Victorian Literature in the Looking Glass of Psychology

By

Melinda Gorgan

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Acknowledgements

This book proves that dreams do come true if you dare to make the right decision at the right time. Although generally perceived as the terrifying year of the Covid pandemic, 2020 was one of the best years I have ever had. Deciding to enrol in the doctoral programme of "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, Romania, was the first step of my journey towards accomplishing my dream: holding the book I authored in my hands. This book results from almost three years of thorough research, which I enjoyed every moment. The Professors I met during these years, the advice I received, and their faith in my potential brought me to this point where I am holding *Victorian Literature in the Looking Glass of Psychology* in my hands.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Dr. Habil. Maria-Ana Tupan, my doctoral supervisor. Without her guidance, support, and tireless faith in my ability to evolve, this book would never have appeared. I am also grateful to my family for their support and patience and my dear friends, who witnessed my worries and success.

I dedicate this book to my daughter, hoping that she will also dare to pursue her dreams and believe that, sooner or later, they will come true.

Foreword

In one of Lewis Carroll's books, Alice wishes the glass melted away, getting soft like a silvery mist so that she might get beyond it into the Looking-glass House, where all things "may be quite different." In the case of a smooth mirror, an image in the glass will look similar to the reflected object irrespective of the angle of incidence. If, instead, the ray passes from one medium to another (glass, water), the angle of refraction will impact the look of the object seen through the new medium.

In the nineteenth century, life-like representation was the realist poetics of the majority of European countries. By contrast, the British nineteenth century is usually referred to as the Victorian Age, or the "long century", precisely because of the heterogeneity of its cultural profile, which cannot be subsumed under a single stylistic label or period term. Isobel Armstrong (*Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Politics, and Poetics*, 1993) has solved the dilemma by defining it as a time dominated by phenomenology, that is, by obstinate efforts of interpretation which generate as many "glassworlds" (*Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination*, 2008), or surrogates of reality distorted by the refracted light of the mind.

Melinda Gorgan's V*ictorian Literature in the Looking Glass of Psychology* is based on a doctoral thesis where she is tracking a common epistemological ground of the changing poetics across Queen Victoria's reign, setting out from the constructivist hypothesis that literature used simulation models borrowed from the successive schools of psychology that emerged along the way. The result is an admirably coherent argument, richly documented and persuasively articulated, about epistemic sources of Victorian literature and the way they got threaded into plots, narrative structure, and especially character construction. The changes in poetics are explained in light of shifts from cognitive to psycho-physical, associative, pragmatic versions of psychology, that is, the passage from the confident, Herbartian idea of the computable interaction between mind and environment to the mind and body equations of physiological psychology, or the abysmal psychology at the end of the century, supportive of theories about degeneration, double personality, atavism, biological and racial determinism, telepathy and subconscious drives. Despite apparently radical turns, the progress of psychology

from the 1830s to the end of the century, as recorded in writing and practised in experimental laboratories, is unified by a deterministic view of the self, shaped by external or internal agents outside its control. The romantic autonomous self or the Kantian transcendental subject made no sense in this new post-metaphysical and scientifically-minded world. The British developed an avid interest in science, particularly in the study of the mind, as proved by the over 100,000 magazines and newspapers engaged in the dissemination of the new scientific ideas and the cultural critics mentioned by the author (S. Anger, *The Victorian Mental Sciences,* 2018; G. Cantor, & S. Shuttleworth, S. (Eds.) *Science Serialized. Representations of the Sciences in the Nineteenth- Century Periodicals* 2004); S. Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Identity and Empire.* Cambridge University Press; 1996).

The impact of science on literature was already sensed by R.J. Angell in 1909 ("The Influence of Darwin on Psychology"), two decades before Gaston Bachelard identified *Le nouvel esprit scientifique* (1934) in the revolution stirred by the physics of relativity and quantum physics, while William Whewell's theory of the "consilience of inductions" anticipated by over a century Foucault's elaboration of the notion of episteme as the corner stone of discursive negotiations.

Gorgan documented the subject by appealing to precedents, but, at the same time, she undertook her own exploration of Victorian non-fiction in an attempt to reveal the existence of discursive negotiations (Stephen Greenblatt) to place in relation ideas and knowledge of the time on the one hand and literary works on the other (as Michel Foucault does in *Les mots et les choses*), to employ a discipline's findings to explain developments in literature at the trysting point of the epistemology of literature and cultural anthropology.

Gorgan appropriated versions of critical theory, developing the ability to spot relevant epistemological foci, to distinguish between stray ideas from those which acted like attractors, "colligating phenomena" (William Whewell), and enabling her to trace an epistemological thread whose origin lies back in the mid-nineteenth century down to our time.

Persuasive revisionary readings, such as those of Henry James's novel *The Portrait of a Lady* and three of his stories—"The Jolly Corner," "The Figure in the Carpet," and "The Private Life," reveal Melinda Gorgan's hermeneu-

tic capacities in addition to those of an archaeologist of cultural artefacts. From narrative theory, she swerves to genre theory, a frame in which she casts her gloss on Stevenson's and Wilde's lapses into Gothic.

The British school of psychology became famous, especially in France, but at the same time, strong connections were established with the prominent figures on the Continent:

> Fascination with science was not only an intellectual pursuit. In his Introduction to *Victorian Science in Context*, Bernard Lightman says, "The Victorians were fascinated by the strange new worlds that science opened to them. […] Victorians of every rank, at many sites, in many ways, defined knowledge, ordered nature, and practiced science. Their science was central to their culture" (1997, p. 1).
>
> Cantor and Shuttleworth (2004) back up the theory that a proper understanding of how scientific ideas were interlaced with the cultural life of the Victorians implies examining how scientific language pervaded the literature during the period. Also, Bernard Lightman (1997) notes that current studies in the history of science assert that the relationship between contemporary science and culture lies on a Victorian basis. The Victorians' attention to science and their inspiration from continental sources are observable not only in their intellectual atmosphere but in their literary expression as well. (p. 83)

The implied conclusion is that the complexity of Victorian literature owed much to this openness to the contemporary movement of ideas, including those of other nations, which testifies to the thinkers' ethical attitudes and values.

Thus, a new title is added to the recent attempts to extend the negotiations between literary and psychological discourses before the advent of modernism and to theories other than psychoanalysis. Instead of a positivist attempt to show reality a faithful copy, the Victorians submitted it to a process of phenomenological inquiry, allowing epistemic ideas to vary the angle of refraction at the boundaries of world and representation.

Maria-Ana Tupan

Argument

The nineteenth century will be known to posterity as the era of one of the greatest revolutions of which history has preserved the remembrance, in the human mind, and in the whole constitution of human society.

(Mill, 1997, p. 2)

Victorian Literature in the Looking Glass of Psychology is an adaptation of the doctoral thesis entitled *Psychology and Literature: Epistemically Dependent Change in Character Construction in the Victorian Age*, meant to be an interdisciplinary study interested in diachronically observing character construction changes throughout the Victorian era. Since "the age which 'discovered' evolution was itself caught up in many processes of change" (Robbins & Wolfreys, 1996, p. 5), closely related to the epistemological turns, the shift in the construction of literary characters is pursued as they are altered over the years from the beginning to the end of the Victorian age.

Since we believe that the development of psychology from the Herbartian ideas of the early Victorian years to the psycho-physical parallelism of the end of the century was in close relation to the construal of the literary characters, we propose an in-depth analysis of the changes that characters underwent in the fifty years passing from *Jane Eyre* to *Dracula*. The research, aligned with the contemporary directions of literary studies[1], is a legitimating narrative, an attempt to delineate the narratorial discourse's undeniable change from the beginning to the end of the Victorian age. We glance at a few representative works of the timespan covering Queen Victoria's long reign from the perspective of present-day criticism, regarding "the question of text and history not as a relationship of text and context or foreground and background, but instead […] an understanding of the text as a privileged moment within a network of discursive and material praxes" (Wolfreys et al., 2006, p. 137).

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[1] Our research has got fruitful insights from two courses attended at Oxford University in 2022: "Investigating the Victorians" and "Trollope, Eliot, Dickens and Hardy: Reading Victorian Fiction", taught by Liz Woolley and Octavia Cox, respectively.

The influence of psychology on literature is tracked step by step through the Victorian age, starting with Dickens's realism and ending with the inward turn, the focus on the psychological mechanisms of the individual, on the self, the *I* in Henry James, Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, and Bram Stoker. The works we analyse are not viewed as mimetic representations of life from a linear perspective but as epistemic offshoots pressing home a holistic cultural standpoint. The originality of the research consists mainly in its diachronic perspective and interdisciplinarity, with no precedent study of character with changes explained in light of epistemological turns having come to our knowledge.

The shift in the paradigm, the complexity with which up-to-date criticism views literature, has contributed to the revival of the interest in Victorianism and the relationship between the literature of the period and other fields of knowledge. Of even more interest to the issue of the articulation of cultural orders seems to be that of a historicised approach, which can yield a legitimating narrative of phenomena by revealing the causes of the culture/science merger shortly after Immanuel Kant's statement on the incompatibility of science and humanities, which has affected academic curricular agendas since 1781, the year of the philosopher's publication of his authoritative *Critique of Pure Reason*. Following several books on Victorian literature, whose authors were forced to appeal to contemporary non-literary sources to explain style changes, Bernard Lightman has finally come to this unexpected conclusion, which shows the violation of Kant's predicament shortly after his death: "In recent years, historians of science have come to recognise that the Victorian era is a particularly important period, when significant features of the relationship between contemporary science and culture first assumed form" (Lightman, 1997, p. 3).

The first chapter of our study, *Discursive Networks: Psycho-Physics as the "Science Maîtresse" of the Age*, explains the importance of the German psychological developments for British psychology and literary representations, as well. As a starting point of our research, this chapter introduces some general aspects of nineteenth-century continental and British intellectual life, accentuating the unprecedentedness of the age under various aspects. We speculate that the synergetic discourse of science and literature results from the fragility of disciplinary boundaries. Endeavouring to spotlight the core of the discursive networks, first of all, we list the intellectuals

whose influence we consider meaningful, tracing some of the main ideas of their work. In our attempt to identify the authoritative European figures in scientific thought, we proceed to analyse the four intellectuals whose relevance we believe to be decisive for the further development of our research. The continental sources whose work we closely examine are Johann Friedrich Herbart, Gustav Theodor Fechner, Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt, and Max Dessoir. Finally, reducing the array of our research, we arrive at the representatives of English thought, providing a survey of Thomas Carlyle, William Whewell, John Stuart Mill, and William James's works. The investigation of the intellectual and literary atmosphere of the age contributes to our understanding of the reception of various works, be they scientific discoveries or fictional works. We conclude our first chapter confident that discussing the prevailing themes of the age's scientific research is the basis for demonstrating the permeability of boundaries between science and literature and the shift in character construction from the beginning to the end of the Victorian period.

The second chapter, *From Herbartian Psychic Mechanics to Mid-Century Positivism,* spotlights the development from Herbart's associationism to Auguste Comte's positivism, focusing on several literary works that reflect the dominant scientific theories of the age. The first subchapter, *Coming of Age and Development*, focuses on the genre of *Bildungsroman*, a concept whose German origins, definition, and characteristics are subsequently presented. Charlotte Brontë's young female protagonist, Jane Eyre, and Charles Dickens's young male *Bildungshed*, David Copperfield, are the two young characters whose evolution towards adulthood we investigate, demonstrating the prevalence of the age's scientific ideas in their character construction. After inspecting the two young, *undisciplined heart*s, we examine several aspects of the dramatic monologue, exemplified by Robert Browning's experienced, obsessive duke in *My Last Duchess* and a few other works. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's novel in verse, *Aurora Leigh*, also contributes to the idea of duality in Victorian beliefs regarding identity, relations, and faith. The second subchapter, *Identity and Environment*, focuses on the problem of selfhood and the milieu, having Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* and George Eliot's *Silas Marner* as a basis for demonstrating the ongoing shift in character construction. Pip and Silas Marner's journeys end in a positive aura, both finding redemption, although their progress and relation to society prove challenging throughout their evolution.

The third chapter, *Abysmal Psychology and Pragmatism in the Late-Victorian Age* focuses on the last decades of the Victorian Age when the development of psychology and the influence of the evolutionary theory, psycho-physical parallelism, and pragmatism changed the construction of characters, novelists shaping characters, which are entirely different from the socially determined realist novel heroes analysed previously. Characters from the late Victorian age are driven by unconscious desires, libidinal forces, irrational drives, split selves, dual identities, and atavism. First, we provide a short overview of the theoretical developments of the age, establishing the cultural and scientific framework that underlies the fictional works to be analysed.

The first subchapter, *Heredity and Fate*, explores aspects of ancestry and destiny in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. Mirroring the construction of the second chapter's first subchapter, where the emphasis is laid on a young woman, Jane Eyre, and a young man, David Copperfield, this part also investigates the prospects of a young woman and a young man, Tess and Jude—this time the protagonists appearing in novels by the same author. The second subchapter, *The Self and the Double*, explores the idea of the self and different selves in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* and some of his short stories: *The Private Life*, *The Figure in the Carpet,* and *The Jolly Corner*. We go on to examine theories of doubling and atavism in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, whose story provides several indications of the science-literature merger. From here, we proceed with a reading of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which also proves to be a rewarding choice in our inquiry into the subject of the double motif and the interference of scientific theories in fictional works. Last but not least, we advance with our investigation into the issue of vampirism and hypnosis in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to demonstrate that the borderline Gothic explorations take over the literary scene in the fin-de-siècle.

The last part of our book, the *Conclusions*, summarises the changes in fictional works during the Victorian age, looking at some significant viewpoints regarding the alteration. Moreover, it draws a parallel between several novels or characters, pointing to the perceivable differences in their construction.

Interdisciplinarity, Discourse Negotiations, and Psychosynthetic Literary Analysis

In *The Victorian Mental Sciences* (2018), Suzy Anger questions the reasons why the psychological research of the nineteenth century appears to be an essential background for the correct interpretation of Victorian fictional discourse, values, and culture.

> Nineteenth-century English psychology, a mishmash of scientifically dubious theories and practices such as phrenology, physiognomy, moral management, and mesmerism, hardly seemed key to understanding the broad cultural issues of concern as traditionally construed in Victorian studies. (Rothfield, 1990, p. 97).

Sharing Baker's views that "diversity has been present in Victorian studies from its modern incarnation" (1996, p. 232), our book sets off to investigate precisely the aspects of heterogeneousness surrounding the chosen subject. In *Afterword: Diversity in Victorian Studies and the Opportunities of Theory* (1996), William Baker anticipates the flourishing of Victorian studies in their multifaceted varieties and sees electronic opportunities and hypertext as the source of prosperous development, urging scholars to grab these online possibilities to enhance the field of Victorian studies. Considering that in Victorian research, "all is fluidity and change" (Baker, 1996, p. 232), he observes the potential of the investigations that embark upon discovering new aspects of Victorianism.

According to Maria-Ana Tupan (2009), situating a work of art in the cultural context of its epoch is a legitimate practice of the theories of the last centuries, but the genealogy of a work through negotiation between the dominant discourses of the epoch, rather than from the imaginary fire of the mind of the isolated author can be discovered in any phase of literary history. In *Modernismul și psihologia* (Tupan, 2009), we can identify the New Historicist idea that a text should be reviewed from a double perspective: from its significance in the context of the historical period, on the one hand, and from its relevance for the present, on the other hand. Those who seem to generate the change towards this perception are the intellectuals whose interest goes beyond the traditional sense of criticism:

> […] the advocates of new historicism have claimed that their way of reading offers both a way back to context from a suffocating literary-critical formalism, and a more subtle view of the workings of that context, its modes of definition and of power, than are provided by older historicisms. (Rothfield, 1990, p. 97)

Mentioning Lawrence Rothfield's point of view, Suzy Anger notes that in the last decades, the "new historicist methods played a large role in changing the contours of literary studies, as did the increasing emphasis on interdisciplinarity in Victorian Studies" (2018, p. 275).

The starting point of our research lies in Maria-Ana Tupan's perspective that "Images, cognitive metaphors, epistemological foci, models embedded or commuted across disciplinary fields give us an idea about the intrinsic order of a phase of culture" (2015b, p. 40). The research explores significant connections in the fields of literature, psychology, physics, and biology in an attempt to examine the Victorian age in its infinite complexity from an up-to-date critical perspective, endeavouring to "cast light on the history of ideas" (Tupan, 2015b, p. 39). Since we believe that "the work of art is the product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society" (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 158), we investigate interactions between different discourses to demonstrate their interrelatedness. In *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction*, Jill L. Matus endorses Greenblatt's views, defining the science-literature interface as "a cultural exchange in which it is less important to talk of originators than of a shared discursive matrix that shapes both 'scientific' and novelistic representations" (Matus, 2009, p. 13). The deep exploration of the topics and the analysis of sources from different areas provide a proper tool for making relevant connections for understanding the epistemically dependent change in character construction in the Victorian age. The theoretical integration perceived by Maria-Ana Tupan (2015b) in Julian Wolfreys's *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century* (2002) contributes to the perspective of the present study, which is a research that surpasses the boundaries of the traditional disciplines, aiming to the field of interdisciplinarity. Since we believe that "in light of general systems theory, no element can be defined outside a system of relations of increasing complexity" (Tupan, 2015b, p. 34), the present research aims to capture the linking between various fields.

In *Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century*, Julian Wolfreys identifies several "new modes of 'hybrid' criticism which are emerging at the beginning of the twenty-first century" (2002, p. 2). Sceptical about procedures which "ossify into protocols, mere programmed excuses for limiting the act of reading, or, worse still, not reading at all and avoiding reading in the name of methodology, ideology or institutionalized demand" (2002, pp. 8- 9), Wolfreys encourages the "making of new perceptions from within particular conventions of critical discourse." Believing, along with Heidegger, that "a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing" (1971, p.154), the method we assume is a blend of Critical Theory and New Historicism. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines Critical Theory as "a way of thinking about and examining culture and literature by considering the social, historical, and ideological forces that affect it and make it the way it is" (n.d., n.p.). In his attempt to describe a critical social theory, Kincheloe describes it as being

> […] concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system […] Critical theory […] is never static; it is always evolving, changing in light of new theoretical insights, fresh ideas from diverse cultures, and new problems, social circumstances, and educational contexts. (2007, p. 18)

Thus, the Critical Theory design advances the possibility of reaching out to the entire cultural semiosis of an age. Access to the whole Victorian culture, to life itself, opens the door to discourse about the human condition under specific historical circumstances. Moreover, this context is historicised in the sense that it is culture-specific, mediated by language and by a double perception—as perceived by the Victorians and as the 21st-century researcher approaches it. Victorian literature is divided between the realist camp (presenting a reality considered to be material, unitary, unique, and given in common to all members of the respective society) and the phenomenological camp, who believe that reality appears to each human subject according to his psychological condition, to the ideas to which they have been exposed to, to the epistemology of the age. In his attempt to define reading formations, Tony Bennett advises the identification of

> […] the determinations which, in operating on both texts and readers, mediate the relations between text and context, connecting the two and providing the mechanisms through which they productively interact in representing context not as a set of extra-discursive relations but as a set of inter-textual and discursive relations which produce readers for texts and texts for readers. (1988, p. 74)

In the Preface to *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, Isobel Armstrong (1996) advances the idea that "The poetry and poetics of the Victorian period were intertwined, often in arresting ways, with theology, science, philosophy, theories of language and politics" (p. vii). Maria-Ana Tupan (2023) specifies that interdisciplinarity is cross-paradigmatic, her argument "tracing the ideas germinating into modernism back to the middle of the nineteenth century, in that long Victorian Age, as the other side of the positivist, realist and naturalist dominant" (p. 3) and endorsing Armstrong's views, who "characterizes Victorianism as the passage to phenomenology" (p. 3). Armstrong finds that "the link between cultural complexities and the complexities of language is indirect but can be perceived" (1996, p. 11). In an age when "hermeneutic doubt and suspicion continued to be woven into the literature of the century from Carlyle to the post-romantics" (Tupan, 2023, p. 3), Isobel Armstrong perceives "a shift from ontology to epistemology, a shift from investigating the grounds of being to a sceptical interrogation of the grounds of knowledge, which becomes phenomenology, not belief" (1996, p. 15). A historicist perspective is thus open to research, as the world of experience appears to human observers in changing ways over time. Stephen Greenblatt's famous opening for his book *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988), about his desire to talk with the dead, points precisely to this generational limitation of a certain social semiosis but also suggests the possibility of going back in time through the surviving artefacts to get "insight into the half-hidden cultural transactions through which great works of art are empowered" (1988, p. 4). According to him, studying social semiology in its entirety does not mean an abandonment of "the enchanted impression of aesthetic autonomy" (Greenblatt, 1988, p. 5) but an analysis of "the objective conditions of this enchantment, to discover how the traces of social circulation are effaced" (Greenblatt, 1988, p. 5). Perceiving the text as a favourable point in time within a system of discursive conventions (Wolfreys et al., 2006), following in the footsteps of Foucault, who urges for the establishment of "those diverse converging, and sometimes divergent,

but never autonomous series that enable us to circumscribe the 'locus' of an event, the limits to its fluidity and the conditions of its emergence" (1972, p. 230), Greenblatt finds social energy to be the trigger of the literary works' perenniality:

> The 'life' that literary works seem to possess long after both the death of the author and the death of the culture for which the author wrote is the historical consequence, however transformed and refashioned, of the social energy initially encoded in those works. (1988, p. 6)

Following the same ideas, focusing on poetry, Isobel Armstrong perceives the thought-provoking aspect of reconsidering history and culture:

> Rereading Victorian poetry, then, involves a reconsideration of the way we conceptualise history and culture, and the way we see the politics of poetry. It also involves rethinking some of the major criticism of this century, Marxist and feminist criticism and deconstruction, and considering how the language and form of Victorian poetry question the theories they have developed. Putting the stuffing back into the Victorian sofa then becomes a process of reconstruction which asks living questions. (1996, p. 17)

We may conclude that the interdisciplinary insight into the interconnection between science and literature in the Victorian period gives light to a different perception. According to Basarab Nicolescu (2007), interdisciplinarity refers to transferring methods from one discipline to another, combining techniques from various fields to pursue a common goal. Literature's interaction with psychology and the development of ideas and theories throughout time have made clear that fiction is not a different entity from everything else occurring in the real world, but it is a product of the engagement of different ideas appearing in the age discussed.

Thus, perceiving the "increasingly interdisciplinary nature of critical and cultural studies" (Wolfreys, 2002, p. 4), the study sets in quest of capturing the interlacing of different areas, striving to understand, as Stephen Greenblatt urges, "not only the construction of these zones but also the process of movement across the shifting boundaries between them" (Greenblatt, 1988, p. 7). The interdisciplinary method provides the proper framework

for studying the influence of non-literary discourses, more specifically, the impact of psychology, the science maîtresse of the age, on the epistemology of character construction, which leads us to discursive negotiations. We believe that

> The continuity or the parallelism we can identify between the history of ideas and the chronotopic mapping of fictional worlds is not just a prop of the legitimacy of interdisciplinarity but also a vantage point of explanatory rather than just descriptive criticism. (Tupan, 2016, p. 6)

In the age of non-linearity, in their *General Model of Hierarchical Complexity*, Michael Lamport Commons and Francis A. Richards recommend four postformal orders, among which the last is the cross-paradigmatic order. The cross-paradigmatic order creates new fields by surpassing paradigms and formal boundaries. "Cross-paradigmatic actions integrate paradigms into a new field or profoundly transform an old one" (Commons & Richards, 2003, p. 208). We believe that "several incongruous disciplines [...] merging into a new site of theoretical integration" (Tupan, 2015b, p. 34) can surpass the boundaries of strict methodologies of different schools of thought or the axiomatic disciplinary confines. Julian Wolfreys even mentions the term "epistemological foci" (2002, p. 4) to explain the outcome "of the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of critical and cultural studies" (2002, p. 4) in the 21st century.

The urge to surpass boundaries lead us to the idea of a psychosynthetic literary analysis approach, as well. Psychosynthesis, as defined by its developer, the Italian psychiatrist Dr Roberto Assagioli, a contemporary of Freud and Jung, is the appropriate balancing of various elements of the human psyche to achieve development on all levels. According to Assagioli (1952), the psychological indivisibility of a human is only an illusion since the psyche is not a coherent unity such as the body: "The so-called normal man is, in fact, an aggregation of elements and tendencies or rather of several contrasting subpersonalities" [2] (n.p.). Based on the interdependence of interior and exterior elements, psychosynthesis is "first and foremost a dynamic, even a dramatic conception of our psychological life, which it portrays as a

[2] (Trans.) "l'uomo cosidetto normale è in realtà una congerie di elementi e di tendenze, anzi di varie sub-personalità contrastanti".

constant interplay and conflict between the many different and contrasting forces and a unifying center which ever tends to control, harmonize and utilize them" (Assagioli, 1959, p. 57) while combining "several methods of inner action, aiming first at the development and perfection of the personality, and then at its harmonious coordination and increasing unification with the spiritual Self" (Assagioli, 1959, p. 57).

As Zsuzsanna Tóth-Izsó (2022) remarks, psychosynthetic literary analysis is not yet a commonly acknowledged method, and our steps in analysing the literary works from the Victorian period being for that reason solely attempts at advancing this methodology which comes in handy for conducting our study. Following in the footsteps of Assagioli (1965), who talks about the lower, middle, and higher unconscious in his model of the human psyche and discusses the possibilities of "harmonious inner integration, true Self-realization and right relationships with others" (p. 21), we set out to uncover specific aspects of the struggle of literary characters to accomplish that goal.

Starting from Assagioli's comment upon the fact that there are various contradictory and conflicting propensities in the human psyche "which at times constitute the nuclei of semi-independent sub-personalities" (1965, p. 36), we have taken into account some inner conflicts of a few Victorian characters that we considered essential for a psychosynthetic reading of these novels.

The first part of our book, investigating the Bildungsroman protagonists Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, and even Aurora Leigh, tracks the story of the development of individuals starting from childhood and reaching maturity, which defines the genre in point of theme. Maturity can be interpreted as the possibility of a balanced psychic integration, the fulfilment of the Self. Assagioli (1965) identifies four stages in the fulfilment of the genuine Self, which include the comprehension of one's own personality, the mastery of its several elements, the determination or identification of a unifying centre and the last stage, the development or restoration of the new centre. Jane, David and Aurora's coming of age covers all these phases. All these characters start their journey from their youthful years when they only probe or explore the possibilities of their personalities; they go on discovering several elements of their personalities, find a voice of their own,

and, finally, act accordingly. Jane achieves happiness when she frees herself from the constraints of Victorian patriarchal views; David's bliss comes when he reaches that stage of maturity at which he can "tame his undisciplined heart" and choose Agnes. Aurora finds her peace when she accepts her conditions, and her conditions accept her; redemption comes when everything is according to God, or in Assagioli's terms, when the psychosynthesis is established, and the protagonist shakes off the enslavement of external influences. Pip's story of disenchantment with his initial "great expectations" also implies the idea of freedom versus external influences, choices made under the influence of others, but the end of the story reveals a protagonist who has gone through the necessary changes to achieve his real identity, obtaining the intended personal psychosynthesis. Silas Marner's epic trajectory comes close to the idea of psychosynthesis as well, although it reveals various aspects of self-realisation, including spiritual experiences. Silas' choice of goodness and morality gives him the sense of reaching his purpose. His altruistic love brings him closer to his higher unconscious and, consequently, to realising his true self.

Since Assagioli (1965) advises a thorough examination of the various fields of the lower unconscious to find "the dark forces that ensnare and menace us" – the 'phantasms', the ancestral or childish images that obsess or silently dominate us, the fears that paralyze us, the conflict that waste our energies" (p. 21), we may say that certain features of the characters coming under focus are explored from this perspective. In order to understand the disharmonious integration and faulty relations to other characters and society, we further examine "the dark side" plunging into the deep waters of the lower unconscious. The Duke of Ferrara's obsessive superiority and murderous passion (*My Last Duchess*) reveal a psychological disturbance and the prospects of faulty or incomplete psychosynthesis. Although we have spotted the presence of the lower unconscious in the novels mentioned above and characters as well, the focus was more on the harmonious coexistence of the personality and the environment than on the psyche in its proper sense. Our descent to the lower unconscious starts with the pathological psychopath impersonated by the Duke of Ferrara, but further explorations of the subject prove rewarding. First of all, we investigate the repressed instinctual drives of Tess of the d'Urbervilles in light of Darwin's evolutionary theory. Then, we proceed toward reading the characters of Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead. Although in search of self-realisation,

with Christminster as a symbol of psychosynthesis, Jude fails in his attempt to find redemption since he moves in the same revolving circles, unable to surpass his condition. However, despite what she appears to be, Sue is unprepared to take full responsibility, given her awakening. With the character of Isabel Archer, the seeming duality of the self explored by Assagioli (1965) and even multiplicity, considered to be unity and uniqueness, seem to be justified hypotheses since the multi-angle perspective of Isabel performs as a manifestation of the same self under different circumstances or different projections depending on the source of light cast on her. The other works of Henry James that we discuss are further explorations of the idea of selfhood and the structure of the psyche and our being. Various points of view and experiences reveal different sides to the same character, as is the case with Lord Mellifont, Clare Vawdrey, *The Figure in the Carpet*, or Spencer Brydon.

Investigating the means of liberation and the road towards awakening, Assagioli mentions that a person who feels intuitively that he is 'one' and still finds "that he is 'divided unto himself' […] is bewildered and fails to understand either himself or others" (1965, p. 20). This is the case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Dorian Gray and Dracula, in whose stories we find aspects of atavism, monstrosity, diabolical double, torment, doubt, discouragement or despair to the point of committing murder, which are all aspects related to the lower unconscious and the critical stages of spiritual realisation described by Assagioli (1965). "The opening of the hitherto closed eyes to an inner reality previously ignored" (Assagioli, 1965, p. 40) brings about crises and reactions identifiable in the mentioned Victorian characters. While at the beginning or even middle of the century, we find characters that are dwelling in their inner transformation and becoming aware of their true self, by the end of the century, we come upon characters caught in the whirlwind of the crises related to their psychosynthesis, descending into the lower unconscious to meet their primitive drives, urges, uncontrolled desires and pathological manifestations.

Mansilla and Gardner define interdisciplinary work as "work that integrates knowledge and modes of thinking from two or more disciplines" (2003, p. 3) with "the goal of advancing understanding (e.g., explain phenomena, craft solutions, raise new questions) in ways that would have not been possible through single disciplinary means" (2003, p. 3). Analysing

the age when the belief was that life could not be defined unless relying on psychology (Herbart, 1891), a legitimate understanding of the literary works of the period should encompass the historical and cultural background as well. Petts, Owens and Bulkeley perceive interdisciplinarity not as a synthesis of various techniques brought together but "as a series of negotiations and recursive interactions between disciplinary practices" (2008, p. 600). Roland Barthes observes the transformative nature of interdisciplinarity, considering that

> Interdisciplinarity is not the calm of an easy security; it begins effectively […] when the solidarity of the old disciplines breaks down […] in the interests of a new object and a new language neither of which has a place in the field of the sciences that were to be brought peacefully together, this unease in classification being precisely the point from which it is possible to diagnose a certain mutation. (1977, p. 155)

In an attempt to define the objective of interdisciplinarity, Willy Østreng notes that its primary purpose is "to break or bridge the 'walls' separating communities of knowledge" (2010, p. 26), intending "to create a holistic understanding of a given topic, challenge or problem" (2010, p. 26). The Nobel-prize-winning creator of quantum mechanics, Werner Heisenberg, expresses his belief that the new scientific theories also bring about changes in artistic expression. He considers that "the style arises out of the interplay between the world and ourselves, or more specifically between the spirit of the time and the artist" (Heisenberg, 1958, p. 108). Analysing the question of science and art, he concludes that throughout the centuries, together, they create: "a human language by which we can speak about the more remote parts of reality, and the coherent sets of concepts as well as the different styles of art are different words or groups of words in this language" (Heisenberg, 1958, p. 108).

Sharing Peter Katz's views regarding the reciprocally vital relationship between Victorian literature and science, we also believe that "Narrative instantiations of scientific discourse provide historical windows into the ways Victorians conceptualised the broader cultural conversations that permeate these narratives" (2015, p. 3). The idea of merging different disciplines to achieve a multiperspective, complex image can be traced back

to William Whewell's thought: "For wide and various as their subjects are, it will be found that they have all certain principles, maxims, and rules of procedure in common; and thus may reflect light upon each other by being treated of together" (Whewell, 1847, p. 640). Natalie Mera Ford (2015) endorses this view, seeing Victorian science as not only a background to literature. She emphasises the mutuality of the discourses, concluding that not only fiction and poetry turned to science, but the reverse movement was also frequent. Her research shows that scientists' bending to fiction had not only descriptive purposes, softening the technicality of scientific concepts. For example, psychologists and psychiatrists often turned to literary characters, analysing their actions and behaviour as subjects of clinical studies. Later, even Freud himself recognised that literature had influenced his views. Nicholas Dames acknowledges that "the novel, in brief, was part of the story of psychology, just as surely as psychology is part of the history of the novel form" (2005, p. 94). The coexistence of various discourses and the permeability of the boundaries between different fields displays a nineteenth century which "was in a constant state of flux where conflicting discourses struggled for pre-eminence" (Robbins& Wolfreys, 1996, p. 3).

Believing, as Stephen Greenblatt suggests, that "the work of art is itself the product of a set of manipulations" (1992, p. 158), we analyse the different forces working closely or against each other, capturing the effects of discursive negotiations during the timespan comprising Queen Victoria's long reign. Since we believe that "the literary work is a site of dialogic interaction of multiple voices or modes of discourse" (Baker, 1996, p. 230), sharing the views of Stephen Greenblatt regarding the "mutually profitable exchange" (1992, p. 158) between different discourses, we examined the meanderings of the dissolving boundaries between disciplines. The attempt to reproduce these negotiations proved to be a quest to capture complexity: "a subtle, elusive set of exchanges, a network of trades and trade-offs, a jostling of competing representations, a negotiation between joint-stock companies" (Greenblatt, 1988, p. 7). Viewing the written materials of the Victorian age as "products of extended borrowings, collective exchanges, and mutual enchantments" (Greenblatt, 1988, p. 7) is a dynamic act of researching an entanglement specific to the period from which we arrive at the conclusion that "every text is necessarily embedded in a complex network of social, economic and political practices (similar to Foucault's episteme); literary and non-literary texts circulate inseparably within this network" (Mason

Vaughan, 2006, p. 105).

In his essay, *Towards a Poetics of Culture*, Stephen Greenblatt urges for the development of the "terms to describe the ways in which material […] is transferred from one discursive sphere to another and becomes aesthetic property" (1992, p. 157). He believes that viewing this as a uni-directional movement is misleading since "the aesthetic discourse […] is so entirely bound up with capitalist venture" (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 157) and "the social discourse is already charged with aesthetic energies" (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 157). We are informed in *Stephen Greenblatt and the New Historicism* that the method of analysing discursive negotiations and exchanges undertaken by Greenblatt results in demonstrating that "the social energies which circulate between the two texts are, presumably, characteristic of the culture at large" (Mason Vaughan, 2006, p. 105). Thus, the approach we propose is not only an investigation of discursive negotiations and a search for meaning "not outside interpretation, but in the hidden places of negotiation and exchange" (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 159) but also an inquiry into discursive formations which share in common, not autonomous and discrete textual units, but networks of intertexts which demand from the interpreter an "archaeology of knowledge," as Foucault describes this hermeneutic circle in his book of this title:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network. (1972, p. 23)

Since we share Foucault's views (1972) that it is impossible to capture all the emergent relations, we focus on the field which we believe to be the most fruitful, describing the reciprocation between scientific and literary discourses. "To reveal in all its purity the space in which discursive events are deployed […] is to leave oneself free to describe the interplay of relations within it and outside it" (Foucault, 1972, p. 29). Therefore, throughout our research, we will follow Foucault in the attempt to unriddle the "specificity of […] occurrence" (p. 28) of a literary work by positioning it in relation to concurrent flows of semantic energy.

Suzy Anger concludes that literary critics investigating the exchanges between science and Victorian literature in the last few years have confirmed "how developments in views on mentality, consciousness, behavior, and the self […] influenced nineteenth-century literary works. Conversely, they have shown how Victorian literary texts played a role in shaping psychological ideas" (2018, p. 280). Since "Victorian literature provides the reader with almost limitless possibilities of inclusion and exclusion – sometimes even within the same text" (Robbins& Wolfreys, 1996, p. 4), the lacing of literature and scientific treatises contributes to a relatively unstable field of study. This type of inquiry is among the reasons Victorian literature still matters: the webbing of the mutually enriching areas offers endless possibilities of interpretation. Virginia Mason Vaughan perceives Greenblatt's perspective as "a brilliant intertextual dance" (2006, p. 105). The following pages of our book reveal the steps of the dance that psychology and literature performed in the Victorian age, from putting on their dancing shoes to the final pose at the end of the century.

Chapter 1

Discursive Networks: Psycho-Physics as the "Science Maîtresse" of the Age

General Aspects

Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe.

(Carlyle, 2020, p. 231)

Nineteenth-century Britain witnessed unprecedented development in all fields of knowledge and existence. According to Harrison, "surely no century in all human history was ever so much praised to its face for its wonderful achievements, its wealth and its power, its unparalleled ingenuity and its miraculous capacity for making itself comfortable and generally enjoying life" (1927, p. 189). The advancement was perceived as a necessity, and as John Stuart Mill (1997) proclaimed, the transformation was radical, where society requested and foreshadowed not only a new mechanism but a mechanism assembled differently. Moreover, since the changes were fundamental, they asked for time: "The first of the leading peculiarities of the present age is, that it is an age of transition. Mankind have outgrown old institutions and old doctrines, and have not yet acquired new ones" (Mill, 1997, p. 5). The shift from the old values to the new ones brought uncertainty and divided opinions among those who still believed in the ancient principles and those who embraced the advancement:

> Mankind are then divided, into those who are still what they were, and those who have changed: into the men of the present age, and the men of the past. To the former, the spirit of the age is a subject of exultation; to the latter, of terror; to both, of eager and anxious interest. The wisdom of ancestors, and the march of intellect, are bandied from mouth to mouth; each phrase originally an expression of respect and homage, each ultimately usurped by the partisans of the opposite catch-word, and in the bitterness of their spirit, turned into the sarcastic jibe of hatred and insult. (Mill, 1997, p. 3)

Walter E. Houghton (1985) notes in *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870* that the same idea of change and transition was felt and debated by many thinkers and writers, such as Matthew Arnold, Thomas Carlyle, Benjamin Disraeli, Herbert Spencer, Tennyson, Lytton, and many others. Here is Lytton's view of his age:

> […] we live in an age of visible transition—an age of disquietude and doubt—of the removal of time-worn landmarks, and the breaking up of the hereditary elements of society—old opinions, feelings—ancestral customs and institutions are crumbling away, and both the spiritual and temporal worlds are darkened by the shadow of change. (Lytton, 1833, p. 108)

Evolution was perceived as simultaneously positive and negative, as Houghton (1985) admits: it was an age of demolition and renewal. It deconstructed the old beliefs, principles, and institutions and advanced a fresh, new direction.

The origins of Victorian literature lie in this period of uncertainty and transition, and this shift is probably the trigger of the greatness of the literature written over this time. Thomas Carlyle coined the clothes metaphor to express his sense of the time, bringing up new disguises with the individual allowed to choose between role models: *Sartor Resartus*: "Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe" (Carlyle, 2020, p. 231). According to Carlyle's perception, "The whole world here is doing a Tarantula Dance of Political Reform, and has no ear left for literature" (as cited in Adams, 2009, p. 27). Thus, we see an image of Victorians who were considered not to have an ear left for literature and were too preoccupied with the political, social, industrial, and economic changes they underwent during these years. Contrasting the attitudes of the Victorians- as Carlyle assessed them, the present-day literary scholars undoubtedly have an ear for the unmapped sides and interpretive possibilities offered by the complexity of the literature written in nineteenth-century Britain.

Using the lens of New Historicism, recent criticism has found exciting aspects regarding the influence of the epistemology of the age upon literary expression. New Historicism promotes the idea that "[…] the many discourses at work at any given time affect both an author and his/her text;

both are inescapably part of a social construct" (Siegel, 2006, np). Scholars in the field of literature have found a fusion of discourses present in the Victorian age, which together form the overall image of the epoch. A proper understanding of the literature going under this period will only be possible if considered against its historical and cultural background.

Britain's nineteenth century was an age of unparalleled social, political, and economic transformation. It witnessed the rise of the middle class as a political power, industrialisation, the Reform Bill, Catholic Emancipation, and the clash between Evangelicalism and Benthamism. In light of these changes, Adams (2009) argues that there was a significant awareness of history during the early 1830s, as we shall see, especially in Thomas Carlyle's works.

While Carlyle turns to history as the most accurate source of meaning, William Whewell proposes the creation of an epistemically unified culture in *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1847). The multitude of philosophical and scientific ideas and the fragility of the confines of science and literature allowed the emergence of a synergetic discourse. According to Hall's definition: "Discourse is '*how* it is said' and '*how* it is read', and the contexts in which language is used and processed, both immediate, linguistic, and in wider social and cultural terms, explain how meanings arise between language users" (Hall, 2005, p. 2).

As anticipated by the title of the present chapter, the *Discursive Networks* refer to a matrix of different discourses, which, through their interconnectedness, form a complex system allowing the comprehension of Victorian literature. As Julian Wolfreys comments on Michel Foucault's idea: "a discursive structure arises at any particular historical moment as a result of the interaction between a constellation of codes and forms of address from different disciplines and fields of thought" (Wolfreys, 2004, p. 66).

The Foucaultian idea of discursive networks implies power and knowledge and the interplay of the constituent elements of the discourse engaged in a culture at a specific historical juncture. The momentum of the intersection of different discourses at the beginning of the Victorian age caused a turn that cast new light on the relationship between literature and science, especially psychology. The convergence of philosophical relativism, scientific

development, and the advent of psychophysics enhanced the unease of the Victorians regarding human comprehension of the universe, existence, and the workings of the human mind. Maria-Ana Tupan (2010a) advocates that the main characteristics of the beginning of the Victorian age are the uncertainty about the epistemological foundations of science and the shift to the anthropological definition of identity. She also asserts that these attributes mark the dissimilarity between the different phases of the earlier and later Victorian culture.

> But, though a century be an arbitrary period, as purely conventional as a yard or a mile, and though every century has a hundred characters of its own, and as many lives and as many results, we must for convenience take note of conventional limits, and fix our attention on special features as the true physiognomy of an epoch. (Harrison, 1927, p. 156)

In an attempt to establish the idea that psychology is an essential framework for a proper understanding of Victorian culture and literary works, the present research focuses on demonstrating that psychophysics is "an epistemological gateway to Victorian literature" (Tupan, 2010a, p. 55). The *APA Dictionary of Psychology* defines psychophysics as: "a branch of psychology that studies the relationship between the objective physical characteristics of a stimulus (e.g., its measured intensity) and the subjective perception of that stimulus (e.g., its apparent brightness)" (VandenBos, 2007, p. 862).

The approach to identity and the problem of the self through the lens of the emerging science of psychology and physics is a crucial element in understanding how the literary discourse of the age is construed because: "Physics and psychology were the batteries feeding their ideas into the rhetoric of elegiac statements, metaphysical doubts and scientific relativism or even agnosticism, of double-voiced poems and embedded narratives, of generic hybrids, entropic plots and split personalities" (Tupan, 2010a, p. 61).

Thus, as the title of this chapter reads—Discursive Networks: Psycho-Physics as the "Science Maîtresse" of the Age—the focus is on demonstrating how physiological psychology and psychophysics became the leading discourse that fueled cultural life and literary representation in an age when,

according to Herbart, the belief was that: "We can not have a correct definition of life without the help of psychology" (Herbart, 1891, p. 124).

Continental Sources

Psycho-physics, the dominant discourse of the British Victorian age, cannot be discussed without considering the significant figures of nineteenth-century European intellectual life, especially German sources. Since the cradle of physiological psychology (*Die Anthropologie in Pragmatischer Hinsicht* by Immanuel Kant, 1797) lies in the research of German intellectuals, the starting point of a study regarding psychology and its influence upon literary discourse is not possible without a broader understanding of the ideas propagated by the founders of the discipline, scholars in the field of philosophy, physiology, physics, mathematics, and other sciences. Nevertheless, among the identified influencers, we can find academics from other European countries who were significant masterminds of the age. Moreover, as Kant's acknowledged source was David Hume's associationist philosophy, by discussing literary structure grounded in this epistemology on the British Isles, we may trace its history to its actual beginnings.

According to Jaan Valsiner (2012), psychology is a *German invention* in its sense of science. The philosophical and literary discourses originating in the German areas were highly influential upon philosophers, writers, and scholars in other parts of Europe, as well. Beliefs and viewpoints in the middle of the changing times caused the shift from Romanticism and the *Naturphilosophie* to a more scientific-centred approach. Jaan Valsiner, in *The Birth of a Troubled Wissenschaft: Emerging Psychology in Its German Context* (2012), acknowledges that:

> The revolutionary turmoils of the society in late 1840s were paralleled by the final elimination of the traces of *Naturphilosophie* from the German academic discourses, and the replacement of the *Wissenschaften* by creating—by the end of the nineteenth century—parallel trajectories in the science of the nature, and of the soul. The move of the German "mainstream" of knowledge toward the "Newtonian science" was inherently heterogenous, yet centered on the "return to Kant" call. (p.111)