

Representations of Lovesickness in Victorian Literature *

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Abstract

Given the central place it occupies in human life and relations, it is hardly surprising that romantic love as well as the distress caused by unrequited love is a universal phenomenon that has been explored by numerous writers over the years. Passionate love can be defined as a state of intense desire for fusion with another. When love is reciprocated and union is achieved, the lover feels a sense of fulfilment and joyful ecstasy. If the lover is rejected or scorned, however, s/he is overwhelmed with an acute sensation of emptiness, often accompanied with feelings of anxiety and despair. For the purposes of this article, I will focus on representations of lovesickness in two novels from the Victorian period: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte and *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins. Drawing on the sociologist Eva Illouz' *Why Love Hurts?* and the psychologist Dorothy Tennov's conceptualization of love and limerence, I will examine how the emotional trauma experienced by Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* and Rosanna Spearman in *The Moonstone* causes all three characters to feel intense suffering and prolonged misery, leading - eventually - to their destruction.

Keywords: Lovesickness, Victorian literature, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Moonstone*.

Viktorya Dönemi Edebiyatında Karasevda Betimlemeleri

Öz

İnsan hayatı ve ilişkilerinde kapladığı merkezi yer göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, romantik aşk ve karşılıksız aşkın seneler boyunca birçok yazar tarafından incelenmiş olması hiç şaşırtıcı değildir. Tutkulu aşk bir başkasıyla birleşmeye yönelik kuvvetli bir arzu duymak olarak tanımlanabilir. Aşkı karşılık görürse seven kişi derin bir tatmin ve coşkunluk hissi yaşar. Aşkı karşılıksız kalırsa ya da hor görülürse ise şiddetli bir boşluk hissiyle beraber sıklıkla endişe ve umutsuzluk duygularına kapılır. Bu makalenin amacı, Viktorya döneminde yazılmış Emily Bronte'nin *Uğultulu Tepeler* ve Wilkie Collins'in *Aytaşı* romanlarında karasevda betimlemelerini irdelemektir. Sosyolog Eva Illouz'un *Aşk Neden Acıtır?* adlı çalışması ve psikolog Dorothy Tennov'un aşk ve tutkulu aşk hakkındaki düşüncelerinden yola çıkarak, bu romanlarda karakterlerin yaşadığı duygusal travmanın nasıl derin acılar hissetmelerine ve en nihayetinde yok olmalarına sebep olduğu incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karasevda, Viktorya dönemi edebiyatı, *Uğultulu Tepeler*, *Aytaşı*.

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1. INTRODUCTION: LOVE, LIMERENCE AND LOVESICKNESS

*Love is the tyrant of the heart;
It darkens Reason; confounds discretion;
Deaf to counsel;
It runs a headlong course to desperate madness* (Ford 1985: 63)

While it is often celebrated as an immensely powerful emotion that can bring joy, ecstasy and even transcendence to one's life, romantic love has also been experienced by many as a chronic source of severe discomfort, pain and despair. Passionate love can be defined as a state of intense desire for fusion with another. When love is reciprocated and union is achieved, the lover feels a sense of fulfilment and joyful ecstasy. If the lover is rejected or scorned, however, s/he is overwhelmed with an acute sensation of emptiness, often accompanied with feelings of anxiety and despair. As Eva Illouz suggests: *"Love has been viewed by philosophers as a form of madness; yet, it is a peculiar form of madness for its power derives from the fact that it enhances the ego and provides it with an accrued perception of its power. Romantic love enhances the self-image through the mediation of another's gaze"* (1979: 111). It is interesting to note that there are significant similarities in the symptoms of being in love and various conditions of mental disorder. Many people who fall in love manifest manic symptoms including an inflated self-esteem coupled with exalted moods which make them feel highly elated. However, such elevated states are usually accompanied by various depressive symptoms which include tearfulness, insomnia, loss of appetite and concentration. Obsessive- compulsive symptoms also emerge and include intense preoccupation with a loved one, various symbolic rituals, stalking and holding on to valueless but resonant items. In fact, the condition of serotonin in the brain is remarkably similar between people in love and those diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder.

As Frank Tallis maintains, the illness metaphor reveals something very important about how we think about love. In his words: *"For millennia, it has been employed to emphasize the similarities that exist between love and madness. The metaphor has been so successful in this context that we now find it difficult to separate the two concepts"* (2004: 3). Given the central place it occupies in human life and relations, it is hardly surprising that romantic love as well as the distress caused by unrequited love is a universal phenomenon that has been explored by numerous writers over the years. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on representations of lovesickness in two novels from the Victorian period: *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte and *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins. Drawing on the sociologist Eva Illouz's recent work *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* (2012) and the psychologist Dorothy Tennov's conceptualization of love and limerence depicted in her seminal book with the same title (1979), I will examine how the romantic agony experienced by Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* and Rosanna Spearman in *The Moonstone*, causes all three characters to feel intense suffering and prolonged misery, leading - eventually - to their destruction.

The Oxford Dictionary definition of limerence is *"The state of being infatuated or obsessed with another person, typically experienced involuntarily and characterized by a strong desire for reciprocation of one's feelings but not primarily for a sexual relationship"*. According to Dorothy Tennov who coined the term, limerence has certain basic components which include

intrusive thinking about the object of your passionate desire (the limerent object or "LO"), who is a possible sexual partner • acute longing for reciprocation, dependency of mood on LO's actions or, more accurately, your interpretation of LO's actions with respect to the probability of reciprocation, inability to react limerently to more than one person at a time, some fleeting and transient relief from unrequited limerent passion through vivid; imagination of action by LO that means reciprocation • fear of rejection and sometimes incapacitating but always unsettling shyness in LO's presence, especially in the beginning and whenever uncertainty strikes • intensification through adversity (at least, up to a point) an aching of the "heart" (a region in the center front of the chest) when uncertainty is strong • buoyancy (a feeling of walking on air) when reciprocation seems evident • a general intensity of feeling that leaves other concerns in the background • a remarkable ability to emphasize what is truly admirable in LO and to avoid dwelling on the negative, even to respond with a compassion for the negative and render it, emotionally if not perceptually, into another positive attribute (1979: 23-24).

As I will show in what follows, the lovesick characters in the novels I have chosen to examine exhibit all of the traits and behaviours listed above. Given the huge distance in time between these Victorian novels and Tennov's study, it is possible to argue that limerence is a universal experience deeply rooted in human nature. No matter their differences in terms of gender, class and character make-up, people seem to experience feelings of passionate love as well as the pain engendered by lovesickness in astonishingly similar ways.

2. THE DOOMED LOVERS IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Emily Brontë's timeless masterpiece *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is best remembered for its depiction of the intense and turbulent relationship between its main characters Catherine and Heathcliff. Despite the depth of their passion and a remarkably powerful sense of belonging, their relationship is ridden with tension and conflict almost from the beginning and certainly towards the end. Consequently, this classic novel entails a memorable depiction of the prognosis of lovesickness which is experienced by both characters as an incurable malady. According to Harold Bloom:

Romantic love has no fiercer representation in all of literature. But "love" seems an inadequate term for the connection between Catherine and Heathcliff. [...] These extraordinary vitalists, Catherine and Heathcliff, do not desire in one another that which each does not possess, do not lean themselves against one another, and do not even find and thus augment their own selves. They are one another, which is neither sane nor possible, and which does not support any doctrine of liberation whatsoever. Only that most extreme of visions, Gnosticism, could accommodate them, for, like the Gnostic adepts, Catherine and Heathcliff can only enter the pleroma or fullness together, as presumably they have done after Heathcliff's self-induced death by starvation (2007: 7).

In this respect, what Heathcliff and Catherine experience as "romantic love" is an unconscious longing for fusion whereby physical boundaries and limitations are destroyed, turning two beings into one. Significantly, both characters experience love as a recognition of proximity to something greater than themselves. Thus, the experience of being in love

dissolves their sense of individual separateness. According to the famous psychoanalyst Otto Kernberg, the longing for closeness, fusion, and intermingling that implies both forcefully crossing a barrier and becoming one with the chosen object is one of the characteristics of erotic desire which entails *“the sense of becoming both genders at the same time, of temporarily overcoming the ordinarily unbreachable barrier separating the genders, and the sense of completion and enjoyment of the penetrating and encompassing, penetrated and enclosed aspect of sexual invasion [...] in remaining oneself while becoming the other as well, one has a sense having achieved intersubjective transcendence”* (1995: 23). Catherine and Heathcliff never have sexual intercourse but somehow partake in this state of *“intersubjective transcendence”* from a very early age. They do not simply belong to one another, but rather *within* each other and consequently experience an incredible sense of unity and oneness¹.

Heathcliff is an orphan found in Liverpool and brought to Wuthering Heights by Catherine’s father Mr. Earnshaw. While Catherine feels a special affinity to him, her brother Hindley hates this *“gipsy”* boy for stealing his father’s affections almost from the start. After Mr. Earnshaw dies Hindley, who had been sent away for education, comes back to Wuthering Heights with a wife and forces Heathcliff into the role of a servant. Terrorized by the cruel Hindley, Catherine and Heathcliff find solace in one another and spend most of their time running wild on the moors. On one of their rambles, they are caught peeking through the windows of Thrushcross Grange where the Lintons live. When the two are discovered Heathcliff is immediately sent away but Catherine, who is bitten by their dog, is forced to stay with them for several weeks. Having given up her wild ways during her stay with the Lintons, Catherine eventually returns to Wuthering Heights dressed like a lady and starts socializing regularly with the Linton children Isabella and Edgar². Heathcliff, who feels increasingly neglected and alienated, leaves Wuthering Heights for more than three years after he finds out that Catherine accepted Linton’s marriage proposal. Upon his unexpected return as a remarkably changed man in manners and financial standing, he embarks on a journey of revenge seeking vengeance from not only Hindley but also the Lintons who he holds responsible for his separation from Catherine.

The main factor that inhibits the expression and realization of limerent mutuality in the case of Catherine and Heathcliff is the rules and norms of the society in which they live and the couple’s difficulty in negotiating its demands. Both Heathcliff and Catherine have a passionate disposition and experience severe emotional turmoil when dealing with external as well as internal conflict. The house servant Nelly suggests that the fiery Catherine *“never had power to conceal her passion, it always set her whole complexion in a blaze”* (Bronte 1847: 65). However, Catherine ends up marrying Edgar whose veins she says are *“full of ice-water”* (Bronte 1847: 110), and whose cold blood she believes *“cannot be worked into a fever”* (Bronte 1847: 110). So Edgar is, at best, a pleasurable companion for Catherine who is attracted to him mainly for the social status, companionship and comfort he can provide. Although her feelings for Edgar lack the intensity of emotions she has for Heathcliff, Catherine makes a pragmatic decision as she is perfectly aware that her union with Heathcliff will never be accepted by her social circle.

¹ While most critics foreground the transcendent quality of this romantic connection, Goodlett argues that it is in fact *“addictive”* and pathological: *“Catherine and Heathcliff nourish their insufficiencies by feeding off each other, and as the novel shows, this system of addiction is not an efficient one”* (1996: 324).

² Catherine’s seemingly brief sojourn with the Lintons proves to be not only a formative influence but also a turning point in her life: *“Catherine’s confinement at the Grange, while not literally forced on her, is symbolically forced on her as she is pressed into adolescence and the confining position of a lady”* (Crouse 2008: 183).

When Nelly questions her motives for marrying Edgar, Catherine tries to defend her decision saying that she has accepted Linton's proposal because he is handsome and pleasant to be with adding that *"I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says. I love all his looks, and all his actions, and him entirely and altogether"* (Bronte 1847: 78). Catherine is also honest enough to admit that marrying Edgar will be socially advantageous for her: *"And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighborhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband"* (Bronte 1847: 78). Despite all these assertions, Catherine herself remains unsure that she is doing the right thing by entering this marriage of convenience since something deep inside her poses an obstacle. When asked where this obstacle lies, *"Here! and here!" replied Catherine, striking one hand on her forehead, and the other on her breast: 'in whichever place the soul lives. In my soul and in my heart, I'm convinced I'm wrong!"* (Bronte 1847: 79). So deep down, Catherine knows she is wrong because, simply put, she has no doubt whatsoever that she and Heathcliff belong together. In fact, she remains convinced that, quite shockingly, they are already engrained in one another locked in a symbiotic relationship. Consequently, and despite her resolve to marry Edgar, Catherine is fully aware that theirs is most certainly not a match made in heaven:

I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire (Bronte 1847: 80).

As several critics have noted, Catherine's feelings for Edgar are informed by learned romantic conventions of love and the dictates of Victorian society. Fearing that they should be beggars if she marries Heathcliff, Catherine naively assumes that by marrying Edgar she can aid Heathcliff to rise and place him above her wicked brother's powers. As Garofalo puts it: *"Absurdly, impossibly, Catherine proposes that Heathcliff be brought into the Linton family, that he be allowed to share their wealth, that he should also enjoy the love of Linton's wife, and that Catherine should give up on nothing- not her social ambition, her conventional love for Edgar, nor her passion for Heathcliff"* (2008: 832). However, in Catherine's defence, one could perhaps add that she lives at a time when one's value *"was more or less objectively established"* and people were socially conditioned to find partners of *"similar family lineage, fortune, status, etc."* (Illouz 2012: 83). From this perspective, her inability to act on her authentic emotions and fully commit to the man she loves is intimately linked with the prevailing social and cultural arrangements of her day.

While Catherine's actions are ruled by social convention, her heart certainly is not and it is the mental and emotional turmoil caused by this internal conflict that leads to her undoing. She is unable to reconcile the dissenting voices within her and thus suffers from increasing mental and emotional instability. In the words of Tennov: *"Limerence is not the product of human decision: It is something that happens to us. Its intrusive cognitive components, the obsessional quality that may feel voluntary at the moment but that defies control, seem to be the aspect of limerence in which it differs from most states"* (1979: 256). Despite the fact that Catherine's will is constrained by the social mechanisms beyond her control, she cannot fully detach herself

from Heathcliff because for her he is, in essence, Catherine expressing herself in a different body. As the following passionate outburst makes abundantly clear, limerence controls all her thought processes:

What were the use of my creation, if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning: my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. 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. So don't talk of our separation again: it is impracticable; and — — (Bronte 1847: 81).

For Catherine, the enduring love she feels for Heathcliff cannot be reduced to what one may call romantic infatuation as it is rooted in her own being. The everlastingness of this kind of intense soul-to-soul connection can be effectively contrasted with the ephemeral quality of the “love” she has for her husband Edgar. It is also important to note that Catherine’s love for Heathcliff is a source of ecstatic transcendence which annihilates ego boundaries and takes her to the realm of non-dualistic awareness. Such a heightened cognitive/emotional state makes the thought of a life without Heathcliff utterly unbearable and brings her to the brink of complete breakdown.

For Catherine, letting go of Heathcliff completely is not only unbearable but also impossible since she believes that the bond that unites them is impervious to worldly conditions or interventions.³ In fact, both Catherine and Heathcliff seem to be overwhelmed by an experience of “enchanted love” which Illouz describes as simultaneously spontaneous and unconditional, overwhelming and eternal as well as unique and total.

This ideal-type of romantic love affirms the radical uniqueness of the object of love, the impossibility to substitute one object of love for another, the incommensurability of its object, the refusal (or impossibility) to submit feelings to calculation and to rational knowledge, the total surrender of the self to the loved person, and the possibility (at least the potentiality) of self-destruction and self sacrifice for the sake of another (2012: 161).

Thus trapped in this “enchanted” state, Catherine does not seem to have the power to let go of Heathcliff even after she marries Edgar who remains a devoted husband and lover until her death. Despite the wonderful qualities he obviously has, Edgar can never replace Heathcliff as Catherine’s limerent object and he too suffers immensely as a consequence. Yet neither the jealousy and discomfort of her husband nor the seeming irrationality of her abiding attachment to Heathcliff can hinder Catherine from owning her emotions for the latter. For Catherine, then, Heathcliff holds a unique place that is exclusively reserved for

³ According to Phillips: “In Catherine’s eyes, there is no possibility of abandoning Heathcliff, because the foundation of their bond is insensible to empirical reversals” (2007: 98). So Catherine naively assumes that since their love is “transcendental” it is not dependent on external factors or circumstances. This perspective, at least partially, accounts for the liberties Catherine recklessly takes with Heathcliff and her genuine puzzlement when she is accused of betraying their love by marrying Edgar.

him and him only. The fact that she remains adamant about keeping Heathcliff in her life at great cost to her health and well being and despite the protestations of her family also show that for her, Heathcliff is indispensable.

When Catherine is eventually forced to choose between her husband and Heathcliff following a particularly violent row that began with a discussion about Isabella's infatuation with Heathcliff, she refuses to give an answer and falls terribly sick. Accusing her of having betrayed their love and motivated by revenge Heathcliff elopes with Edgar's sister Isabella. In the months that follow Catherine's health deteriorates and she dies shortly after giving birth to her daughter Cathy. Distraught by profound grief, Heathcliff exclaims:

May she wake in torment!' he cried, with frightful vehemence, stamping his foot, and groaning in a sudden paroxysm of ungovernable passion. 'Why, she's a liar to the end! Where is she? Not there—not in heaven—not perished—where? Oh! you said you cared nothing for my sufferings! And I pray one prayer—I repeat it till my tongue stiffens—Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living; you said I killed you—haunt me, then! The murdered do haunt their murderers, I believe. I know that ghosts have wandered on earth. Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul! (Bronte 1847: 148)

Even after her death, Catherine seems to maintain total control over all aspects of Heathcliff's thought processes and interactions with the world. His violent outbursts resemble the ravings of a madman and reveal that the logical part of his mind has completely shut down. Even beyond the grave, Catherine remains as Heathcliff's limerent object; an obsession that leads to the latter's descent into an increasingly disordered mental state which could easily be considered as a form of madness.

As Martha Nussbaum points out, the real question of the novel is not why Heathcliff cannot have Cathy – that is a material, social and political question. The deeper question is rather why Cathy cannot accept Heathcliff, "*why she must be false to him, and to her own soul*" (2001: 609). In betraying Heathcliff, Catherine also betrays herself and suffers the consequences as much as Heathcliff does⁴. In the words of Heathcliff: "*Because misery and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, you, of your own will, did it. I haven't broken your heart – you have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine... Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy?*" (Bronte 1847: 144). As the tragic story of Catherine and Heathcliff aptly illustrates, the limerent aim of return of feeling is at the same time an all-consuming need which causes extreme emotional dependency on the limerent object's behaviour (Tennov 2012: 72). Although Heathcliff knows that Catherine's feelings for him are as strong as his feelings for her, he is enraged by the fact that she failed to commit fully to their relationship. In the words of Tennov: "*Limerence insufficiently returned within a love-sex relationship is not different in any basic way from one totally unreturned*" (2012: 89). In this sense, the fact that Heathcliff and Catherine cannot let go of one another despite the fact that they cannot really *be* together intensifies their agony and subjects them to a perpetual state of emotional turmoil. "*If anything*" remarks Tennov "*emotional swings*

⁴ In *Literature and Evil*, Georges Bataille suggests that "Catherine, who loves Heathcliff, dies for having broken the laws of fidelity – not in the flesh but in the spirit. And Catherine's death is the perpetual agony which Heathcliff suffers for his violence" (19).

from joy to despair and from anger to gratitude are more violent in the context of a relationship that includes a level of commitment and mutuality" (2012: 89).

I agree with Nussbaum's suggestion that what Catherine cannot come to allow and finds intolerable is "the exposure of true passion, and its links with pain and death" (2001: 609). Unable to bear the nakedness of that aspect of herself represented by Heathcliff, she flees to the arms of Linton in search of comfort and security, thereby choosing a life shaped by social conventions and conditioning. "In seeking to protect herself from the risk of death, however, she kills not only him but also her own soul, and forces him to hate as well as love her" (Nussbaum 2001: 609). In a profoundly moving scene shortly before Catherine's death Heathcliff exclaims: "Kiss me again; and don't let me see your eyes! I forgive what you have done to me, I love my murderer – but yours! How can I?" (Bronte 1847: 144) This is indeed the moment when the lovers come closest to worldly union as "their faces hid against each other, and washed by each other's tears" (Bronte 1847: 144).

All in all, both Catherine and Heathcliff die broken hearted and of a broken heart. As their tragic story shows, intense romantic love – no matter how strong it may be – is not enough to bring about a happy ending, especially at a time when a very rigid understanding of class consciousness pervaded all realms of life, public as well as private. Still, although their story is profoundly heartbreaking, it continues to inspire many who are moved by the main characters' passionate display of emotions and the strength of their connection which survives their physical death.

3. LOVESICKNESS AND DEATH IN THE MOONSTONE

Whereas Catherine and Heathcliff are mutual limerents who are consumed by their unrealized passion for one another, Rosanna Spearman in *The Moonstone* is the unfortunate victim of unrequited love. The intense limerent longing she feels for the upper-class Franklin Blake serves as an important plot device in the novel, but it also deserves scrutiny in its own right. In the words of Pykett, she is a "sympathetic and admonitory portrait of the sufferings of a lower-class woman who transgresses class boundaries by becoming infatuated with her social superior Franklin Blake" (2005: 118).

Wilkie Collins' famous detective novel *The Moonstone* begins with a written account of the priceless Moonstone diamond which Hindus held as sacred. In 1799, during the siege of Seringapatam, Sir John Herncastle steals the diamond while fighting for the British Army and takes it back to England. Ostracized by his family because of this dishonourable act, Herncastle spends the rest of his life as an outcast and bequeaths the diamond to his niece Rachel Verinder to be given to her on her 18th birthday upon his death. On the night of her birthday, Rachel is presented the diamond by her cousin Franklin Blake and wears it through the dinner party, leaving it in her sitting room overnight. In the morning, the diamond is gone and Superintendent Seegrave of the local police starts the investigation. Not satisfied with his performance, Franklin Blake calls for the celebrated Sergeant Cuff of London to take over the investigation. Cuff initially suspects Rosanna Spearman, a reformed thief, of having collaborated with Rachel Verinder who he thinks stole her own diamond to pay off personal debts.

It is Rachel Verinder's altruistic and soft-hearted mother Lady Verinder who first meets Rosanna Spearman in a London Reformatory four months before the action of the story. Touched by her tragic story and convinced by the matron's opinion that poor girl only needs a second chance, she takes Rosanna in as the second housemaid. Although Rosanna

suffers from a weak constitution and regular fainting fits, she proves herself worthy of this second chance “by going about her work modestly and uncomplainingly, doing it carefully, and doing it well” (Collins 1868: 28). However, she fails to make any friends apart from Penelope, the daughter of Gabriel Betteredge, Lady Verinder’s steward who is also the narrator of the first narrative. Betteredge has a soft spot for Rosanna and cannot understand why other employees do not like her: “There was certainly no beauty about her to make the others envious;” he observes “she was the plainest woman in the house, with the added misfortune of having one shoulder bigger than the other. What the servants chiefly resented, I think, was her silent tongue and solitary ways” (Collins 1868: 28). As a physically unattractive young woman of a lower social standing, Rosanna is well aware that she does not have a real chance of finding an eligible bachelor. What’s worse, she suffers from a deeply melancholic temperament and experiences regular depressive episodes. Haunted by her guilty past, she chooses self-imposed isolation rather than interact with others.

Rosanna is indeed very lonely and spends most of her free time in a ghastly, secluded place called Shivering Sands, where she happens to meet Franklin Blake for the first time. Betteredge, who is also present during this encounter, observes: “She was blushing of a deeper red than ever, seemingly at having caught Mr. Franklin’s eye; and she turned and left us suddenly, in a confusion quite unaccountable to my mind; without either making her curtsy to the gentleman or saying a word to me. Very unlike her usual self: a civiller and better-behaved servant, in general, you never met with” (Collins 1868: 32). Franklin himself notes that she appears to be an “odd girl” and asks: “I wonder what she sees in me to surprise her?” (Collins 1868: 32) What both Betteredge and Franklin fail to understand at the time is that Rosanna’s seemingly “unaccountable behaviour” is induced by love at first sight. It is as if Rosanna is struck by a thunderbolt that shakes the very foundations of her being. Getting back to the house with Blake some time later, Betteredge finds out from his daughter Penelope that Rosanna returned home in a visibly strange and very unaccountable state of mind:

She had turned (if Penelope was to be believed) all the colours of the rainbow. She had been merry without reason, and sad without reason. In one breath she asked hundreds of questions about Mr. Franklin Blake, and in another breath she had been very angry with Penelope for presuming to suppose that a strange gentleman could possess any interest for her. She had been surprised, smiling, and scribbling Mr Franklin’s name inside her work-box. She had been surprised again, crying and looking at her deformed shoulder in the glass (Collins 1868: 49).

To Betteredge all this seems to be utterly unintelligible and when Penelope suggests that the only explanation is that Rosanna has fallen in love with Franklin at first sight, he finds this supposition “monstrous” given Rosanna’s standing: “a housemaid out of a reformatory, with a plain face and a deformed shoulder, falling in love, at first sight, with a gentleman who comes on a visit to her mistress’s house, match me that, in the way of an absurdity, out of any story- book in Christianity, if you can!” (Collins 1868: 50). Betteredge’s professed shock at the possibility of a plain looking lower-class maid falling in love with a gentleman may sound absurd, perhaps even offensive, to a contemporary reader but it is perfectly in accord with the dominant conceptual frameworks of the Victorian era. Rosanna does not embody any of the usual marks of a conventional romantic heroine and thus only attracts pity from those who realize that she is in love.

Rosanna's inexplicable behaviours continue to attract attention after the moonstone is stolen from Rachel's room and the investigation begins. As Tennov remarks, the limerent individual manifests "*physiological symptoms such as heart palpitations, trembling, pallor and general weakness; changes at the behavioural level include awkwardness, stammering and confusion*" (2012: 49), adding that "*When limerent you are fearful, apprehensive, nervous, anxious – terribly worried that your actions may bring about disaster*" (2012: 49). Rosanna's increasingly erratic and awkward manners coupled with her constant preoccupation with Franklin Blake suggest that she has fallen into a limerent state. Entranced by the powerful emotions this state induces, she even starts to stalk Franklin Blake who is quite taken aback by the maid's bold moves, yet remains unaware of her feelings for him. Much later, in her suicide note, Rosanna confesses some secret actions relating to Franklin such as kissing his pillow, stealing his nightgown, and putting it on her own body.

Such limerence-inspired actions are generally judged socially undesirable, even socially disruptive. In the case of Rosanna, her admittedly strange behaviours also lead others to think that she might be somehow involved in the theft of the diamond. Unlike Betteredge who remains convinced that Rosanna could never have committed such a crime, Franklin suspects Rosanna of having stolen diamond and treats her rather coldly when she appears abruptly as he is playing billiard by himself in a room. Tennov suggests that when limerent, no matter how intensely you desire reciprocation you cannot simply ask for it since to ask is to risk premature self-disclosure" (1979: 67). Rosanna shows a similar reluctance to open up to Franklin. When he asks her if she wished to speak to him, she responds: "*Yes, if I dare*" (Collins 1868: 132). Made uncomfortable by her enigmatic ways and feeling extremely awkward in this situation, Franklin continues to knock the balls around. Rosanna is deeply upset with Franklin's apparent lack of interest in her. "*He looks at the billiard balls*" Franklin hears her say. "*Anything rather than look at me!*" (Collins 1868: 132).

Soon after this encounter, Rosanna overhears a conversation between Franklin and Sergeant Cuff during which the former blurts out that he took "*no interest in Rosanna Spearman whatsoever*" (Collins 1868: 136). Having heard this Rosanna is devastated since her limerent attachment to Blake had come to be the focal point of her life. What she experiences at this point is "starvation" in which even her sensitivity to signs of hope is useless against the crushing weight of evidence that her limerent object does not and will not return her feelings. Extremely worried and uneasy about Rosanna's mental state following this unfortunate encounter, Penelope tells her father:

But you see, father (though Mr. Franklin isn't to blame), he's been mortifying and disappointing her for weeks and weeks past; and now this comes on the top of it all! She has no right, of course, to expect him to take any interest in her. It's quite monstrous that she should forget herself and her station in that way. But she seems to have lost pride, and proper feeling, and everything. She frightened me, father, when Mr. Franklin said those words. They seemed to turn her into stone. A sudden quiet came over her, and she has gone about her work, ever since, like a woman in a dream (Collins 1868: 138).

So even people who are sympathetic towards Rosanna and show her genuine concern, find her romantic infatuation with Franklin "monstrous", as it goes against social convention and propriety. There is, however, nothing Rosanna can do to stop feeling the way she does although she knows full well that Franklin is beyond her reach and will never

return her feelings. Trapped in her limerent state which “often involves behavior not in accord with the best interests of the actor” (Tennov 1979: 160), Rosanna sinks further and further into despair. For Betteredge, Penelope as well as Sergeant Cuff, the only people who are aware of Rosanna’s feelings for Blake, Rosanna’s infatuation with the upper-class Franklin is sheer madness. However, impaired reasoning is a common symptom of romantic love and as Tennov suggests, limerence is “first and foremost a condition of cognitive obsession” (1979: 33) that bypasses rational faculties. In this sense, the intense passion Rosanna feels for Franklin Blake is not under her voluntary and logical control.

Although Rosanna secretly longs for “a return of feelings” or at least some concern for her on Franklin’s part, she is forced to relinquish all hope in the face of his sustained indifference and lack of interest. As Tennov asserts “hopefulness is as essential to the development of a full limerent reaction as uncertainty... The problem is once again that it is not objective reality, but reality as it is perceived that provides the base for limerent hopefulness” (1979: 57). When she is finally forced to accept the obvious fact that Blake does not really care for her, Rosanna abandons all hope and withdraws further into her shell. Penelope observes “a curious dimness and dullness in her eyes” (Collins 1868: 138) whereas her father remarks that she looked “like a creature moved by machinery” (Collins 1868: 139). Betteredge also recognizes “The girl’s altered looks, and words, and actions—the numbed, deadened way in which she listened to me” (Collins 1868: 139). As Tennov remarks: “The state of unreturned limerence is one of relative (and often self-imposed) isolation” (1979: 87). The transfer of attachment to another limerent object is not possible in Rosanna’s case given the fact that she lacks a supportive social network to meet other potentials and also self-confidence as a physically unattractive working class woman haunted by her shadowy past. Soon after Rosanna gives up on Blake; she commits suicide and her body is simply swallowed up in the sea of quicksand known as the Shivering Sands.

The fisherman’s daughter Lucy Yolland, Rosanna’s best friend, knows the reason why Rosanna took her own life and blames Franklin Blake for the death of her friend⁵. “He’s a murderer! he’s a murderer! he’s a murderer!” she screams:

He has been the death of Rosanna Spearman. That man came here, and spoilt it all. He bewitched her. Don’t tell me he didn’t mean it, and didn’t know it. He ought to have known it. He ought to have taken pity on her. ‘I can’t live without him—and, oh, Lucy, he never even looks at me.’ That’s what she said. Cruel, cruel, cruel. I said, ‘No man is worth fretting for in that way.’ And she said, ‘There are men worth dying for, Lucy, and he is one of them’ (Collins 1868: 173).

Lucy’s warning falls on deaf ears since in her limerent state Rosanna can only respond to her construction of Blake’s qualities. That is to say, the characteristics of Blake are crystallized by mental events in which his attractive characteristics are exaggerated and unattractive characteristics are ignored. In fact, Rosanna already had a mental image of a

⁵ As Mark Rossman remarks neither Lucy nor Rosanna are a real part of the normative sexual economy: “In their disfigurement, both characters are unable to participate in normative culture; both are profoundly excluded from the normative center. It is not surprising that Rosanna commits suicide, and that the very last image of Limping Lucy is of her thumping away from the dismayed Franklin Blake, into the obscurity and silence of the attic (2009: 491).

love object the template of which Franklin fit perfectly⁶. Recalling the moment she set eyes on him, Rosanna writes the following in her letter:

Do you remember when you came out on us from among the sand hills, that morning, looking for Mr. Betteredge? You were like a prince in a fairy-story. You were like a lover in a dream. You were the most adorable human creature I had ever seen. Something that felt like the happy life I had never led yet, leapt up in me at the instant I set eyes on you. Don't laugh at this if you can help it. Oh, if I could only make you feel how serious it is to me! (Collins 1868: 291).

These words reveal that, as experienced by Rosanna, limerence is a state that overtakes her capacity to judge and that leads her to crystallize the object of her desire. It is moreover, both an irruptive and disruptive event that eclipses all other relationships and even her responsibilities. As Tennov maintains, in fiction and in psychiatry, a limerent reaction often “blends into or is interpreted as a “mental illness” (2012: 90). Reasons for this include the fact that “limerence is basically at variance with rationality and with a conception of human behaviour as essentially the visible outcome of logical thought” (2012: 90). Rosanna, who was emotionally distressed and fragile even before she fell in love with Franklin Blake, exhibits limerent reactions more openly than a more emotionally resilient and grounded person would have. Although it would be far-fetched to assume that Rosanna’s existing mental instability causes limerence, it probably causes her intense feelings to show more blatantly. I would further suggest that Rosanna’s depressed mental state could certainly have led to the escalation of her limerence to desperate and obtrusive levels. Since her fantasy of being in love with Franklin Blake is her only joy and source of beauty in an otherwise depressing life, she feels that she has nothing left to live for when her love remains unrequited⁷.

4. CONCLUSION

According to Charles Lindholm, one of the ways people can relieve the burden of loneliness in a cold and indifferent cosmos is through “*experience of falling in love, where the feeling of being over-whelmed, the sense of merger, the willingness to embrace self-sacrifice, and the idealization of the other are closely akin to the charismatic devotion that Weber saw as the source of religion and community*” (1998: 26). Millions of people have literally lived and died for love over the course of human history. Many others have felt that the emotional high and intensity of the limerent state cannot be matched by any other experience. Yet as my examination of lovesick characters in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Moonstone* has shown, the dark side of love is probably as fascinating a phenomenon as its bright, uplifting side.

⁶ Niklas Luhmann observes that “Love is applied to itself before it chooses an object for itself” (2010: 26). Consequently, “One loves loving and, therefore, loves a person whom one can love” (2010: 32). Drawing on this premise, one could further ask: “Does love at first sight not presuppose that one was already in love before the first sighting?” (2010: 35). In a similar vein, I would suggest that Rosanna is already in love with the feeling and romantic ideal of love before she actually falls in love with Franklin Blake. She simply projects what she already has inside her onto her chosen limerent object.

⁷ In the words of Mossman: “In actual cultural practice, Rosanna is “deformed” both physically and mentally, both outside and inside; her interior person is inseparably linked to her outer exterior, to the impairment/disability/abnormalcy of her body. It is through this chain of signification that she is marginalized as a character in the novel, indeed quickly disappearing in person, in body, from it...” (2009: 489).

As I have argued throughout this article, the lovesickness of Catherine, Heathcliff and Rosanna follow a common course and produce common symptoms. In both novels, then, rejection and disappointment in love generate intense emotional and psychic suffering, causing mental distress in lovesick characters who are eventually destroyed by the agony of acute unhappy limerence. It is perhaps even possible to argue that all three of the characters I have examined die prematurely as a result of sustained and lovesick reverie. In the case of Rosanna Spearman limerence is not only unreciprocated but also impossible given the fact she could not have changed her social fate, status or physical appearance. Catherine and Heathcliff's limerence in *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, is mutual yet equally doomed, mainly due to the strict class consciousness of the Victorian era. None of the characters I have examined find it possible to transfer limerence to a new person. Sad and disturbing they may be, their stories continue to resonate with numerous readers who are moved by the longing and passions of these fictional characters.

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