Trabajo Fin de Grado

Under Jane Eyre’s shadow: notes on Vanessa Ives’ way to assertiveness in Penny Dreadful series (2014-16)

Alumno/a: Virginia Vega Figueroa
Tutor/a: Julio Ángel Olivares Merino
Dpto.: Filología Inglesa

Julio, 2019
INDEX

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................... 3
   1.1. Objectives ..................................................................................................................................................... 3
   1.2. Methodology .............................................................................................................................................. 4

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND STATE OF THE ART ......................................................... 5
   2.1. The Bildungsroman: Origin and development ................................................................................................. 5
   2.2. The English Bildungsroman ............................................................................................................................. 6
   2.3. Values of society: Women’s life and position in Victorian England .............................................................. 7
   2.4. Penny Dreadful and Jane Eyre ......................................................................................................................... 10
       2.4.1. Summary .................................................................................................................................................. 10
       2.4.2. Relation with the Bildungsroman .............................................................................................................. 12
       2.4.3. Penny Dreadful and Jane Eyre: a comparison ............................................................................................. 14
              Red Room and white room ........................................................................................................................... 14
              Orphanhood .................................................................................................................................................. 18
              Religion ...................................................................................................................................................... 20
              Love .......................................................................................................................................................... 21
              Social class ............................................................................................................................................... 24
              Mystery .................................................................................................................................................... 26
              Loneliness and alienation .............................................................................................................................. 27
              Marriage .................................................................................................................................................. 28

3. VANESSA IVES’ GROWTH: AN ANALYSIS ................................................................................. 31

4. CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................................................. 37

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................................................................................................... 39
1. INTRODUCTION

This literary research is focused on the television series *Penny Dreadful*, created by John Logan for Showtime and Sky. *Penny Dreadful* mixes drama, horror, thriller, dark and historical fantasy. It is based on the most terrifying Victorian Gothic characters, including Dracula, Dorian Gray, Victor Frankenstein and his monster and others.

This British-American television series was first aired on May 11, 2014 and it came to its end on June 19, 2016. The three seasons that compose this series are centred in 19th century London, joining iconic figures of Gothic literature with new and complex characters, which creates an enigmatic narrative, since the characters are related and they all share hidden and secret pasts.

Our study will be based on the main character of *Penny Dreadful*, Vanessa Ives, compared in some aspects with the character of Jane Eyre, from Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre*.

For this research, we have taken into consideration the context, the genre and of course, the main female characters. To finish, it should be pointed out that the relation between these two works has not been suggested before.

1.1. Objectives

Our main objectives in this research are, first of all, to go deeply in the study of the concept of the *Bildungsroman*, whose characteristics can be appreciated in the content of both works. In a second place, to establish an exhaustive relation between *Penny Dreadful* series and the novel *Jane Eyre* bearing the characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* in mind. Finally, to analyse in what ways Vanessa Ives grows from the very beginning until the very end of the series, connecting this evolution with the characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*, and also, making emphasis in all the events which affect her life and which lead her to assertiveness.

Since this television series is relatively recent, it can be said that there are not many evidences that it has been previously object of study. In this way, it will be interesting to analyse this television series whose characters follow the traditional conventions of the nineteenth century gothic, although they are depicted in a more
modern and adapted way, connecting their lives and creating just one story made of many.

1.2. Methodology

The analysis will be divided into three different parts: theoretical contextualization, analysis of the television series’ main character and, finally, the conclusions.

To begin with, we will study the Bildungsroman literary genre in contemporary fiction. First of all, we will talk about the origin of this term and also its development throughout history. Then, we will make reference to this literary genre in the English culture and also to the woman question in Victorian England. In this last part, we will also take into account the role of the strong female characters who appear in Penny Dreadful, to contextualize women’s life and position in this period as compared with the female representation in this television series. To finish, we will focus our work on Vanessa Ives’s life as compared with Jane Eyre’s. In this part of our research, we will also discuss the main similarities and differences that both characters share as well as their relation with the Bildungsroman literary genre.

Next, we will centre our study in the character of Vanessa Ives, observing and studying the changes which she suffers throughout the story and, of course, the events which influence her transformation, paying attention to the evolution of the character from youth to adulthood.

To finish, we will share all the conclusions obtained providing a synthesis of all the objectives mentioned before.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND STATE OF THE ART

2.1. The Bildungsroman: Origin and development

In order to understand the literary genre of Bildungsroman, first of all, it is necessary to provide a clear definition for this concept, quoted in the 1820s by Karin Svenson from Johann Karl Simon Morgenstern, a German philologist.

A Bildungsroman is a novelistic genre that arose during the German Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, following the dissolving of the feudal system and the spreading of democratic ideas. The genre focused on new ideas about the psychological, moral and social shaping of the personality of a protagonist in relation to society. As Buckley argues, it might be tempting to use synonyms of the term Bildungsroman; the novel of youth, the novel of education, of apprenticeship, of adolescence, of initiation or even the life novel – but none of these synonyms fully substitutes the label Bildungsroman since the genre is about the process of maturation rather than the state of being. (Svenson, 2009, p.2)

The Bildungsroman focuses on the growth of the protagonist throughout the story, from the childhood to the adulthood, where the character suffers an extremely important change.

There are many factors which can influence the process of maturation of a character: society, environment, family, love affairs or sexual encounters… As Svenson (2009) argues, “A Bildungsroman does not only examine the hard facts of growing up, but focuses deeply on the youth’s soft feelings and thoughts about them.” (p.3)

Etymologically, the origin of the term Bildungsroman comes from the word Bild, a religious concept referring to the restoration of the image of God. This way, we can infer that the character’s change may be oriented to God himself, in such a way that the character changes or matures following the image of God, trying to achieve the inner peace, the perfection. This theory has a strong relation with the evolution of the main character of Penny Dreadful, something that we will discuss later on. The fusion of the terms Bildung, meaning ‘education’, and roman, meaning ‘novel’, gives name to this novelistic genre of personal development.

Although it was Karl Morgenstern who first used this new term, the creation of the Bildungsroman genre was marked by the publication of Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship by Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1975-76). This new German genre had a strong influence in Europe and then, it spread all over the world.
Traditionally, in the *Bildungsroman* genre, the central character or the ‘hero’ has been mainly masculine, although female characters or ‘heroines’ have also been gradually introduced.

### 2.2. The English *Bildungsroman*

The general notions of the *Bildungsroman*, very popular in Victorian England, were adapted to the English society creating a particular sub-genre following a certain plot.

“In an English Bildungsroman, the protagonist is often a poor orphaned boy whose goal is to become a cultured gentleman of means. As part of his self-education, he moves from his provincial home to an urban setting. While the German Bildungsroman emphasizes internal conflicts within the main character, the English Bildungsroman uses the outside world to threaten the hero’s quest for identity. Many English Bildungsroman novels draw from the author’s own experience.”

As we mentioned at the end of the last point, female protagonists have had to face the problem of growing up in a world dominated by men.

“While a male protagonist in a Bildungsroman may meet his pivotal crisis in the course of his professional career, the female protagonist’s turning point may result from a romantic entanglement. Her journey of discovery may be more internal, or psychological, than that of her male counterpart.”

It is for this reason that *Bildungsroman* female characters follow the traditional values of marriage typical from their society. Conventionally, the goal they must achieve at the end of their process of learning is to find a sophisticated and a noble man and then, marry him. This is more or less the pattern followed by both the novel *Jane Eyre* and its protagonist, in the sense that the novel ends with a marriage, although it has to be mentioned that marriage is not Jane Eyre’s main goal as woman.

---

1, 2 http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/125836/7/07_chapter%202.pdf (04/02/2019)
As Camilla Brändström (2009) considers in her “feminist exploration of the Bildungsroman”, “instead of learning by reason, by basing decisions on previous knowledge, like the male hero, the female protagonist grows by learning from life itself.” (p. 16). The reason for this fact is that in a male-dominated world, not all women had the possibility of going to school or simply the privilege of having someone as a mentor. Women’s life was oriented towards their home, their families, their children and, of course, their husbands.

2.3. Values of society: Women’s life and position in Victorian England

Since Penny Dreadful and Jane Eyre share the same temporal and spatial setting, Victorian England, the values of society that both protagonists follow are quite similar, taking into account that they do not belong to the same social class.

The Victorian era was the period in which Queen Victoria reigned, from 1830 until 1901, and when many important changes took place in the English society, such as the growth of the economy, the industrialization, the expansion of new territories in the British Empire…Together with economy and politics, the British society also suffered a significant evolution facing the traditional values.

One of the most important social changes that took place was the well-known “Woman Question”, which was promoted by the Industrial Revolution. As a consequence, women began to discuss about their role in society and also about their political rights.

Although the changes previously mentioned can be appreciated in both Penny Dreadful and Jane Eyre, we are going to lay more emphasis in the issue of the “Woman Question” since the protagonists are female characters and their lives represent perfectly the live of a Victorian woman.

As we have learned throughout history, the life of a Victorian woman was limited in all aspects, not having the same opportunities as men. Victorian society was unwilling to appreciate female work, however, “women’s work was both visible – in factories, domestic service or governessing – and invisible work at home. This invisible domestic work was generally proposed on women, and the importance of good household management was emphasized.” (Tiainen, 2013, p. 51)
In the case of *Jane Eyre*, being a governess is the only option that an unmarried woman can contemplate as a job. “Thus, the employment of a governess gave some autonomy to a woman: at least she could earn her own living”. (Tiainen, 2013, p. 52)

In addition, not only the fact of being a woman but also her orphanhood, make Jane be unprotected and defenceless under the constant offensives she suffers by her cousin John.

Moments after the novel begins, John Reed provokes Jane’s childish rage by striking her in the face and taunting her with her poverty and dependency. Thus, immediately, the political/social circumstances of Jane’s life are established: as a female she is exposed to male physical brutality and whim; as an economically helpless person she is vulnerable in a highly class-conscious society. Her response to John’s gratuitous cruelty is to “fly at him” and threaten to be dragged off and locked into the “Red Room,” where her uncle had died and which is rumoured to be a haunted chamber. (Rich, 1987, p. 464)

Nevertheless, the situation was improving little by little for Victorian women and they were allowed in other sectors such as education, sanity and communication.

In addition to the restrictions previously mentioned, Victorian women also presented legal and economic limitations, since married women had not access to the money and possessions of the family, nor had they the possibility of obtaining the divorce.

As we stated in the methodology of our research, it is essential to make an allusion to the representation of the strong female characters in *Penny Dreadful*, in order to provide a clear image about their role in the late Victorian London period. One of the leading female characters is Lily Frankenstein, Victor Frankenstein’s second creation in the series, and, as Green (2017) says, “the character in *Penny Dreadful* which most clearly emblematises the Gothic New Woman” (p. 5). As we can see in *Penny Dreadful*, “the New Woman is Gothic not simply because she is associated with destruction but because she is associated with unending change” (Green, 2017, p.8)

Lily’s character is a flawless example of dominance and destruction. Her anxieties of power and superiority of women over men lead her to the creation of an “army of female warriors” whose purpose is to change radically women’s situation and to make men be the vulnerable gender.
We flatter our men with our pain, we bow before them, we make ourselves dolls for their amusement, we lose our dignity in corsets and high shoes and gossip and the slavery of marriage! (...) Never again... will I kneel to any man. Now they shall kneel to me. (Logan, 2014, 02x08)

Definitely, her thoughts go further from the concept of feminism, since what she is leading is not a struggle for women rights and equality, but a revolution and the female supremacy.

We are not women who crawl. We are not women who kneel. And for this, we will be branded radicals. Revolutionists. Women who are strong and refuse to be degraded and who choose to protect themselves are called monsters. That is the world's crime, not ours. (Logan, 2014, 03x06)

This is how Brona’s personality changes when she is transformed as Lily. This character first appeared as a poor Irish immigrant with consumption who, after her death, was reincarnated as Lily, a respectful and polite woman at first, but then an aggressive and dark character.

As a conclusion for this remark dealing with powerful women in *Penny Dreadful*, it is essential to highlight that apart from Lily, there are more female characters who have demonstrated their personal authority to resist male power.

Lily is not the only character in *Penny Dreadful* with whom the theme of new womanist horror resonates: the glamorous sufferings of Vanessa Ives, the dark predations of the witches and the mysterious Dr Seward all reflect the idea of the transformative feminine. But where Vanessa seeks to triumph over supernatural evil and liberate herself from the clutches of the dark master, Lily wants much more than a life of adventure and desire. She is determined to gain control, to establish a new race of super beings and to destroy all that has gone before. (Green, 2017, p.10)
2.4. *Penny Dreadful and Jane Eyre*

2.4.1. Summary

To finish with the theoretical contextualization of our research, it is essential to provide, first of all, a brief summary about the works in discussion. Then, we will focus our study on the relation established between them and the *Bildungsroman* as well as on the strong connection that both *Penny Dreadful* and *Jane Eyre* share.

*Penny Dreadful* is a British-American television series created by John Logan, set in the 19th century London society. This series is focused on many well-known characters from the British and Irish Gothic fiction of the Victorian era.

In an atmosphere of drama, horror, and thriller, as well as dark and historical fantasy, the lives of famous Gothic literature characters such as Dorian Gray, Dracula, and Victor Frankenstein among many others, are mixed all together creating a complex plot in which everybody takes part either as heroes or villains.

*Penny Dreadful* characters have to join forces to fight against supernatural monsters and threats in Victorian London. Their main purpose is to find Mina, Sir Malcom’s daughter, and to bring her back from darkness. To accomplish their goal, they have to ask for help to people who they consider specialist in this field and who, as well as they, are characterized for having a life full of secrets, inner demons and even supernatural gifts.

Together, they will decipher and discover all these enigmas and secrets that they all hide. Vanessa Ives, the main character in *Penny Dreadful*, will be the key element to put an end to darkness.
*Penny Dreadful* takes up key ideas that emerged with force during late-Victorian culture and connects them in ways that reveal underlying connections and disconnections. The evolving genre of transmedia fantasy fiction enables the series to create a new account of lasting issues and anxieties in Western culture; including the use of excessive power, mechanistic control over human creativity, the dangers of enchantment, the sufferings of the Other, and the struggle for women to transcend bodily and domestic confinement as autonomous rational beings. (Green, 2017, p.4)

*Jane Eyre* is an English novel, by Charlotte Brönte, set in Northern England in the early 19th century. This autobiography narrates the experiences of Jane Eyre from her childhood to her adulthood.

Considered a *Bildungsroman* novel, *Jane Eyre* focuses on the life of this heroine containing elements of social criticism and dealing with topics such as social class, sexuality, religion and feminism. Jane Eyre, an orphan ten-year-old girl, tells us her terrible childhood experience at Gateshead Hall living with her heartless aunt and cousins who dislikes and despise her.

Then, she is sent to Lowood School, an institution for poor and orphaned girls, where she becomes stronger and more independent but still suffers oppression.

Afterwards, she takes the position of governess at Thornfield Hall where she falls in love with her mysterious employer, Mr Rochester. Due to the discovery of a terrible secret, Jane Eyre is obliged to take an important decision which, by chance, leads her to face mysteries about her past life.
2.4.2. Relation with the Bildungsroman

After having made a brief introduction to the plots of *Jane Eyre* and *Penny Dreadful*, we will discuss in what ways are these works related to the concept of *Bildungsroman* and also between them.

Jane Eyre and Vanessa Ives, the main female characters of the works in question, can be considered as *Bildungsroman* characters due to the way their lives change from the very beginning until the end. In *Jane Eyre*, the process is more lineal than in *Penny Dreadful*, but, as *Bildungsroman* works, there is an important fact in both stories that alter their lives. The evolution of Jane Eyre’s life starts from a situation of misery and weakness that ends with an accommodated position and personal power. However, the story of Vanessa is marked by a series of events which make her become a stronger woman but then weaker again.

Jane’s story, providing a pattern for countless others, is a story of enclosure and escape, a distinctively female *Bildungsroman* in which the problems encountered by the protagonist as she struggles from the imprisonment of her childhood toward an almost unthinkable goal of mature freedom are symptomatic of difficulties everywoman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome: oppression (at Gateshead), starvation (at Lowood), madness (at Thornfield), and coldness (at Marsh End). (Gilbert, 1987, p.476)

As it often occurs in the English *Bildungsroman*, both of them are orphaned women, isolated and unloved, a fact that makes them more independent women. In the case of Jane Eyre, she was orphaned as an infant, which is not the case of Vanessa Ives, who loses her mother when she is an adult. The fact that they are isolated women has given them the opportunity of growing personally learning from life itself, as it occurs in *Bildungsroman* novels.

Both Jane Eyre and Vanessa Ives can be considered as heroines. This idea of heroism is a very important pattern that *Bildungsroman* characters follow. In *Jane Eyre* and *Penny Dreadful*, the protagonists have to make personal sacrifices, both related with love issues. For instance, Jane Eyre sacrifices herself removing her pride and saving her lover, Rochester, who is at the end powerless and isolated as she was at the beginning of the story. The sacrifice of Vanessa Ives goes even further because not only does she sacrifice herself for his lover, Ethan, but also she sacrifices her own life to save the whole world from darkness, as a martyr.
Dealing with the traditional values of marriage typical from the society of that moment, we can say that the idea or goal of our characters in relation with this topic differs in some ways. As we have discussed previously, in a male-dominated world, women were expected to marry a wealthy and accommodated man. The case of Jane Eyre coincides exclusively with the idea of marriage for love, not for economic interest. This fact can be appreciated at the end of the story, when she becomes powerful and rich unlike him and, despite the situation, she is the one who decides to marry him. In Vanessa’s story, the idea of marriage is not contemplated, although there is a moment in which she has a dream where both Ethan and Vanessa appear with their future children. With this ideal vision she has about them, we can infer that our protagonist really wants to marry Ethan and to form a family with him, something which does not take place due to her sacrifice.

We have made allusion previously to the etymology of the concept of the *Bildungsroman*, which is based on a religious concept. One of the theories that the *Bildungsroman* establishes about the evolution of its characters is the change focused on God, in other words, the change following the image of God with the purpose of achieving the ideal image, perfection. As we stated before, *Penny Dreadful* is highly influenced by religion. Our protagonist, Vanessa Ives, is a catholic woman so that is why religion has strong importance in her life. Religious elements, all of them appear constantly as the only way to give up darkness. Vanessa herself states in one occasion “I have a complicated history with the Almighty” (Logan, 2014, 01x06), in the sense that she, a faithful woman, has been touched by the devil, who wants to separate her from God. For this reason, she asks for help to a priest, trying to look for answers about her suffering.

**Priest:** Before we continue our conversation, my dear, there is one thing you must understand. Even if it can be verified, this is a long, grueling and dangerous thing you ask. It could take months, or years, or always, or never. But before we say another word, you must look into your heart and you must answer me a question. Just one. If you have been touched by the demon, it’s like being touched by the back hand of God. Makes you sacred in a way, doesn’t it? Makes you unique, with a kind of glory. The glory of suffering, even. Now, here’s my question. Do you really want to be normal? (Logan, 2014, 01x08)

Furthermore, we have seen her helping people with cholera, something which is strongly connected with religion, because it made her feel a better woman. And this is
nothing compared with the way *Penny Dreadful* ends, which makes us compare Vanessa’s life with the life of a martyr, the one who leaves everything for the humanity as Jesus Christ himself did.

In *Jane Eyre*, religion appears but with less intensity than in the previous one. The protagonist has a stronger relation with religious matters when she is sent to the charity institution. Thanks to Helen Burns, one of the orphan girls she meets, Jane Eyre learns tolerance, peace and faith. We know that Jane Eyre has a good heart from the very beginning, but, the strong friendship established between them makes her a more affective woman. She becomes a woman characterized by the determination of helping and teach humble people, those who have not the same possibilities.

### 2.4.3. *Penny Dreadful* and *Jane Eyre*: a comparison.

As previously mentioned, the comparison between these two works probably has not been carried out before, although it is a fact that both of them share a strong connection in relation to their protagonists.

In order to provide a more exhaustive comparison, we will divide the concepts in discussion into different topics, being the first one the main pillar to deal with.

- **Red room and white room**

  The element that calls so much our attention due to its strong similarity between both works is the one of the red room, in the case of *Jane Eyre*, and the white room, in *Penny Dreadful*. In one of the arguments with her cousin, Jane is sent as punishment to one of the rooms in the house, known as the red room. This room is depicted as the biggest and best room of the mansion. It was precisely there where her uncle died, so it was rarely used.

  The red room was a spare chamber, very seldom slept in: I might say never, indeed, unless when a chance influx of visitors at Gateshead Hall rendered it necessary to turn to account all the accommodation it contained: yet it was one of the largest and stateliest chambers in the mansion (...) This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire, it was silent, because remote from the nursery and kitchens; solemn, because it was known to be so seldom entered (...) Mr Reed had been dead nine years: it was in this chamber he breathed his last; here he lay in state; hence his coffin was borne by the undertaker’s men; and, since that day, a sense of dreary consecration had guarded it from frequent intrusion. (Brontë, 2006, p. 16 – 17)
This part of the reading introduces a gothic atmosphere that mixes the visionary and the horrific. This red room stimulates Jane’s intellectual abilities and imagination and she feels superstitious about her surroundings. In this room, Jane is haunted by an apparition, she feels a presence and she thinks it might be her uncle.

I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down; I uttered a wild, involuntary cry; I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort. Steps came running along the outer passage; the key turned, Bessie and Abbot entered. (Brontë, 2006, p. 21)

Taking into account the depiction of the room, the peculiarity of its colour and the events that took place there, we can infer its symbolism and meaning. When we think about colour red, concepts such as fire, passion, vitality… come to our mind.

The terrors of the red room mirror the terrors of her inner nature: her passion, anger, wilfulness, and sensuality (expressed in later years with Rochester). Jane knows all of these are inside her but does not yet know how to accept, control, or express them in her inhibited and oppressive world. ³

Both the red room and the white room are used as confinement and torture rooms due to the excess of emotion and violent activity of our characters. It is in these rooms where they experiment suffering and the inner abilities, such as visions and dreams, which they share.

In Penny Dreadful, the events of the white room take place in the third season, specifically in the fourth episode. During this season, we can see Vanessa in her worst moment, weak and alienated, since everybody has gone. She finds comfort in the medical therapies by Dr. Florence Seward, who initially was sceptical of Vanessa’s tales about vampires, witches and demons. It has to be pointed out that Dr. Florence Seward descends from the Clayton family, the same one of the old witch who helped Vanessa in the past as a kind of mentor. It might be for this reason that she soon is aware of the darkness in Vanessa’s personality.

In order to recall hidden memories from Vanessa’s dark and hidden past, she places Vanessa into a hypnotic state, which leads her to the white room where she was confined for a very long time.

In both picture 1 and 2, we can appreciate Vanessa’s physical and psychological state. Although we can see Dr. Seward, she is not there in reality, it is a result of the hypnotic status. If we have a look at the white room we can appreciate that it is completely empty, except for a bed, the stuffing white walls and the straightjacket that
Vanessa uses. This room was placed in the asylum where Vanessa was sent to be released from the demon’s possession and wild behaviour. There she experienced diverse kinds of torture; she was bathed in icy water and drenched with a high-powered hose, even trepanation was put into practice as last hope.

A very interesting fact that takes place in this white room is that Vanessa exclusively establishes contact with just one person, and this person is the same one that incarnates the character of “the creature”. Before dying and being converted by Victor Frankenstein into “the creature”, he worked in this asylum as orderly and tries to help Vanessa to get better.

During the period of time Vanessa is confined in this room, she is in a kind of comma between two worlds. The devil uses the body of this man as a channel to establish contact with Vanessa. During this scene, we can see Vanessa acting as a medium. The devil appears in the white room in the shape of two men: one of them is the devil of the earth, who wants her body, and the other one or rather his brother, is the devil of heaven, who wants her soul. Vanessa lets herself be seduced strategically until the devil of the earth reveals his name: Dracula, brother of Lucifer. Vanessa wakes up from the hypnotic status and she already remembers the name of the master, something that she will use to fight against him.
- **Orphanhood**

  *Jane Eyre* starts telling us the story of an unhappy orphaned girl who lives with her aunt, Mrs Reed, and cousins, John, Eliza and Georgiana. Before the death of Mr Reed, her mother’s bother, he himself ordered Mrs Reed to take care of Jane and to treat her as her own child because they were the only family she had. But, in fact, this did not happen despite the fact that they were family. She, powerless and isolated, narrates us how they despise her just because they think she, an orphaned girl, does not deserve to live the same life or to have the same opportunities that they have. Due to her orphanhood, they consider that she does not belong to the same status in social class as they do.

  John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in a day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near. There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror he inspired, because I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions; the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence; more frequently, however, behind her back. (Brontë, 2006, p.12)

  The situation is more or less similar to the beginning of *Penny Dreadful*. In the very first episode, we can see that Vanessa is helping Malcom with his search. The image that they transmit us is a father-daughter relation although they are not family, but, in fact, Vanessa is only used as a channel to find Sir Malcom’s daughter. As Jane Eyre, she has no family and is orphaned, unloved and isolated too. There is a slight difference between Jane and Vanessa that can be noticed when we establish contact with their characters from the very first place. Jane is depicted as weak and vulnerable, although sometimes we can also see her behave with courage and confront the Reeds, for instance, when she realizes she will be sent to Lowood School, a charity institution for orphan girls. Vanessa, as we will see later, shows us her strong facet from the very beginning, the one of a woman who fears nothing.

  I am glad you are no relation of mine. I will never call you aunt again as long as I live. I will never come to see you when I am grown up; and if anyone asks me how I liked you, and how you treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty. (Brontë, 2006, p.44)
Both Jane and Vanessa are sent alone far from their homelands, one to an orphan institution and the other to an asylum. It is there where they live their worst moments because again, they have to face painful experiences.

These words we are going to read were pronounced by Dr. Seward to Vanessa, the very first time they meet. It is so impressive the detailed and accurate description that Dr. Seward makes about Vanessa not knowing her. By reading these lines, we can imagine how isolated and unhappy she is, and also how much suffering she has endured.

You're unhappy. You're isolated. You think you are the cause of this unhappiness and are unworthy of affection. So, you have few friends. Recently, you lost something that you feel very important; your lover, your faith, your family, or all three. You blame yourself for this, so it makes you neurotic. So you don't sleep and don't eat, not anything healthy anyway. You used to care about your appearance, but you've lost interest in that, so you avoid mirrors. Sunlight bothers you, so you avoid that too, for which you feel guilty. Because you think it's unhealthy and even immoral not to like the sun. You are not a woman of convention or else you wouldn't be here. But you like to pretend that you are so people don't notice you. But you like that as well, and can sometimes dress to draw the eye. But then you think that the men who look at you are fools or worse to be taken in by such an obvious outward show. So, instead, you are drawn to dark, complicated, impossible men, assuring your own unhappiness and isolation. Because, after all, you're happiest alone. But not even then because you can't stop thinking about what you have lost. Again, for which you blame yourself. So the cycle goes on. The snake eating its tail. (Logan, 2014, 03x01)

Living at Lowood, Jane has to bear the constant unkindness and lack of compassion that the manager of the institution, Mr Brocklehurst, has with her.

‘My dear children,’ pursued the black marble clergyman with pathos, ‘this is a sad, a melancholy occasion; for it becomes my duty to warn you that this girl, who might be one of God’s own lambs, is a little castaway – not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example – if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse. Teachers, you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weight well her words, scrutinise her actions, punish her body to save her soul – if, indeed, such salvation be possible, for (my tongue falters while I tell it) this girl, this child, the native of a Christian land, worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut – this girl is – a liar!’ (Brontë, 2006, p.78 – 79)
- **Religion**

Religion is another issue that must be taken into account when we compare *Jane Eyre* and *Penny Dreadful*. As we have mentioned before, Vanessa is a catholic woman, so, religion takes a very important role in the television series.

![Vanessa trying not to lose faith in God](image)

Every time darkness tempts Vanessa, she tries to establish contact with God. Religion is her last hope against the devil. In Jane Eyre, however, we can say or consider that Jane has a sceptic view on religion.

‘But where are you going to, Helen? Can you see? Do you know?’

‘I believe; I have faith: I am going to God.’

‘Where is God? What is God?’

‘My Maker and yours, who will never destroy what He created. I rely implicitly on His power, and confide wholly in His goodness: I count the hours till that eventful one arrives which shall restore me to Him, reveal Him to me.’

‘You are sure, then, Helen, that there is such a place as heaven; and that our souls can get to it when we die?’

‘I am sure there is a future state; I believe God is good; I can resign my immortal part to Him without any misgiving. God is my father; God is my friend; I love Him; I believe He loves me.’

‘And shall I see you again, Helen, when I die?’

‘You will come to the same region of happiness: be received by the same mighty universal Parent, no doubt, dear Jane.’ (Brontë, 2006, p.97)
This quote is a dialogue between Jane and Helen, her friend at Lowood, just a moment before she dies in her arms. Thanks to Helen, Jane learns tolerance and peace, and, during the period of time she lives with her in the institution, it can be said that her stay was more pleasant. “Like Simone Weil, like St. Teresa, like Héloïse, Helen Burns substitutes a masculine God for the love of earthly men (or women) – a pattern followed by certain gifted imaginative women in the Christian era.” (Rich, 1987, p. 467)

When we read the dialogue between these two girls, we can perceive the anxiety Jane feels because she does not know what will happen to her friend after her death. In addition, she also has curiosity about what makes her friend being calm and ready, despite knowing she is about to die.

- Love

The lives of Vanessa Ives and Jane Eyre are also affected, in some way, by the same key element: love. In the stories of both characters, love takes an important role in their personal growth or evolution.

As we can see in Penny Dreadful, one of the reasons why both families, the Murrays and the Ives, separate each other, is due to the love affair that Vanessa has with Mina’s fiancée. That relation marks the end of the strong friendship between Mina and Vanessa, which implies the first great change in Vanessa’s life: isolation and illness.

As in Jane Eyre, love affairs also appear frequently in Penny Dreadful. For instance, we know that Dorian Gray feels something for Vanessa. They have a very strange relationship: Dorian, a man who has never been rejected before, is rejected by Vanessa, who considers that a love affair between them would be dangerous for her. “Mr Gray. I am not the woman you think I am. And with you, I am not the woman I want to be”. (Logan, 2014, 01x08)

Another man interested in Vanessa is the Master himself. His intentions are to rule darkness and conquer God, being Vanessa his wife and the mother of evil. To achieve his goal, he incarnates the body of Dr. Alexander, who little by little is closer to Vanessa. He pretends to be really in love with her, even they have a sexual encounter and Vanessa is not aware that this man is Dracula in reality.

Dracula: Give me your flesh. Give me your blood. Be my bride, and then all light will end and the world will be in darkness. The very air will be pestilence to mankind. And then our
brethren, the night creatures, will emerge, and feed. Such is our power. Such is our kingdom. Such is my kiss.

Vanessa: Yes.

Dracula: One kiss, and you're free of all this. In this mortal world, you'll always be shunned for your uniqueness, but not with me. They will lock you away in rooms like this. They'll brand you a freak and a sorceress, but I won't. I love you for who you are, Vanessa.

Vanessa: And what name do I whisper to you, beloved?

Dracula: I am the demon. I am the dragon. My name is Dracula! (Logan, 2014, 03x04)

In these lines we can see the master tempting Vanessa to be his bride, telling her he has fallen in love, but, in fact, Vanessa is just pretending that she is being tempted, she wants him to reveal his real name.

Although we have seen that Vanessa has been object of desire of some men, only one became her lover: Ethan Chandler, an American sharpshooter running away from his troubling past. They meet at the very beginning of the story. When Vanessa sees his skills with guns in one of his circus performances, she offers him a job as an arm escort for the search of Mina. Both share the same characteristics: hidden pasts and secrets, supernatural gifts, passion… The contact that they establish with the search of Mina, makes them be made one for another, and, consequently, fall in love. When they start to feel attraction, she stops him because they are dangerous since they already know their secrets. At the very end of the second season, we can see that this thought of Vanessa changes. Sir Malcom goes to Africa and she is again isolated, so, she wants Ethan to stay with her. But, what could have been a happy ending for this season, in fact, it becomes so painful for Vanessa. Ethan confesses his crimes and receives an extradition order, so, he comes back to America. Vanessa is alone, everybody has gone.

In the third and last season, we can see both of them living separately: Ethan in New Mexico and Vanessa in London, alone. In addition, during this time, Ethan has an affair with Hecate, a witch, who wants Ethan to rule darkness with her.

As Ethan, Vanessa has a relation con Dr Alexander at the same time, and his purpose is the same as Hecate: he wants Vanessa to rule darkness with him, as we have mentioned before. But Ethan and Vanessa meet again at the end of the last season. Sir Malcom and Ethan return to London to help Vanessa because she is closer and closer to Dracula, but, when they arrive, darkness had already emerged in London. Ethan is the only one who has the power to save Vanessa, although the story does not have a happy
ending for these lovers. She sacrifices her own life to safe humanity from darkness, light comes and she dies as a heroine.

Jane’s love story is similar to Vanessa’s regarding the difficulties they have to face and also the passionate feeling they have one for another. Jane falls in love with Rochester, the owner of Thornfield, the place where she works as governess. As it occurs in *Penny Dreadful*, this man has also a troubled and hidden past.

As in *Penny Dreadful*, in *Jane Eyre* there are also certain impediments or obstacles that make difficult the love story between Jane and Rochester. On the one hand, the different social class they belong to, and on the other hand, more than twenty years of age difference.

It has to be pointed out that as in the case of *Penny Dreadful*, the feeling of attraction does not appear suddenly. Jane and Rochester meet by chance, when he has an accident with the horse and she, not knowing who he was, helps him. It is when she returns to the mansion when she realizes that the man she helped was, in fact, her master and the protector of Adele, her pupil. The noticeable improvement of Adele makes Rochester be more and more interested in Jane.

And was Mr Rochester now ugly in my eyes? No, reader: gratitude and many associations, all pleasurable and genial, made his face the object I best liked to see; his presence in a room was more cheering than the brightest fire. Yet I had not forgotten his faults; indeed, I could not, for he brought them frequently before me. He was proud, sardonic, harsh to inferiority of every description: in my secret soul I knew that his great kindness to me was balanced by unjust severity to many others. He was moody, too: unaccountably so; I more than once, when sent for to read to him, found him sitting in his library alone, with his head bent on his folded arms; and, when he looked up, a morose, almost a malignant, scowl blackened his features. But I believed that his moodiness, his harshness, and his former faults of morality (I say former, for now he seemed corrected of them) had their source in some cruel cross of fate. I believed he was naturally a man of better tendencies, higher principles, and purer tastes than such as circumstances had developed, education instilled, or destiny encouraged. I thought there were excellent materials in him; though for the present they hung together somewhat spoiled and tangled. I cannot deny that I grieved for his grief, whatever that was, and would have given much to assuage it. (Brontë, 2006, p. 172)

As we can see, beauty had not so much importance for her and neither had age. Jane falls deeply in love with Rochester, and, what makes her be aware of her feelings is the presence of Blanche Ingram at the mansion. Mrs Ingram was the woman that
Rochester pretended to love. This fortune-hunter, as it was her purpose with Rochester, was a very beautiful, materialistic and haughty society woman who constantly treated Jane dismissively, as if she was inferior. Jane’s thought of a possible marriage between them intensified her feeling for him, even she felt a little jealousy. But, in fact, we can consider that Rochester used Mrs Ingram as a mere object to catch Jane’s attention, and actually, it worked.

I had not intended to love him; the reader knows I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, green and strong! He made me love him without looking at me. (Brontë, 2006, p. 203)

After all of these impediments, Jane is about to become Mrs Rochester, although at the end, Mr Rochester’s great secret is revealed. As we know, some strange incidents had taken place at Thornfield and, the night before Jane and Rochester’s wedding, another one happens: Jane’s wedding veil, symbol of matrimony, is ruined. The originator of these acts is Bertha Mason, Rochester’s mad wife who was locked in a chamber, where nobody knew about her existence. On the wedding day, this secret comes to light and Jane decides to leave her lover instead of becoming her mistress. “Rochester, Jane learns, after the aborted wedding ceremony, had married Bertha Mason for status, for sex, for money, for everything but love and equality.” (Gilbert, 1987, p. 479)

- **Social class**

As we have mentioned previously, the difference between their social statuses also affected their love. Maybe for Rochester it was not an impediment, but, for the rest of his employees it was something unthinkable and, this fact, made Jane think that actually they were not destined to be together.

You have nothing to do with the master of Thornfield, further than to receive the salary he gives you for teaching his protégé, and to be grateful for such respectful and kind treatment as, if you do your duty, you have a right to expect at his hands. Be sure that is the only tie he seriously acknowledges between you and him; so don’t make him the object of your fine feelings, your raptures, agonies, and so forth. He is not of your order: keep to your caste and be too self-respecting to lavish the love of the whole heart, soul and strength, where such a gift is not wanted and would be despised. (Brontë, 2006, p. 189)
Mr Rochester never questioned Jane’s position, on the contrary, when they were together they connected perfectly. But, since Rochester is an affluent man, he cannot avoid behaving just as it is common in a man of his status. Although he does not care about Jane’s humble social class, as we have mentioned previously, he tries to transform Jane, in a certain way, into a woman of his range.

It is not Rochester’s sensuality that brings her up short, but his tendency to make her his object, his creature, to want to dress her up, lavish jewels on her, remake her in another image. She strenuously resists being romanticized as a beauty or a houri; she will, she tells him, be no part of his harem. (Rich, 1987, p. 471)

In addition to the relation between Jane and Rochester, we can see that it does not matter their age difference: Rochester considered Jane a mature woman taking into account she only was eighteen years old, and, she had the capacity to make him feel comfortable with her presence and their conversations.

‘He is not to them what he is to me,’ I thought: ‘He is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine – I am sure he is – I feel akin to him – I understand the language of his countenance and movements: though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him (…) I must, then, repeat continually that we are forever sundered – and yet, while I breathe and think, I must love him.’ (Brontë, 2006, p. 203 – 204)

For Jane, a girl who has never been loved before, the love story with Rochester makes her be more self-confident and also to value herself. In addition, she has to make a decision about Rochester’s marriage proposal, who finally declares his love to her. Mrs Fairfax, the housekeeper at Thornfield who does not approve their marriage because of the differences in their ages and social classes, warns and advises Jane.

‘I hope all will be right in the end,’ she said: ‘but, believe me, you cannot be too careful. Try and keep Mr Rochester at a distance: distrust yourself as well as him. Gentlemen in his station are not accustomed to marry their governesses.’ (Brontë, 2006, p. 306)

*Penny Dreadful*, as opposed to *Jane Eyre*, does not make relation to age difference between the lovers: both seem to be the same age, but, regarding the topic of
social classes, we could say that unlike Vanessa, who is a refined and a well-mannered woman typical from the Victorian London period, Ethan is an ex-cavalry soldier coming from the savage new world, America.

**Vanessa Ives:** I have a need for a gentleman who's comfortable with firearms and not hesitant to engage in dangerous endeavours. Or was all that a tall tale as well?

**Ethan Chandler:** What do you think?

**Vanessa:** Expensive watch, but threadbare jacket. Sentimental about the money you used to have. Your eye is steady, but your left hand tremors. That's the drink, so you keep it below the table, hoping I won't notice. You have a contusion healing on your other hand, the result of a recent brawl with a jealous husband, no doubt. Your boots are good quality leather, but have been resoled more than once. I see a man who's been accustomed to wealth, but has given himself to excess and the unbridled pleasures of youth. A man much more complicated than he likes to appear. (Logan, 2014, 01x01)

This dialogue belongs to the very first time Ethan and Vanessa meet. As we know, Vanessa was looking for a man who could help them with the search of Mina. She found him in a circus, where he entertained small crowds using his skills with arms. So, if we compare Ethan and Vanessa taking into account the previous reference, we could say that their circumstances are not the same.

Therefore, in the case of *Jane Eyre*, it is the female character the one belonging to an inferior status, whereas in *Penny Dreadful*, it is the man who occupies this place.

- **Mystery**

We have mentioned before that both love stories are characterized by the mysterious and dark past of its characters. In *Penny Dreadful* series, both Vanessa and Ethan are conscious that they are a very dangerous couple since they know about their past lives. Each one has revealed his or her secrets to the other, as opposed to *Jane Eyre*. It is true that Jane lives certain mysterious situations which make her think that something strange and unnatural is happening at Thornfield. But, no way could she imagine that Rochester, her lover, hid a secret like that.

I briefly related to him what had transpired: the strange laugh I had heard in the gallery: the step ascending to the third story; the smoke – the smell of fire which had conducted me to his room; in what state I had found matters there, and how I had deluged him with all the water I could lay hands on. (Brontë, 2006, p. 175)
This part of the reading adds suspense to the plot mixing gothic elements such as fire, a strange laughter, steps..., which, compared with *Penny Dreadful*, they are always part of the action. Besides, we have to include the way Rochester’s brooding and dark behaviour. What Jane could not imagine is that all that time she has been living under the same roof of Rochester’s mad wife, and, it is when she is about to marry him that she discovers he is already married, and, that way, she was his mistress.

Which is better? – To have surrendered to temptation; listened to passion; made no painful effort – no struggle; – but to have sunk down in the silken snare; fallen asleep on the flowers covering it; wakened in a southern clime, amongst the luxuries of a pleasure villa: to have been now living in France, Mr Rochester’s mistress; delirious with his love half my time – for he would – oh, yes, he would have loved me well for a while. He did love me – no one will ever love me so again. (Brontë, 2006, p. 414)

 Loneliness and alienation

This fact marks a milestone in Jane’s life. She becomes a freer and stronger woman, able to decide about her own future. She rejects the idea of being his mistress, she does not deserve that position, so she renounces what she loves the most. Again, both Jane and Vanessa share the same suffering: the loss of a love.

Dear Vanessa... your many kindnesses I will always carry with me. Such generosity... has not been a part of my life, and I thank you for your affection and understanding. In my most frightened and lonely moments, you were there. And such light you brought to me. But I am made for the dark. As we both know. I am fit for only one place and should have been there long ago. Deep in the cold clay on a forgotten hill. Your road may be difficult. But mine is doomed. So we walk alone. Written with love... Ethan. (Logan, 2014, 02x10)

This passage marks the end of season 2. As we have mentioned, Ethan leaves Vanessa to return to his homeland. Apart from Ethan, Sir Malcom also abandons her to set out on a trip. So, she finds herself alienated from the world in that mansion, where we have seen her in her worst moments.

Once more, they feel loneliness, which, at the same time, helps them to improve as humans and, of course, as women.
In deciding to leave Rochester, Jane takes the first crucial step toward independence. She has discovered that there is, after all, something more important to her than pleasing those whom she loves, or giving satisfaction to those who love her. Despite the pain of her conflict she has acted decisively to preserve her own integrity. At the moment of her decision, Jane returns to the critical scene of her childhood. She is alone in her room as she was alone then – powerless before external circumstances and internal pressures. (Moglen, 1987, p.486)

Every problem they face makes them more independent and be ready for worse situations, what comes to be to learn from their own experience, the basis of the *Bildungsroman*.

Jane Eyre, who had been an ardent, expectant woman – almost a bride – was a cold, solitary girl again: her life was pale; her prospects were desolate. A Christmas frost had come at midsummer; a white December storm had whirléd over June; ice glazed the ripe apples, drifts crushed the blowing roses; on hayfield and cornfield lay a frozen shroud: lanes which last night blushed full of flowers, to-day were pathless with untrodden snow; and the woods, which twelve hours since waved leafy and fragrant as groves between the tropics, now spread, waste, wild, and white as pine-forests in wintry Norway. My hopes were all dead – struck with a subtle doom, such as, in one night, fell on all the first-born in the land of Egypt. I looked on my cherished wishes, yesterday so blooming and glowing; they lay stark, chill, livid corpses that could never revive. (Brontë, 2006, p. 341)

- **Marriage**

One last aspect that must be compared between these two works is the idea of marriage. We have seen that apart from the desire of our protagonists of being assertive, confident and to have an identity, marriage is also part of their goal because they really love these men. In *Penny Dreadful*, Vanessa has a dream in which we can see a perfect couple sharing an ideal life with their children. Lucifer, to tempt Vanessa to cede him her soul, shows her how would be living a normal life married to the man she loves, free of pain. In this scene, we can see them together with their children, Charles and Claire. Lucifer plays with Vanessa’s feelings, because the perfect vision he has showed her is what she truly wants, to be loved for who she is. But, anyway, she is conscious that she is not destined to live a normal life. “You offer me a normal life... Why do you think I want that anymore? I know what I am. Do you?” (Logan, 2014, 02x10)
In *Jane Eyre*, our protagonist wants the same: to take Rochester as husband and to form a family.

I saw he was going to marry her, for family, perhaps political reasons; because her rank and connections suited him; I felt he had not given her his love, and that her qualifications were ill-adapted to win from him that treasure. This was the point – this was where the nerve was touched and teased – this was where the fever was sustained and fed: she *could not charm him*. (Brontë, 2006, p. 216)

Jane really loves Rochester, and for this reason we can see here how jealous she is when she thinks in a possible marriage between him and Miss Ingram. Of course, the marriage between them would be a marriage of convenience, what makes Jane become even more jealous and pronounce the last words we can read in the previous reference.

For a woman of that period, getting married was essential to ensure a future: this is the case of Miss Ingram. This young and beautiful woman only wants to marry Rochester because of his fortune: love is indifferent to her. But we have stated before that our characters do not follow this traditional idea.

Marriage is the completion of the life of Jane Eyre, as it is for Miss Temple and Diana and Mary Rivers; but for Jane at least it is marriage radically understood for its period, in no sense merely a solution or a goal. It is not patriarchal marriage in the sense of a marriage that stunts and diminishes the woman, but a continuation of this woman’s creation of herself. (Rich, 1987, p. 475)

Jane rejects two marriage proposals: the first one because being a mistress was against her honour, and the second one because she did not want to marry a man she did not love only for convenience, as it would have been the case if she would have accepted John’s proposal.

St. John has been observing her for his own purposes, and finding her “docile, diligent, disinterested, faithful, constant, and courageous; very gentle, and very heroic” he invites her to accompany his as his fellow-missionary to India, where he intends to live and die in the service of his God. He needs a helpmate to work among Indian women; he offers her marriage without love, a marriage of duty and service to a cause. The cause is of course defined by him; it is the cause of patriarchal religion: self-denying, stern, prideful, and ascetic. In a sense he offers her the destiny of Milton’s Eve: “He for God only, she for God in him.” What St. John offers Jane is perhaps the deepest lure for a spiritual woman, that of adopting a
man’s cause or career and making it her own. For more than one woman, still today, the felt energy of her own existence is still diffuse, the possibilities of her life vague; the man who pressures to define it for her may be her most confusing temptation. He will give shape to her search for meaning, her desire for service, her feminine urge toward self-abnegation: in short – as Jane becomes soon aware – he will use her. (Rich, 1987, p. 473)

But Jane’s life turns around at the end of the story: unexpectedly, she inherits a fortune from her uncle at the same time Rochester loses everything. Now she is the powerful and accommodated one, whereas he becomes powerless and unhappy. But, unlike in Penny Dreadful, which has a tragic ending, happiness finally comes: she looks for her lover and marry him, whereas Vanessa sacrifices her own life to save the world and dies in the arms of Ethan.
3. **VANESSA IVES’ GROWTH: AN ANALYSIS**

To finish our research, we are going to analyse the evolution of Vanessa Ives’ character from season one to season three, laying emphasis on the events which lead her to assertiveness and also relating these changes to the concept in question: the *Bildungsroman*. Of course, our analysis will be based on an analogy between Vanessa Ives and Jane Eyre.

The first impression we have when we see Vanessa in the very first episode of the television series is the one of a wealthy and refined English woman. The way she behaves makes us think that she has a very strong and powerful personality, in contrast to Jane Eyre, as we have mentioned previously. We have also observed her mysterious and dark attitude, as well as her willingness and courage to fight together with Ethan Chandler and Sir Malcom in his mission to rescue Mina, his daughter and also Vanessa’s friend. Vanessa really knows the kind of creatures they are facing. In this situation, she shows us a steadfast and even wild personality.

*Vanessa:* Do you believe there is a demimonde, Mr Chandler? A half world between what we know and what we fear? A place in the shadows, rarely seen, but deeply felt. Do you believe that?

*Ethan:* Yes.

*Vanessa:* That’s where we were last night, where some unfortunate souls are cursed to live always. If you believe in curses, that is. (Logan, 2014, 01x01)

In the very first episodes, we can see the close relation Vanessa and Sir Malcom have, despite their past acts. It is true that, at the beginning, he uses Vanessa’s talents as a medium as a channel to find his daughter. Although they are disgusted with each other about these past events which were the cause of their friendship breakup, they are able to recognise not only their faults, but also their virtues. For this reason, we can see that their relation becomes closer and, since they are completely alone because they have no family, we can see sometimes that their connection is similar to the one of a father with his daughter, because in fact she is the daughter he deserves.

This father-daughter relationship between Vanessa and Sir Malcom can be appreciated the moment they find Mina, who now is dominated by darkness. So, Sir Malcom decides to put an end to her life because she has become one of this night creatures. Now, Vanessa occupies her place.
Mina: I am your daughter!
Sir Malcolm: I already have a daughter. (Logan, 2014, 01x08)

We already know that Vanessa is a catholic woman and extremely devoted to Christ, unlike Jane Eyre, who, as we have proved before, we cannot consider her as a believer. But Vanessa’s relation with God and her faith suffer the constant temptations by the lord of darkness. “I tried to pray that night and God didn’t answer me, but another did.” (Logan, 2014, 01x05)

As we have said previously, Vanessa tries by all means not to abandon her faith in God. For this reason, she asks for help because she fears this evil creature who haunts her.

During the first episode of the first season, the viewer finds Vanessa kneeling before her crucifix, desperately praying to Christ, presumably for forgiveness for betraying Mina and for protection from the demon that now torments her. Again, in episode four of the opening season, viewers find Vanessa Ives sitting on a park bench and looking longingly at the Catholic Church on the other side of the park. In the final episode of the first season, desperate for deliverance, Vanessa enters the church and asks the priest to exorcise her of the evil spirit, or spirits, that torment her. (Logsdon, 2018, p.21)

We also have seen how darkness altered Vanessa’s polite and refined behaviour, violating the standards of Victorian society.

Vanessa’s behaviour following the séance confirms the association of her so-called “demonization” with a sexually-active nature that transgresses standards once held by a more stable culture and society, both now slowly disintegrating. Angered by Sir Malcolm’s failure as father and husband, Vanessa storms into the backstreets of London where she has a brief sexual liaison with an unidentified male (Season 1, episode 2). In a later scene, she experiences a brief sexual encounter with Dorian Gray. The consequence of this second sexual liaison is a crippling bout of demonic possession from which Ethan Chandler’s recitation of the rites of exorcism temporarily frees her. (Logsdon, 2018, p.18)

Therefore, to conclude with the first season, we can say that our character, although she is a fearless and strong woman, there are some occasions in which she feels afraid when she has to face darkness. In other words, there are moments of strength and moments of weakness, predominating the last ones.
To this, we also have to add her personal situation, the same as Jane Eyre’s: she has lost her family, she is alone in the whole world. Hence, we must say that as the Bildungsroman states, as an orphaned girl she has to learn from life itself.

In the second season of Penny Dreadful, new creatures appear in Vanessa’s life. These creatures are witches and also servants of Dracula. Madame Khali, the leader, makes Vanessa voodoo to control and torture her using a lock of Vanessa’s hair. She puts the heart of a baby into a doll with Vanessa’s physical appearance.

In fact, these three witches appeared in her life seven years before. In this season, Vanessa remembers Joan Clayton, the old witch who once helped and taught her how to protect herself from nightcomers. Madame Khali and Joan Clayton were sisters, but they became enemies when the first one was seduced by the devil and started to practice dark magic. Apart from teaching her the ways of the day walkers and how to protect herself from dark magic, she also taught Vanessa the Verbis Diablo: the Devil’s tongue. Unlike Vanessa, Jane Eyre did not count on the help of a mentor or tutor, someone who could guide or advise her.

There is a battle between both witches for Vanessa and, finally, Joan is burned. Vanessa starts using Joan’s personal totem to block evil: a scorpion painted with her own blood. After seven years, Vanessa and Ethan come back to Joan Clayton’s house because she is not safe in London. From this moment they start feeling attraction.

**Ethan:** You will not die while I’m here. You will not surrender while I live. If I have one goddamned purpose in my cursed life it’s that.

**Vanessa:** You are one man.

**Ethan:** More than that and you know it. We are not like others. We have claws for a reason. (Logan, 2014, 02x07)

Although she also feels something for him, she stops it because they are dangerous, they already know their hidden secrets.

Vanessa acquires the role of a heroine when she returns to London to safe Sir Malcom from the tortures of Madame Khali, who also makes Sir Malcom voodoo, tormenting him with visions about the mistakes he made with his family. In fact, Madame Khali uses Sir Malcom as a channel to reach Vanessa, whom she tries to tempt to give her soul to the devil with visions of her future life with Ethan, as his wife. As we know, this is exactly the same strategy that the master uses with Vanessa.
Finally, Ethan kills Madame Khali and Vanessa manages to save Sir Malcom. From this time, Vanessa’s life takes a turn: Sir Malcom decides to set out on a trip to Africa and Ethan comes back to American after receiving an extradition order for the confession of his crimes. She is alone again, and this time, the isolation she feels makes her surrender.

Vanessa’s struggles reach a climax in the final episode of season two. In this episode, she places her crucifix of Jesus into the fire, signalling her attempt to rejection Christ as her Lord and Saviour (Season 2, episode 10) and to bring an end to her conflicts with the Demimonde. (Logsdon, 2018, p.20)

As we have seen in this second season, Vanessa changes radically. At first, she was able to resist temptation and also to defeat the nightcomers. But, she is not able to resist alienation anymore, so she decides to give up and shut herself in the mansion.

In the third and last season of *Penny Dreadful*, we can see Vanessa living surrounded by dirtiness and completely isolated from the external world. Her appearance is scruffy and her behaviour is slightly savage. Fortunately, a friend, who after a very long time visits her, recommends Vanessa to visit a mental doctor when he realises her situation.

Vanessa accepts his aid and visits Dr. Seward. Again, nightcomers stalk her, but this time more frequently since they know she is alone and vulnerable. She tries to socialise again and visits the British Museum, where the master is waiting for her in the shape of a handsome man who pretends to be Dr. Alexander, a zoologist. Meeting him
makes Vanessa change: she cleans the house and the light enters again in the rooms. He is trying to gain her trust.

In this season, Vanessa is placed in the white room by a hypnotic process. Dr. Seward wants to know what happened in that room and also the cause of her suffering. When she wakes up from the hypnosis, they already know the master’s name: Dracula.

Vanessa looks for information about him. She also tells Dr. Alexander her story and they get closer. He pretends to believe and protect her. Vanessa’s emotional weakness makes her think that Dr. Alexander is the only support she has, that is the reason why she surrenders to his charms: they have relations.

Darkness is coming and Vanessa is in danger. Ethan and Sir Malcom come back to London to safe Vanessa. They establish connection and warn her Dracula is closer. Now, Vanessa is aware that Dr. Alexander is the master. She goes to confront him decisively, but again, he tries to convince her about his love for her.

**Dracula:** We have been shunned in our time, Vanessa. The world turns away in horror - why? Because we're different. Ugly. Exceptional. We are the lonely night creatures, are we not? The bat, the fox, the spider, the rat...

**Vanessa:** The scorpion.

**Dracula:** The broken things.

**Vanessa:** The unloved.

**Dracula:** There's one monster who loves you for who you really are, and here he stands. I don't want to make you good, I don't want you to be normal. You don't need to be anything but who you truly are. You have tried for so long to be what everyone want you to be, what you thought you ought to be, what your church and your family and your doctors said you must be. Why not be who you are instead?

**Vanessa:** Myself...

**Dracula:** You will never be alone again. I will love you until time has lost all meaning.

**Vanessa:** Yes...

**Dracula:** Do you accept me?

**Vanessa:** I accept... myself...

**Vanessa:** And then all light will end, and the world will live in darkness. The very air will be pestilence to mankind. And our brethren, the night creatures, will emerge and feed. Such is our power. Such is our kingdom. Such is my kiss. (Logan, 2014, 03x07)

After Vanessa’s surrender to darkness, everything is covered by fog and night creatures, like a plague. Even people die due to this infestation. Meanwhile, Ethan and Sir Malcom are closer to Vanessa. Ethan is the only one who has the power to safe her.
Vanessa: What do you fear?
Dracula: I don't know what you mean.
Vanessa: I can smell it on you.
Dracula: He’s coming - your Mr Chandler. I have reason to fear him. He is foretold as my singular enemy.
Vanessa: Fear not all prophecies. We defy them. We make our own Heaven, and our own Hell. Let him come. He and I shall write the ending in blood, as it was always going to be. (Logan, 2014, 03x09)

A battle takes place between the army of the light and the night creatures, and, meantime, Ethan finds Vanessa. She wants him to end her life so that darkness finishes and also her suffering.

Vanessa: Let it end. With a kiss.
Ethan: With a kiss. With love.
Vanessa: With love. (Logan, 2014, 03x09)

They kiss each other and, after saying the Lord’s Prayer, he shoots her. With Vanessa’s death, darkness goes away and light comes, but, although it has re-emerged, sadness can be felt for Vanessa’s loss. She was the only one who could defeat darkness so she gives her life in return. This is Vanessa Ives’ way to assertiveness.

As we stated previously in the introduction of the Bildungsroman genre, we have seen how Vanessa has grown as a person, the important changes she has suffered and the end of her maturation which has been, as we mentioned, oriented to God himself to
find the inner peace. If we compare Vanessa’s way to assertiveness with Jane Eyre’s, we can consider that, after all, they were looking for the same: to be free and to make their own decisions.

As we saw at the end of the second season, Vanessa attempts to reject Christ as her Lord, but at the end, we have seen that she never lost her faith even after having been touched by the devil. So, “Vanessa’s transgressions, at least from a traditional Christian perspective, are certainly many: on her road back to Christ, she becomes a witch, a clairvoyant, an adulteress, and a murderer” (Logsdon, 2018, p.18)

4. CONCLUSION

Finally, after having studied and analysed the Bildungsroman genre, the relation between the television series Penny Dreadful and the novel Jane Eyre as compared with the concept mentioned before, and Vanessa Ives’ growth on her way to assertiveness, we have come to some conclusions which respond to the objectives of our dissertation.

In both Penny Dreadful and Jane Eyre, we can find two female characters closely related regarding their personal histories and also the period of time in which they live. Vanessa as well as Jane are characterized by an inner strength which helps them to face the different obstacles and hurting situations they experience and have in common, such as isolation, lack of affection, harassment… These factors make them learn from their own experience, hence we can consider both of them as Bildungsroman characters. This self-learning leads them to their maturation, to become freer in a male dominated society and, finally, to be assertive.

But, although we can make sure, after having provided all the reasons previously, that both Vanessa and Jane belong to the Bildungsroman genre, in general, we also can conclude that they do not follow certain standards of the English Bildungsroman, concretely. For instance, as we know, in this subgenre the life of a woman was oriented towards marriage, family, and home, just the opposite of our characters goals, whose last stage is assertiveness.

Dealing with Vanessa Ives’ growth, after having done a thorough study, we can say that our character’s life has been marked by certain breakdowns which have altered her maturation. In the first episodes of the first season we saw a powerful and dominant woman. Then, she remembers her most suffering moments from the past and, after that,
she is again possessed. In the second season, we can see Vanessa weaker, although she manages to overcome the three witches, what makes Vanessa stronger. But, at the end of season two, Vanessa suffers another breakdown due to isolation. In the third season we can see Vanessa in her worst moment, which leads her to the assertiveness. She wants to find a solution not only for herself but also for the rest of the people. She is finally self-confident and she decides to stop it.

So, when we say that the breakdowns have marked her maturation, we mean that Vanessa’s growth has not been lineal, in the sense that the constant memories about the past have had an effect in her personal evolution.

All in all, having reached these conclusions, it can be assured that both works and main characters share characteristics of the Bildungsroman novel, although we have seen that sometimes they may differ regarding the women question and its position in society. In addition, it can be claimed the strong connection between both Vanessa and Jane: two Victorian women who, despite living in a society of female repression, they stand out for their desire of living as free women.
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources


Secondary sources


**WEB SOURCES**

https://journals.openedition.org/cve/2343
https://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/topic_2/welcome.htm
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Eyre
https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/125836/7/07_chapter%202.pdf
http://refractory.unimelb.edu.au/2017/06/14/schubart/
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Penny_Dreadful_(TV_series)
https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Penny_Dreadful