comic fantasy series Discworld by Terry Pratchett. It revolves around the disappearance of the Hogfather, a Discworld version of our Santa Claus. A group called the Auditors of Reality¹⁶ contracts Jonathan Teatime of the Guild of Assassins to assassinate the Hogfather in order to put an end to human imagination, which distorts reality in their point of view. To save human creativity, which is endangered by losing one's imagination and belief in the illogical, Death¹⁷ takes over temporarily for the Hogfather so that the children won't lose belief in him. In the meantime, Death's granddaughter Susan tries to find out what happened. She gets help from the Oh God of Hangovers and the wizards from the Unseen University. The wizards face the problem of too much spare belief in the world, which results in the creation of random small gods and beings, a process which also created the Oh God of Hangovers. Susan travels to the land of the Tooth Fairy¹⁸ to discover that Teatime, together with a group of criminals he employs, has assassinated the Hogfather by using some ancient magic on all the children's teeth in the castle to stop the children from believing in the Hogfather. After throwing Teatime off the tower and when some belief in the

¹⁶ The Auditors of Reality are godlike beings who are responsible for the correct running of the universe in a rather bureaucratic sense. They hate human nature because they consider fantasy and imagination messy, and are therefore recurring villains in the Discworld series.

¹⁷ Death is a recurring character in the series as well and he is simply the concept of death personified, who carries out the tasks of taking the souls from the mortals once their lifespan is over. His appearance is the universal image of a skeleton with a scythe, but he is a neutral character bordering on good, and very fond of humans. Through the course of the series, he has developed a personality of his own and adopted a human apprentice who later fell in love with another human. The result of their relationship was Susan, who is Death's granddaughter and, although there is no genetic connection, is mostly human with some of Death's powers inherited.

¹⁸ One unique characteristic of Pratchett's style is the absurdist combination of different images or concepts from popular belief, serious, philosophical issues and children's beliefs, such as Death as a popular character with features from universal beliefs, and the Tooth Fairy (or other entities children are encouraged to believe in). Those are assigned the same level of importance and Pratchett combines them credibly within the internal consistency of the Discworld.

Hogfather is restored, thus re-creating him, Susan rescues him from the Auditors. When Susan and Death celebrate Hogswatch Night together, Teatime, who survived the fall from the tower, tracks them down in her house to kill Death. However, Susan kills him first, with a poker. After Teatime's death, everything is restored to normality.

Formal Aspects of the Novel

The point of view in *Hogfather* alternates and the focus is switched from character to character in order to show the different but interconnected events on the material Discworld as well as the events revolving around Teatime's plan in the imaginary realm of the Tooth Fairy. Pertaining to Pratchett's style, the omniscient narrator explores the thoughts of everyone except for Jonathan Teatime's. The focus lies on others' impression of Teatime, but the reader, just like the characters, hardly gains any real insight into his mind. The storyline itself goes on a long time without any focus on Teatime's actions at all. There is a strong focus on Susan, Death and the wizards who try to solve the problem Teatime has created, but most of the time the reader is left in the dark about what Teatime is actually planning to do.

The protagonists are Death and Susan, whereas Death's role is confined to the events on the material Discworld and Susan's in interaction with Teatime's plan. It is interesting to note that Susan and Teatime are very similar. Pratchett created an interesting duality between the protagonist and the villain here. This aspect shall be explored in more detail further on.

Character Analysis

Jonathan Teatime is introduced as an estranging and potentially dangerous character right at the beginning, even before he actively takes part in the plot:

Something began when the Guild of Assassins enrolled Mister Teatime, who saw things differently from other people, and one of the ways that he saw

things differently from other people was in seeing other people as things (later, Lord Downey of the Guild said, ‘We took pity on him because he’d lost both parents at an early age. I think that, on reflection, we should have wondered a bit more about that.’) (Pratchett 11, emphasis in the original)

This way, a strange atmosphere is already set at the beginning, foreshadowing the unusual course of events that is to follow.

Teatime is first and foremost introduced as an assassin. It is not only his profession, it is all that defines him. A generally valid description of an assassin in the Discworld is given in the form of Lord Downey, the head of the Guild who is described as “an Assassin. The capital letter was important. It separated those curs who went around murdering people for money from the gentlemen who wished to have removed, for a consideration, any inconvenient razorblades from the candyfloss of life” (20). They are “cultured men who enjoyed good music and food and literature. And they knew the value of human life. To a penny, in many cases” (ibid). Assassins are very much concerned with style. Teatime however has unconventional ways and Lord Downey had already considered dismissing him, preferably in the form of an accident because “[l]ike many people with no actual morals, Lord Downey *did* have standards, and Teatime repelled him” (29, emphasis in the original).

Teatime first appears in the novel by getting into Downey’s room entirely unnoticed, despite the traps and precautions the Head Assassin had taken. He insists on his name being pronounced “Teh-ah-tim-eh” (30) and his physical description increases the weirdness and creepiness of his character:

Teatime’s face was young and open and friendly. Or, at least, it smiled all the time. But the effect was spoiled for most people by the fact that it had only one eye. Some unexplained accident had taken the other one, and the missing orb had been replaced by a ball of glass. The result was disconcerting. But what

bothered Lord Downey far more was the man's other eye, the one that might loosely be called normal. He'd never seen such a small and sharp pupil.

Teatime looked at the world through a pinhole. (31)

Throughout the novel, the physical descriptions place a strong focus on "those mismatched eyes" (374) that don't seem to fit the rest of his face.

His strange, physical appearance fits perfectly with the way his personality is evaluated by other characters. Even before Teatime's first appearance, Lord Downey characterises him by pointing out that

very occasionally you found you'd got someone like Mister Teatime, to whom the money was merely a distraction. Mister Teatime had a truly brilliant mind, but it was brilliant like a fractured mirror, all marvellous facets and rainbows but, ultimately, also something that was broken. (29)

This suggests that Teatime has some kind of psychological defect that might explain his actions and attitude towards other people. He is incapable of thinking like a normal person; his unconventional methods don't seem to be a problem for him, and he doesn't even see why there should be a problem with his way to deal with certain situations.

To Downey's dismay, it only takes Teatime a few seconds to devise a plan to assassinate the Hogfather, a task that Downey considers impossible, because he has already given it some thought beforehand. Not only has he considered how to assassinate the Hogfather, but also "the Soul Cake Duck. And the Sandman. And Death" (34). When Downey comments that it should be technically impossible to kill those beings, Teatime simply points out that "[e]veryone has their weak point" (ibid). Teatime's plan strongly affects all the other characters in the novel. By assassinating the Hogfather, a major force of belief is removed which results in the personification of forces because of all the spare belief on the Discworld. Teatime's actual plan is only explained by Susan towards the end of the

book: “It’s such old magic it isn’t even magic any more [...] If you’ve got a piece of someone’s hair, or a nail clipping, or a tooth – you can control them” (344). Using the teeth that have accumulated in the Tooth Fairy’s castle, he controls all the belief in the world. He works against Death’s efforts, who tries to restore belief in the Hogfather by assuming his role.

His behaviour and attitude make Teatime quite a lonely person: “‘I don’t have many [friends],’ he said, apologetically. ‘Don’t seem to have the knack. On the other hand... I don’t seem to have *any* enemies at all. Not one. Isn’t that nice?’” (47) He is unable to form personal relationships because he doesn’t seem to have a proper understanding of human relationships in general. He calls everybody his friend, but threatens them at the same time. This happens for instance when he hijacks the cart with the teeth for the Tooth Fairy. He forces Ernie the driver to show him how to open the secret passage to the castle: “‘you will take us through or, and I say this with very considerable regret, I will have to kill you” (64). After Ernie complies, he kills him anyway because he has no use for him anymore and considered him dull in the first place. Possibly because he has no other real relationships, his primary motives for becoming a good assassin are immortality in the form of respect from the other Guild members. This, and the convention among assassins to show style, is probably the reason why he tries to impress everyone. For instance, he disguises himself as a waiter to impress the group of criminals that he hires and sneaks up to them, being disconcertingly friendly but violent at the same time. This leads to his being respected and feared among the group members. He also makes a point of showing style and cruelty at the same time when getting rid of the guards in the Tooth Fairy’s castle:

He cringed back as Teatime stepped over it. ‘What’re you doing here?’ he shouted. ‘Who *are* you?’

‘Ah, I’m glad you asked. I’m your worst nightmare!’ said Teatime cheerfully.
[...]

‘No,’ said Teatime. ‘Not that one.’ He withdrew a dagger from his sleeve. ‘I’m the one where this man comes out of nowhere and kills you stone dead.’
The guard grinned with relief. ‘Oh, *that* one,’ he said. ‘But that one’s not very –’ (100/101, emphasis in the original)

Teatime even turns against his employees when they get distracted, scared and steal from him. He threatens them openly at first – “‘I know people say I’d kill them as soon as look at them,’ whispered Teatime. ‘And in fact I’d *much* rather kill you than look at you, Mr Lilywhite” (322, emphasis in the original) –, then he concludes with a more subtle threat: “If I thought you were feeling bad thoughts about me I would be so downcast [...] I do not have many friends left, Mr Medium Dave” (232).

Because Teatime’s thoughts are inaccessible to the reader, it is the other characters’ reactions that influence the reader’s response toward him. This may or may not work depending on the individual reader and his or her disposition toward the single characters. They do not actually understand him, which makes him suspicious and even more inaccessible. Before they start to work with him, the criminals make a quick evaluation of him, pointing out that “Teatime was OK. True, after a few minutes talking to him your eyes began to water and you felt you needed to scrub your skin even on the inside, but no one was perfect, were they?” (44) Their immediate reaction is rejection, but they cooperate anyway:

The men around the table watched him. It was always hard to know what Banjo was thinking, or even if he was thinking at all, but the other four were thinking along the lines of: bumptious little tit, like all Assassins. Thinks he knows it all. I could take him down one-handed, no trouble. But... you hear stories. Those eyes give me the creeps... (49)

He is not only perceived as creepy, but also as quite an annoying character in general by Mr Brown, who is on the team and has the courage and life experience to tell Teatime what he actually thinks of him: “You think it’s all some kind of game. You make little jokes to yourself and you think no one else notices and you think you’re so smart. Well, Mr Teacup, I’m leaving, right? And you ain’t stopping me. [...] You think you’re nasty? You think *you’re* mean?” (331, emphasis in the original) Although Mr Brown makes a valid point, Teatime simply disregards his words: “I appreciate your point of view [...] And, I have to repeat, it’s Teh-ah-tim-eh. Now, please, Banjo” (ibid).

The only characters who are not repelled by Teatime are the Auditors, who see him as a “resourceful human” (66). Despite his efforts to make himself a hero by wanting to kill Death, even the children prefer the latter over him: “Huh, that’s not very creepy, it’s just bones [...] And anyway it’s just standing there. It’s not even making woo-woo noises. And anyway *you’re* creepy. Your eye’s weird.’ ‘Really? Then let’s see how creepy I can be,’ said Teatime” (430).

The climax of the novel, at least with Teatime as a villain, is his confrontation with Susan at the Tooth Fairy’s castle¹⁹. He immediately recognises her heritage upon seeing Death’s sword, which she brought along from his castle, demonstrating his eye for detail and education as an assassin. He tries to cut her off when she talks to him, dismissing her by stating, “I only get annoyed at important things” (376). Teatime is not willing to take responsibility for his actions. In fact, he already sees himself as having won the fight: “I’ve *got* away with it. No more Hogfather. And that’s only the start. We’ll keep the teeth coming in, of course. The possibilities –” (380, emphasis in the original). During that confrontation, he also upsets Banjo, whom he had great influence over beforehand, by mentioning that the

¹⁹ Another climax of the novel is Susan’s attempt to rescue the Hogfather in its original form from the Auditors, but this storyline does not include Teatime anymore at this point.

Hogfather is dead. As Teatime had pointed out earlier, “Banjo has the heart of a little child [...] I believe I have, too” (232). This similarity eventually leads to Banjo’s alienation.

Despite his efforts to shut her up, Susan keeps talking and forces him to listen to her words, which distress him greatly. Being the only character that sees Teatime as he is, she forces him to remember his childhood. His reactions show how much truth lies in her words:

‘I think I know you, Teatime,’ she said, as sweetly as she could for Banjo’s sake. ‘You’re the mad kid they’re all scared of, right?’

‘Banjo?’ snapped Teatime. ‘I said grab her –’

‘Our mam said –’

‘The giggling excitable one even the bullies never touched because if they did he went insane and kicked and bit,’ said Susan. ‘The kid who didn’t know the difference between chucking a stone at a cat and setting it on fire.’

To her delight he glared at her.

‘Shut up,’ he said.

‘I *bet* no one wanted to *play* with you,’ said Susan. ‘Not the kid with no friends. Kids know about a mind like yours even if they don’t know the right words for it –’

‘I *said* shut up! *Get* her, Banjo!’

That was it. She could hear it in Teatime’s voice. There was a touch of vibrato that hadn’t been there before.

‘The kind of little boy,’ she said, watching his face, ‘who looks up dolls’ dresses –’

‘I *didn’t!*’ (382-83, emphasis in the original)

This is a crucial moment for Teatime’s character development. Susan explains how Teatime functions: that his state of mind never had a real source or reason because he had

been like this all his life. Through her deeper understanding of his psyche, she is the only one to get through to and hurt Teatime's feelings. His reactions show that he doesn't want to be confronted with this reality, not even think about it until she forces him to react directly to the words she said. Before his exclamation "I *didn't!*" he merely tried to deflect her words by not paying attention to them, by getting rid of Susan herself. As this is the only time that Teatime shows any emotions at all, and seeing that his reactions are genuinely desperate and distressed, the reader for the first time has reason to feel sorry for him. It opens up a way to empathise with him by trying to assume his point of view, now that personal background information has been established. Until this point, the reader could only wonder what had happened to Teatime, what made him the villain that he is. Here, Pratchett presents a way to turn the hitherto strange, cruel and inaccessible villain into a tragic character who has a distorted mind of a child. However, even though her words affect him on a deeper emotional level, he is still able to think clearly enough not to be tricked by Susan when she hits him; on the contrary, he anticipates it. He further presents himself as somewhat narrow-minded and simplistic by drawing a direct comparison between himself and Death, whose sword he stole from Susan and intends to keep as a weapon of greater power: "He's very single-minded," said Susan, closer now. 'Ah, a man after my own heart'" (385).

When Susan pushes him over the railing of the stairwell, the reader first gets the feeling that he has actually died, especially considering that it followed such a dramatic, climactic confrontation. The plot goes on without Teatime for a while, but soon, after everything seems to have been settled, he falls onto the wizards' table and escapes with the help of Death's sword. He interrupts Susan and Death's awkward celebration of Hogswatch Night with the intention of killing the latter. For the first time, too, he explicitly demands to have spectators – the children that Susan has to watch – in order to be able to present himself as a hero, for which he did not seem to have much need before: "It will be instructive [...]"

Educational. And when your adversary is Death, you cannot help but be the good guy” (428). This confrontation is much less spectacular than the scene at the Tooth Fairy’s castle. After Susan tricks and kills him by throwing a poker through Death, her grandfather dismisses his role as the Hogfather and resumes his real duties:

Death prodded the fallen Teatime with his foot.

STOP PLAYING DEAD, MISTER TEH-AH-TIM-EH.

The ghost of the Assassin sprang up like a jack-in-the-box, all slightly crazed smiles.

‘You got it right!’

OF COURSE.

Teatime began to fade. (432)

Although his death is not quite spectacular, it rounds off his character perfectly. When he was first introduced, and throughout the rest of the book, he complained about others’ pronunciation of his name. In death, though, it is finally pronounced the right way, presenting a certain closure to the reader.

Jonathan Teatime remains a mystery to the reader throughout the novel. He is introduced as an insane villain and generally resists others’ attempts to investigate deeper into his personality – possibly because he is mainly as simplistic or single-minded as he presents himself. None of the other characters manages to penetrate him or get under his skin the way Susan does. This results from the strong similarity between the two. Both Susan and Teatime are not normal – Susan because of her genetic disposition that results from her being a descendant of Death, Teatime for no obvious reason at all. They are both conscious of the fact that they are not normal, although Susan makes an effort to behave normally and lead a normal life. This is the reason why she has no contact at all with her grandfather. Teatime prefers not to try to fit in. He consciously chooses for an abnormal lifestyle. Although they

have similar problems, they deal with them in a radically different way. This way Susan understands Teatime so well during their final confrontation. Only with Susan's help is the reader able to gain more access to his mind and understand him better. On the other hand, Susan's references to his childhood make him a more complex character because of the additional background questions that are not answered and remain unanswered despite the stylistic closure that comes with Teatime's death.

Terry Pratchett's Hogfather, directed by Vadim Jean

Terry Pratchett's Hogfather can be seen in many aspects as a very close adaptation of *Hogfather*. First and foremost, both storyline and plot are largely the same as in the novel and only some minor scenes have been cut. Only little plot manipulation can be detected: unlike the novel, the film illustrates the Hogfather's work by directly showing him delivering presents. Teatime's actions in the castle are shown consistently throughout the whole film, instead of his being absent for a long time. His scenes are spread evenly over the whole film. Even if they only constitute a few seconds of showing him and his group of criminals doing their work in the Tooth Fairy's castle, the spectator is constantly reminded of his actions. He lands in the Unseen University immediately after being defeated by Susan, whereas the novel created the illusion of his actual death and later surprised the reader by having him reappear in the last scene that he is in. Just like in the novel, the story is told by an omniscient and invisible narrator who, by means of a voiceover, sets the comic fantasy atmosphere at the beginning, literally reading out parts of the first pages of the novel. In this way, the world is introduced to the unfamiliar spectator the same way each novel introduces the Discworld to the unfamiliar reader. The narrator clearly states where "our story begins." He speaks less frequently as the plot progresses and mostly introduces settings, for instance the Guild of Assassins or the Unseen University. The narrative structure itself is linear, except for the last

scene in which Death goes back in time to buy the wooden horse for Albert, and many cross-cuts are used to show both Teatime's and Susan's storylines at the same time.

The novel is adapted in two parts, like any other Discworld adaptation that has been released so far²⁰. On the one hand, this makes each part consistent in itself: each part can be seen as a single, coherent film that makes sense to the spectator. However, the films are meant to be watched after one another. This interrupts the flow of the story a little, but gives the director enough time for a close adaptation. With each film running at 90 minutes, the whole three-hour adaptation ensures that there is enough time to give credit to the whole novel without compromising it. The first film ends with Teatime laughing next to a glowing pile of teeth, saying, "Happy Hogswatch, everybody!" At the same time it is shown that the belief in the Hogfather is fading, i.e. that he has been successful up to this point: Susan finds the Oh God of Hangovers and the Hogfather's castle collapses. The second film starts the same way as the first, with the narrator establishing the background of the world in the same way before continuing with the story. Following this, the scene with Teatime and the castle guard is shown, followed by Death and Albert's finding of the dead guard who emerges in the real world, and Susan's bringing the Oh God of Hangovers to the Unseen University to sober him up.

A major problem with novel adaptations is the problem of maintaining the style that contributes to the perception of the novel. This is especially problematic in this case due to Terry Pratchett's stylistic idiom. Both film and novel are comic fantasies and not meant to be realistic, although internally consistent once the framework of the Discworld has been accepted by spectator and reader. In general, the film's atmosphere is rather serious and creepy, which presents a strong contrast to the other Discworld films where the atmosphere is decidedly more comical, and decidedly more unreal also. Here, though, the unrealistic

²⁰ When the films were first released, they were shown during the Christmas time, with the films shown on two subsequent days.

components are shown as realistically as possible in terms of setting, character, etc. The lack of a consistent comical narrating voice largely contributes to this perception, too. Because it is a comic fantasy, the novel's style itself is humorous even when it comes to the narrator and his comments regarding the events happening in the story. This problem has been partly dealt with by using an actual narrator in the film who at least manages to set the right tone for a comedy, but who is not used consistently. In the novels, the narrator is biased and does not only narrate the story itself, he also constantly evaluates characters and events through comments or comical anecdotes. This kind of narrator significantly contributes to Pratchett's stylistic idiom, but is missing in the larger part in the film. To make up for this, some characters are introduced partly by their settings, too, instead of the narrator's comment – for instance the world of Death, which is shown completely in black and white. Generally, the film puts a lot of focus on close-ups to show the details the narration inevitably has to miss. Another ironic effect to acknowledge the presence of Pratchett's style is added by his cameo appearance as the owner of the toy store, which can naturally only be acknowledged by the recognition of Pratchett's fans.²¹

Teatime's character appears only a few pages into the novel and first appears twelve minutes into the film. Not only is the general adaptation of the film close; the adaptation of the characters is quite close, too. Teatime shows all the aspects of his personality that the novel attributes to him, and his physical appearance confirms this as well. In the film as well as the novel, he has blond, curly hair. As soon as he accepts the assignment, he wears elegant black clothes, and where the novel puts a strong focus on his eyes in terms of other characters' reactions to them, the camera emphasises them to produce this disconcerting effect on the spectator. The first time his eyes are shown, he looks directly at the camera and, by extension, the spectator, intensifying the unsettling, shocking effect they have. Marc Warren

²¹ In each of the three Discworld adaptations so far, Pratchett has a cameo appearance as one of the minor characters.

portrays the character well, intensifying everything about Teatime that disturbs the other characters in the novel. He is especially consistent in the use of his voice: he speaks slowly, disconcertingly calm, and his tone of voice sounds naive or at least places him in a daydreaming state. His facial expression is impassionate, though he smiles all the time.

In this way, Vadim Jean puts much effort into projecting the reactions in the novel onto the spectator, thus trying to make him think and feel how the other characters feel when confronted by Teatime. This surely is an effective and more direct, more personal approach to the spectator, who can only see the reactions in the film. Downey appears to be disconcerted, but his thoughts aren't explored at all. Those thoughts, however, are one of the major sources of information in the novel regarding Teatime's personality and the little background that can be given about him. The criminals are openly afraid of him and think he is crazy, and the other guards are afraid, too. Mr. Brown only seems annoyed by him, and Susan is not impressed by his scariness either, but none of these reactions is explored in greater detail.

Other than not having any friends – which he does admit, but much later in the film than in the novel – Teatime does not display any emotional conflicts. Also because the narrator's comments and the character's thoughts have been eliminated, external conflicts characterise Teatime more, which also means that the main state of knowledge in regard to him is that the spectator has significantly less information than him, and even less than in the novel. The novel's epic confrontation between him and Susan explores his character in most depth, but this depth is not achieved to the same extent in the film. All dialogues throughout the film are very close to the novel, which holds also true for their confrontation, but Susan's evaluation of Teatime is a little re-arranged and shortened. This provides Susan with less possibility to explore his character in the same depth as she does in the novel. On the other hand, unlike in the novel this scene is very intimate. Teatime hardly ever touched anyone during the whole film, but here he gets close to Susan, which increases the tension between

them. While still impressive, this scene is not as emotionally loaded as in the novel. This scene gave the reader the final clue to Teatime's characterisation, to the core that makes him who he is. In the film, this aspect that makes him a tragic character is not as prominent. The lack of characterisation of this aspect also influences the way his last scene is evaluated. He does want to appear as a hero in front of the children, but without any prior perception of his tragic character, his development does not become clear. During his interaction with the children, he tries very hard not to get impatient with them, but when they keep calling him creepy, his attitude suddenly changes and he tries to be truly villainous, which, due to visual cues, is much more impressive than in the novel. When he dies, both blood and tears stream from his eyes, and he clearly expresses his confusion about the events leading to his death. His ghost, however, seems truly happy that Death got his name right, and then fades. The only other way to characterise him, other than external conflicts, is still through Susan as a dramatic foil to Teatime. Here, too, she is different, but deals with it in a different way. The film exemplifies this in a conversation between her and Death, and her shocked or hurt reaction at his words:

Death: It's not your business.

Susan: Not my business? How can you say –

Death: You wanted to be normal. Good night, granddaughter.

Throughout the film Susan comes to terms with her nature, though reluctantly, while Teatime does not.

Conclusion

While the novel allows the reader to explore Teatime in slightly more depth than the film, Teatime is fascinating for more than just his inaccessibility that makes both spectator and reader wonder who he actually is. In the film even more than in the novel, he does not

develop, is centred around a single idea, or, to use Forster's terms, he is not a very round character. However, this is appropriate for an effective character in comedy.

The fascination with Teatime is therefore not necessarily the depth of his character because there is hardly any, especially in the film. The fascination with the inaccessible Teatime, while it can also provoke interest in his character as such, can also be found on a cognitive level that forces spectator and reader to re-evaluate his own life. Teatime stands for something greater than himself within both the novel and the film, but I believe that the film, due to its more serious atmosphere, manages to focalise this better. Teatime is an agent of the Auditors, the acting force of evil, but by extrapolation of the Auditors' nature also a force of order and rules. While the Auditors as the underlying villains are not too active, he tries to eliminate human fantasy and belief while being human himself. The central theme is human nature and the works can be seen as a sort of social criticism. They explore children's beliefs and the meanings of childhood that might be lost later on in life – or that make it possible to become functioning adults in the first place. The core message is summarised by Death at the end of the film: "Humans need fantasy to be human. To be the place where the falling angel meets the rising ape [...] You need to believe in things that aren't true. How else can they become?" Teatime, then, is the opposite of what humans, according to Death, are supposed to be. The works convey core messages regarding human nature, make reader and spectator think about the importance of their own creativity and fantasy, and have to see themselves be more or less directly criticised, again by Death: "Human beings make life so interesting. Do you know that in a universe so full of wonders, they have managed to invent boredom?" But not only Death's words, also Teatime's actions that oppose those words are central to conveying and presenting the message, and the spectator sees the consequences of a possible loss of fantasy: a character like Teatime.

B. The Joker

Ed Brubaker – *Batman: The Man Who Laughs* (2005)²²

Brian Azzarello – *Joker* (2008)

Introduction

The Joker does not only appear in one single source text. He is a recurring character in the Batman comic series and frequently appears in other works based on it. Therefore he cannot be singled out as only one literary source character that provides a universal understanding of him. Margolin points out that an adaptation of a character in multiple works by multiple, unrelated authors can lead to a ‘super’ or ‘mega’ character in our cultural conscience. This is “a generalized literary figure [...] which both synthesizes and transcends any individual figure of this name. Such stereotypes are based the existence of a set of core properties ascribed to the figure in all of the works in which it occurs and considered essential to it” (Margolin 70). While it would be interesting to analyse all the source material available, such an attempt would go far beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, the literary material is limited to two graphic novels: Ed Brubaker’s *Batman: The Man Who Laughs*²³, published in 2005, and Brian Azzarello’s *Joker*²⁴, published in 2008. These give the basis of the establishment of such a mega character.

Man Who Laughs depicts the first encounter between Batman and the Joker. Police captain Gordon and his force find an abandoned warehouse full of mutilated, dead bodies. They do not find any clues about the murderer at first. When a reporter is being filmed while reporting on the reopening of Arkham Asylum, she dies in a similar fashion as the bodies in the factory. The Joker emerges from behind her, announces the millionaire Henry Claridge as

²² Based on *Batman #1*, published in 1940, in which Joker is first introduced as a villain.

²³ This work shall be further referred to as *Man Who Laughs*. This is not a reference to the novel by Victor Hugo, or the film of the same name.

²⁴ In informal conversations with fellow undergraduate students who are well-informed in the *Batman* series, I have found support that those works in particular establish Joker’s character accurately.

his first official victim to the camera, and kills the cameraman. Bruce Wayne²⁵, having seen the broadcast on TV, meets Gordon at the asylum for the investigation. Despite the police's protection, Claridge dies at midnight. Joker uses this distraction to arm and free the inmates of a medical centre. While Wayne researches the poison that was used to kill Claridge, Joker broadcasts another open threat, this time to the local millionaire Jay W. Wilde. He invades his house with poisonous gas. A struggle between Batman and Joker follows. The latter manages to flee and Wilde dies. While Batman continues his research at a chemical processing plant, the Joker makes yet another public threat, this time including two victims of which one is Bruce Wayne. He is saved from the poison even though it has already entered his system. In the meantime, Joker's gang of clowns wreaks havoc on the streets. Batman cuts off the city's poisoned water supply at the reservoir, where he encounters Joker. Joker is arrested and locked up in Arkham Asylum.

Azzarello's *Joker* takes up the story several years after this. Joker is released from Arkham Asylum. With the help of the thug Johnny Frost and other criminals, he takes back the city. During this process, Two-Face²⁶ kidnaps Frost to try to turn him against Joker, but fails. After an assassination attempt on Joker, a small war breaks out between their forces. During a meeting between those two criminal masterminds, Joker threatens Two-Face and murders his men. Two-Face is later seen at a meeting with Batman, asking him to stop the other villain. Frost dies during a fight between Batman and Joker.

²⁵ Bruce Wayne and Batman are the same person.

²⁶ Another popular villain in the Batman series. He used to be the attorney Harvey Dent, who later transforms into the physically mutilated Two-Face. He suffers from a multiple personality disorder and obsessively chooses the life or death of his victims by flipping a coin.

Formal Aspects of the Works

Both works are graphic novels. *Man Who Laughs* alternates between the first-person narration of Captain Gordon and Batman. In *Joker*, Johnny Frost is the only first-person narrator.

Therefore the story is reduced to only his point of view. Although chronologically connected to *Man Who Laughs*, the drawings are more realistic and disturbing, and much less a cartoon.

Character Analysis

Joker is first introduced through his gruesome actions. *Man Who Laughs* starts off in an abandoned factory with at least nine dead bodies. His cruelty and disrespect for other beings is directly addressed by Batman: “I think whoever did this was **practicing** on them... And I think this is just the **beginning**” (Brubaker 12, emphasis in the original²⁷). The manner of his victims’ death is exemplified by the reporter. She starts to giggle hysterically, then turns greenish pale and dies. Paired with his maniacal laugh, he threatens the city as a whole: “So, **hello – goodbye**, you’re all going to die” (15). His physical appearance is curiously similar to that of his victims. He is first only presented as a shadow behind the dying reporter before a full picture reveals his blue complexion²⁸ and green hair. He wears a purple suit and hat, a yellow shirt and a green tie, and possesses a gun.

The Joker does not conceal his crimes at all. He is impassive towards the people he kills as “he didn’t even **look** at them, as if killing them wasn’t even important” (32). This suggests that he does not kill simply for the sake of killing, but that his motives go farther than that. Indeed, it is pointed out that “[i]t’s becoming more and more clear that we’re not dealing with someone who has a motive other than *causing terror*” (38, emphasis mine).

Batman, however, introduces another motive by working out a connection between Joker and Batman’s former antagonist, the Red Hood:

²⁷ Both graphic novels emphasise words by writing them in bold. My own emphases are written in italics.

²⁸ Judging from the characters’ reactions, his face is supposed to be white or at least pale.

Could it be this simple? Joker and the Red Hood are one and the same? One criminal mastermind transformed into another? Problem is, there are big differences between them. The Red Hood never killed anyone and Joker kills with almost every breath he takes. [...] If I'm right, and Joker is the Red Hood, then his vengeance may already be complete. [...] Hard to believe anyone would kill so many people just to hide a motive, but we're obviously not dealing with a rational mind. (49-53)

Assuming revenge as his primary motive, Joker is straightforward and simple in his approach to the world. He is an impressive criminal mastermind, stealing the TV crew's van: "With minor adjustments, he'll be able to broadcast **live** anytime he wants now" (21). He takes control of the situation and gives himself a clear advantage over the police force since he can operate and spread chaos from anywhere now. The mysterious deaths, accompanied by turning insane shortly before, are attributed to time-released poison. He also uses brute force and makes use of the distraction to free the criminally insane. He later operates with groups of armed clowns, who are probably the inmates. In his announcement to the city, he describes those – and therefore himself, too – as "some **poor misunderstood souls**" (36), and extends his threat not only to the victims he explicitly mentions, but also the whole population of the city: "As for the rest of tonight's **entertainment**, well, that'll just have to be a **surprise**, but I promise you'll **die laughing**" (37). His schemes are very inventive and manipulative, and his motive of spreading chaos is successful through the fear he provokes. Joker does not appear to be frightened of the consequences. In fact, he seems to think of everything as fun, as a mere game, as Batman discovers in their first fight: "This psychopath is **laughing**. I'm about to break his bones and all I can hear is his laughter echoing through the whole house" (44). Because of this kind of behaviour, the police nickname him Joker. He never attributed the name to himself, but openly accepts it.

The police are helpless against Joker. Only Batman is able to get inside his head. This, however, is only possible after the poison attack: “This is all a diversion. [...] I **know** what Joker’s **planning** now. I’ve been in his head” (61). Batman displays more or less exact knowledge about his plans, but does not share this with the reader. Joker is outraged when Batman sabotages his plan, accusing him of letting people die in vain: “Do you know how much **planning** went into this night? I mean, a lot of people have **died** so I could be here... [...] And yet you just ruin **everything**” (67). This shows once again that Joker only sees chaos as the desired outcome of his actions. Victims are but a necessary means to this end. Instead of killing Joker by letting him fall into the poisoned water, Batman saves his life, beats him up, and locks him up at Arkham Asylum. He refuses to get down on one level with the villain, although he is aware of his implicit involvement in the events: “If Joker was the Red Hood, then I **did** play a hand in his creation” (70).

In this graphic novel, then, Joker is straightforward and simple-minded, with revenge as his primary motive. He justifies all other atrocities – the innocent deaths, the general destruction – as a means to this end. On the one hand, this implies that Joker is fully aware of what he is doing, and is willing to commit crimes for his cause. On the other hand, his twisted view on the world might indicate that he indeed thinks his actions are justified. His full characterisation of himself can be seen in the poem that he leaves at Arkham Asylum: “One by one they’ll hear my call, then the wicked town will follow my fall” (20). Batman refers to it to sum up the essence of his character before their final confrontation:

He’d get personal revenge on the people who made him what he is. And then the whole city would “follow the fall.” His fall was into a vat of toxic poison that spilled out into what should have been a clean bay. So he poisons Gotham’s water supply, and everyone dies laughing. In his sick mind, we’re all

to blame just for being alive. I understand that now. That paranoid anger and hate. He may be a genius, but that hate is all he knows. (65)

This raises many questions about the Joker's character in general: about his initial transformation to the Red Hood, and his background story as such. The resolution of the graphic novel does not provide closure because large parts of his background that are necessary to understand him are unknown: "His prints aren't in any database, so we'll probably never know who he really is. He's certainly not saying, if he even knows" (70). This leaves the character open to further interpretations by other authors.

One of such interpretations is explored in Azzarello's *Joker*. It gives a different kind of insight into the Joker's mind because Frost is directly involved with his criminal activities and gives a first-hand account of the events. There are significant differences to *Man Who Laughs*. The stylistic difference in the drawings results in a much more prominent and more impressive character whose appearance is more realistic. He has greenish-blond hair, a pale face (probably enhanced by make-up), evil, attentive eyes, and scars extrapolating his mouth, thus distorting his face into an unnerving grin. His behaviour seems decidedly crueler, more impulsive and more dangerous. This can also be attributed to the fact that Joker is the main focus of the work, whereas in *Man Who Laughs*, he only appears when he pursues his criminal goals. He giggles a lot, which seems disturbing to the other characters, and goes out to party with the criminals. Joker is widely accepted and respected, but also feared by the others. Although he does get emotional in the presence of a woman, it is never clarified who she is. The only stable, personal relationship he has is the one with Frost. He has another observable relationship with Harvey Dent, or Two-Face. Joker shows that he knows him very well, giving a direct psychological evaluation of Two-Face's condition which is partly based on their similarities:

Well let me tell you **how**, because **I** know psychosis like the back of my hand... Harvey's head... it's a brand new sports car – or a beater, depending how you look at it. And this car, it has **two** owners – not very creative owners either – since they couldn't come up with **separate goddamn names** when the opportunity presented itself. So which **one** is pissed off at me? (Azzarello²⁹)

He uses this knowledge to deal with him. He does not want to put an end to Dent's havoc, contributing to his own chaos, but finally meets up with him and threatens him. Two-Face later relays the potential power the Joker has over him to Batman: "You **have** to stop him. He said... He said he figured out a way to **murder** one of us. [...] Us. Not you. He's going to murder one of **us**." Joker, then, is the more powerful villain, but his exact plans remain unknown.

His understanding is also extended to Batman. Joker is not merely a mad criminal mastermind; he is able to form valuable conclusions about his enemies, which makes him such a dangerous antagonist. He presents the reader with a straightforward evaluation of Batman, showing that he does not only know a lot about his co-villains, but also his own enemies. At the same time, he shows that he does not understand him completely:

[Joker:] You wear your **shame** like a badge, because you don't have the **balls** to actually pin one on. Yes... just look at you... Desperate to be feared, you want to be perceived as a **monster**, draped in black. And yet... you leave that **little window**... a glimpse at the **perfection** underneath. **Obvious** – the chiseled good looks – not the jaw, the mouth of a **monster**... **Why** don't you let it be seen? Tell me **why**.

[Batman:] To **mock** you.

²⁹ The original's pages are unnumbered.

In his first night out, he secures the support from other criminals. He does not explain how he managed to convince the doctors at the asylum of his release, but the fact that he did suggests that he still maintains the brilliance he displayed before his arrest. His primary concern is gaining back his power over the city. Instead of being funded by the criminals, he robs a bank. Here, he shows how he would like to structure his life in the future: “Boring. The alarm wasn’t tripped, and nobody died. Maybe next time.” He now wants to kill people simply for the sake of killing them, of causing chaos once more. Everything about his behaviour seems to be about chaos. There is no goal he is working towards, such as poisoning the population. Chaos is both his means and his end. Despite his brute force and scary, aggressive impulsiveness, though, he displays a sick sense of humour.

He is much deeper here than the rather shallow comic book character he was before. He gives the reader access to his own mind by making philosophical statements or giving personal advice. For one, he defies popular standards, demanding Frost to never make apologies for one’s looks or behaviour. In fact, he despises apologies. He is not too fond of the notion of money, either; he uses it, but it is not important to him. Of himself and his release from the asylum, he states: “Well... I’m not **crazy** anymore... just **mad**.” This perception of himself is important to understand the way he feels. Relationships are not acceptable for criminals in his worldview: “There’s a lot of things people in our position can get away with... **murder** being one... **Wives** ain’t two of them.” Although a man like Joker is not expected to have people he looks up to, he does mention an inmate at Arkham Asylum who wanted to drive around the world in a car within one day. This story supposedly taught Joker an important lesson: “He blamed the **cars** for his failures. It never crossed his mind that what he **believed** he could do was **impossible**. I **admire** that. I **really** do.” This supports the idea of his need to have control over situations. Joker does what he wants to do, and not even people who doubt him can stop him.

His most crucial statement, however, once again deals with chaos and exemplifies his own principle behind everything he does: “Long as I know what the rules are, I can **make ‘em up** as I go along!” He hereby proposes an anarchistic setting. His purpose is to rid society of any kind of order there might be.

Because Frost is with him at all times, he gives better access to his psyche, although he does not fully understand him, either. He gives a crucial first evaluation of him:

That’s what he is, I guess; a **disease** that infected Gotham City... of which there is no cure. [...] **He** was a **disease** that somehow, with the help of God or the devil – pick your poison – had convinced his doctors he wasn’t diseased **anymore**.

According to Frost, Joker is a doer much rather than a planner, explaining his impulsiveness. He is attentive and manipulative, and “maybe it was more like he made you **think** the way he wanted you to.” Two-Face, knowing him on a villain-to-villain basis, gives another evaluation of him. This shows that their understanding of the other is mutual:

You **know** you are involved with a **sick man** who will see you **die?** He will stand over **your body** with **your blood** on his hands and I promise you he **will** laugh... not because your life means **nothing** to him – but because **death**, for him – is the **punch line**.

Frost’s evaluation goes deeper than that. He draws important generalisations from Joker to humanity as such: “There will **always** be a Joker. Because there’s **no cure** for him. No cure at **all**... just a **Batman**.” Therefore, the presence of *a* Joker, i.e. the presence of evil in general, is a necessary component of humanity that cannot be driven back completely. The only action that can be taken against it is damage-reduction, here in the form of Batman.

There are certain characteristics that identify Joker beyond the individual works. He is a ruthless, criminal mastermind who sees everything as a game and does not obey any rules. He is manipulative, dominant, and always needs to be in control. His main motive is chaos (revenge is not supported in *Joker*). This engulfs his whole being. He is both an agent and creator of chaos, and only seems to gain satisfaction in life when there is no order.

***The Dark Knight* (2008), directed by Christopher Nolan**

The Dark Knight is not based on a specific literary source. This makes it a loose adaptation of the comics in general, although the adaptation of the individual characters is quite close. The film starts with a bank robbery committed by a mob of clowns. It turns out that Joker manipulated his minions into killing each other. Bruce Wayne offers to officially support the new district attorney Harvey Dent, who is also romantically involved with Rachel Dawes, Wayne's love. Joker interrupts a meeting of the crime bosses, offering to exterminate Batman for a share of their gain. At their refusal he threatens them and soon spreads panic by killing a Batman imposter. He demands the real Batman to reveal himself. He thus continues killing innocent people, convincing Batman to finally reveal his true self. Before he can do so, Dent pretends to be Batman to give him time and opportunity to capture the villain. Joker is arrested during his pursuit of Dent. At the same time, both Dent and Rachel are kidnapped and brought to separate places rigged with explosives, forcing Batman to choose who of them to save. Despite his efforts, Rachel is killed in the explosion. Only Dent can be saved. Joker meanwhile escapes from prison by blowing it up. He further names a specific victim that has to be killed to prevent him from blowing up a hospital. While Batman saves the victim, he dresses up as a nurse and visits the strongly disfigured and traumatised Dent at the hospital, provoking him to take revenge on those responsible for Rachel's death. He then frees him and blows up the hospital, leaving Dent for his revenge on the police officers involved in the

corruption that led to her death. Joker threatens to blow up two ferries next, one with convicts and one with civilians, and gives each group the chance to destroy the other ferry, thus saving themselves. However, both refuse to blow each other up. With the help of his employee Fox, Batman is able to track down Joker's current location and confronts him before he can kill the hostages. Instead of killing him, he leaves him to the SWAT team to arrest him and probably take him to an asylum. In the meantime, Dent threatens Gordon's family. Batman kills him before he can harm them and, fleeing, assumes public responsibility for Dent's actions in order for the city not to lose their heroic image of him.

The film is presented realistically except for the exaggerated use of special effects. The linear, causally clear plot enables the spectator to completely understand the complicated dynamics at hand. The camera assumes an objective narrator's perspective and frequently switches between portraying the different storylines to make sense of the plot. There is one time, though, when the camera assumes Joker's perspective in an interesting way. When he hangs upside down, the camera rotates to move with him and present him the right way even though he is still positioned upside down. This forces the spectator to move together with Joker and might encourage him to get inside Joker's head and actively assume his perspective.

Such techniques make Joker get under the spectator's skin. The existence of such a person is a logical assumption given the circumstances that are presented, and the viewer is encouraged to get involved with him on some level. Paired with his disturbing personality, this produces a strong, lasting effect. The formerly established aspects of his mega character can be found in the film, too. He has no respect for others' lives, nor his own, seeing everything as a game. He even plays his own minions against each other and dresses up to deceive them. His creative cruelty manifests itself in his demonstration of a 'magic trick', where he lets a pencil 'disappear' by killing someone with it. He does not have feelings for

other people and gives off the impression of a schizophrenic psychopath. He takes sadistic pleasure in killing people, which is not elaborated on much in the graphic novels. He explains that he uses a knife to kill in order to savour his victim's emotions, for in their last moments, "people show who they really are." While not valuing life as such, he is drawn to mentally ill people, as Batman suggests about a man the police questions: "He's a paranoid schizophrenic, former patient at Arkham. The kind of mind the Joker attracts." He does not value money, demonstrated by his burning it, and needs to be active: "I just do." However, he still prepares for his crimes and plans things thoroughly, provided that he can execute them. He even manipulates a police officer to get his phone call, thus calling the phone he had previously put into an inmate's stomach, triggering the bomb that blows up the prison. Even his arrest is part of this plan. He is also well-equipped with weapons, which is shown in the prison scene. He clearly enjoys what he is doing: "I like this job. I like it."

Visually, he is first introduced by showing his face. Unlike in *Man Who Laughs*, his white face is a result of make-up, not chemicals. He is only once seen without make-up, which is during the assault on the mayor. Joker has a Glasgow smile³⁰, unevenly accentuated by his make-up, and blonde-green hair. In most shots there is a great focus on his face to show this disturbing smile. He wears a purple suit and appears not to take good care of his physical state. His symbol is a Joker playing card.

Heath Ledger does an excellent job portraying the Joker. He gets very much into character and openly displays his mental condition by developing some tics, such as licking his lips frequently. He moves erratically and gives off quite an unstable impression. He manages to play the insane psychopath in a disturbingly convincing manner. He laughs maniacally quite often and tends to turn from being extremely calm to extremely aggressive. He even laughs when Batman beats him up, which is also the case in *Man Who Laughs*. He

³⁰ A form of mutilation in which the victim's face is cut from the mouth to the ears. The scars thus extrapolate the mouth into a broad artificial smile.

does use some strange humorous elements in his speech, but there is a lot of force and aggression in his voice, too. One of his trademark sentences is “Why so serious?” He frequently asks it in inappropriate situations when other characters are clearly and understandably frightened of him. In general, Heath Ledger’s performance is quite memorable, forceful and impressive, and probably the best portrayal of Joker I have seen.

Joker does not change significantly throughout the film. He gets more active, but his unstable personality is consistent. Nonetheless, he is a very complex inaccessible character. His motivations are entirely unclear to both spectator and characters. The only clues about the underlying forces that drive him are the different background stories he provides about his scars. He first explains that they are a result of his alcoholic father’s abuse of him as a child. He later provides another version of his self-mutilation for his wife’s sake³¹. In those stories, the importance of “Why so serious?” is reinforced by his constant forced smile. Judging from his face, he is never able to look seriously, which reflects his refusal to take anything seriously in the first place: “Now I’m always smiling!” More background information that does not necessarily have to connect to his story is his statement: “You remind me of my father. I hated my father!” This implies that part of his personality problems might indeed be a result of some form of child abuse. However, he already establishes his incredibility through the different background stories. The spectator thus never knows whether or not to believe his revelation of personal information. He deliberately makes himself inaccessible and does not want to be understood. This encourages him to play with other people’s minds, reinforcing his need to have control over any situation. By kidnapping Rachel and Dent, he toys with Batman’s conscience, trying to bring him down to a criminal’s level by valuing one life over the other. His social experiment on the ferries, as he calls it, is part of his game. He tries to turn people into criminals and reveal their bad nature. Although he does not succeed, he sees

³¹ During his final confrontation with Batman, he attempts to tell him another story, but is beaten by his enemy before he can do so.

the transformation of Dent into Two-Face as his private success over Batman because he indeed turns him into a criminal.

Joker spreads fear and chaos. His trademark cards are a way of communication. He further communicates his intentions through video tapes and calling into the newscast, close to his behaviour in *Man Who Laughs*. Another way of relaying information in an enigmatic manner is to include three sets of DNA on a card, naming his targets. He tends to put a Glasgow smile on his victims' faces, too. The film employs a lot of special effects to exaggerate the chaos that the Joker produces.

Joker's main motive is to create chaos and fight against any kind of order. This includes fighting Batman. Except for his openly disturbing appearance and personality, he is a very intriguing character because of the message he conveys. The overall theme of the film is the traditional conflict between good and evil and the dynamics of society. Joker is not only a messenger, but also the embodiment of this theme. He gives valuable insights into human nature in his social criticism, promoting an anarchistic society as the only kind of arrangement that works well. He proposes the lack of order because, unlike rules, this does not discriminate against anyone: "I'm an agent of chaos. [...] It's fair." He further explains: "The world is cruel. And the only morality in a cruel world is chance." He therefore claims that evil and chaos are inherent parts of human nature; everyone has to be able to acknowledge them.

This is what he shows in the transformation of the inherently good character Harvey Dent into the villain Two-Face who, curiously, also sees everything as determined by chance. Dent completely embodies Joker's message. At the beginning he states: "You either die a hero or you live long enough to *see yourself become a villain*" (emphasis mine). He first is an honourable character, a "white knight", a "hero with a face." His disfigurement transforms him into Two-Face. His bitterness and need for revenge consume him completely, extinguishing everything that made him a "white knight" in the first place. Joker took the

most honourable person and turned his goodness around, demonstrating the progression of evil, the progression of a villain.

His social experiment disturbingly demonstrates that his view of the world might be right. Although he fails to make them murderers, his point is conveyed: interestingly, the civilians are rather more ready to kill than the criminals. The civilian who gains control over the detonator only throws it away reluctantly, whereas the convict in charge disposes of it immediately. Joker deliberately corrupts the city this way. He also suggests that there is some varying quality in crimes: “This town deserves a better class of criminals. [...] This town is mine now.” He implies that there is some inherent quality that evil possesses, reinforcing the value and importance it has in our daily lives. In demonstrating this, he gives important insights into his own personality, his own evil ways. When accused that he is crazy, he simply states, “No. I’m not.” He later states the importance of madness, saying that it “is like gravity.” However, he does point out the necessity of the existence of goodness as a counterpart to evil in his relationship to Batman: “You complete me. [...] To them, you’re just a freak, like me. [...] *I’m not a monster*” (emphasis mine).

Conclusion

Joker acknowledges the interplay of good and evil forces, promoting the idea of duality as well as the notion that evil has a value of its own. Furthermore, he forces the viewer and reader to investigate his own situation critically. There seems to be some truth in Joker’s words. His character is thus able to stimulate the spectator’s critical thinking about society and the world in general. Although strongly challenging moral standards in doing so, he does have a point that is hard to shake off. He is in this sense a representation of some part of human nature, and, by deductive reasoning, of the recipient, too.

IV. Conclusion

The literary and filmic analyses have provided three general categories that popular villains can be distinguished by³². These characterise the villain in regard to plot function and his relationship with the audience. Despite these categories, the borders between these types are not clearly established, and the different villains, especially the core villain and the philosophical villain, may well overlap in the creation of a character.

The emerging villain provides the spectator or reader with a substantial understanding of his development. In order to be intrigued, the audience must witness the external circumstances that transformed the average being into a villain. Ideally, such circumstances are more or less unusual; they constitute the action that drives the plot forward. Since this development mainly takes place on a mental level, literature is better able to present this kind of villain appropriately. Film, due to the limited accessibility of the character's psyche, may be able to show external circumstances better, but leaves the spectator unable to completely comprehend the exact changes that the character undergoes. The emerging villain, then, may intrigue both spectator and reader in the sense that both function and presentation of the character change throughout the work. The potential of change complicates him and leads to different possible outcomes and versions thereof. Emerging villains are an interesting case to study given that their evolving is comparable to real life, where people change constantly, but are not as easily understood in film as in fiction.

The core villain is evil in his essence, and openly so. Unlike the emerging villain, he is deliberately kept mysterious and inaccessible to raise questions on the reader's and spectator's part. It is not important to understand him; in fact, it is crucial *not* to be able to understand him. He is presented as an accomplished villain already. Any possible previous developments

³² Since only seven case studies have been examined, this list is not exhaustive. Other villains that have not been taken into account here may raise the need for further categories.

may be hinted at, but not elaborated too much. He is the direct and conscious embodiment and representation of the binary framework of evil, although he can assume the concept of good and evil as relative forces as well, which for instance Lestat embodies by claiming that “[e]vil is a point of view” (Rice 89). Most of the time, a conscious choice is involved. Unlike the emerging villain, who may try to justify his actions due to a bond to neutrality or goodness that is still inherent to the character, the core villain does not need to do so. He is utterly conscious of moral standards and the basic distinction of good and evil, and *deliberately chooses* evil over good. By making this conscious choice, he assumes direct, personal responsibility for his actions and persona. In doing this, he challenges the reader’s or spectator’s own moral standards, forcing him to re-evaluate his view on the world. Such villains are exceptionally interesting because they can be seen to directly interact and question both reader and spectator. His inaccessibility is the very medium through which interaction and interest is maintained. Because viewer and reader are deliberately kept in the dark about the character’s interior circumstances, they have to actively assume the villain’s position and empathise with him in order to begin to understand him. If this is not successful, the recipient may be either more intrigued, trying to find out more about him, or frustrated because the character’s meaning is denied to him. The possibility to empathise with those villains by assuming their point of view may be due to the hidden desires the reader or spectator has. According to Van Yperen, “Darth Vader shows that conversion to the Dark Side brings great power, stature, and influence. In reality, given the choice, many of us would choose to be Goliath rather than David” (Heit 198). In this category, the villain is both a representative and an agent of evil at the same time.

The last category, the philosophical villain, is easy to define in function, but hard to define in terms of specific characteristics. The philosophical villain explores the framework of society or human nature. Both his behaviour and his statements are deliberately designed to

make a point. This can be of moral or social nature, or explore general philosophical subjects. While he can also be intriguing in terms of plot manipulation, appearance and character concept, it is the point conveyed to reader and spectator that make him most effective. This does not necessarily have to take place on a conscious level. The recipient does not have to be aware of the issues raised; an underlying questioning of prevailing standards that dominates the interaction might just as well be the result. The general function of the philosophical villain, then, is to relay a certain point, more often than not a startling idea that provides a deeper and alternative understanding of human nature and societal dynamics. In *Hogfather*, for instance, Teatime's emotional detachment and flat unimaginative character is a representation of what humans would be if their essential creativity and imagination were taken away from them. In *The Dark Knight*, the Joker criticises our culture's prevailing idea of good and evil: "One of the Joker's best tricks, then, is not to claim that evil is better than good, but, rather, to suggest that the entirely [*sic*] paradigm is flawed. Consequently, those who adhere to either good or evil fracture their own self-identity" (Heit 181). Heit claims that he therefore embodies and assumes a Nietzschean perspective. Drawing from a flawed paradigm of good and evil, Joker extends his statements to human nature in general:

The experiment is designed to prove that when the chips are down, the façade of good and evil will dissolve and those involved, like those watching, will have to accept the failure of moral standards to preserve life. [...] The only problem that the Joker can recognize is a continued adherence to the moral standards the [*sic*] Nietzsche decries. In response to the boats' refusal to destroy one another, the Joker says dismissively that one "can't rely on anyone these days." From the Joker's perspective the decision to die mutually rather than to preserve oneself reflects the "timid cowardice" that Nietzsche describes. (ibid.)

This kind of villain is mainly characterised through the underlying interaction he establishes with the reader or viewer. His specific characteristics, i.e. the way he is applied in the work depends on the issue that is raised by the author or filmmaker.

Why, then, are villains such a popular object of fascination? They can openly invite the reader's and spectator's involvement in various ways depending on the intention of the work's creator. Either of the types that have been identified in this study requires active cognitive involvement on the recipient's part to some extent. Except for the emerging villain, whose character development is ideally examined through access to his interior life, they work well in film and literature likewise. A striking observation in this area is the essential difference between this first kind of villain and the other types even in appearance. The emerging villains that provide the case studies examined here are both presented in a normal, everyday appearance, contributing to their verisimilitude and the better understanding of their character in the framework the spectators and readers understand themselves. All the other villains are deliberately presented in an unusual, somewhat appealing way in both behaviour and appearance, which raises the interest on the recipient's part in order to accept the alternative viewpoints they present.

Regardless of their specific function and type, though, villains provide fascinating character concepts for the very reason that they deal with something so essentially human. Evil is an issue that, due to the adherence to moral standards, people are necessarily concerned with if only on a subconscious level. They present evil as both an alternative viewpoint and the embodiment of everyone's dark side, a side that one might necessarily have to get in touch with in order to function properly in society. Examining villains means examining oneself to some extent. One may not agree with them or their behaviour, but one can hardly deny the personal, possibly uncomfortable connection that can be established with them. Being openly confronted with evil and forced to reinvent oneself in terms of moral

standards and personal beliefs, villains can provide the reader and viewer with a different lens through which one can view oneself and humanity as such.

As a final note, however, one may ask: Are there psychological differences between people who always gravitate towards villains and those who recognise their importance and are fascinated with villains generally perceived as popular, but do not *always* do so? If I acknowledge that many people share my general fascination with villains, is there something that *always* draws me to villainous characters, provided that they are not too repellent and do not fail to fulfil their function of meaning within my own expectations? Do I already have significantly different expectations due to my constant involvement with villains, and therefore a higher tolerance of presented evil where others might already perceive the line between acceptable and unacceptable as being crossed? This might be an exceptionally interest subject to study and could be approached very well in the terms of Holland's reader-response theory, in which a text is filtered through several steps and given new meaning by the reader based on one's psychological condition. Unfortunately this psychoanalytical approach lies beyond my field of study, but I highly recommend such a topic for further research, given that it might provide interesting insights into the underlying forces that drive readers and spectators. Evil and its agents may be an important part of our lives and investigating them means reinventing ourselves to some extent – but some people, such as myself, seem to be significantly more susceptible to this process than others.

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