אוניברסיטת בר אילן

המחלקה לאנגלית

הצעת מחקר לתואר שני:

תפקיד הלבוש בסיפורי "סינדרלה" ברומן הוויקטוריאני

מרב בורק

מנחה: ד"ר יעל שפירא

Bar Ilan University

Department of English

M.A. Thesis Proposal:

Clothing in Victorian “Cinderella” Novels

Merav Burak

Advisor: Dr. Yael Shapira

Table of Contents

Introduction

> *It was then I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago. I noticed that Miss Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up. As Estella dealt the cards, I glanced at the dressing-table again, and saw that the shoe upon it, once white, now yellow, had never been worn. I glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent, and saw that the silk stocking on it, once white, now yellow, had been trodden ragged. Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud. (Dickens 51)*

The missing shoe Pip notices during his first visit to Miss Havisham's house in *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens (1861) is only one of the many echoes of the "Cinderella" fairy tale in the novel, and specifically in Dickens' use of clothes. Pip's desire of winning Estella's heart, too, requires a Cinderella-like transformation, as he must improve his social status, beginning with a change of clothing at the tailor's as soon as he receives the funding for them. Clothes serve many functions in Dickens' retelling of the fairy tale: they are means of restraint, where Pip must wear clothes that do not allow him **"**free use" of his limbs (20); status symbols, where he laments his "coarse hands" and "common boots" (52); images of decay, where Miss Havisham appears "withered like the dress" that she wears (49); tools for disguise, where Pip's new garments feel like "Joe's in his Sunday suit" and so on (133).

But what is Dickens' aim in portraying his characters as Cinderella figures, and particularly in choosing his protagonist to be a male Cinderella? And why do neither Pip's nor Miss Havisham's "Cinderella" stories come to fruition, despite the transformation implied by their clothing? In this thesis I will consider these questions as well as the role that clothes play in another Victorian novel that complicates the "Cinderella" fairytale, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë (1847), where Jane seems to resist the "Cinderella" transformation of attire, though she, too, clearly is a Cinderella figure. In view of the simplicity of "Cinderella," where new clothes result in a new social status, what values do Victorian writers contradict or uphold in adapting the tale's theme of clothing as an agent of change?

Aims and General Description

I would like to analyze the image of clothes in relation to Brontë's and Dickens' use of "Cinderella" fairytales in *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations*. While *Jane Eyre* depicts its heroine as a resisting Cinderella figure, *Great Expectations* constructs an even less traditional revision of the fairy tale by offering a male Cinderella. Consequently, I wish to compare and contrast these novels in order to understand the relation between clothes, the "Cinderella" story, and their handling of gender norms. By drawing on existing criticism of the novels while closely reading the texts themselves, I aim to demonstrate the function of the clothing motif in the tales, its influence and metamorphosis in the Victorian era, and its role in Dickens and Brontë's exploration of Victorian gender ideals.

Methodology

In order to examine the relation between the "Cinderella" clothing motif in *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* and the novels' treatment of gender, I will combine a close reading of these novels with specific attention to their retelling of "Cinderella." I will draw on historicist and feminist approaches to *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre*, as well as on existing scholarly work that examines the influence of "Cinderella" on these novels, the significance of clothes within them, and their handling of gender ideology. In addition, existing criticism (including feminist criticism) on "Cinderella" and fairytales more broadly, and on the clothing motif within them, will guide my research. Furthermore, as these novels were published in the Victorian era, I will include criticism on gender roles, clothing and the influence of fairy tales in Victorian literature and culture.

Scholarly and Critical Background

The Clothing Motif in the "Cinderella" Story:

In fairytales, clothes often function as a tool for surmounting the social rules and the natural limitations of life and logic (Scotte 151): although princes conventionally marry princesses, Cinderella's ball gown enables her to achieve the unlikely outcome of a prince marrying a lower-class match, as if she were his equal. However, this wish-come-true narrative does not mean that Cinderella possesses actual power over her life; her "lack of control over her life is a dominant feature" in the Grimms' version of the tale, for example (Scotte 156). In fact, the "Cinderella complex," is an acknowledged term used to describe women who are "still waiting for something external to transform their lives," possessing "repressed attitudes and fears that keep women in a kind of half-light, retreating from the full use of their minds and creativity" (Dowling 31).

Different versions of the tale exploit clothing to achieve similar functions with usually minor variations. Clothing provides a means of disguise in Charles Perrault's versions of the tale, "Donkeyskin" and "Cendrillon," and likewise in the Grimms' adaptation, "Aschenputtel." In all three variations, clothes or accessories also represent the key to Cinderella's recognition and her authentication as the right person to marry the prince: the slipper in Grimms' and Perrault's "Cinderella" versions, and the ring in Perrault's "Donkeyskin."

These versions portray a social structure where clothing indicates whether the wearer is a suitable or inappropriate candidate to marry the prince, so that Cinderella's allure is a direct product of her garb. While these versions portray a "Cinderella" figure that is overlooked when she is in her "rags," "Donkeyskin" further highlights the element of desirability which the "new" clothes bring. When the prince peeps at the heroine through the keyhole of her room and sees her sans the donkey skin, in one of her rich gowns, it makes him fall in love with her immediately,

conveying how her change to rich and beautiful clothing awarded her the prince's newfound romantic interest.

Given their importance in establishing Cinderella's desirability, clothes are implicated in the tales' presentation of the "female ideal." As various critics note, Cinderella is usually passive, a significant aspect in the Grimm's and Perrault's versions, where she does not act on her own initiative to better her life. According to Alexandra Robbins, "Cinderella encourages little girls, who usually identify with the good heroine, to aspire to become meek and inactive" (104). Robbins asserts that "Cinderella" represents an anti-grotesque ideal of femininity, a "paradigm of passivity" (106), where the female who "patiently tolerates abuse without objection," will be rewarded with the patriarchal prize of marriage to a prince (107). Moreover, Robbins establishes how it is Cinderella's external transformation of clothing that allows her to achieve this happily ever after, rather than her virtues of goodness or kindness.

In fact, the dominance of the clothes undercuts the idea that Cinderella is chosen for her virtues, an insight emphasized in feminist readings of the tales (e.g., Panttaja, Robbins, Scotte). Such readings accentuate the passivity involved in Cinderella's feminine ideals, and I will draw on these and other discussions of clothing in the tales in my analysis of *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations*.

The "Cinderella" Story in Victorian Literature:

As mentioned, in the nineteenth century, "Cinderella" had a great influence on both authors and readers, appearing on the stage as pantomimes, in chapbooks and toybooks (see Cullen).

According to Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, "the motifs and plot patterns of Cinderella appealed to Victorian writers who wished to deal with and symbolize a young woman's… transformation" (86). Critics have detected "Cinderella" themes in Jane Austen's novels,

Persuasion (1817), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Sense and Sensibility*(1811) and *Pride and Prejudice*(1813), as well as in M.E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and in Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853) (See May, fn 25; Tailarach-Vielmas, 121).

In a book devoted to the Cinderella myth in the hands of 18th and 19th century women writers, Mei Huang asserts that their "Cinderella" narratives are "about female desire and ambition" (67). She identifies George Eliot's heroines, Hetty (*Adam Bede*, 1859) and Gwendolen (*Daniel Deronda*, 1876*)* as "working Cinderellas" (145) and views *Jane Eyre* as an evolution of the Cinderella figure in Richardson's *Pamela* (1740). Only in *Villette* (1853), Huang argues, does Brontë actually manage to break up "the inherited narrative pattern" of Cinderella (139). Huang maintains that these women novelists "develop the paradox of the existing Cinderella theme" from feminist or feminine perspectives (29), and I will draw on her analysis in my own work.

This abundance of primary and secondary sources on "Cinderella" in Victorian literature suggests that this fairytale provided cultural meanings for Victorian writers and their readers. Therefore, I will include such studies in my research to understand the influence of the "Cinderella" fairytale in the Victorian "Cinderella" retellings, while considering what insights might be added to this scholarship through a particular focus on the motif of clothes.

Clothes in the Victorian Novel:

Various studies have established the significance of clothes in relation to the class and gender norms of Victorian society (see Crane; Rosenman, Roberts). Anna Krugovoy Silver, for example, examines the dress codes associated with the norm of female beauty, including corsets, which she relates to anorexia nervosa. With regard to clothing in the Victorian novel specifically, the most relevant studies are by works of Suzanne Keen, Amy Louise Montz, and Christine Bayles Kortsch.

These critics show that the portrayal of clothing provides novelists with a set of cultural values and implications intended for their Victorian readers. According to Keen, for instance, Victorian novels often portrayed heroines in clothes that are "Quakerish," that is to say, "neat, form-fitting, relatively unadorned garb" (211), a form of dress that helps women "move more freely in the world than non-Quaker women" (223). Another type of cultural implication, according to Montz, is that an immoderate love of dress was used to characterize women as vain, a fact she attributes to "Victorian anxiety over class mobility" (5).

In addition, clothing also provided heroines of Victorian novels with control and feminine power. Montz maintains that for "many novelists of the Victorian period, fashion is an arena in which women can have power not only over their clothing, but also over their ultimate presentation of the character they display to the public" (2-3) and believes that clothes are "readable" – both to society and to the individual observer or reader, allowing women to "script the public perception" of them (4). Bayles Kortsch defines dress culture as the source of power and knowledge that women possessed in an otherwise patriarchal environment. In her studies, which center on late Victorian female writers' utilization of dress culture, she asserts that "literacy in dress culture … offered women writers a useful way to talk to and about women" (14). I will utilize these studies in my analysis in order to understand the nuances of the cultural significance of the clothing images in the novels.

Clothing and the Cinderella Story in *Jane Eyre*:

Many critics have discerned "Cinderella" themes in *Jane Eyre* (see Clarke, Huang, Meckier, Berg, and Gilbert), though their studies have not focused specifically on the issue of clothing. Clothes appear in *Jane Eyre* in diverse contexts: there is the ill-fitting uniform of the Lowood Institution that did not sufficiently provide warmth to the students, which Jane especially observes by noting the extravagant coats of Mr. Brocklehurst's female relatives. There

are the plain Quaker clothes which are Jane's choice of garb in her adulthood, contrasted with the lavish gowns of Mr. Rochester's supposed fiancée, Miss Ingram. There are also the constricting new clothes which Mr. Rochester purchases for the reluctant Jane (including jewelry), items that are repugnant to Jane's humble nature. This refusal is a marked break with the fairytale, where Cinderella embraces the opportunity to wear rich gowns and mask her low station.

It is doubtful whether Cinderella is the role Jane actually wishes to assume. Unlike Cinderella, Jane resists the attempt to portray her as something that she is not. Maria Tatar asserts that *Jane Eyre* is a critique of "Cinderella," since Jane declines to fall into the roles expected of her in "Rochester's fairy-tale fantasies" (xvii). Many critics have noted the paradoxical manifestation of passion and repression in Jane Eyre's behavior, such as Clarke, who believes that Brontë is aware of the contradictory elements present in the "Cinderella" tale and employs them; further study of Jane's Quaker dress and the references to the fairytale in *Jane Eyre*, as I propose to conduct in this thesis, may illuminate the Victorian feminist issues Brontë encompasses in this paradox.

Furthermore, the eroticism in *Jane Eyre* creates a definite feminist undertone that Brontë utilizes to dramatize "yearning not just for political equality but for equality of desire" (Gilbert 357). That is to say, Brontë plays with the notion of female sexual desire: while Cinderella desires the prince and the beautiful grab that will make her attendance at the ball viable, Jane rejects this external sartorial transformation in her choice not to wear clothes beyond her social class. Yet, the fact that Jane wears Quaker dress that still directs attention to her clothed body (presumably to attract a suitor, if not a prince) marks a peculiar tension between Brontë's embrace and rejection of the "Cinderella" transformation. It is interesting to study Brontë's

reworking of the tale and her contradictory use of clothing imagery, especially in view of the presence of female sexual desire that Sandra M. Gilbert traces in the narrative.

Clothing and the Cinderella Story in *Great Expectations*:

Many critics (e.g., Meckier, Hays, Partlow, Morgentaler, Stone) identify *Great Expectations* as a "Cinderella" story with varying "Cinderella" figures. There are indeed assorted "Cinderella" elements in this novel: Pip suffers at the hands of a stepmother figure, undergoes a transformation to achieve social mobility that includes the acquisition of new attire at the tailor's, and although he does not lose a shoe at a ball, as mentioned above, we do encounter the image of the unworn white shoe at Miss Havisham's dwelling. Pip rejects his identity as a poor working class individual in favor of his temporary gentleman status. He envisions himself "the young Knight of romance" who shall "marry the princess," (197) as Peter L. Hays points out (129).

According to Jerome Meckier, Dickens's use of the fairy tale in *Great Expectations* is part of his broader criticism of the Cinderella themes in the work of his Victorian peers. In the essay "Frauds on the Fairies" (1853), Dickens wrote a short parody of Cinderella to drive his point, and stated: "Whosoever alters them [fairy tales] to suit his own opinions, whatever they are, is guilty, to our thinking, of an act of presumption, and appropriates to himself what does not belong to him." Meckier argues that Dickens used *Great Expectations* to "repudiate the adoption of *Cinderella* as a cultural myth…of Victorian England" since Victorian writers imbued "Cinderella" motifs in their novels (2015: xix).

U. C. Knoepflmacher maintains that "the empowerment of a young woman who shrewdly learns to exploit her marketability" is the cause of Dickens' objection to the modern retellings of "Cinderella". What's more, Knoepflmacher believes that Dickens felt threatened by "the Cinderellas created by 'strong women' such as Charlotte Brontë" (17). Yet, unlike Brontë's Jane, Dickens' Pip is decidedly a male Cinderella, as Hays observes. Dickens, according to Hays,

bases his novel on fairytales and then moves it "toward reality" (129). Given this inconsistency, I would like to understand Dickens' construction of a "Cinderella" story, especially with the untraditional male protagonist: what is the cultural "realty" he is portraying?

In his adaptation of the tale, Dickens incorporates a diverse range of clothing images that connect to "Cinderella" themes. Although critics do find reason to situate this novel in conversation with "Cinderella", they have not yet examined the role of the clothes imagery. Since Pip does not realize his "Cinderella" fantasy, it is worth examining how the deviation from the tale influenced the narrative, and what choices and manipulation of gender norms Dickens employs in constructing the narrative with clear references to "Cinderella" and "Cinderella" clothing.

Chapter Outline

Introductory Chapter. This chapter will establish the Victorian cultural background for the readings of the novels that will appear in the following two chapters. It will additionally examine the versions of the "Cinderella" tales published by the Grimm Brothers and Charles Perrault. The introduction will discuss the use of clothes within these versions of "Cinderella", as well as relevant criticism. It will study the various functions of clothes in the genre of the fairy tale and draw a comparison of how these versions manipulate this motif in relation to the values and characteristics of "goodness" and passivity. Lastly, it will provide a summary introducing each of the upcoming chapters of my thesis.

Chapter One: *Jane Eyre*. This Chapter will discuss the way Brontë constructs a "Cinderella" figure that, on the one hand, rebels against her mistreatment, and seeks out independency with an assertive feminist agenda, and who, on the other hand, falls into the predictable pattern of meandering into the romantic plot line to marry her "prince." While considering Brontë's novel

in relation to both the Perrault and the Grimms' versions of the tale, I will analyze Brontë's portrayal of clothing with attention to Jane's relationship to the "Cinderella" conventions and gender roles.

Chapter Two: *Great Expectations*. This chapter will examine the motif of clothes in the depiction of Pip's childhood, his transformation into a gentleman, and his reversal when his "Cinderella" fantasy shatters. It will analyze Dickens' motives in using the "Cinderella" fairytale, his utilization of different versions of the tale, and the conventions of gender roles Dickens portrays or negates in Victorian novels.

Conclusion. The conclusion will summarize the main points of the previous two chapters, comparing and contrasting their conclusions. It will also attempt to outline the portrayal of gender norms in Victorian "Cinderella" stories through their motif of clothing.

Bibliography

Bayles Kortsch, Christine. *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women's Fiction. Literacy, Textiles, and Activism.* Ashgate Publishing. 2009. Print.

Berg, Temma F. "From Pamela to Jane Gray; or, How Not To Become the Heroine of Your Own Text." *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (summer 1985), pp. 115-137. The Johns Hopkins University Press. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 September. 2017.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. London: Penguin, 2006. Print.

Clarke, Micael M. "Brontë's Jane Eyre and the Grimms' Cinderella." *SEL Studies in English Literature* 1500-1900, 40.4 (2000): 695-710. *Project Muse*. Web. 5 March. 2017.

Crane, Diana. "Clothing Behavior as Non-Verbal Resistance: Marginal Women and Alternative Dress in the Nineteenth Century." *Fashion Theory*, 3(2), (1999): 241–268. *Csuca*. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

Cullen, Bonnie. “For Whom the Shoe Fits: Cinderella in the Hands of Victorian Writers and Illustrators.” *The Lion and the Unicorn,* Vol. 27, No. 1, January 2003, pp. 57-82. Johns Hopkins University Press. *Project Muse*. Web. 27 July. 2017.

Dickens, Charles. “Fraud on the Fairies.” *Household Words.* 1 Oct. 1853. *Miscellaneous Papers*. Vol. 1. London: Chapman and Hall, 1911. 435-42. *Victorianweb*. Web. 19 July. 2017.

---------. *Great Expectations*. Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1992. Print.

Dowling, Colette. *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*. New York: Summit, 1981. Print.

Gilbert, Sandra M. “"Jane Eyre" and the Secrets of Furious Lovemaking.” *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Thirtieth Anniversary Issue: III(Summer, 1998), pp. 351-372. Duke University Press. *JSTOR.* Web. 15 June. 2017.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "Aschenputtel," *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* [Children's and Household Tales -- Grimms' Fairy Tales], 7th edition (Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1857), no. 21, pp. 119-26. Translated by D. L. Ashliman. © 2001-2006. Web. Taken from www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm021.html

Hays, Peter L. “What the Dickens? "Great Expectations" and "The Great Gatsby".” *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review.* Vol. 3 (2004), pp. 128-139. Penn State University Press. *JSTOR*. 25 July. 2017.

Huang, Mei. *Transforming the Cinderella Dream: from Frances Burney to Charlotte Brontë.* New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1990. Print.

Keen, Suzanne. "Quaker Dress, Sexuality, and the Domestication of Reform in the Victorian Novel." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 30.1 (2002): 211-36. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 March. 2017. Essay 2

Knoepflmacher, U. C. “Introduction: Literary Fairy Tales and the Value of Impurity.” *Marvels & Tales*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Considering the Kunstmärchen: The History and Development of Literary Fairy Tales (2003), pp. 15-36. Wayne State University Press. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 July. 2017.

Krugovoy Silver, Anna. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.

May, Leila S. “Jane Austen’s “Schemes of Sisterly Happiness*”.” Philological Quarterly*, 81.3 (Summer 2002):327-358. University of Iowa. *ProQuest Central*.Web. 9 August. 2017.

Meckier, Jerome. *Dickens's Great Expectations: Misnar's Pavilion versus Cinderella.* University Press of Kentucky, 2015. Print.

---------“Great Expectations and Self-Help: Dickens Frowns on Smiles”. *JEGP.Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, *100*(4), (2001): 537-554. *Proquest*. Web. 5 March. 2017.

Montz, Amy Louise. “Dressing for England: Fashion and Nationalism in Victorian Novels.” *Texas A&M University*, 2008. Web. 17 August. 2017. oaktrust.library.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/ETD-TAMU-2954.

Morgentaler, Goldie. “*Meditating on the Low: A Darwinian Reading of Great Expectations*.” *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, Vol. 38, No. 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1998), pp. 707-721. Rice University. *JSTOR*. Web. 26 July. 2017.

Panttaja, Elisabeth. “Going up in the World: Class in "Cinderella"”. *Western Folklore*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Perspectives on the Innocent Persecuted Heroine in Fairy Tales (Jan., 1993), pp. 85-104. Western States Folklore Society. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 July. 2017.

Partlow, Robert B., Jr. “The Moving I: A Study of the Point of View in Great Expectations.” *College English*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Nov., 1961), pp. 122-126+131. National Council of Teachers of English. *JSTOR*. Web. 26 July. 2017.

Perrault, Charles. "Cendrillon, ou la petite pantoufle de verre," *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités: Contes de ma mère l'Oye* (Paris, 1697). In Andrew Lang, *The Blue Fairy Book* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., ca. 1889), pp. 64-71. Taken from www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault06.html

-------- “Donkeyskin.” *Old-Time Stories told by Master Charles Perrault*, translated by A. E. Johnson (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1921). University of Pittsburgh. Web. 20 July, 2017. www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault11.html

Robbins, Alexandra. “The Fairy-Tale Facade: *Cinderella’s* Anti-grotesque Dream.” *Journal of Popular Culture.* Vol. 32, Issue 3(Winter 1998), pp 101–115. *Wiley online library*. Web. 24 August. 2017.

Roberts, Helene. “The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman.” *Signs*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Spring, 1977), pp. 554-569. The University of Chicago Press. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 August. 2017.

Rosenman, Ellen Bayuk. “Fear of Fashion; or, How the Coquette Got Her Bad Name.” *A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews.* 15:3, 12-21 (2002). Web. 15 August. 2017. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08957690209600070

Scotte, Carole. “Magical Dress: Clothing and Transformation in Folk Tales.” *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 4, winter 1996, pp. 151-157. Johns Hopkins University Press. *JSTOR*. Web.10 July. 2017

Stone, Harry. “Fire, Hand, and Gate: Dickens' Great Expectations.” *The Kenyon Review*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Autumn, 1962), pp. 662-691. *Kenyon College*. *JSTOR*. Web. 26 July. 2017.

Tatar, Maria. *The Classic Fairy Tales*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.; 1999. Print.

Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence. *Fairy Tales, Natural History and Victorian Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print.