

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

Filozofická fakulta

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

**The Comparison of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*
and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall***

Bakalářská práce

**The Comparison of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and
Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall***

(Bakalářská práce)

Autor: **Karolina Korabečná**

Studijní obory: Anglická filologie – Španělská filologie

Vedoucí práce: **Mgr. Ema Jelínková, Ph.D.**

Počet stran (podle čísel): 43

Počet znaků (bez mezer): 60 676

Olomouc 2021

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne

...14.1.2020...

Děkuji Mgr. Emě Jelínkové, Ph.D. za cenné rady, podporu a lidský přístup.

Abstract:

This bachelor thesis deals with the comparison of two novels of Brontë sisters – Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. The aim of this work is to compare these two novels, but the work also deals with the Victorian stereotype of woman being portrayed as 'the angel in the house' (Jane Eyre and Helen Graham). The part of this thesis is focused on the secondary literature, the style of writing and the description of characters in Brontës' works. The other part of the work deals with my personal analysis made from the primary literature.

Key Words:

Charlotte Brontë, Anne Brontë, Jane Eyre, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

Anotace:

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá srovnáním dvou románů od sester Brontëových – Jana Eyrová od Charlotte Brontëové a Dvojí život Heleny Grahamové od Anne Brontëové. Cílem této práce je porovnat tyto dva romány jako celky, ale také popsat ženský stereotyp zvaný „anděl v domě“ (Jana Eyrová a Helen Grahamová), který je typický pro viktoriánskou literaturu a tato díla. Část této práce se zabývá sekundární literaturou a v ní popsaném stylu psaní a charakterizování postav v dílech sester Brontëových. Druhá část práce je mou osobní analýzou učiněnou z primární literatury.

Klíčová slova:

Charlotte Brontëová, Anne Brontëová, Jana Eyrová, Dvojí život Heleny Grahamové

Table of contents

1. Introduction	6
2. Historical background	7
2.1 Victorian literature	7
2.2 Women in the Victorian novel	8
3. The Brontë sisters.....	10
3.1 Charlotte Brontë's Writing.....	11
3.2 Anne Brontë's Writing.....	13
4. Differences between Charlotte's Jane Eyre and Anne's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.....	15
4.1 Writing background	15
4.2 Narrators.....	17
4.3 Characterisation.....	19
4.4 Jane Eyre vs. Helen Graham	22
4.5 Setting.....	26
4.6 Stereotypes	28
4.7 Conclusions	30
4.8 Critics	32
5. Personal analysis of the heroines.....	34
6. Conclusions	39
7. Bibliography	41

1. Introduction

Brontë sisters are well-known for their works which are describing the society and they were not afraid to mention the negative attributes of people. Their novels contain the main women characters which are described in detail. The Brontës are describing the inner worlds of these women who have right to feel emotions, who want to be more independent and who desire to have happiness in their lives.

The aim of this thesis is to compare the main works of two of Brontë sisters – Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). In this thesis I will be focusing not only on the comparison of the novels but primarily on the main characters – Jane Eyre and Helen Graham.

In the first part of this work, I will be focusing on the secondary literature and the manner of writing of Brontë sisters. How they describe these women characters and what they emphasize in their novels. In the next part of this thesis, I will be comparing Jane Eyre and Helen Graham as the main characters. Which characteristics they share, opposed to qualities that differentiate them. The important question for this thesis is how each sister deals with the Victorian stereotype of 'the angel in the house'. How much they use this stereotype in their novels? And are the main characters 'angels in the house'? In the last part of this work, I will be doing my personal analysis made from the primary sources.

Although there are many works which deal with the comparison of Brontë sisters, each of them focuses on the slightly different topic. Some of them describe the life and work of all Brontë sisters as Patricia Ingham's *The Brontës*, other focuses only on one of the sisters as Elizabeth Langland's *Anne Brontë: The Other One* and David Deirdre, for example, writes about the Victorian literature and stereotypes in general. In this thesis, I would like to propose the comparison of two concrete works, their main characters, and the utilization of the one Victorian stereotype typical for these novels.

2. Historical background

2.1 Victorian literature

The Victorian era is connected with the reign of the queen Victoria. The beginning of this epoch with her enthronement in 1837 and the end with her death in 1901. The whole epoch then bears her name. This epoch gave us a lot of significant authors whose books are still very popular. Apart from Brontë sisters, it is Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning and many other authors. The Romanticism, as the previous epoch, was characteristic for its poetry and with the commencement of the Victorian era, novels became more and more popular.

Even though the individual works can differ in the topic or the form according to the decade it was written in, some of the characteristics are the same for all the Victorian novels – ‘huge casts of characters, complex plots, cliffhanger sections due to serialization or ever three-decker novels’.¹ The Victorian era is also known for its morality. People demand the abiding of the smallest morals which can be often observed in the novels and the typical feature of these novels is the conflict between morality and desires which people have. This is closely related to the conflict between social classes which Patricia Ingham summarizes as follows:

In practice, of course, society did not consist of three monolithic classes: within each there were uncertain areas and differing perceptions. For class is the two-faced concept: how other perceive us and how we perceive ourselves are often different matters. This is especially true in borderline or grey areas between classes, in which Charlotte and Anne showed an interest, for they themselves belonged to one.²

¹ Linda M. Shires, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel: The aesthetics of the Victorian novel: form, subjectivity, ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 61.

² Patricia Ingham, *The Brontës* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48.

2.2 Women in the Victorian novel

‘Marry a man with whom you were emotionally compatible if you could, but marry a man of material means you must.’³ This sentence can be understood as an advice for the Victorian women whose duty was to marry well and be a ‘perfect wife’. This attitude or idea is called ‘the angel in the house’, ‘which represents the perfect housewife, the domestic goddess of the middle class’⁴.

The Victorian feminine ideal of angelic virtue, used originally by Coventry Patmore in his domestic epic *The Angel in the House* (1845-62), embodied sexual purity and a strong sense of Christian morality, placing women in a secondary role to men. Woman’s appropriate sphere of influence was seen as domestic, and with this a clear line was drawn between the ‘female’ values expressed in the well-run Victorian Christian middle-class home and the ‘male’ public values of a fast-expanding capitalist economy.⁵

As Anne Hogan and Andrew Bradstock propose, the term ‘angel in the house’ is used for women who are good Christians, wives, and mothers. In other words, women who are devoted to their families and submissive to their husbands.

But in the end of the Victorian era this theory slowly starts to change because of the first feminist writers, this process is often called ‘killing the angel in the house’.

Other terms which are used, according to Sarah Kühl, for women in the Victorian novels are ‘the new woman’ and the ‘the fallen woman’.

³ Nancy Armstrong, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel: Gender and the Victorian novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 97.

⁴ Sarah Kühl, ‘The Angel in the House and Fallen Women: Assigning Women their Places in Victorian Society’ (Open Educational Resources, University of Oxford, 2016), 1.

⁵ Anne Hogan and Andrew Bradstock, *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture: Reassessing the ‘Angel in the House’* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1998), 1.

[T]he term The New Woman, an elusive label that embodies everything vaguely connected to female emancipation and suffrage. The Fallen Woman is another term, which is somewhat vague in that it encompasses several conditions in which a Victorian woman could find herself, but which formed a very significant, if negative part of Victorian social life.⁶

In the Victorian era, every woman was labelled according to these stereotypes. Women had two options; either they obey the rules given by the society to be ‘the angel in the house’, or they try to be independent and equal to men which means they are meant to be ‘fallen women’.

⁶ Sarah Kühl, ‘The Angel in the House and Fallen Women: Assigning Women their Places in Victorian Society’, 1.

3. The Brontë sisters

In this thesis I will be mentioning ‘the Brontës’ a lot, so it is important to clarify who I will be focusing on. There were five Brontë sisters in total, but two of them did not survive into their adulthood (Maria and Elizabeth) so they are not relevant for this work. And because this thesis is a comparison of the novels *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of the Wildfell Hall*, I will focus mainly on Charlotte and Anne. But to make the view on Brontë sisters more complex, I will also mention some information about Emily Brontë

Charlotte (born 1816), Emily (born 1818) and Anne (born 1820) Brontës are well-known English poets and novelists who wrote in the Victorian era. Although they (in terms of time) fall into the Victorian era, their style of writing or their writing in general is not considered purely Victorian. Emily is regarded as a Romantic writer; Charlotte’s writing is half Romantic and half Victorian and Anne’s writing is considered totally Victorian.

It is important to mention that Emily was often underestimated or rather ‘hidden in plain sight’ but after her novel *Wuthering Heights*, which was a great success, she became appreciated not only by readers but also by her sisters.

In their novels, they are dealing with social problems as Patricia Ingham proposes:

[A]ddressing contemporary issues relating to class is precisely what all three sisters do. Between them they cover most of the significant issues: individuals in the grey area between upper classes and lower classes; and the question of social mobility. Charlotte’s perception of her own inability to handle such topics probably results from a failure to recognize that in her novels class boundaries are questioned.⁷

Brontë sisters use women as main characters in their novels, but we should not understand their writing as purely feministic. Although, the heroines seek their

⁷ Patricia Ingham, *The Brontës*, 100.

own self-fulfilment, kind of freedom and sometimes even an independence, they are not described as feminists. Drew Lamonica makes an apt claim that:

The Brontës do not dismiss the family as a viable structure for self-fulfillment; families can indeed be repressive if they deny personal development and actualization, but the novels conclude with the realization or promise of harmonious domestic union [...] For the Brontë heroines, a communion of self *and* family, not self-sufficient autonomy, is the goal of the journey of self-development and the concluding site of personal freedom.⁸

In the beginning of their writing careers, the Brontë sisters were using the pseudonyms because of the harsh criticism towards female authors. They were using the ‘Bells’ pseudonyms: Charlotte wrote as ‘Currer Bell’, Emily as ‘Ellis Bell’ and Anne as ‘Acton Bell’. Their pseudonyms were first used when publishing their collective literary work – *Poems* in 1846. Charlotte Brontë wrote under her pseudonym until the first success with the novel *Jane Eyre* when she admitted her (and her sisters’) real name and the reason of them doing so.

Brontë sisters had also one brother – Branwell Brontë – who dedicated his life to art (he was painter and poet). Unfortunately, Branwell became addicted on alcohol which had a negative impact on his life.

3.1 Charlotte Brontë’s Writing

Charlotte Brontë wrote mostly novels with main female characters and the approach she was adapting is summed up by Ruth Parkin-Gounelas: ‘Charlotte Brontë, who, as a product of the Romantic age, was subject to the scrutiny of newly developing standards, navigated a difficult course between Romantic and early Victorian attitudes.’⁹

⁸ Drew Lamonica, *We Are Three Sisters: Self and Family in the Writing of the Brontës* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 3.

⁹ Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, *Fictions of the Female Self* (London: Macmillan Academic and Professional LTD, 1991), 4.

As already mentioned, Charlotte Brontë focuses on the grey area between individual social classes. Her female characters often deal with the belonging to the grey area when they originally come from one class, they are brought up in other class and, in the end, live in different one. As an example, I will mention Jane Eyre who was born to parents of mixed social status which led to belonging to the lower social class. Jane was then brought up in the house of her aunt with better social status and she ended up living with Mr. Rochester, the owner of Thornfield Hall.

Other topics which Charlotte uses in her novels, except of the mentioned social classes, are women stereotypes, Victorian standards, cultural traditions, and she also mentions other social problems as slavery.¹⁰ In her novels we can often find elements of romance and gothic.

All her novels are closely influenced by her life experiences. *The Professor* and *Villette* by her sojourn in Belgium, *Jane Eyre* by the experiences at The Clergy Daughter's School at Cowan Bridge and *Shirley* is influenced by Charlotte's friend Mary Taylor. Throughout the novels, there are also evident her experiences as a governess.¹¹

Charlotte tries to make her novels more believable and relatable by using first person narrator and mixing dialogues with reflective writing. The characterization of narrator in *Jane Eyre* described by Mike Edwards can be thus applied not only on *Jane Eyre* but also on *Villette*. In her third novel, *Shirley*, she uses the omniscient narrator.

[T]he split between an external world of contention and an inner world of peace emerges naturally from the use of the first-person narrator, relating experiences and meditating upon them. This interplay between experience and meditation is a central and essential element in the structure of the whole novel.¹²

¹⁰ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*. (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1999), 202-207.

¹¹ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 195-197.

¹² Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 6.

3.2 Anne Brontë's Writing

Anne's literary work is not as rich as her sisters'. Except for her poems, Anne wrote two novels – *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. In the *Agnes Grey*, Anne uses a first-person narrator who addresses the reader (often said that it is following Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*) and in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* she uses multiple storytellers and embedded narrators (that may follow Emily's *Wuthering Heights*).¹³

The topics, Anne uses in her novels, are very similar to topics used by Charlotte. Women stereotypes in the Victoria era ('the angel in the house'), social classes and the observance of rules given by the society.

Opposed to Charlotte, Anne's novels are more feministic. Her female characters are trying to be independent and more equal to men. She is writing rather ironically, and her works can be considered as a tacit critique of 'the angel in the house'.

Anne finally presents a very different feminism from Charlotte's and Emily's, one more influenced by the eighteenth century than by the Romantic poets and novelists who shaped her sisters. Anne's feminism focuses on the cultivation of reason and on nurture of the soul leading to conquest of the passions. Anne's heroines feel deeply but strive to discipline their passions. [...] Anne places personal independence and suitability of temperament with a men over sexual passion, and the consequences to her art are significant.¹⁴

As Elizabeth Langland suggests, the female characters are trying to be more rational and not be carried away only by their passions. In contrast to Charlotte's novels, Anne's heroines' strength is not a sexual passion.¹⁵

¹³ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One* (London: MacMillan Education LTD, 1989), 31.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 30.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 30.

Anne's work was also influenced by her personal life. In *Agnes Grey* she uses her experiences as a governess and in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* she uses theme of the alcohol in marriage (connection with her brother's life).

4. Differences and similarities between Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

4.1 Writing background

As already mentioned, the writing of both sisters was influenced by their personal lives. Their experiences were used in their novels and often we can easily recognize these elements.

When writing *Jane Eyre* (or other novels), Charlotte was inspired by the great novelists of that time – Jane Austen, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Charles Dickens. Other literature which influenced the novel *Jane Eyre* is the Bible which is very often alluded there. Except from the literature, Charlotte often uses a cultural tradition of her country as one of the motifs to make the work more relatable. And last but not least to inspire her, was her experience as a governess and teacher.

The Lowood section of *Jane Eyre* is based closely on the experiences of Charlotte and her sisters at The Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge. Her experiences as a governess, and her familiarity with the manners and character of clergymen are everywhere apparent in her work. The natural scenery of the West Riding is a constant backdrop in her novels, and characters often appear speaking in the rhythms and dialect of the locality.¹⁶

Jane Eyre is Charlotte's second novel. Her first novel is called *The Professor* (written from the man's perspective) but it was not a success. Mike Edwards says that '[a]lthough *The Professor* was rejected, it was with such generous comments as to encourage Charlotte to submit *Jane Eyre* for publication in 1847. Written in a more sensational style than her earlier novel, [...] it met with a better reception, was published that year, and was rewarded with immediate success.'¹⁷

¹⁶ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 195.

¹⁷ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 198.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall is Anne's second novel. Her first novel is called *Agnes Grey* but because it was published in the same year as Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, it does not meet with such a success. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, published in 1848, was then more successful than her first novel.

Anne's novels were also influenced by School at Cowan Bridge¹⁸ where she got the education. 'The different education given to boys and girls and its disastrous consequences to both sexes are subjects which she addresses eloquently in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. The protagonist, Helen Graham, is particularly adamant about the harmful effects of boy's education, founded on principles at once narrow and promiscuous.'¹⁹

As well as Charlotte's work, Anne's novels were also influenced by her experiences as a governess and her attitude to unequal rights of men and women.

A full awareness of these inequities in British law informs Anne Brontë's novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, which also explodes the myth of domestic heaven and exposes the domestic hell, from which the protagonist ultimately flees into hiding. Brontë recognised that this domestic heaven was jeopardised by the behaviour of women as well as that of men. She saw in her own pupils the effects of the narrow education prescribed for women.²⁰

After spiritual and physical crisis (Anne suffered many illnesses) and the visit of the minister of the Moravian church²¹, she started to use more religious themes in her poetry and '*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* also develops the themes of election, reprobation, and salvation that were becoming so near to Anne Brontë's heart.'²²

¹⁸ Heather Glen, *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 196.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 6.

²⁰ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 25.

²¹ Margaret Connor, 'The Rescue: James La Trobe and Anne Brontë' (*Brontë Society Transactions*, 1999), 55-65.

²² Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 13.

4.2 Narrators

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte uses the first-person narrator where Jane Eyre tells us her life story. We can therefore distinguish Jane – the character and Jane – the narrator.

Jane the Narrator's comments serve to enhance the impact of Jane the Character's actions, building a second point of view that adds meaning and strengthens the pathos created within the reader. [...] The narrative and character voices serve to effectively communicate Jane's spiritual development in the text, allowing one to experience and one to evaluate the current action.²³

As said by Kristina Deusch, the Jane's narration is adding the information to Jane's actions. 'This is a highly effective style of writing, economical, vivid and rich. It is not objective, though it is not apparent at this point to what extent the narration is based.'²⁴ Charlotte's way of writing *Jane Eyre* is a mixture of characters' actions, descriptions, dialogues and reflective passages.

Jane narrates the whole story, with her focus chiefly on what she sees going on around her. Later on, as Jane matures, there is more opportunity for self-analysis. However, at this [beginning of the novel] childhood stage, the incidents she narrates are carefully selected to illuminate the personality and attitudes of the narrator herself. Much is left unsaid: we do not have to be told that Jane is a victim, for we see the situation enacted; the details of the character emerge naturally from the action, without the need for lengthy explanations.²⁵

The way of narrating *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* differs a lot. As discussed above, *Jane Eyre* is written in the first narrator and the whole story is

²³ Kristina Deusch, 'Jane the Narrator and Jane the Character: Changing Religious Perceptions in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*', (Digital Showcase, University of Lynchburg, 2014), 2.

²⁴ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 8.

²⁵ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 8.

narrated by Jane – the main character. Opposed to Anne’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* which is narrated by more authors and it is not the direct narration of the main character. ‘Instead of presenting the quiet story of one individual’s perspective, Anne’s Brontë’s second novel details the growth or deterioration of several characters and employs a sophisticated technique of layered narratives that undergirds the novel’s preeminent theme.’²⁶

Its dual narrative – the heroine’s private diary framed by letters from her second husband to his brother-in-law – is often considered clumsy; its subject – a bad marriage and its consequences – depressing or uncongenial. The novel’s frame of reference is religious rather than psychological; the Bible its most frequently quoted text.²⁷

This type of narrative can be also labelled as ‘framed retrospective narrative’ because the main story includes other stories or rather other points of view. One narrated by Helen Graham through her diary stands for the women’s point of view and the other one narrated by Gilbert Markham through his letters can be understood as a male or public point of view.

Tenant’s framed narrative is far more complicated as the layered structure instead demonstrates a fluid model of narrative negotiation. On the one hand, Tenant unfolds from Helen, and all that we know about her life prior to becoming the tenant of Wildfell Hall stems from her attempts to archive her memories. On the other hand, Gilbert maintains a level of control over how Helen’s memories are transmitted. Helen’s journal and Gilbert’s frame thus function together as co-dependent archives.²⁸

²⁶ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 118.

²⁷ Heather Glen, *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*, 99.

²⁸ Alyson June Fullmer, ‘The Archon(s) of Wildfell Hall: Memory and the Frame Narrative in Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*’, (Brigham Young University, 2016), 4.

4.3 Characterisation

In this chapter I will discuss the way Charlotte Brontë and Anne Brontë deal with characterisation of other characters (Jane and Helen will be discussed separately in the next chapter).

In Charlotte's works the number of characters differs. In *Shirley*, for example, there are over 150 characters²⁹, opposed to *Jane Eyre* where the number of characters is significantly smaller. In *Jane Eyre*, as in other novels, many characters appear just briefly but just few of them are really developed. Their characterization and reader's opinion are influenced by first-person narrator. Story is narrated by Jane, so the depiction of individual characters is also done by her.

Jane is always central. In the early chapters of the novel, characters pass before us in rapid sequence: Mrs Reed, Bessie, Abbot, John Reed and his sisters, Eliza and Georgiana at Gateshead; Miss Temple, Miss Scatcherd, Helen Burns at Lowood. All these characters are defined and differentiated by reference to their attitude to Jane. All have a function in the novel which extends beyond simple 'character': they have thematic significance and emotional meaning for Jane.³⁰

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte uses all characters typical for Victorian romance novel – an honest female protagonist coming from the lower class (Jane Eyre), a wealthy gentleman (Edward Rochester), a curious housemaid (Alice Fairfax), a reserved clergyman (St. John Rivers), somebody who is cruel to heroine during her childhood (Mrs. Reed) and somebody who is an obstacle to the protagonist's 'happy life' (Betha Mason).

Even though, these characters have common features with characters from other novels of the same genre, each of them is portrayed in the way it does not make them just 'an average character'.

²⁹ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 37.

³⁰ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 38.

Edward Rochester is, for example, described as a wealthy gentleman who spend his young life travelling to avoid his commitment. After marrying Bertha whose evinces madness, he became principled and responsible for a spoiled Adèle Varens (a daughter of his mistress from France). He loves Jane but because of Bertha he cannot live the life he wants. After Jane runs away, Thornfield Hall burns down and Bertha dies, he considers it as a punishment and decides to live alone in seclusion. He speaks to Jane directly and honestly (apart from his big secret) and they love each other, which also makes Edward Rochester likable for a reader. Opposed to Betha, who is the exact opposite of Jane Eyre. Bertha is a wild and promiscuous foreigner who became from a family with a genetic madness. Later, she is kept in Thornfield Hall because she became dangerous for others and even for herself. Other negative characters influenced by the relationship with Jane are Mrs. Reed, Abbot and Bessie. Their behaviour to Jane when she was little, makes reader to condemn them and even more sympathize with Jane.

Opposed to Edward Rochester, Arthur Huntingdon in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is the 'prototype' of Victorian man who thinks women are meant to be 'angels in the house' and they are not good for anything else.

[F]or him, too, a position of power makes absolute control a right. He is a rich man, in control of a large estate, a wife, son, servants, and a circle of male friends who are his satellites and throughout the narrative it is not reasoned consideration that determines any of his decisions or actions but appetites impulsively gratified. [...] he has had no long-term plan; he acts on his immediate wishes and gives no thought to the consequences or to the future.³¹

At first, Gilbert Markham seems to be a real gentleman and the exact opposite of Arthur Huntingdon and the reader sympathizes with him. But after studying his character in detail, it is possible to find many common features with Arthur Huntingdon. Gilbert Markham is also very immature, impulsive, jealous, violent and eventually, he is very cruel to Helen. He treats other women (for example Eliza Milward) as they were inferior. The only male character whom Helen can

³¹ Patricia Ingham, *The Brontës*, 151.

rely on, is her brother Frederick Lawrence. He is very supportive and tries to protect her by hiding her at Wildfell Hall. Other character who is protective towards Helen is her aunt Mrs. Peggy Maxwell. She is trying to convince her not to marry Arthur Huntingdon and then helps her in need, she stands in the position of mother role in the novel. Characters who give the reader negative connotation (except of Arthur Huntingdon) are Annabella Wilmot and Walter Hargrave. Annabella Wilmot is Arthur's mistress who flirt with him just in front of Helen and their friends and Walter Hargrave is the Arthur's friend who is described as a manipulator who stalks Helen.

As Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, also Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is influenced by the style of narrative. Part of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is narrated through the Helen's diary which gives the reader her point of view and the characters are influenced by her relationships with them. The novel is also told through letters from Gilbert Markham to his friend which influences the characterization too.

It is only by incorporating Helen's diary into his own narrative that Markham can reinterpret the Fallen Woman and runaway wife of Victorian convention as the model of excellent womanhood that the novel proposes. Helen's diary and her subsequent letters to her brother – also appropriated and incorporated by Markham – constitute primary evidence for the interpretive act, which was initiated by Markham's 'reading' of Helen's face and his conversations with her.³²

The main difference in characterization of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* can be that Anne uses more male characters who are described to show differences in using their power and masculinity. Charlotte is applying stereotypes to the position and behaviour of Jane rather than Mr. Rochester. Another feature which differs the characters are the 'clarity' of their personality. Charlotte describes the nature of her characters more as 'good' or 'bad', opposed to Anne whose characters are not so clear for the reader as, for example, Gilbert Markham.

³² Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 123.

4.4 Jane Eyre vs. Helen Graham

‘Jane narrates the whole story, with her focus chiefly on what she sees going on around her. Later on, as Jane matures, there is more opportunity for self-analysis. However, at this childhood stage, the incidents she narrates are carefully selected to illuminate the personality and attitudes of the narrator herself.’³³ As Mike Edwards propose, in the beginning of the book reader has to accept that the narration is made by the child as it is Jane’s autobiography. When Jane gradually matures, her personality naturally changes and develops. Being an orphan, hatred from her aunt, the death of her friend, everything influenced not only her childhood but also her adult life.

The effect is to create an atmosphere of grudge and resentment: we know that Jane feels neglected and trapped; already we are waiting to see how she will manage to escape from her situation. This is a pattern which becomes familiar as the novel proceeds: again and again, Jane commands our sympathy as she struggles to overcome obstacle to her happiness and development.³⁴

Jane as a child may seem a bit impertinent but at the same time, she is obedient. Her childhood at Lowood School makes her a calm, decent and polite young woman who wants to live her life. After getting a place of governess at Thornfield Hall, she finally has a chance for a real life outside the walls of her school. Then something unpredictable happens, she falls in love. Although many people during her life show her that she is only an orphan or a governess, that she is inferior, Mr. Rochester is only one who sees her as a real person.

Jane, who begins to fall in love with him not because he is her master but in spite of the fact that he is, not because he is princely in manner but because, being in some sense her equal, he is the only qualified critic of her art and soul. [...] Jane's eyes as much as she herself does and understands that, just as he can see beyond her everyday disguise as plain Jane the governess, she can see beyond his temporary disguise

³³ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 8.

³⁴ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 9.

as a gypsy fortune-teller-or his daily disguise as Rochester the master of Thornfield.³⁵

It is the first time in her life when she feels fulfilled. She is in love with Mr. Rochester, she likes to spend time with Adèle or Mrs. Fairfax and Thornfield Hall suddenly seems to be her 'home'. After she finds out the truth of Mr. Rochester's wife, she escapes. She becomes broken but on the other hand, she maintains her inner integrity and she becomes more independent at Moore House. She has time for self-realization and it seems that her suffering leads to empowerment. Jane becomes more confident and she is more aware of her virtues, but it does not mean that Jane stops to be modest and humble.

Later on, Jane rebels against the notion of a conventional domestic life of "making puddings and knitting stockings" (126). Yet this is precisely the sort of life she leads at Ferndean. Given the possibility that Jane-shut away in moldy Ferndean, constantly ministering to the demands of an invalid-may not have found her earthly paradise, the rhetoric of Victorian domesticity allows her no means through which to articulate any disappointment. Like any good household angel, Jane "delights in sacrifice"; any pain or suffering, supposedly transformed into pleasure by womanly love and devotion, is thereby negated. In choosing to marry Rochester, Jane has forfeited her ability to perform heroic, visible acts of self-renunciation.³⁶

According to feministic reading (as Lamonaca's explanation above), Jane's decision is made on the basis of Victorian conventions – to be 'an angel in the house'. On the other side, the romantic reading, show us Jane's desire to live happily with love of her life. The answer here is not clear, it depends on the reader and his point of view. My personal analysis follows in chapter 5 of this thesis.

³⁵ Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Plain Jane's Progress' (The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 790-791.

³⁶ Maria Lamonaca, 'Jane's Crown of Thorns: Feminism and Christianity in *Jane Eyre*' (Studies in the Novel, University of North Texas, 2013), 257-258.

Opposed to Jane's childhood, Helen's childhood is not described so in detail. To compare them in their adult life, Helen is more rebellious as she decides to escape from her husband and start a new life. But it was not like that before her marriage.

There, a young and idealistic woman marries a man whose character is already in need of reformation. Believing herself called to this task, she begins optimistically only to discover that she is powerless to effect any changes that cannot be wrought by the force of moral suasion. She has no social or legal leverage.³⁷

Helen is a woman of strong belief who tries to live according to Victorian conventions. Despite her aunt discourage her to do so, she marries an adulterer who drinks and gambles. She seems to be naive when thinking, she can handle it. After their son was born and her husband's problems were getting even worse, she decides to leave him to protect not only herself but most importantly her son – little Arthur. She is a great mother, and she tries to raise him to be a better man than her husband is. Sometimes it may seem that she is overprotective and that she is nearly smothering her son with love.

Throughout the novel, motherhood provides the impetus for plot, the reason for action. Helen's husband Arthur is abusive, intemperate, and adulterous, yet Helen submits to him until she feels that their son is endangered. Her constant fear for Arthur-kidnapping-is made plausible by the stories retailed in the debates over the custody bill and the novel's setting ten years prior to the bill's passage. Along with masquerade, then, comes a nearly obsessive concern with privacy-a concern, however, that the novel persistently undoes.³⁸

After the successful escape from her husband, Helen, with the help of her brother Frederick, hides in Wildfell Hall where she wants to start a new life but 'Helen's

³⁷ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 119.

³⁸ Elizabeth Rose Gruner, 'Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane', (Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature, University of Richmond, 1997), 310.

life at Wildfell Hall is a masquerade from start to finish'³⁹. To keep herself and her son in safe, she is reserved, secretive and she does not share anything from her private life. Her attitude leads to slanders and it goes so far that she decides to give her personal diary to Gilbert Markham (she did not run away as Jane Eyre did).

Helen [...] ironically discovers that the only way to maintain her status as a private, domestic woman, and a mother, is to "go public" with her story, at least to Gilbert. Once the story is in Gilbert's hands, however, it becomes a public document; he uses it to combat the gossips' tales of Helen, and, perhaps more oddly, to negotiate a relationship with his brother-in-law twenty years after the events of the diary narrative.⁴⁰

Although Helen escapes from her husband, she came back to Arthur when he is dying, her motive can be understood as a fulfilment of her obligation towards him.

When Helen returns to her husband's bedside, she is as much avenging demon as she is redeeming angel. [...] [I]n psychological terms, Helen has achieved 'innocent' revenge. She is punishing with impunity. Her motives in returning to her husband cannot be impugned, but her presence is deadly to him. [...] She has won complete vindication from her husband.⁴¹

As well as Jane Eyre, also Helen Graham eventually spends the rest of her life with the man whom she really loves. Although it may seem that Helen is prouder than Jane, it is Jane who is rebellious right from the beginning. Jane is not afraid to speak out loud and to say what she thinks, opposed to Helen who still feels responsible for her violent husband.

³⁹ Elizabeth Rose Gruner, 'Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane', 310.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Rose Gruner, 'Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane', 311.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 146.

4.5 Setting

According to Cambridge Dictionary, setting is ‘the time and the place in which the action of a book, film, play, etc. happens’.⁴² Both novels – *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* – takes place in Victorian England in 1820’s and 1830’s when the stories began. Both – Charlotte and Anne – also sets their novels in rural England, as in manors and countryside mansions. It is important not to understand the setting as a simple ‘putting into some place and time’. Authors and especially The Brontës use the setting as one of the ways of provoking emotions and make the novel more realistic.

In Brontë’s novels, the setting is always richly depicted and powerfully felt. Places are tangible and authentic; the characters are conscious of them. [...] Brontë worked hard at her writing, but there is more than hard work at the root of the setting in *Jane Eyre*; she uses nature to bind the action together in a rich web of varied and interrelated imagery and symbolism.⁴³

The novel *Jane Eyre* is placed in five settings – Gateshead Hall, Lowood School, Thornfield Hall, Moor House and Ferndean. Every place is connected with the part of Jane’s life and its atmosphere evoke the concrete emotions in the reader. In Gateshead Hall, Jane spent the part of her childhood in her aunt’s house where she was not treated well. Her feelings are intensified by the ‘red-room’ or the presence of the uncle’s ghost. The rest of Jane’s childhood, she spent in the Lowood School full of diseases and cold educators. After taking the place of the governess, Jane moves to Thornfield Hall, to the dark and cold place with the supernatural phenomena. On the one hand, Jane feels uncomfortable there because of the mystery or secret which Mr. Rochester hides but on the other hand, Jane finally finds the place where she feels like home. She belongs somewhere and she experiences the romantic relationship for the first time. Moor House and Ferndean are not so developed in the novel but are also important in Jane’s life. Moor House became the Jane’s refuge after finding out that Mr. Rochester has a wife.

⁴² Cambridge International Dictionary of English, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴³ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 64-73.

She has an opportunity for a self-realization, and she becomes more confident. The last place – Ferndean – is described as a dark and desolated place far from the outside world and even Mr. Rochester did not want his wife Bertha to live there. After Thornfield Hall burned down, Mr. Rochester moves there, which can be understood as a punishment for him but after Jane comes back, they choose this place as their home.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall can be also placed in five main settings – London, Wildfell Hall, Linden-hope, Staningly Hall and Grassdale Manor. London is in the novel described by Helen as a fashionable place to live, but she also mentions its demoralization because of the alcohol and gambling. The important place in the novel is, of course, Wildfell Hall, where Helen was born and later, she returns to her brother's house where she is hiding and painting. Wildfell Hall should evoke the safeness in the reader. Other place in the novel is Linden-hope which is the Gilbert Markham's family farm near to Linden-Car described as modest and hospitable. Staningly Hall can be understood as Helen's home because of her aunt's and uncle's residence where she lives, and it is also the place which she and Gilbert choose as their home. Last place to mention is Grassdale Manor – the Arthur Huntingdon's residence where Helen lived when married to Arthur. Because she was unhappy in her marriage, also this place evokes the negative emotions.

In *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Helen Huntington is trapped in the marital house, unable to influence her husband's actions in the public sphere while he is still able to exert considerable control in the domestic sphere, the 'woman's domain'. [...] Legally, married women had few rights over their children, their home, or indeed their body. It is these facts which eventually force Helen to flee the confinement of her marital home, to literally escape from the domestic sphere of her house and marriage with Huntington. [...] The house also plays an important role in her independence.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Sophie Parkinson, 'The Role of the House in Facilitating Female Agency in the 19th and Early 20th Century Novel', (Leiden University, 2018), 18.

4.6 Stereotypes

Stereotype is said to be ‘a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong’.⁴⁵ If it is a literature stereotype, we can understand it as set idea that is typical for a concrete era (in the case of this thesis it is a Victorian era) and that is mostly a main topic which appears in books written in given period. Opinions to certain stereotype differ a lot and its analysis is at least problematic. In novels discussed in this thesis (*Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*) appear two major stereotypes – class boundaries and the gender conflict (specifically ‘the angel in the house’).

The problem of class boundaries is the main theme of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* as Jane struggle with ‘belonging somewhere’ her whole life and many people show her that she is not one of them. She grew up without parents which may cause an unfamiliarity of her origin, she lived with her aunt who belongs to a middle-class, then Jane spent the most of her childhood as an orphan at Lowood School what was a descend to a lower-class but eventually, she marries Mr. Rochester what makes her a part of a high-class society. In the case of Jane, we can speak about ‘grey area’ between social classes because she does not belong to one certain class her whole life.

In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, class boundaries are not discussed so in depth but in the end of the novel, we can notice that after Gilbert Markham finds out Helen Graham becomes an heiress, he wants to give up because he thinks Helen would not marry him when she became rich (which means she is of the higher social status now).

The other stereotype which appears in these novels is the conflict between males and females connected with ‘the angel in the house’. As already discussed in chapter 2.2, women in Victorian era were meant to be good wives who take care of their husbands, their children, and their home. They were not supposed to have their own opinion or their own spare-time activities which would be far from

⁴⁵ Cambridge International Dictionary of English, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

women Victorian standards as knitting, for example. Jane Eyre as well as Helen Graham were showing their independence and avoiding becoming just ‘the angels in the house’. Jane always says her opinion directly and she has no problem even when speaking with Mr. Rochester (as he is a male with higher social status). Jane expressed her opinion that ‘women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute stagnation, precisely as men would suffer’⁴⁶ and she said her life would be empty if filled with ‘making puddings, and knitting stockings [...] playing on the piano and embroidering bags’.⁴⁷

In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Helen Graham was described as more emancipated heroine as she leaves her husband and becomes totally independent. She does her paintings for a living and she is not reliant on anybody.

‘I’m sorry to offend you, Mr Markham,’ said she, ‘but unless I pay for the book, I cannot take it.’ And she laid it on the table.

‘Why cannot you?’

‘Because –’ she paused, and looked at the carpet.

‘Why cannot you?’ I repeated with a degree of irascibility that roused her to lift her eyes, and look me steadily in the face.

‘Because I don’t like to put myself under obligations that I can never repay – I *am* obliged to you already for your kindness to my son; but his grateful affection, and your own good feelings must reward you for that.’⁴⁸

But in the end, it is Jane, who is more emancipated as Helen returns to her husband to fulfil her obligation.

Although both of them are showing their slightly emancipated opinions throughout the whole story, eventually, they end up being wives and taking care of their husbands, children, and home.

⁴⁶ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1992), 107.

⁴⁷ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 107.

⁴⁸ Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1994), 59.

4.7 Conclusions

‘Reader, I married him.’⁴⁹ The opening sentence of the last chapter of the novel *Jane Eyre*. After Jane returns to Mr. Rochester (who is seriously injured after the fire in Thornfield Hall), she marries him to live ‘happily ever after’. But what happened with Jane’s feministic belief? She was refusing to be ‘an angel in the house’, a wife who is knitting socks and taking care of her husband. But eventually, she ends up living this way. Mike Edwards explains the reason why she probably did so. ‘This, then, is the same Jane as before, but translated into a position of greater power. She has money thanks to her legacy, and position thanks to her marriage, and she can look forward to a stable future.’⁵⁰

After all that Jane experienced during her life, she finally finds a place where she belongs and where she is loved. For the first time in her life. As was already discussed, Jane is not considered the typical Victorian woman whose life role is being a wife and a mother, who is limited by her husband. But her experiences and a possibility of a self-realization lead to her independence (thanks to acquired legacy) and an impression of bigger power. She is not poor, inferior, and weak anymore.

Such independence is a threat to the literary tradition of masculine heroism – and, indeed, it is not surprising that when she does marry him, he is literally a cripple, reduced in manly strength, maimed and blind, forced to lean on her, to accept her guiding hand. Brontë herself could not conceive of male heroism surviving in its full splendour at the side of such a mate.⁵¹

Charlotte Brontë’s writing is not feministic, but she is asserting the women power and independence. Her heroines are strong, and they are not willing to submit completely to men.

⁴⁹ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 454.

⁵⁰ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 170.

⁵¹ Millicent Bell, ‘CLASSICS REVISITED: Jane Eyre: The Tale of the Governess’ (*The American Scholar*, 1996), 263.

Anne Brontë is applying similar qualities for her heroines, but of all Brontës, Anne is the most feministic one. In her novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Helen Graham is going right against the Victorian conventions. Helen leaves her husband, lies about her previous life, and does a painting for a living. She is mysterious, reserved, and unpleasant to other people, she has qualities undesirable for the Victorian woman. But, as well as Jane Eyre, she ends up marrying Gilbert Markham and they live a decent life. 'Helen Huntingdon is a much harsher, more vengeful angel [...] and this is supported by Anne Brontë's refusal of the martyr ending'⁵². As Siv Jansson propose, Anne Brontë is refusing to let her heroines suffer. Arthur's death is understood as Helen's liberation, so she can legally live life she wanted to. In the end of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, there is a similarity with *Jane Eyre* in the acquisition of power for the heroine. As well as Jane, Helen gains the wealth which enables her to be more independent and powerful. In the case of Helen Graham, her wealth also improves Gilbert's social status.

Anne Brontë's solution is to provide Helen with a fulfilling second marriage, to 'reward' her for her previous suffering with an apparently happy union, in which the balance of power is shifted in her favour. However, she offers no wider solutions for the problems highlighted in the novel: marriage remains a lottery in which luck seems to determine the wife's fate.⁵³

To compare the endings of both novels, the heroines reached the same turning point. Restrictions which limited their life disappeared or, to be more specific, people who were standing in the way of their happy life died. They gained better social status due to acquired wealth and they marry men whom they love and who were somehow debilitated, so eventually, it may seem that Jane and Helen were not just in the position of 'angels in the house'.

⁵² Siv Jansson, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall: Rejecting the Angel's Influence*. In: Hogan A., Bradstock A. *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 32.

⁵³ Jessica Cox, 'Gender, Conflict, Continuity: Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) and Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893)' (*Brontë Studies*, University of Wales Lampeter, 2010), 13.

4.8 Critics

As all famous literary works, also Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* got critical reviews and it divided readers into two groups – one who loved not only the novels but also the Brontës as writers and the other who rather criticize these novels and the style of writing.

According to Mike Edwards, there are three main approaches in criticism of *Jane Eyre* – Robert B. Heilman's, David Lodge's and Shirley Foster's.⁵⁴ In an essay by Robert B. Heilman, he deals mainly with the usage of Gothic in Charlotte Brontë's works. He divides Gothic into three types: 'old Gothic', 'Anti-Gothic' and 'new Gothic'.⁵⁵

The remainder of Heilman's essay is devoted to exploring the expression of 'new Gothic' in the major novels. He discusses the way in which Brontë denies superficial attractiveness to the protagonists of *Jane Eyre* in order to draw attention to their powerful inner attraction, in which love is mixed with hostility and violence, and with deep need which verges on the blasphemous.⁵⁶

In essays of David Lodge, he focuses on the language of novels. He says that in *Jane Eyre* appear two kinds of language: 'a firmly practical, realistic and literal mode, which stresses basic animal comfort, and is keenly aware of emotional states; and a unity of tone in the novel, on which critics agree, is an effect of the reconciling of these two linguistic registers.'⁵⁷ In his book, Mike Edwards also mentions the symbolism David Lodge finds in *Jane Eyre* (e.g. fire for a development of Jane Eyre's character opposed to ice which stands for Mr. Rochester).

⁵⁴ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 211.

⁵⁵ Robert B. Heilman, 'Charlotte Brontë's 'New' Gothic', (*From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad*, University of Minnesota Press, 1958), 118-132.

⁵⁶ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 213.

⁵⁷ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 216.

The third critical approach by Shirley Foster deals with the duality of vision. She says that the novel can be read in two ways: 'either as a capitulation to orthodoxy; or as a vindication of female assertiveness.'⁵⁸

The work of Anne Brontë is often overshadowed by her sisters Emily and Charlotte. Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* has not only less attention but also is often considered as a critique of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*. Even Charlotte herself blamed Anne that her novel caused 'a number of attacks on *Jane Eyre*'s coarseness'.⁵⁹ 'The reviewer in the *Rambler*, for example, had concluded that, 'Nevertheless, on the whole, we should say that *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is not so bad a book as *Jane Eyre*'.⁶⁰

The reason why Anne probably criticized the work of her sister is that Anne is more rebellious in her novels, she tries to apply more feministic opinions, she criticizes social stratification, and she goes against the Victorian conventions.

The first instance for which Anne Brontë criticises her sister is the social conformism portrayed in Charlotte's novel. Despite the rebellious nature of the book's reputation, *Jane Eyre* does not rebel or rises against the social patterns of her time; on the contrary, she accepts, respects and adjusts herself to them; *Jane Eyre*, in fact, supports social stratification and the notion of following it.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Mike Edwards, *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*, 220.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 152.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Langland, *Anne Brontë: The Other One*, 152.

⁶¹ Alžběta Zedníková, 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall as a Critique of *Jane Eyre*' (Masaryk University, 2013), 34.

5. Personal analysis of the heroines

The whole previous chapter and its subchapters should serve as an overview of several authors' literal analysis of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. It discussed the main factors of these novels, their similarities, and differences. In this chapter I will do my personal analysis of heroines – Jane Eyre and Helen Graham – based on the books⁶² and television adaptations: *Jane Eyre* by Susanna White (2006) and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Mike Barker (1996).

First to analyse will be Jane Eyre as it is easier for me to identify with her. From the beginning of the novel Jane follows certain values which sometimes complicate dealing with certain situation in her life but on the other hand, it makes me revere her for it. Jane is decent, polite, modest, and sincere. Even though she was taught to be gracious, she is not afraid to tell the truth or her own opinion out loud, even in front of people with higher social status. It could be said that she always calls things as they are, at least in her thoughts.

The whole novel *Jane Eyre* is narrated by Jane which gives us a very personal point of view. The narrative starts in Jane's childhood, so it is obvious that she is developing throughout the novel. In the beginning, Jane lives with her aunt Mrs. Reed where she is treated very unfairly. Mrs. Reed does not give her any love and Jane is treated differently than her cousins (Georgiana, Eliza and John) which gives her miserable feelings. She wants to have home and family and she wants to belong somewhere. She longs for love since she was just a little child. The only person in Gateshead who treated her nicely and who give her some feeling of belonging there was Bessie Lee, the maid who was working there.

After getting to Lowood School, where she is firstly considered disobedient, she becomes friend with Helen Burns and this friendship is another milestone which influences her life. Helen is her closest friend and because of Helen's submission,

⁶² Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1994).

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1992).

Jane develops her obstinacy. In Lowood School, Jane also strengthens her faith and gets the opportunity to work as a governess at Thornfield Hall, which changes her life forever.

After some time at Thornfield Hall, she slowly starts to feel being accepted somewhere thanks to Alice Fairfax and little Adèle. Jane, firstly in her life, experiences the love to a man, to Mr. Rochester. She was not prepared for it, but it happens so suddenly, and she became enraptured. 'Mr. Rochester, I will love you and live with you through life till death.'⁶³ Jane's words which proved how much she loves him and, luckily, this feeling became mutual. It was a blissful part of her life, she was enjoying Mr. Rochester presence and she was feeling somehow equal to him. He gave her this impression of being desired and listened to. She demonstrates many times that she does not want to be just another wife and mother without dreams, she refuses to sit at home and 'knit stockings'. She also said that '[i]t is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex'.⁶⁴ Although Jane was longing for love, she was not willing to give up her freedom or her own mind.

When Jane finds out what the Mr. Rochester's secret was, when she finds out about Bertha, she is devastated, she is so hurt as she never was. And she felt a lot of pain during her life. Mr. Rochester offers her to live with him as his mistress, just to be together, but this was an example of Jane's lost freedom. She does not want to hide her life, to be the second woman in Mr. Rochester's life. And even though she loves him as nobody else, she must leave him. To leave Thornfield Hall. To leave her whole new life.

Jane starts a new life in Moor House where she is living with sisters Diana and Mary Rivers and their brother St. John. Hiding her identity was a kind of escape from the previous life for her. She wants to start a new life. She becomes independent and strong thanks to Rivers who helped her and who served as a role

⁶³ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1992), 321.

⁶⁴ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1992), 107.

model for Jane. Working at school, Jane does what she always wanted to, and she was even able to be in charge of it. When St. John offers her to go with him to India where they can work and live together as a brother and a sister, she refuses. If she agrees, she will also lose her freedom, just in other way than before. She would be hiding her true feelings which goes against her beliefs.

Probably it was proving her independence to herself and obtaining wealth which makes her to return to Thornfield Hall. She is feeling strong and stable now. When she learns about what happened there, she finds Mr. Rochester and all her feeling become so recent. Even though she was rebellious from the beginning, she decides to make concession in her opinions, because she wants to live with Mr. Rochester, to live with love of her life and, finally, to belong somewhere.

In the second part of this chapter, I will do a personal analysis of Helen Graham from *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. For me, personally, Helen is too reserved, and, in some situations, I cannot understand her behaviour but if I try to be more objective, Helen's life was very uneasy, and her actions always lead to protect her son Arthur.

Even when being young, Helen was always a good Christian with strong moral obligations, but before she met Arthur Huntingdon, she was full of optimism. When she visited London for the first time, her aunt Mrs. Maxwell warned her before men like Arthur Huntingdon, but Helen was young, naive, and Arthur was handsome and determined to marry her. Helen was convinced she has chosen the right men to live with, but she ascertains soon that she was mistaken.

Arthur Huntingdon was all that Helen's aunt said. He was rude adulterer whose interests were nothing but other women and alcohol. It does not last long, when Arthur starts to host his friend with similar interests. One of regular visitants – Annabella Wilmot – was even his mistress. Arthur flirts with her right in front of Helen and other friends. Helen feels powerless because Arthur as a man has all power in his hands. She can just quietly tolerate it. But this is not what Helen does, she tries repeatedly to talk to him, to guide him to the right path, but Arthur

is incorrigible. Helen then fights with herself and a conflict between love she feels to Arthur and hatred she feels because of things he does to her.

As time passes, she is more content when Arthur leaves for a long time. Helen, who meanwhile raise a son, is a great mother and little Arthur means a whole world to her. She would do anything to protect him. Other conflicts come when Arthur decides that he will make a man from little Arthur, here Helen knows that she has no opportunity to stop it because Arthur is becoming more and more aggressive. In this time, it is a breaking point for Helen. She knows that the only possibility to save her son is to run away. First attempt, when she asks her husband, is unsuccessful, so she decided to escape secretly.

After the escape, she hides in the house where she was born, she became a new tenant of Wildfell Hall. From this point of the novel, she became very reserved, secretive, and even unpleasant to other people and her behaviour leads to slanders. Nobody knows what life she was living, and Helen is frightened of that Arthur would find them. The only one who truly loves her and protects her and her son, is her brother. He is the only one she believes to.

When her neighbour, Gilbert Markham, evince her feelings to her, Helen is very aloof. Even though she was suffering in the marriage, her moral obligations are still stronger than the possibility of a real happiness. Later, she even returns to her dying husband because it is her duty. But now, she is not looking frightened anymore. Helen is living on her own and she also earns money with the activity she loved – painting. It is possible that the feeling of greater power makes her feel less scared of him. Arthur is now in the position of someone who needs help. After Arthur's death, Helen is completely freed from this duty towards her husband, but she cannot focus on her own happiness, because of her earlier discussion with Gilbert. She really loves him, but she could not leave her husband which Gilbert does not understand.

After some time, Helen, with the wealth of her aunt, lives contentedly with little Arthur but she cannot forget feelings she has for Gilbert and which she hides so deeply. Eventually, she has an opportunity to explain him how she felt, and she

can declare her love to him. Now, there is not anything which stands in the way to her deserved satisfaction.

As I mentioned, it was easier for me to empathize with Jane Eyre, as her opinions and behaviour is more natural to me. It is possible that Helen Graham is more understood by mothers as her behaviour is influenced by her son as she does everything to protect him. But I must admit that both heroines are described in detail and they are perfectly developed. It is not hard to believe them and to sympathize with them. In my opinion, Brontë sisters belong to the group of authors who portray the novel characters in the best possible way.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to compare novels written by two of the Brontë sisters – Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848). This thesis focuses not only on novels as the whole but mainly on heroines – Jane Eyre and Helen Graham – who are developing throughout the whole story.

In the first part of this thesis, I was working with the secondary literature to give an overview of literal analysis of these novels. Each writer who does the literal analysis of one of these novels is influenced by his own reading which can, eventually, change many statements which are made. Each author is also focusing on different aspect of the novel. Some of them are writing about the development of the heroines, some of them are analysing other characters, others focus on the style of writing or on the style of narrative. For my work it was fundamental to give a comprehensive summary of individual aspects of these novels.

In the beginning of this work, I analysed the writing background of the chosen novels – the style of writing which apply each of the sister, the problematic they develop in the novel and stereotypes typical for the era it was written in (Victorian era).

In the last part of this thesis, I did the personal analysis of these novels made by reading the books and watching certain television adaptations. In the personal analysis I made I was focusing on the heroines and their development throughout the whole novel. Their attitude, behaviour, and emotions.

Both sisters – Charlotte and Anne – have its own type of writing which characterize them, but they also share the same elements applied in their works. They are both using a female character as a protagonist, who are not willing to become dependent on men. To become a woman who just take care of their husbands, children, and home. They have dreams, they want to self-realize and they are not afraid to say their opinion. Both sisters are dealing with the themes as love, social status, female stereotypes, and Victorian conventions. Also, the conclusions of both novels are very similar. Heroines who fight for being

accepted and understood obtain a wealth, they become independent but, eventually, they end up living with the man whom they love. The male protagonists of both novels are in the end debilitated and somehow weaker than females. The ending of both novels can be understood as a silent resistance against the Victorian conventions. The major difference between these novels is probably that Anne's writing is more feministic, and her intentions are not so concealed. Her writing is considered as a quiet satire of 'the angel in the house'.

The question asked for this bachelor thesis was how each sister deals with the Victorian stereotypes in her novel and if the main female characters are 'the angels in the house'. Although the endings of novels indicate that Jane and Helen are not completely 'the angels in the house' as they became more independent, it is not as it seems. In the novels we can notice (from behaviour, opinions, and statements) that Jane and Helen are the opposite of typical Victorian housewives. They are wilful and they are not afraid to defend their opinions in front of men. They are not fearful of leaving the love of their lives to become self-reliant. Even though they return to their men to marry them and to have children with them, they are, in the end, more powerful than their husbands. Both, Jane and Helen, obtain wealth which leads to a better social status. In the case of Jane, Mr. Rochester is blind and wounded so he must rely on someone else's help. And in Helen's case, she has better social status than her forthcoming husband Gilbert Markham. But the ends of both novels show the twist in their beliefs. Jane decides to make some concessions in her opinions, and she became the wife and mother. Helen is, in fact, devoted to her husband throughout the whole novel. All this led me to the conclusion that Jane Eyre and Helen Graham are 'the angels in the house'. Helen is 'the angel in the house' for the whole time and Jane, eventually, became one too.

7. Bibliography

Primary sources

Brontë, Anne. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1994.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1992.

Secondary sources

Amigoni, David. 2011. *Victorian Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Barker, Juliet. 1994. *The Brontës*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Bell, Millicent. 1996. 'CLASSICS REVISITED: Jane Eyre: The Tale of the Governess'. *The American Scholar* (Vol. 65, No. 2, pp. 263-269), The Phi Beta Kappa Society.

Cambridge International Dictionary of English. 1995. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Connor, Margaret. 1999. 'The Rescue: James La Trobe and Anne Brontë.' *Brontë Society Transactions* (Vol.24, No. 1, pp. 55-65).

Cox, Jessica. 2010. 'Gender, Conflict, Continuity: Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) and Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893)'. *Brontë Studies*. University of Wales Lampeter.

Deirdre, David. 2001. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Deusch, Kristina. 2014. 'Jane the Narrator and Jane the Character: Changing Religious Perceptions in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*'. Digital Showcase, University of Lynchburg

- Edwards, Mike. 1999. *Charlotte Brontë: The Novels*. London: MacMillan Press LTD.
- Fullmer, Alyson June. 2016. 'The Archon(s) of Wildfell Hall: Memory and the Frame Narrative in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*'. Brigham Young University (All Theses and Dissertations).
- Gilbert, Sandra M. 2012. 'Plain Jane's Progress' The University of Chicago Press.
- Glen, Heather. 2002. *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gruner, Elizabeth Rose. 1997. 'Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane'. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, University of Richmond.
- Heilman, Robert B. 1958. 'Charlotte Brontë's 'New'Gothic'. *From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad*, 118-32. University of Minnesota Press.
- Hogan, Anne, and Andrew Bradstock. 1998. *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture: Reassessing the 'Angel in the House'* London: Macmillan Publishers.
- Ingham, Patricia. 2006. *The Brontës*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jansson, Siv. 1998. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall: Rejecting the Angel's Influence*. In: Hogan A., Bradstock A. *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kühl, Sarah. 2016. 'The angel in the house and fallen women: Assigning women their places in Victorian society'. Open Educational Resources, University of Oxford.

- Lamonaca, Maria. 2013. 'Jane's Crown of Thorns: Feminism and Christianity in *Jane Eyre*'. Studies in the Novel, University of North Texas.
- Lamonica, Drew. 2003. *We Are Three Sisters: Self and Family in the Writing of the Brontës*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Langland, Elizabeth. 1989. *Anne Brontë: The Other One*. London: MacMillan Education LTD.
- Parkin-Gounelas, Ruth. 1991. *Fictions of the Female Self*. London: Macmillan Academic and Professional LTD.
- Parkinson, Sophie. 2018. 'The Role of the House in Facilitating Female Agency in the 19th and Early 20th Century Novel'. Leiden University.
- Zedníková, Alžběta. 2013. 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall as a Critique of Jane Eyre'. Masaryk University.