# Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort*: A Crisis of Class Identity*

## *Joanna Baillie'nin De Monfort Adlı Oyununda Sınıfsal Kimlik Bunalımı*

Tuğba ŞİMŞEK**

## Abstract

The late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries in Britain are characterised by socio-cultural and political turmoil and transformations specifically due to the impacts of the revolutions, the growth of the middle class and thus the changing class hierarchies. Within this chaotic socio-political atmosphere, the Gothic becomes a very dominant and popular genre projecting these transitions of the period. Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) who was influenced by the Gothic craze of the age like many writers is regarded as one of the most significant playwrights of the period. In one of her well-known Gothic plays, *De Monfort* (1798), Baillie portrays the anxiety and fear of the loss of power and status by the aristocracy. Thus, she creates a Gothic atmosphere surrounded by the claustrophobic and paranoid anxiety of De Monfort. De Monfort, who is also affected by fear and paranoia dominating the period as a result of the political sanctions, cannot adjust himself to the changing social structure. Considering the changing class hierarchies, particularly De Monfort's attachment to his family name becomes the core of the play in terms of his fear of obliteration. In the context of the socio-cultural and political dynamics of the Romantic period, this study aims to argue how Baillie illustrates the shifting class dynamics and anxieties of the period with reference to her Gothic play, *De Monfort*.

**Keywords**: Joanna Baillie, Gothic, *De Monfort*, class identity, identity crisis

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## Öz

Özellikle devrimlerin etkisi, orta sınıfın büyümesi ve böylece değişen sınıfsal hiyerarşiler dolayısıyla Britanya'da 18. yüzyıl sonu ve 19. yüzyıl başı, sosyo-kültürel ve politik karmaşa ve dönüşümlerin olduğu bir dönem olarak nitelendirilir. Bu kaotik sosyo-politik ortamda Gotik, dönemin bu değişimlerini yansıtan baskın ve popüler bir tür olarak karşımıza çıkar. Birçok yazar gibi Gotik furyasından etkilenen Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) bu dönemin en önemli oyun yazarlarından biri olarak kabul edilir. En bilinen Gotik oyunlarından biri olan *De Monfort* (1798) adlı eserinde Baillie, aristokrasinin güç ve statü kaybetme kaygısını ve korkusunu işler. Böylece yazar, De Monfort karakterinin klostrofobik ve paranoyak kaygılarıyla çevrili Gotik bir atmosfer yaratır. Politik uygulamalar sonucu döneme hâkim olan korku ve paranoyanın da izlerini taşıyan De Monfort değişen yapıya ayak uyduramaz. Dönemin değişen sınıfsal hiyerarşileri göz önüne alındığında, özellikle De Monfort'un aile soyadına olan bağlılığı, yok olma korkusu açısından oyunun ana noktasını oluşturur. Romantik dönemin sosyo-kültürel ve politik yapısı bağlamında, bu çalışmanın amacı, Baillie'nin *De Monfort* adlı Gotik oyununda dönemin değişen sınıfsal dinamiklerini ve kaygılarını nasıl yansıttığını tartışmaktır.

**Anahtar kelimeler**: Joanna Baillie, Gotik, *De Monfort*, sınıfsal kimlik, kimlik bunalımı

## Extended Summary

Considering the fact that it was the age of the revolutions and the socio-cultural and political dynamics of the society were also changing, Gothic became one of the dominant genres in the late eighteenth century as it was born out of the turmoil of the period. This study aims to examine how Joanna Baillie depicts the shifting class dynamics and anxieties of the age in her Gothic play, *De Monfort* (1798) and specifically how the mental incarceration and growing claustrophobia of the eponymous character as a result of his class-based anxiety are portrayed in relation to his uncanny encounters and situations.

The impacts of the growing bourgeois class and the decline of the aristocratic power can be clearly observed in *De Monfort* as the shifting class hierarchies provoke a crisis of class identity which is exemplified by De Monfort himself. Unlike the traditional Gothic setting like the castle or subterranean passages, Baillie sets the town as an alternative to the conventional enclosed Gothic spaces to create a claustrophobic impact on the character. Within this suffocating environment, De Monfort is very much disturbed by the presence of Rezenvelt, his arch-enemy representing the growing middle class. His very being in fact triggers De Monfort's claustrophobia and paranoia. The haunting image of Rezenvelt everywhere instigates De Monfort's frustration and makes him more nervous and paranoid. His mental circumstance actually evokes the sense of surveillance dominating the period as a result of the government's strict political sanctions to avoid and repress any revolutionary actions since the British government began to see the revolution as a threat to the monarchy considering the Reign of Terror (1793-1794) following the Revolution in France. These strict sanctions led to a huge amount of fear and paranoia in the society. Thus, De Monfort's disturbed mental state, his suffocation, restlessness and anxiety can be evaluated as a reflection of the chaotic atmosphere of the age.

For De Monfort, Rezenvelt's upward social mobility is a threat to De Monfort's hereditary status and family name. Behind his constant restlessness, he is afraid of losing his power and status. While Rezenvelt gets more involved in the elite circle of De Monfort, De Monfort is gradually estranged from this same circle. Besides, it is important to mark that De Monfort is not given any individuality since he represents a class-based institution, for this reason, he has no name unlike his sister, Jane. He is so self-conscious of his nobility and class identity that he tries to hold on to his family name while being consumed inside with his hatred which is the outcome of his class-based anxiety and fear. Besides, after murdering Rezenvelt, De Monfort says he does not have any name anymore. Until then, he has been trying to hold on to his last name but now he loses it too. So, with the loss of his name, his whole existence is about to vanish as well. In this regard, though defining Rezenvelt as an uncanny other breaking his world apart, De Monfort is the one projecting his fears and anxieties upon Rezenvelt, thereby turning Rezenvelt into an uncanny figure because Rezenvelt represents and exposes De Monfort's fears and anxieties. Hence, it is not too wrong to think that Rezenvelt is the uncanny other or *doppelganger* of De Monfort whom he tries to repress but in vain. Thus, by breaking the barriers around De Monfort into pieces, the image of Rezenvelt discloses De Monfort's un/buried fears and anxieties.

To sum up, Baillie creates a Gothic atmosphere which is surrounded by the claustrophobic and paranoid anxiety of De Monfort. In *De Monfort*, the playwright reflects upon the shifting structure of the society and subsequent identity crisis inflamed by De Monfort's fear of the loss of his aristocratic identity which is also associated with the gradual annihilation of his family name.

### Introduction

As a very successful and popular Scottish playwright, poet and essayist, Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) distinguished herself with her prolific and eclectic writings during the Romantic period. Starting with her first volume of *A Series of Plays* (1798), also known as *Plays on Passions* together with its second (1802) and third volumes (1812), Baillie had a very huge reading public and was very much admired by her contemporaries such as "Maria Edgeworth, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Walter Scott, Lord and Lady Byron, Wordsworth, and Southey" (Clery, 2000, p. 86). Baillie wrote at the turn of the century when the Gothic was an influential genre and dominated the Romantic period, so, like many writers of the period, she employed the Gothic in some of her plays. Considering the changing socio-cultural and political dynamics of the Romantic period, this study argues that Baillie portrays the shifting class dynamics and the anxieties of the period in her Gothic play, *De Monfort* (1798).

In her "Introductory Discourse" to the first volume of *Plays on Passions*, Baillie not only introduces her dramatic theory but also criticises the current dramatic tradition. As Curran writes, Baillie "… two years before Wordsworth celebrated preface, had published her own seventy-two-page argument for naturalness of language and situation across all the literary genres" (1988, p. 185-86). So, by proposing her own dramatic method and criticism, Baillie becomes one of the very prominent literary figures of the age and establishes herself as a drama critic of her time. Baillie states that "[t]he theatre is a school in which much good or evil may be learned" (1821a, p. 57). Hence, she designs her plays based on "sympathetic curiosity" (1821a, p. 4), thus people can learn how to deal with passions through sympathy. Baillie's "great object here is to trace passion through all its varieties, and in every stage" (1821a, p. 58). As Bennett states, "unlike the observed unities and goals of universality in traditional tragic drama, Baillie manipulates the genre to spotlight particularities and differences" (1999, p. 229). She embraces a more subjective and psychological perspective in terms of her characters rather than focusing on the plot structure.

In the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the Gothic is defined by specific settings like the claustrophobic castle or other enclosed spaces such as dungeons, monasteries, convents; by stereotypical characters like the villain, the heroine or the damsel in distress, monks, demons, ghosts; by certain themes like usurpation, oppressive patriarchy, repression of women, perversity, incest, anti-Catholic sentiment; and by mysterious and gloomy atmosphere, horror and terror. As it was born out of the chaotic circumstances of the late eighteenth century, the Gothic can be regarded as a commentary on the period itself. Though it started with the novel genre, specifically with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the novelistic Gothic features are applied to the Gothic plays as well. Cox argues that "[d]uring an era when English audiences anxiously lived through a series of political, economic, social, cultural, and literary innovations the Gothic drama provided a major new form of entertainment and of reflection upon a world in major upheaval" (2000b, p. 125). Hoeveler states further that

[e]ach [play] participates in the ongoing national debate about the proper role of the monarchy, the threat of violent revolution, the shock of sudden class transformation, the anxiety of changing gender roles within the family structure, and, finally, the construction of a newly nationalistic British empire that sought to justify its absorption of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. (2000a, p. 169)

Regarding all these, the Gothic operates as a witness to the age itself by meditating on the social and political changes, thus illustrating the shifting dynamics of the society and subsequent circumstances of the individuals. Cox defines the Gothic's scope as an "exploration of the supernatural, the psychological, and the political" (1992a, p. 7). As Armitt also argues, the "Gothic ... has become a means of reading culture, not just a cultural phenomenon to read" (2011, p. 10) because it portrays the very culture and society in which it is written. Miles also states that "the Gothic is a discursive site, a 'carnivalesque' mode for representations of the fragmented subject" (2000, p. 4). With its discursive quality, the Gothic anatomises society. The Gothic, thus, helps unveil the anxieties and fears of the age by voicing and challenging them through subversion, reversal and heterodoxy. In the Gothic genre, the established boundaries and norms are reconstructed in an uncanny way. The Gothic, thus, provides a certain space to investigate socio-cultural, psychological, and political issues while it also evolves from its earlier formulaic pattern as a genre. In this regard, Baillie makes use of the Gothic as a tool to explore socio-cultural and political segments of the society.

The late eighteenth century onwards was a period of socio-cultural, economic and political changes. As Punter argues,

it is hardly surprising to find the emergence of a literature whose key motifs are paranoia, manipulation and injustice, and whose central project is understanding the explicable, the taboo, the irrational. … The[…] [Gothic] symbols, we may say, were forged as a response to a period of social trauma; and perhaps that trauma is one which British culture is still trying, in increasingly sophisticated ways, to understand. (1996, p. 112)

Considering this 'period of social trauma' which Punter refers to, it is essential to indicate the chaotic and dynamic structure of this period briefly. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the major events, – namely the Industrial Revolution, the American Revolution, the Gordon Riots, the French Revolution, the Reign of Terror, the Napoleonic Wars, the Regency Crisis, the Irish unrest along with subsequent economic, social, and political pressures – arouse a sense of uncertainty, insecurity and instability leading to the fear of an unknown future. Besides, the growth of the middle class and the declining power of the aristocracy affect the existing socio-cultural and political structures. In this context, the Gothic becomes an inevitable means to illustrate the confusing and frustrating status of the individuals in this chaotic world of theirs. In *Spectacular Politics*, as Backscheider discusses:

The gothic suited the times, for it challenges the limits of the predictable, the 'natural,' the possible. If borders and limits do not hold, then the assumptions that determine our interpretations of phenomena and behavior are threatened. The public and private, the affectionate, the social, and the political become areas of uncertainty and insecurity, and every person and every event is capable of arousing dread. (1993, p. 149-50)

In this sense, the arousal of dread obviously results from the changing and complicated dynamics of the society while the boundaries are broken into pieces. The shifting class hierarchies can be clearly observed in *De Monfort* as this changing situation provokes a crisis of class identity in De Monfort. *De Monfort*, for this reason, is a representative play which portrays the anxiety of De Monfort due to Rezenvelt's upward social mobility.

## An Analysis of *De Monfort* in Terms of Identity Crisis

*De Monfort* which was first performed at Drury Lane in 1800 is a play based on hatred. At the beginning of the play, De Monfort comes to Amberg, a German town, to isolate himself. His sister, Jane De Monfort follows her brother to be able to understand what is bothering him so much. Subsequently, Jane learns the reason and tries to help her brother to discard his hatred for Rezenvelt but some misunderstandings bring the demise of both De Monfort and Rezenvelt in the end. Throughout the play, while Baillie shows how hatred consumes De Monfort, she also depicts the socio-political and psychological aspects behind this ongoing hatred and its consequences.

For De Monfort, the town turns into a claustrophobic space that is suffocating him from the very moment of his arrival. Being forced to get involved in social events by the Frebergs, the sociable elite of the play and then the arrival of his arch-enemy Rezenvelt make De Monfort more restless and disturbed since his supposedly safe space is shrinking. So, the setting develops into a claustrophobic space for De Monfort. In the traditional Gothic, enclosed spaces like a castle or subterranean passages are exploited to generate the same kind of claustrophobic impact on the characters. Yet, in this play, the town is designed as an alternative to these conventional Gothic spaces. Baines and Burns further explain how the setting operates, as follows:

[The setting] provides a decorative frame for Baillie's exploration of suppressed emotion; incestuous attraction, the impulse to gratuitous violence, and irrational fascination with a *doppelgänger*/rival of the same sex are all recurrent themes in Gothic and Romantic writing, and Baillie's treatment of them is subtle and detailed, grounding them in the emotional life of individually plausible figures, and using the ersatz historical setting to isolate her psychological concerns and so focus audience on the characters' interiority. (2000, p. ix)

In *De Monfort*, Baillie employs such an unconventional claustrophobic setting to explore De Monfort's psychological and emotional responses and to uncover his inner turmoil and chaotic mindset. As Crochunis states, "Gothic dramatic writing exploits theatrical space for political and psychological effect" (2001, p. 167). In this sense, here, the setting becomes a vehicle to instigate De Monfort's disturbed mental state further.

De Monfort gets so agitated by Rezenvelt that his inevitable presence in De Monfort's life triggers De Monfort's claustrophobic and paranoid circumstances. He feels like he is haunted by Rezenvelt as he says:

He haunts me— stings me— like a devil haunts –

He'll make a raving maniack of me - Villain!

The air wherein thou draw'st thy fulsome breath

Is poison to me- Oceans shall divide us! (*Pauses*.)

But no; thou think'st I fear thee, cursed reptile;

And hast a pleasure in the damned thought.

Though my heart's blood should curdle at thy sight,

I'll stay and face thee still. (Baillie, 2000b, 1.2.66-73)

De Monfort cannot discard the pervasive image of Rezenvelt as if Rezenvelt is pursuing him ev-

erywhere. His paranoia about Rezenvelt provokes his excessive and irrational behaviour throughout the play. He thinks of Rezenvelt as a villain tormenting him, as De Monfort says: "he hath a pleasure too,/A damned pleasure in the pain he gives!/Oh! the side glance of that detested eye!/That conscious smile! that full insulting lip!/It touches every nerve: it makes me mad" (Baillie, 2000b, 1.2.196-200). So, Rezenvelt's haunting presence or his surveillance over him instigates his frustration each time and makes him more paranoid and restless. In this context, it is important to argue that this sense of surveillance may recall the political circumstances of the age. After the Reign of Terror (1793-1794) in France during which many people along with the members of the monarchy were executed, the British government began to see the revolution as a threat to the monarchy. For this reason, the prime minister William Pitt carried out strict precautions to prevent any revolutionary actions and repress radical voices through some regulations like the 1794 Treason Trials, the 'Gagging' Acts of 1795, the suspension of *habeas corpus*, all of which created "a contemporary climate popularly known as 'Pitt's Terror'" (Worrall, 2000, p. 150). These coercive measures or actions trigger fear and paranoia in the society of the late eighteenth century. As Levy argues, the "'Gothic' … was the historically dated response of the English psyche to what was happening on the far side of the Channel" (1994, p. 2). In this context, the Gothic turns into a representative vehicle to illustrate claustrophobia and paranoia disseminating into each level of the society. So, the sense of suffocation, restlessness, and anxiety under the chaotic atmosphere of the age finds its expression in the character of De Monfort. In this sense, the haunting image of Rezenvelt and the suffocating environment indeed evoke the political atmosphere of the age.

After the unsettling confrontation between De Monfort and Rezenvelt at the Frebergs's party, De Monfort confesses the reason for his unrest constantly preying upon him to his sister, as follows: "No, it is hate! black, lasting, deadly hate!/Which thus hath driven me forth from kindred peace,/From social pleasure, from my native home,/To be a sullen wand'rer on the earth,/Avoiding all men, cursing and accurs'd" (Baillie, 2000b, 2.2.89-93). His hatred makes him a loner, a wanderer by forcing him into constant isolation from everything and anybody. Even the sight of Rezenvelt makes De Monfort's gestures and physiognomy awkward. When seeing him, De Monfort does not know how to behave or what to do and most of the time he is confused, anxious and aggressive in front of Rezenvelt. De Monfort explains further what is disturbing him so much:

… When, low in fortune,

He look'd upon the state of prosp'rous men,

As nightly birds, rous'd from their murky holes,

Do scowl and chatter at the light of day,

I could endure it; even as we bear

Th' impotent bite of some half-trodden worm,

I could endure it. But when honours came,

And wealth and new-got titles fed his pride;

Whilst flatt'ring knaves did trumpet forth his praise,

And grov'ling idiots grinn'd applauses on him;

Oh! then I could no longer suffer it! (Baillie, 2000b, 2.2.121-131)

As clearly understood from these lines, Rezenvelt's acquisition of wealth and title is the reason for De Monfort's hatred. Watkins argues that De Monfort and Rezenvelt respectively exhibit "the anxieties and despair resulting from the loss of aristocratic social authority and ... the energy and defiance arising from the acquisition of bourgeois energy and authority" (1993, p. 41). So, Rezenvelt's upward social mobility is a blast to De Monfort's aristocratic status. De Monfort cannot help but loathe him and he likens him to a snake on his path while he is trying to move forward with firm steps: "Here can I wander with assured steps,/Nor dread, at every winding of the path,/Lest an abhorred serpent cross my way,/To move" (Baillie, 2000b, 1.2.8-11). While also referring to their future encounters in various places like the town, the party, the woods and the convent, this premonition clearly manifests his anxiety and fear of losing his aristocratic power and status as Rezenvelt is an obvious obstruction to his power and status. As Botting argues, "the Gothic figures … became signs of a pervasive cultural anxiety concerning the relation of present and past, and the relationship between classes, sexes and individuals within society. Gothic figures were also indicative of changing notions of culture and nature" (1996, p. 57). As one of these Gothic figures, De Monfort is about to reach a breaking point because of this shifting social structure. In fact, De Monfort's predicament exposes the fragility of this established social and cultural structure at an individual and societal level when it comes to maintaining and protecting its boundaries. So, at this point where the boundaries are breaking apart, fear and anxiety conspicuously come to the surface as his class identity is about to be annihilated.

While De Monfort finds Rezenvelt's presence threatening and disturbing, the Frebergs as the representatives of the aristocratic lifestyle accept Rezenvelt into their social circle much more easily than De Monfort and consider him as a very pleasant gentleman. Count Freberg describes him as follows: "He is so full of pleasant anecdote,/So rich, so gay, so poignant is his wit,/Time vanishes before him as he speaks/And ruddy morning thro' the lattice peeps/Ere night seems well begun" (1.1.192-196). The Frebergs and Rezenvelt enjoy their lives, unlike De Monfort who feels displaced and troubled. The Frebergs are depicted as carefree people who love socialising and revelling. In relation to their aristocratic lifestyle, Burrough states that "[t]heirs is a world of flattery, of false, feigned and indiscriminate friendships, of hyperbolic and superficial discourse" (1995a, p. 230). So Rezenvelt probably imitates this aristocratic lifestyle or easily adjusts himself to it while the Frebergs live their lives in a jolly and indifferent spirit. De Monfort's pride and superiority complex cannot let him adjust to this new social structure, unlike the Frebergs. Firstly, the previous duel between De Monfort and Rezenvelt in which De Monfort lost and secondly, Rezenvelt's being socially accepted by De Monfort's social circle trigger the latter's frustration as neither is acceptable to De Monfort because he finds all these insulting to his aristocratic identity. While Rezenvelt is getting more involved in this elite society, De Monfort is becoming more detached from it, which culminates in the fact that "De Monfort has become the naturalized monster of a gothic narrative" (Elliott, 2007, p. 96) at the end.

Moreover, De Monfort's first name is never revealed throughout the play while his sister has a name, Jane. This hereditary family name, De Monfort, is the only entity defining him. The non-existence of his first name is also a contributing factor to his fear and anxiety. As Baines and Burns state, "De Monfort is never merely an individual, he is the representative of a moribund baronial class, in retreat from the newly ennobled and enriched Rezenvelt whose growing power oppresses him" (2000, p. xxi). In this sense, De Monfort defies or is not given any individuality since he represents a class-based institution. He is so self-conscious of his nobility and class identity that the

loss of his grip on his power and status can be disastrous and humiliating for him as he is already being consumed inside with his hatred which is the outcome of his class-based anxiety and fear. To further elaborate, when talking about the duel between him and Rezenvelt, De Monfort says:

When he disarm'd this curs'd, this worthless hand

Of its most worthless weapon, he' but spar'd

From dev'lish pride, which now derives a bliss

In seeing me thus fetter'd, sham'd, subjected

With the vile favour of his poor forbearance;

Whilst he securely sits with gibing brow,

And basely bates me like a muzzled cur

Who cannot turn again.

Until that day, till that accursed day,

I knew not half the torment of this hell,

Which burns within my breast. Heaven's lightnings blast him! (Baillie, 2000b, 2.2.156-166)

His choices of the words like 'worthless,' 'fettered,' 'shamed,' 'subjected,' 'gibing,' 'muzzled cur' evidently demonstrate how De Monfort feels about himself when he is confronted by Rezenvelt. So, this unfortunate and humiliating defeat for him is a real blast to his family name and status since his only identity, that is his one and only familial name, is at risk of slipping away. In the end, the anxiety and fear related to his non-existence as an individual as well as the loss of his hold on his power and authority lead him to commit a murderous act.

Moreover, Sedgwick argues that the Gothic is "the first novelistic form in England to have close, relatively visible links to male homosexuality, at a time when styles of homosexuality, and even its visibility and distinctness, were markers of division and tension between classes as much as between genders" (1985, p. 91). Sedgwick further points out the ideological construction of the effeminacy of the aristocracy in relation to the growing middle class during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She refers to "the feminization of the aristocracy as a whole, by which not only aristocratic women ..., but the abstract image of the entire class, came to be seen as ethereal, decorative, and otiose in relation to the vigorous and productive values of the middle class" (1985, p. 93). Regarding the shifting class hierarchies of the period and the homosexual implication between De Monfort and Rezenvelt, the aristocratic effeminacy can be associated with the class conflict between the characters. In the play, Rezenvelt behaves as if De Monfort is a woman, specifically in his teasing flirtations: "(*smiling archly*.) What, think you, Freberg, the same powerful spell/Of transformation reigns o'er all to-night?/Or that De Monfort is a woman turn'd./So widely from his native self to swerve,/As grace my folly with a smile of his?" (Baillie, 2000b, 2.1.166-170). Besides, in relation to De Monfort's motive for coming to the town, Rezenvelt says: "O! 'tis love of me./I have but two short days in Amberg been./And here with postman's speed he follows me,/Finding his home so dull and tiresome grown" (Baillie, 2000b, 1.2.159-162). With his teasing comments, Rezenvelt turns himself into an object of desire for De Monfort. So, the haunting presence of Rezenvelt makes De Monfort vulnerable and frustrated at the same time in terms

of not only class identity but also sexual and gender identity. De Monfort is obviously regarded and teased as an effeminate person by Rezenvelt. Considering the conventional gender roles, De Monfort has already lost his sense of masculinity in relation to his sister who is depicted as a very rational person unlike De Monfort who is driven by his passions and emotions, and in that period, rationality is something attributed to men. Now De Monfort also assumes a kind of a feminine role before Rezenvelt, who functions as an "empowered male other" (Sedgewick, 1985, p. 106). This homosexual implication between them in fact refers to his fear and anxiety about his aristocratic position which is regarded as 'decorative' and 'otiose' in contrast to the vigorousness of Rezenvelt who is penetrating every bit of his life. This study does not intend to affirm the socially constructed ideas of gender roles but within this relevant context, the idea of the effeminacy serves to comprehend the extension of the class conflict between the characters. It shows that the established wall around De Monfort's aristocratic status and family name is falling apart as the aristocracy are gradually losing their power considering their contesting interests with the bourgeois class.

So, it is not wrong to state that Rezenvelt turns into the uncanny other or *doppelganger* of De Monfort. As Wagner states,

[h]istorically, the gothic trope most associated with questions of identity has been the *doppelganger* or double. Doubling may occur when gothic protagonists encounter a 'second self,' that is, uncannily similar character or an opposite. Alternatively, a troubled character might 'split' into two figures, usually as a way of dealing with psychological pain or repressed emotion. (2014, p. xxxi)

Rezenvelt represents De Monfort's split self or double as he poses a threat to De Monfort's well-established class identity. Rezenvelt represents everything that De Monfort is afraid of, for this reason, the latter sees him as an enemy figure and thinks that Rezenvelt "will not let [him] be the man [he] would" (337). In this regard, Wagner argues that "the gothic shows us that monsters are not so much our fearful others; rather they are our own irrepressible desires and our own insecurities" (2014, p. xi). Though thinking of Rezenvelt as a monstrous other breaking his world apart, De Monfort is the one projecting his fears and anxieties upon Rezenvelt, thereby turning Rezenvelt into an uncanny double. As Freud states, the *unheimlich* or the uncanny "belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread" (2003, p. 123). The "uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed" (2003, p. 148). Starting from their childhood, it seems De Monfort has tried to suppress his hatred somehow yet no matter how he tries to repress it, it comes back whenever he sees Rezenvelt. Uncanny enough, De Monfort has been suffocated by his reversed mirror image, Rezenvelt, throughout the play. So, he is surrounded by his fear and anxiety as Rezenvelt incarnate. Schaff also argues that "this points to an identity conflict fuelled by a socially unacceptable passion, turning the tragedy about hate into a tragedy about self-hate" (2017, p. 338). De Monfort cannot be the person he is supposed to be or desires to be, so this makes him feel humiliated and frustrated as he cannot identify himself based on the traditional boundaries anymore. So, with his intrusive presence, Rezenvelt definitely exposes De Monfort in terms of how De Monfort strictly adheres to his socio-cultural status, thereby threatening De Monfort's whole existence by demolishing his established class boundaries.

As many scholars point out (Hoeveler, 2001b, p. 129; Schaff, 2017, p. 340; Wozniak, 2008, p. 56; Gilbert, 2003, p. 99; Colón, 2009, p. 143; Haggerty, 2013, p. 256; Burrough, 1997b, p. 116),

De Monfort and Jane's close relationship implies incest, which is actually one of the mostly employed Gothic themes during the Romantic period. Since the loss of their parents, Jane has become a mother figure for all the De Monfort siblings. De Monfort depicts her as "[t]he virgin mother of an orphan race/Her dying parents left, this noble woman/Did, like a Roman matron proudly sit,/Despising all the blandishments of love;/Whilst many a youth his hopeless love conceal'd,/Or, humbly distant, woo'd her like a queen" (Baillie, 2000b, 2.1.237-242). These lines can be read as a projection of his Oedipal complex (Watkins, 1993, p. 52). Throughout the play, it is observed that they are very much close to each other and De Monfort hates the idea of her thinking less of him. After telling his secret to her at last, De Monfort says: "Ha! thou hast heard it, then? From all the world,/But most of all from thee, I thought it hid./… 'twas that which drove me hither./I could not bear to meet thine eye again" (Baillie, 2000b, 2.2.139-140, 144-145). So, it is possible that De Monfort's unsettled class identity and orphan status in the society may trigger this incestuous tone.[1] De Monfort is so displaced in familial and social terms that there is not a solid ground left for him to hold on to because everything around him is falling apart while his established world is also shrinking because of the growing bourgeois class. Here, in fact, the incestuous tone indicates De Monfort's desire and need for stability and preservation of his aristocratic status through Jane. She is like a last vestige for De Monfort to keep himself stable, secure and anchored but when he comes to Amberg without his binding piece, that is Jane, he cannot manage to pull himself together anymore. His unstable and displaced state because of his disconnection with Jane leads him to murder, madness and subsequent death.

Thinking that Rezenvelt and Jane are having an affair, De Monfort kills Rezenvelt in the woods. After the murder, De Monfort suffers a lot and dies in delirium in the end. After seeing the corpse of Rezenvelt, De Monfort says: "Come, madness! come unto me, senseless death!/I cannot suffer this! Here, rocky wall,/Scatter these brains, or dull them! (*Runs furiously, and, dashing his head against the wall, falls upon the floor*" (Baillie, 2000b, 4.3.89-91). With his suffering and self-destructive inclinations, his madness turns out to be another element isolating him from the social normative world. As Rigby states, "[m]adness is another common Gothic trope which can double as a code for 'excessive' relations between men; nineteenth-century Gothic texts regularly feature men who, on finding themselves under the domination of another male figure, go 'mad' or express a fear of madness" (2009, p. 52). The excessiveness of De Monfort's emotions drives him to his own demise along with Rezenvelt's. The unavoidable penetration of Rezenvelt into De Monfort's elite circle causes this excessiveness and also the loss of his mental stability as he is deeply disturbed by the haunting presence and surveillance of Rezenvelt. After murdering him, De Monfort has already been losing his mind and his seeing Rezenvelt's dead body makes him lose it totally. Thus, his fear and anxiety that are projected upon Rezenvelt, his uncanny double, destabilise his mental state and drive him towards madness. Considering their being the doubles of each other, Rezenvelt's pervasive presence and his subsequent death are correlated with the fact that De Monfort has been consumed by his anxieties and fears resulting from Rezenvelt's growing status and power in the society. Besides, after the murder, he says: "… I have no name –/I'm nothing now" (Baillie, 2000b, 5.2.60-61). Thus, the loss of Rezenvelt who projects De Monfort's anxieties and fears, and the loss of his family name become intersected and interwoven in this sense,

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1 According to Hoeveler who evaluates the incestuous inclination of De Monfort in relation to his hatred, "De Monfort is in the grip of a tabooed love for his sister, and somehow that love has veered off and disguised itself as a perverted, displaced, hysterical hatred of Rezenvelt" (2001b, p. 129).

referring to his total annihilation because he cannot tolerate the declining power of the aristocracy and probably because he cannot have his individual identity, unlike Rezenvelt who seems to be contented with himself and his identity throughout the play. Until then, he has been trying to hold on to his last name but now he loses it too. So, with the loss of his name, his whole existence is about to vanish as well. In the end, he cannot adjust himself to the new social order and loses his grip on his class identity and status.

## Conclusion

As observed throughout the play, De Monfort's growing hatred for Rezenvelt demonstrates his fear of losing his aristocratic power and status, which is accompanied by his fear of losing his hereditary family name. While the plot revolves around claustrophobia, restlessness, anxiety, fear and madness, Baillie portrays the impacts of the shifting class structure through the antagonistic relationship between De Monfort and Rezenvelt. Because of his antagonistic position threatening De Monfort's class identity, Rezenvelt turns into De Monfort's uncanny double or *doppelganger* embodying his anxieties and fears. Besides, while the effeminacy of the aristocracy reflects the class conflict between the characters, the incestuous implication between De Monfort and his sister accentuates the fact that De Monfort desires to keep his stability and preserve his social class status through the only unfaltering entity in his life, that is his sister, who is the representative of the aristocracy. Throughout the play, it is observed that the changing social structure of the late eighteenth century in terms of class dynamics incites a sense of suffocation, restlessness and frustration for De Monfort. By adapting the Gothic, Baillie reflects the claustrophobic and terrorised world of De Monfort resulting from his anxieties and fears about his declining aristocratic status and fading hereditary family name. *De Monfort*, thus, becomes the very Gothicised representation of the socio-cultural and political transformation of the period in terms of class identity.

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