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Burning Too Bright For This World: Independent Woman
in the Novels of the Brontë Sisters
(bakalářská práce)

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Anglická filologie

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

V Olomouci dne

Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce je věnována zobrazení nezávislé ženy v románech Charlotte, Emily a Anne Brontëových. Práce popisuje historický kontext a pozici ženy ve viktoriánské společnosti v souvislosti s jejími nepříliš velkými možnostmi prožít nezávislý rovnoprávný život. Další kapitola je věnována biografii autorek, kde je čtenář seznámen s událostmi, které ovlivnily jejich tvorbu a s některými autobiografickými prvky v jejich dílech. Dále popisuje způsob, kterým se samy autorky snažily získat nezávislost a rovnoprávné postavení ve společnosti.

Hlavní část práce se skládá z analýzy tří románů sester Brontëových, *Jana Eyrová* (Charlotte Brontë), *Na Větrné Hůrce* (Emily Brontë) a *Dvoji život Heleny Grahamové* (Anne Brontë). Hlavním cílem této analýzy je představit autorky jako význačné spisovatelky, které v dobách, kdy byla žena pokládána za méněcennou a žena-spisovatelka byla podceňována a neakceptována společností, dokázaly prezentovat své názory a vydobýt si místo mezi uznávanými spisovateli této doby. Práce rozebírá výše zmiňovaný obraz nezávislé ženy na konkrétních příkladech promítnutých v těchto dílech a závěrem je navzájem porovnává.

Zkoumá způsob, kterým se autorky dotýkaly dané problematiky, a je ukázkou toho, jak tři zdánlivě pasivní dívky žijící v pustině Yorkshirských vřesovišť dokázaly bojovat proti předsudkům a diskriminaci.

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Název bakalářské práce: Obraz nezávislé ženy v románech sester Brontëových

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Klíčová slova

Brontë, nezávislost, rovnoprávnost, feminismus, žena, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

Annotation

The bachelor thesis deals with a depiction of independent women in the novels of the Brontë sisters. It describes the historical background and the position of women in Victorian society with regard to their restricted opportunities for independence and equality in life. The next part mentions their biography and pays attention to the most important events which influenced their creations as well as some autobiographical features of their work. It also describes the way in which the writers struggled for independence and the equal social position of women.

The main part of the thesis consists of an analysis of three novels by the Brontë sisters, Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. The main aim of the analysis is to present the authors as distinguished writers who managed to demonstrate their independent opinions and made their mark among other respected writers of that time in spite of the fact that women were regarded as inferior and female writers were undervalued. The image of independent women is demonstrated in particular examples depicted in the novels and in conclusion these issues in the novels are compared.

The thesis studies the way the authors addressed this issue and is a demonstration of how three ostensibly passive girls living in the solitude of the Yorkshire moors managed to fight against social prejudices and discrimination.

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Poděkování

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1. Introduction

Although the image of a Victorian woman was the image of a submissive, obedient, soft and mild character, the Brontë sisters, ladies who were growing up in the relative solitude of the Yorkshire moors, managed to contribute to the revolutionary spirit and present the question of women rights and independence in their work. During their short lives, they achieved success in a society which did not respect female writers. Their work gives us an image of conventional Victorian society and the difficulties women had to go through if they wanted to gain independence and equality.

The aim of the thesis is to present Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë as distinguished writers dealing with the 'Woman Question' in their novels and study the issue of independent women in their work. It also contains their biographies and briefly comments on the social position of female writers.

The initial part of the thesis consists of the historical background regarding the position of women in society, their opportunities for education and employment, as well as the general opinion regarding female writers. The next chapter includes the Brontë sisters' biographies with regards to their work, and with special attention given to their independent opinions which were contrary to public opinion of that time.

The major part of the thesis deals with an analysis of three novels – Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of the Wildfell Hall*. I will discuss the portrayal of independent women in these works with regards to the social position of women at that time and also with regards to some possible autobiographical aspects. I will dedicate special attention to the major female characters of the novels regarding their independent behaviour and opinions.

Finally, I will focus on a comparison of the three novels and will examine in what way and how successfully they managed to capture this issue in their work.

2. Historical Background

The Brontë's writing career occurred during the Victorian period (1837 – 1901). Their novels were published in the 1840s and 1850s. Society of that time used to give priority to men in all spheres: from education, working opportunities and politics, to literature. As Anis states, the nineteenth century was a great time for English Literature, thanks to the contribution of the printing press and the expansion of education.¹ Nevertheless, women were still disregarded and had to stay out of literary circles regardless of how good their skills could be. Despite this disparagement and discrimination, there were still a number of female writers who managed to make their mark in a time full of prejudices. When consider names such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, undoubtedly the Brontë sisters and others, one can see some evidence of female emancipation at that time. Colquhoun puts it as follows: “These are all middle-class women of a period which is supposed to have seen a complex eclipse in female education.”²

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) could be considered one of the first quite radical feministic writings to pave the way for the question of women's education and their position in society. Hereby, the long-lasting female battle started to influence social and political events in Britain. Literature was a strong and important means of communication, but it was not easy for female writers to invade the literary scene of that time because women in general were considered to be inferior to men, dependent and their mental (and also physical) abilities were not acknowledged. The right to vote was a privilege of men only until 1918, but although female writers had neither the right to vote, nor many possibilities for education and equal position in society, their work is a demonstration of their mental power and great writing abilities.

¹ See Rehnuna B. Anis, “The Woman Question in the novels by the Brontë Sisters.” *IJUC Studies*. Vol. – 3. (Jun., 2009), pp. 19-30. *Bangladesh Journals Online*. Web. 10 Jan. 2013 <<http://www.banglajol.info/index.php/article/view/2629>>

² Ethel Colquhoun, “Modern Feminism and Sex Antagonism.” *The Lotus Magazine*. Vol. 9, No. 2 (Nov., 1917), pp. 63-71. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 Jan. 2013 <<http://www.jstor.org>>

There occurred many changes involving both the social and political scene during the Victorian period and one of them represents, as Anis points out, “the rising consciousness of women about their rights and potentials.”³ Women were aware of the unequal opportunities in various spheres and started to address ‘the Woman Question’ and fight for their rights. However, their sovereign, Queen Victoria, though she herself was a woman, did not support these efforts. What is more, as Anis points out, “Queen Victoria considered women's suffrage, which began as early as 1840, as a ‘mad folly’.”⁴ Thus, as a consequence of this unsupportive environment, women still remained undervalued together with working class men. The social situation they had to cope with seemed to be a vicious circle, because as Aked emphasizes, “The weakness of the woman has been her womanhood.”⁵

Claire Midgley defines the beginning of modern feminism in the period of time between the 1790s – when M. Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published and the mid 1860s – connected with the initiation of women's suffrage.⁶ During this time, the question of woman's position in society was addressed and investigated. This concerned itself mainly with the issues of – female education, the appropriate social role of women and whether the biological differences of men and women (in this case women were considered to be naturally weaker) denoted the same weakness of women with regard to their mental abilities and qualities.

The initial position of the emancipated Victorian women was not easy, as their only chance for gaining some social contacts and good living possibilities was a good marriage. As Colquhoun argues, boys at that time were expected to live as individuals and had opportunities for education and consequently for gaining power

³ Anis, “The Woman Question in the novels by the Brontë Sisters.” *IIUC Studies*. Vol. – 3. (Jun., 2009), pp. 19-30.

⁴ Anis, “The Woman Question in the novels by the Brontë Sisters.” *IIUC Studies*. Vol. – 3. (Jun., 2009), pp. 19-30.

⁵ Charles F. Aked, “The Woman Movement in England.” *The North American Review*. Vol 188, No. 636 (Nov., 1908), pp. 650-658. University of Northern Iowa. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 Jan. 2013 <<http://www.jstor.org>>

⁶ See Claire Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2007.

and property.⁷ Women, on the other hand were still dependent either on their husbands, or in the case of remaining unmarried, on their fathers. Although, over the course of time, they had some opportunities for education, this still was not of equal quality in comparison to that of men. On the other hand, as Colquhoun emphasizes, soon British fathers started to realize that there was the possibility that it could be necessary for their daughters to earn their living.⁸ Consequently the education of women – though not so expensive or of such good quality, gained a certain degree of importance.

The Brontë sisters undoubtedly addressed the ‘Woman Question’ in their work. Although their attitude might seem more moderate than radical nowadays; when we consider the social background and possible social contacts of the ladies, one might realize just how bold they actually were and how independent were their minds. Anis defines their abilities as follows, “Nowhere do the sisters appear to be inferior in their craft than their male counterparts of the time. Rather, the male novelists hardly ever used their voice to protest against the repression faced by women or use their pens to ask for the rights of women.”⁹

The Brontës' female characters were not portrayed as mild, dutiful and obedient. Actually they fought for women's rights, independence and they fought for equality. The novels address the issue of female education – whereas *Jane Eyre* and *Agnes Grey* point out the importance of better education for women and also employment as a means of independence, in *Wuthering Heights* it is possible to find a representation of how devastating the effects an inappropriate female education can have. They deal with the independence of women in many aspects, and what might have been found quite challenging at that time – is the independent woman leaving her husband – and thus her source of support – to live on her own. This issue is represented in both, *Wuthering Heights* in the case of Isabella leaving Heathcliff and *The Tenant of the Wildfell Hall*. Charlotte and Emily were also appreciated for other

⁷ See Colquhoun, “Modern Feminism and Sex Antagonism.” *The Lotus Magazine*. Vol. 9, No. 2 (Nov., 1917), pp. 63-71.

⁸ See Colquhoun, “Modern Feminism and Sex Antagonism.” *The Lotus Magazine*. Vol. 9, No. 2 (Nov., 1917), pp. 63-71.

⁹ Anis, “The Woman Question in the novels by the Brontë Sisters.” *IIUC Studies*. Vol. – 3. (Jun., 2009), pp. 19-30.

qualities of their work, as Forel argues: “The difference in imaginative quality separates the novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë from those of the other great English novelists of the nineteenth century.”¹⁰

All in all, the position of female writers was extremely difficult in that period and the Brontë sisters's rank among the remarkable women who, through their specific, distinguished work, managed to fight the conventions and prejudices against women of that time as men's equals.

¹⁰ Boris Forel, *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature. 6. From Dickens to Hardy*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1982.

3. The Brontë Sisters - Biography

I would like to provide some information about the life of the Brontë sisters, which includes their family background as well as their education and governing experience. All of these at least in some cases, had a fundamental influence on their work, out of which I would mention Charlotte's masterpiece *Jane Eyre* and Anne's *Agnes Grey* with evident autobiographical elements, that were confirmed by many studies and even by Charlotte herself in Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) influenced by the Yorkshire nature surroundings.

The thesis, focused on the independent woman in the work of the Brontë sisters, also explores their attitude towards independence, compares their desires, inner feelings and the behaviour of the independent female characters in their books with the real personalities of the authors themselves.

In this part of the thesis I worked with Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), Charlotte Brontë's *Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell* (1850), Angeline Gorreau's *Introduction to Agnes Grey* (1988) and Phyllis Bentley's *The Brontës and their world* (1969). I also refer to the academic articles *The Brontë Sisters* (1901) by John Bell Henneman and *Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius* (1920) by Lucile Dooley.

3.1. Family background

Charlotte (born on 21 April 1816), Emily Jane (born on 30 July 1818) and Anne (born on 17 January 1820) were daughters of Mr. Patrick Brontë, Irish by origin, at that time a Church of England cleric and Maria Brontë, his wife. Both parents, strictly religious and well read, were attached to literary composition and as Dooley, mentions in her *Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë* (1920) “There is a reason to believe that both parents were above the average.”¹¹

¹¹ Lucile Dooley, “Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius.” *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272. *University of Illinois Press. JSTOR*. Web. 5 Jan. 2013 <<http://www.jstor.org>>

Rev. Patrick Brontë published two volumes of poems (*Cottage Poems*, 1811 and *The Rural Minstrel*, 1813) and although Mrs. Brontë did not publish, her letters “show some slight ability to literary expression.”¹²

At the time of the marriage Mr. Brontë was a minister at Hartshead. Later the family moved to Thornton where the Brontë sisters and Patrick Branwell were born. The next and last family seat was Haworth. Maria Brontë died here in 1821 after an exhaustive illness.

Her sister, Miss Elizabeth Branwell came to Haworth during Maria's illness to help the family with the household and care for children. Although Mr. Brontë made efforts to remarry after his wife's death, his attempts were unsuccessful and he finally asked Aunt Branwell to return and stay in Haworth. For Miss Branwell this was a complete change of her environment and lifestyle as she was used to the lively atmosphere of Penzance, her home town, and Haworth was a relatively isolated place. Aunt Branwell treated the children well, and was an intelligent, skilled gentlewoman but she could never be the equivalent of the tender nature of Maria. According to Bentley, “she was never referred to with affection in the Brontë's notes and letters.”¹³ The children respected her, but as Dooley states “she was never in any sense a mother to them.”¹⁴ They grew up along with their brother Patrick Branwell and two elder sisters. Maria, born in 1813 is suggested to have been the model for the Helen Burns character in Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Elizabeth who was born in 1815. Both of them died of tuberculosis in 1825, developed on account of the harsh conditions and severe régime of The Clergy Daughter's School at Cowan Bridge, where they were sent for their education.

Patrick Branwell, the only son was born in 1817. Educated at home by his father, Patrick was very communicative, unstable, outgoing and as talented as his sisters. Quite a firm relationship among the three sisters and Patrick Branwell developed during their childhood through sharing their imaginary world of ‘The Great Glass

¹² Dooley, “Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius.” *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272.

¹³ Phyllis Bentley, *The Brontës and their World*. 1969. London: Thames and Hudson, 14.

¹⁴ Dooley, “Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius.” *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272

Town'. Afterwards there was his alliance with Charlotte and their imaginary kingdom 'Gondal'. His later irresponsible behaviour and decline which involved his, over the course of time, deep alcoholism, growing debts and opium abuse, became a dark spot on their close relationship. All these circumstances finally caused his death in 1848.

3.2.Haworth

This place plays an important role in the shaping of the sister's characters and there is also the perceptible impact of these surroundings on their work out of which I would mention the environment in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë.

Haworth lies in the Yorkshire countryside and was a relatively isolated place at that time, with no train connection. Surrounded by moors, it provided the sisters with an escape from the reality of their solitude. They loved the moors from their early childhood. Bentley captures their attitude well: "...their nearness to the moorland, a bleak grandeur which stripped their taste to the austere and nourished their love of independence."¹⁵ Bentley also argues that, "the readers from the south of England and more distant places have said that they never understood the Brontë's writings until they had seen Haworth."¹⁶ Walking round the Yorkshire hills and moorlands provided the sisters with the feeling of liberty and independence, especially Emily loved the moors, as J. B. Henneman comments: "This closeness to nature, to the bleak, desolate, heathery hills, is a trait never lost"¹⁷

Elizabeth Gaskell, (1857) describes the life of the growing girls in Charlotte's biography. The sisters would finish their hand work at nine in the evening to 'study' which means they read their stories to one another and commented on them.¹⁸

Charlotte wrote about the life at the Haworth Parsonage (during the time when she returned from Roe Head) in one of her letters to Ellen Nussey: "In the morning from

¹⁵ Bentley, *The Brontës and their World*. 1969.28.

¹⁶ Bentley, *The Brontës and their World*. 1969. 32.

¹⁷ John Bell Henneman, "The Brontë Sisters." *The Sewance Review*. Vol. 9., No. 2., (Apr. 1901), pp. 220-234. The John Hopkins University Press. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 Jan. 2013 <<http://www.jstor.org>>

¹⁸ See Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 1857. London: Penguin Books, 1997. 56.

nine o'clock till half-past twelve, I instruct my sisters and draw, then we walk till dinner, after dinner I sew till tea time, and after tea I either read, write, do a little fancy work or draw, as I please.”¹⁹ According to Bentley, her reference to occasional writing means in fact, a good deal of literary involvement.

3.3. Life of the Brontë Sisters

According to Bentley, (1969), their life was full of contradictions manifested in their ancestry and environment. “Their world was formed by unusual elements. Their heredity was Celtic – a character usually eloquent, expressive, extrovert. Their environment was Yorkshire – among a people realistic, practical, reserved, greatly disliking any too great revelation of feelings.”²⁰

3.3.1. Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte was born on 21 April 1816 in Thornfield. Her youth plays an important role in the interpretation and understanding of her work. According to Bentley, “It was the childhood of Charlotte Brontë that was the determining influence giving shape to her literary art in later years, giving her much of the power she had.”²¹

She did not have the opportunity to enjoy her childhood for long because at the age of ten she had to assume the maternal position in the family after the death of her mother and her elder sisters. According to Angeline Goreau's *Introduction to Agnes Grey*, (1988), although she “did her best to adopt Maria's motherly attitude toward the younger siblings, but she was by nature less suited to the role.”²²

First, as with all the children, she was educated at home by Aunt Branwell and later sent to The Clergy Daughter's School at Cowan Bridge. The tuition at Cowan Bridge along with the harsh conditions and severe régime was an oppressive experience for little Charlotte. The tragic loss of her two sisters on account of these conditions left a strong mark on Charlotte's mind. The Lowood school was modelled on Cowan

¹⁹ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969.57.

²⁰ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969. 68.

²¹ Dooley, “Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius.” *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272.

²² Goreau, “Introduction.” Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

Bridge and the founder - Mr. Carus Wilson served as the model for the character of Mr. Brocklehurst in *Jane Eyre*, (1847), which was confirmed in E. Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857). Charlotte and Emily were taken home to Haworth after the death of their elder sisters Maria and Elizabeth at Cowan Bridge and Aunt Branwell took up their instruction. Later Charlotte's godparents offered to pay her fees at Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head school, where the girls were provided with good food, comparatively modern teaching methods, the discipline was firm but moderate. Although Roe Head meant loss of freedom and severe homesickness in the cases of her sisters, Charlotte experienced quite a happy period there at the times of her scholarship. Bentley puts it as follows. "This cultured milieu must have suited Charlotte well, once she had grown used to it, in spite of her home-sickness, and it softened a character formed by the rigours of Haworth."²³

She also developed a new friendship with Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor. Both of them played no less an important role, because as Dooley says, she was only involved in life-long friendships.²⁴ Ellen's correspondence with Charlotte provided a valuable amount of information because Ellen kept every single letter Charlotte wrote to her. Mary Taylor was intellectual and trustworthy enough for Charlotte to reveal her "the world below"²⁵, as she used to call her daydreams and she also told her about *The Young Men's Magazine* written by the Brontë siblings.

Charlotte's physical appearance at Roe Head described by Mary and Ellen is not particularly complimentary. Gaskell, (1857) mentions she experienced criticism due to her old-fashioned dress, short sight, lack of physical strength and curly hair.²⁶ Dooley confirms that "It was at Roe Head School that the final weight to her conviction of physical inferiority was given."²⁷

She left Roe Head in 1832 and took up the instruction of her sisters. Later she received an offer to return to Roe Head as a teacher with the possibility of taking one

²³ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969. 75.

²⁴ See Dooley, "Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius." *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272.

²⁵ See Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 62.

²⁶ See Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 62.

²⁷ Dooley, "Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius." *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272.

of her sisters with her for education. She decided to accept the offer but later found herself unhappy and disappointed by the new role. This was too common a daily routine for the much more ambitious Charlotte according to the notice in her private journal: "...am I to spend all the best part of my life in this wretched bondage forcibly suppressing my rate at the idleness, the apathy, the hyperbolic and most asinine stupidity of those flat-headed oafs and on compulsion assuming an air of kindness patience and assiduity?"²⁸ Charlotte left Roe Head and took a position as a governess, because she "thought it a duty as the eldest of the children, daughter of a clergyman of limited possibilities, to become a governess after she left school."²⁹ Although the circumstances did not allow her to be a perfect Victorian lady with her father's financial support, she still burned with literary ambitions: "She had a desire almost amounting to an illness of expressing herself."³⁰ She became involved in a correspondence with Robert Southey and had apparently attached some samples of her literary activity. Southey's reply was gentle, but with expectant signs of the typical undervaluing of woman as a potential writer. He "warned her of the daydreams and that literature cannot be a business of a woman's life and ought not to be."³¹ This indicates a typical male approach to a woman with higher aims in life, than just household works and bearing children. On the other hand, Elizabeth Gaskell, (1957), mentions Charlotte's "excitement which was nothing special in the girl writing to a reputable poet"³², on behalf of which she: "used some high-flown expressions, which, probably, gave him the idea that she was a romantic young lady, unacquainted with the realities of life."³³ Although Charlotte's reaction was very polite and venerable, and in spite of the fact Charlotte assured him that she would accept his advice, it later turned out that she, fortunately, did not take it too seriously. Another stage of Charlotte's life began with her scholarship in Brussels. Dooley, (1920), sees: "a legitimate expression of her expanding ego, because the desire to go to Brussels came as an irresistible longing to

²⁸ Goreau, "Introduction" Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

²⁹ Goreau, "Introduction" Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

³⁰ Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 74.

³¹ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969.91.

³² Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 76.

³³ Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 85.

get into larger places, to see, to know, to feel life in larger aspects.”³⁴ Educated together with Emily by Monsieur Heger, she took advantage of special lessons. The girls were unsuitable for normal tuition because of their age (Charlotte was 26 and Emily 24), therefore Mr. Heger educated them himself. The influence of Mr. Heger on her intellectual and emotional life suited her well, but the stay was interrupted owing to Aunt Branwell's illness and the necessity to go home. Later she came back as a teacher, which turned her stay into misery. The teaching of disobedient girls disillusioned her and also her sympathies towards Mr. Heger, a married man, passed to a passionate love and her relationship with Madame Heger turned to dislike on account of this fact. These circumstances made her life in Brussels unbearable and she finally resigned herself to going back to Haworth. Her next aim was to establish her own school for daughters of clergymen in Haworth together with her sister Emily. As Dooley, (1921), mentions, for Charlotte: “it was a welcome compromise which would enable her to win independence.”³⁵ The plan was a failure, because they did not manage to find any pupils. When we consider her relationship with her sisters, it was not an equal one, because Charlotte behaved as a leader. According to Goreau, (1988), “on account of her desire to publish, she made uninvited eruption into the private world of Anne and Emily”³⁶ and she even revealed Ellis Bell's identity against Emily's wishes. Later Charlotte admitted she “regretted it bitterly, for she found it against every feeling and intention of Ellis Bell.”³⁷ Charlotte's ruthless attitude towards her dying sisters is demonstrated in the situation when Charlotte read aloud a violent personal attack on their work published in a review in the belief that they might find it amusing. On the other hand, she loved her sisters deeply, especially Emily who, as she wrote: “seems the nearest thing to my heart in the world”³⁸

³⁴ Dooley, “Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius.” *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272.

³⁵ Dooley, “Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius.” *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272.

³⁶ Goreau, “Introduction” Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

³⁷ Goreau, “Introduction” Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

³⁸ Dooley, “Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius.” *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272.

Although marriage could have provided her with an escape from the necessity of governessing, it was not her desire to marry someone just for financial support or just because it was a social norm. Her wish was to marry a man whom she would esteem. As Bentley (1969) mentions, Charlotte received and refused three, almost four marriage proposals during her life.³⁹ In 1854, she revealed her engagement in a letter she wrote to Ellen Nussey: “In fact, dear Ellen, I am engaged.... I am still very calm, very inexpectant. What I taste of happiness is of the soberest order. I trust to love my husband – I am grateful for his tender love to me. I believe him to be an affectionate, a conscientious, a high – principled man; and if, with all this, I should yield to regrets, that fine talents, congenial tastes and thoughts are not added, it seems to me I should be most presumptuous and thankless. Providence offers me this destiny. Doubtless then it is the best for me.”⁴⁰

As Bentley (1969) says, “This, from the creator of those great lovers Jane Eyre, Caroline Helstone and Lucy Snowe, has an almost unbearable pathos.”⁴¹ According to Dooley, “she married Mr. Nicholls in the shy, reluctant spirit with which she had faced life and he was her last great compromise.”⁴² Bentley, mentions that Mr. Nicholl's was “not a man to be attracted by any kind of literary fame and it would rather repel him when he saw it in possession of a woman.”⁴³

Charlotte was the only Brontë who got married. The marriage took place in 1854 when she was at the age of 38 which was unusually late at that time. Considering her age, she might have been seeking stability and security alongside a respectable and probably also beloved man, rather than the passionate love of her literary characters. She sought safety, protection and control in the marriage, but in another letter to Ellen, she noted: “It is a solemn and strange and perilous thing for a woman to become a wife.”⁴⁴

³⁹ See Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969. 112.

⁴⁰ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969. 120.

⁴¹ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969.121.

⁴² Dooley, “Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius.” *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272.

⁴³ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969.124.

⁴⁴ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969. 87.

Although the marriage was supposedly satisfying, there were some new aspects to get used to - e.g. the loss of privacy, which were the subjects of Charlotte's complaints in her letters to Ellen.

Charlotte died on 31. March 1855. The cause of her death was officially pulmonary consumption according to her death certificate, but she actually died of sickness and feverish exhaustion in the eighth month of pregnancy.

3.3.2. Emily Brontë

Emily appeared utterly reserved and strong in her own private intentions, according to Charlotte in her preface to the posthumous edition of their work: "Emily was not amenable to the influence of other intellects."⁴⁵ Charlotte found extremes of resolution and simplicity in Emily's nature: "An interpreter ought always to have stood between her and the world"⁴⁶ As Dooley, (1920), mentions, "Emily was even far less understood by her contemporaries than was her sister."⁴⁷

"Emily Brontë was a 'space-sweeping soul' to use her own phrase about a philosopher: her thoughts on life, death, immortality, imagination, liberty, deity, had a depth and breadth of vision comparable to that of Wordsworth or Shakespeare."⁴⁸ Apart from her only novel *Wuthering Heights*, Emily is well-known for her remarkable poetry (*No coward soul is mine, I am only being whose doom*), which mirrors her life, the lonesome walks about the moors, her passion restrained by her reticence, the depth of her thoughts and evokes the feeling of loneliness and sorrow. Similarly to Charlotte, Emily was taken to Cowan Bridge school, where she was referred to as a "darling child"⁴⁹ by the headmistress. Later she joined Charlotte in Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head where she suffered from unbearable homesickness and did not manage to stay there for long. Emily took the post of a governess at the girl's boarding school Law Hill, which was not far from High Sunderland on the one hand and Shibden Hall on the other. Those two houses served

⁴⁵ Goreau, "Introduction" Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

⁴⁶ Brontë, "A Biographical note on Ellis and Acton Bell." Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 309-313

⁴⁷ Dooley, "Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius." *The American Journal of Psychology*. Vol. 31, No. 3., (Jul., 1920), pp. 221-272.

⁴⁸ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969. 97.

⁴⁹ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969.122.

as a model for the setting of *Wuthering Heights*. The two mansions were not the only source of inspiration. Henneman emphasizes that although Emily's relationship with her brother Branwell was more affectionate during his period of self-destruction, than her sisters', he became the source of inspiration for the brutality and coarseness of Heathcliff's character.⁵⁰ The appalling account of duties at Law Hill including hard labour and long hours made Charlotte worried about Emily's health. Emily did not resist the severe regime for a longer time than several months.

In 1842 Emily with Charlotte arrived in Brussels. She did not get on well with her tutor Mr. Heger, but he thought she had a “better mind of the two sisters – a mind like a man's.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, her inward character did not allow the others to understand and know her feelings. “She kept everything to herself, she sat silent in a corner and was universally unpopular in society.”⁵² Charlotte describes her as: “stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone.”⁵³

Emily did not live to see the success of her novel *Wuthering Heights*, she died on 19 December 1848 of consumption after a tormentous period during which she refused to see the doctor and take remedies. As Dooley argues, Emily's writing skills, although unappreciated during her life, were later highly elevated and she was even considered to surpass her probably more famous sister Charlotte.

3.3.3. Anne Brontë

Anne, the youngest Brontë sister was described by Charlotte in her *Biographical Notice*, (1850), as: “milder, more subdued person who wanted the power, the fire and the originality of her sisters, but was well-endowed with quiet virtues of her own.”⁵⁴

As a “literary Cinderella”⁵⁵, Anne was considered the least talented, the mildest Brontë in the shadow of her sisters. According to Goreau, (1988), who compares her

⁵⁰ See Henneman, “The Brontë Sisters.” *The Sewance Review*. Vol. 9., No. 2., (Apr. 1901), pp. 220-234.

⁵¹ Bentley, 49 Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969.122.

⁵² Henneman, “The Brontë Sisters.” *The Sewance Review*. Vol. 9., No. 2., (Apr. 1901), pp. 220-234.

⁵³ Brontë, “A Biographical note on Ellis and Acton Bell.” Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 309-313.

⁵⁴ Goreau, “Introduction” Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

⁵⁵ Brontë, “A Biographical note on Ellis and Acton Bell.” Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 309-313.

development with Charlotte's, her first novel *Agnes Grey* was successfully published in contrast with Charlotte's *The Professor*. Even her early death ruined the possibility to become more successful. Charlotte also mentions that Anne, “though milder and more subdued was equally capable of taciturnity.”⁵⁶ Elizabeth Gaskell (1857) writes about Charlotte describing her sister as “a docile, passive Anne”⁵⁷ who, from her childhood was always patient and submissive. Broadly speaking, Anne was hiding the truth and never revealed her feelings to Charlotte. She was educated partly at Haworth home by Aunt Branwell and later instructed by Charlotte and also spent some time at Roe Head, where she replaced Emily. As Goreau (1988) mentions, “she felt dual motivation at Roe Head, she wished to lighten the burden of failure for Emily by taking her place at school, but she was also very much determined to equip herself to make a living.”⁵⁸

Neither Emily, nor Anne felt happy at Roe Head. She felt a strong loss of freedom. Her poems written at that time are full of themes of imprisonment (*A Voice from the Dungeon, The Captive's Dream, The North Wind*). She left the school after several months because of bad health. After recovering, Anne decided to earn her livelihood as a governess. She wanted to prove not to be the vulnerable younger sister and went out as Ingham family's governess, where she was quite unhappy, but in her letters to Charlotte never mentioned this misfortune. She was soon dismissed for supposed incompetence.

In spite of this inconvenience, Anne is considered the most successful of the Brontë sisters in her milder governess attempts. The position of governess became the theme of her first novel *Agnes Grey* (1847).

Anne Brontë, born asthmatic and physically weak, died on 28. May 1849, soon after Emily's death of the same disease – pulmonary consumption.

⁵⁶ Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 63.

⁵⁷ Henneman, “The Brontë Sisters.” *The Sewance Review*. Vol. 9., No. 2., (Apr. 1901), pp. 220-234.

⁵⁸ Brontë, “A Biographical note on Ellis and Acton Bell.” Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 309-313.

3.3.4. The Brontë's writing Career

The Childhood writings consisted of writings about imaginary worlds and kingdoms. The first imaginary world was called 'The Great Glass Town', later renamed to 'Verdopolis'. The characters were the personification of their wooden soldiers, with the greatest hero called the Duke of Wellington. Each soldier was appointed to his own imaginary kingdom in the imaginary world. In 1829 Branwell invented *The Young Men's Magazine* where they wrote the Great Glass Town stories, essays and songs. Charlotte later took it over. All the preserved writings are written in tiny hand-printing on tiny folded sheets of paper, probably to prevent the other family members from reading it.⁵⁹ Then the siblings separated, Charlotte and Patrick Branwell created their own imaginary kingdom called 'Angria' and Emily together with Anne invented 'Gondal'. Emily continued with the Gondal writings all her life. As Bentley argues, "there is no Gondal prose in existence, Charlotte might have destroyed it after her sister's death."⁶⁰

The stimulus for publication of *Poems by Currer, Elis and Acton Bell*, (1846), was the situation when Charlotte accidentally found one of Emily's private notebooks and read some of the poems Emily kept in it. She went on to convince Emily that "these poems were out of ordinary and merited publication."⁶¹ Charlotte received a furious reaction from her sister because of the interference in her privacy and it took a long time to convince her. They finally published the volume of poems under pseudonyms. Bentley (1969) explains their choice of not revealing their real identities "partly because they did not wish to incur the prejudice of contemporary critics against women writers, and partly to conceal the enterprise from Papa, Branwell and the West Riding in general."⁶²

Anne and Emily had to wait for a year and half for the first publications of their novels *Agnes Grey* and *Wuthering Heights*, both in 1847. They were accepted by

⁵⁹ See Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969, 47.

⁶⁰ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969, 62.

⁶¹ Stone, "Why Charlotte Dissed Emily." *Literary Review*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3. (Spring 2006) pp. 63-70.

⁶² Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969, 81.

a minor publisher T. C. Newby for publication together in one volume on condition that the authors advanced 50 Pounds.

Agnes Grey, first written under the title 'Passages in the Life of an Individual' was published under the pseudonym Acton Bell. According to Goreau, (1988), the critics speculated that "Acton Bell must have bribed some governess very generously to reveal to him the secrets of her prison-house."⁶³ *Wuthering Heights* did not meet with much understanding from the public and the work was considered violent and even disgusting in some ways. As Bentley (1969) mentions, "Emily's solitary but superb masterpiece was so wild, so fierce, that it positively frightened Charlotte."⁶⁴

Charlotte's misfortune with regards to the publication attempts was desperate. Her novel *The Professor* was rejected by 6 firms. When she last submitted it to Messrs Smith, Elder and Co.: "it brought her a reply so courteous, discriminating and encouraging that she, after finishing *Jane Eyre*, sent it to that firm"⁶⁵ *Jane Eyre* was finally published in 1847 and immediately achieved popularity and praise from other well known people such as Thackeray, G. H. Lewes; even Queen Victoria read it.

The second editions of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were not well produced with many errors which horrified their authors and the critics did not praise the new publications either. *Wuthering Heights* was referred to as – "a compound of vulgar depraving and unnatural horrors"⁶⁶ by the Graham's magazine and *Agnes Grey* considered "less ambitious and less repulsive."⁶⁷

Anne sent her second novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* to the Newby against Charlotte's wishes and it was published in 1848. The story of a good Victorian wife's rebellion against her husband, her escape with her son and earning her own living was found shocking and it caused speculations about the sex of the author: "No one but a man, could write with such 'bold coarseness' such reckless 'freedom of language', no one but a man could make so daring an exhibition as this book presents

⁶³ Goreau, "Introduction" Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

⁶⁴ Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969, 76.

⁶⁵ Stone, "Why Charlotte Dissed Emily." *Literary Review*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3. (Spring 2006) pp. 63-70.

⁶⁶ Stone, "Why Charlotte Dissed Emily." *Literary Review*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3. (Spring 2006) pp. 63-70.

⁶⁷ Goreau, "Introduction" Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

to us.”⁶⁸ This, in fact, again convinces us of the attitude of the Victorian society towards woman writers. They refer to the “daring exhibition”⁶⁹ whose author could be only a man because they did not even believe a woman would be capable of writing such a thing.

Anne, in her preface to *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* proved her strong emancipation and feelings of protest: “I am satisfied that if a book is a good one, it is so whatever the sex of the author may be.”⁷⁰ Anne's second novel was also advertised in the way as if it was the work of the authors of *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* which made Charlotte and Anne decide to go to London and confirm their separate identities.

Unfortunately, shortly after the visit of the Smith's family and development of a good relationship with their publisher, Emily and Anne's premature deaths ended their careers. Charlotte, whose work was now marked by the tragic family circumstances, was finishing her next novel *Shirley*, published in 1849. Even though, according to Bentley, it shows some defect such as not enough story, it received quite a positive public reaction.⁷¹ In 1850 she wrote *Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell* to be placed in front of Smith's new edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*. She also published her novel *Villette* in 1853. None of her other works gained the success of *Jane Eyre*.

Her, originally rejected, novel *The Professor* was published posthumously in 1857 and in 1860 *Emma, a Fragment of a Story by Charlotte Brontë* was published in London Cornhill Magazine.

All in all, the Brontë sisters were remarkable women, who, eventually, were not afraid to enter the literary world in spite of living in a society which was not willing to accept a successful woman with higher goals than to be supported by her father or husband. The family background, situation and the environment in which they lived evidently influenced their writing, which, in that period, was mostly considered somewhat extraordinary, in some cases even outrageous.

⁶⁸ Goreau, “Introduction” Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

⁶⁹ Goreau, “Introduction” Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

⁷⁰ Goreau, “Introduction” Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, 7-48.

⁷¹ See Bentley, *The Brontës and their world*. 1969.53.

Their work consists of many autobiographical elements. Their strong female characters are an apparent exhibition of their personal desires and their emancipated view of an independent woman.

4. Jane Eyre

This part consists of an analysis of the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë with a special reference to women's independence and equality. The structure and public reaction will be shortly mentioned and the essential part of the analysis is focused on the main female character's struggle for independence and equality with regards to her social position. The issue of marriage is explored and I will also deal with the male characters and their influence on the plot.

4.1. Structure and public reaction

Regarding the structure of the novel, it is essential to realize that there are certain autobiographical features. Helen Burns being modelled on Charlotte's elder sister Mary and Mr. Brocklehurst being modelled on Mr. Carus Wilson, are good examples of such autobiographical elements, as it has already been mentioned in the Biography chapter.

When we consider the application of the first-person narration, it could have something in common with the autobiographical aspects of the novel as well. As a matter of fact Jane's narration leads us directly to the assumption that it is Charlotte herself who tells the story.

According to Gilbert and Gubar, the names of people and places throughout the entire novel are symbolic: "Jane makes a life-journey which is a kind of mythical progress from one significantly named place to another."⁷² For example, Gateshead stands for a 'starting point', whereas Thornfield suggests difficulties she has to go through. Considering the characters – Miss Temple represents 'a shrine of ladylike virtues', Helen Burns is 'burning with spiritual passions' and even Jane's surname - Eyre indicates either 'air' or 'ire'.⁷³

The public reaction was mostly positive and it provided Charlotte with a certain relief after her unpleasant experience with the first unappreciated novel

⁷² Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. 1984. Second Edition., pp. 336-372. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

⁷³ See Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372

The Professor. As has already been discussed in the Biography chapter, *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847 and immediately achieved popularity. Despite dealing with Gothic aspects as well as *Wuthering Heights* it was not criticised because of coarseness and similarly to *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* it addresses the woman question.

4.2. Gender issue

Regarding the gender issue, Charlotte struggles with the woman question throughout the entire novel. This is demonstrated in all stages of Jane Eyre's life from her early childhood - her imprisonment under the patriarchal authority of young John Reed (acted out through Mrs. Reed) in Gateshead, her next imprisonment in Lowood under the devastating influence of Mr. Brocklehurst, and imprisonment in the ambiguous position of governess in Thornfield where she first realizes another form of imprisonment – marriage.

Having escaped from this threat, having overcome one last attempt to bind her liberal-minded soul, Jane finally becomes an independent woman – by means of inheriting money but also through finding her new identity. The novel describes her struggle in society which would not accept women to be men's equals, women that would be independent. It describes marriage from several points of view and shows us the progress from a marriage of inequality towards a marriage of equality. The question remains, however, as to whether a marriage of equality was even possible at that time. This question will be examined more thoroughly in this part.

The social role of a woman in Victorian society was to be dependent, to be a mother, to be an inferior servant, and to provide her husband with home and pleasure – which means anything but independence. It is essential to realize that Jane (obviously speaking with Charlotte's voice), despite claiming her deep interest in independence and equality throughout the entire novel, finally finds herself in a position in which equality should be doubted. According to Stone, in her novels Charlotte describes “the tensions between women's yearnings for independence and their pleasure in

submission.”⁷⁴ Therefore I will particularly focus on Jane's progress in understanding independence and equality and will explore the results and consequences of her endeavours.

4.3. Jane Eyre

4.3.1. Childhood

Jane is obviously unhappy at Gateshead as everyone would be in a family whose member she is and is not. Ostensibly there is no master of the house (old Mr. Reed being dead), but a mistress – Mrs. Reed. In fact young John Reed, though deemed a juvenile future master – is the real master of the household who manipulates the other members including Mrs. Reed to obey him. Pell puts it as follows: “Jane is helpless against the silent complicity of the household – Mrs. Reed, Eliza and Georgiana side with John.”⁷⁵ He himself claims his superiority by calling himself ‘Master Reed’. This is Jane's first encounter with the patriarchal-based society and although she first manages to resist his violence and domineering behaviour patiently, once the amount of his imperiousness is exceeded, Jane's sense of equality emerges by means of comparing his cruelty to that of a “murderer, slave-driver, Roman emperor.”⁷⁶

Jane's yearning for equality and independence even intensifies after being unjustly locked in the red room – the first tangible form of imprisonment in the novel. As Pell argues, she is fully aware of her position in the Reed family which is demonstrated in her sincere confession of her feelings of the unhappiness based on her position in the family – inferior to all the members and even to servants, surrounded with dislike, which was obviously provable by means of her real experience.⁷⁷ The first revelation of her feelings comes through her talk to Mr. Lloyd but the next, much more striking

⁷⁴ Laurie Stone, “Why Charlotte Dissed Emily.” *Literary Review*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3. (Spring 2006) pp.63-70.

⁷⁵ Nancy Pell, “Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 31. No.4. pp. 397-420. (Mar., 1977) University of California Press. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 Jan. 2013 <<http://www.jstor.org>>

⁷⁶ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992.17.

⁷⁷ See Pell, “Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre.” *Nineteenth-Century fiction*, Vol. 31. No.4. pp. 397-420.

is realized in the way Jane speaks to Mrs. Reed: “My Uncle Reed is in heaven, and can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mama: they know how you shut me up all day long, and how wish me dead.”⁷⁸ This might be understood as either an exaggerated child's rage, or something really inappropriate to be heard coming out of the mouth of a ten-year old girl. Frankly, it demonstrates Jane's dissatisfaction with oppression, which should be natural for any self-conscious human being whose freedom is unbearably restricted. When we consider Jane's reminder of Uncle Reed, she actually, as Gilbert and Gubar emphasize, reminds herself of her own inferiority to the patriarchal bondage.⁷⁹ On the other hand not everyone – and particularly a child – would be able to perform such action. As Gilbert and Gubar point out, it is: “an extraordinarily self-assertive act of which neither a Victorian child nor a Cinderella was ever suppose to be capable.”⁸⁰ Although still a child, a juvenile future woman – one who was not supposed to do so, she feels the necessity to say what she thinks no matter how bruising it could be. After being hurt sincerely several times, she does not mind hurting her tormentor: “*Speak* I must: I had been trodden on severely, and *must* turn: but how? What strength had I to dart retaliation at my antagonist? I gathered my energies and launched them in this blunt sentence – ‘I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved *you*; but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world except John Reed; and this book about the liar, you may give to your girl, Georgiana, for it is she who tells lies, and not I’.”⁸¹

4.3.2. Lowood

Her Lowood experience could be understood as another, bitter encounter with oppression by the next patriarchal authority – Mr. Brocklehurst. According to Stone, local girls wasted their femininity on behalf of Brocklehurst's economical precautions. The loss of – at least feminine appearance is demonstrated in their

⁷⁸ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 20.

⁷⁹ See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

⁸⁰ Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

⁸¹ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 31.

simple, shapeless dress, Brocklehurst's order to cut their hair in order to prevent them from ladylike prodigality.⁸² The insufficient amount of food and the girl's starvation was the reason for their loss of weight and therefore of their feminine figure. In this environment, Jane meets two feminine 'ideals' – Miss Temple and Helen Burns. As Gilbert and Gubar state, both represent "different but equally impossible ideal to Jane."⁸³ Jane is aware of her different character and understands she would never be capable of the suppression of her rage in the manner of Miss Temple's "ladylike silence."⁸⁴

Helen Burns stands for a different, rather spiritual or eternal ideal. Though obedient and silent to unjust treatment, Helen does not represent the oppressed, submissive female at all. Jane dreams of freedom and independence and similarly Helen dreams of it as well. What differs is Helen's rather spiritual notion of freedom. Lamonaca puts it as follows: "Helen models for Jane an independence of thought on matters of theology and doctrine."⁸⁵

Helen manages to control her anger and emotions perfectly, Jane does not, as she herself – humiliated by the fear of being unjustly despised - admits: "I was no Helen Burns."⁸⁶ Moreover, Helen is reconciled with her death: "By dying young, I shall escape great sufferings."⁸⁷ This is something Jane would never say, because what we can observe throughout the entire novel is her struggle to escape death and keep her body healthy. Jane first renders this opinion in her childish concept of how to avoid going to hell: "I must keep in good health, and not die."⁸⁸ This in fact, is seen by many critics as the main thesis of the novel with regards to Jane's desire for independence and liberty. According to Gilbert and Gubar, for Jane, both Helen and Miss Temple represent a mother in some way. All of them are connected with

⁸² See Stone, "Why Charlotte Dissed Emily." *Literary Review*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3. (Spring 2006) pp. 63-70.

⁸³ Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

⁸⁴ Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

⁸⁵ Maria Lamonaca, "Jane's Crown of Thorns: Feminism and Christianity in Jane Eyre." *Studies in the Novel*. Vol. 34, Iss., (Fall 2002), pg. 245; 19pgs. Denton. *Literature Resource Center*. Web 3 Feb. 2013 <<http://go.galegroup.com>>

⁸⁶ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 61.

⁸⁷ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 60.

⁸⁸ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 27.

a divergent sense of liberty: “Her way of confronting the world is still the Promethean way of fiery rebellion, not Miss Temple's way of ladylike repression, not Helen Burns's way of saintly renunciation.”⁸⁹

By her decision to leave Lowood after the eight-year routine, Jane inter alia mirrors Charlotte Brontë's unsettled, self-assertive character which has already been described. Though she still dreams of liberty and independence, she correctly understands there is no possibility for such a life yet, thus in compromise, she is satisfied with hope for a change of routine: “Grant me at least new servitude!”⁹⁰ This ability to ‘compromise’ is, as Gilbert and Gubar state, what she had received from ‘her two mothers’.⁹¹

4.3.3. Governessing

Jane's progress towards independence goes further by means of her new social position – a governess. Gilbert and Gubar mention the ‘ambiguity’ of her social status as a possible cause of her troubles. Regarding this ambiguity, it is essential to realize that her position could have been understood from several different points of view. On one side, she was a working woman earning her living. On the other hand, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, she had a specific position in the family where she was governessing. Not a real and equal family member, it was not possible for her to be fully regarded a servant either.⁹² According to Stone: “Governesses contrasted and complicated middle-class notions of femininity.”⁹³ The feminine aspects of their work can be seen in the main job description – i.e. care for children. Though different and more respectable than nursemaid's work, it was still connected with children and thus it represents femininity and womanhood. On the other hand, the masculine aspects of governessing could be seen in both working for one's living and

⁸⁹ Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

⁹⁰ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 82.

⁹¹ See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

⁹² See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

⁹³ Stone, “Why Charlotte Dissed Emily.” *Literary Review*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3. (Spring 2006) pp. 63-70.

a certain amount of power that the position offered. Stone puts it as follows: “As keepers of middle-class children and thereby keepers of future, governesses exhibited important influence and power upon the middle class.”⁹⁴ Moreover for Jane, the social status of a governess represents a kind of social inequality and also represents one of the obstacles of Jane's planned marriage, though not a crucial one.

4.3.4. Marriage, equality and independence

Her relationship to the master of the Thornfield household – Mr. Rochester could be understood as her simultaneous struggle for independence and equality and doubts upon the marriage as well as her passionate falling in love with him. No matter how passionate and genuine her love was, regardless of Rochester's deceitful manner, and despite experiencing a bitter loss of her hope, she is still more than capable of claiming her own integrity and equality:

“Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! – I have as much soul as you, - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh; - it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal, - as we are!”⁹⁵

When we consider that Rochester's tricky pretence of his desire to marry Blanche Ingram finally turns into the proposal to Jane, the first hidden reality might be understood as a cautionary sign.

According to Pell, “Throughout *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë presents marriage in the context of equality between the partners.”⁹⁶ Jane – if she longs for any marriage, longs for a marriage of equality and there are more reasons to doubt the possibility of such marriage with Rochester. Jane obviously fears for it. When remember her previous description of Rochester's guests enjoying themselves in Thornfield she is

⁹⁴ Stone, “Why Charlotte Dissed Emily.” *Literary Review*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3. (Spring 2006) pp. 63-70.

⁹⁵ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 253.

⁹⁶ Pell, “Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of *Jane Eyre*.” *Nineteenth-Century fiction*, Vol. 31. No.4. pp. 397-420.

obviously not fond of courtship and marriage: “They generally run on the same theme – courtship; and promise to end in the same catastrophe – marriage.”⁹⁷ Her doubts and uncertainty stem from the fact that she is afraid of losing herself, her integrity and the loss of hope for independence. Actually there are some obstacles which at least make the possibility of their marriage difficult or wholly exclude it. Gilbert and Gubar describe a certain awareness of an ‘impediment’ in both, Jane and Rochester. This ‘impediment’, not yet literal could be interpreted as Rochester's hiding of reality and Jane's doubts.⁹⁸ Jane longs for a marriage of happiness and equality but fears ending up inferior: “For a little while you will perhaps be as you are now, - a very little while; and then you will turn cool; and then you will be capricious; and then you will be stern, and I shall have much ado to please you: but when you get well used to me , you will perhaps like me again, - *like* me, I say, not *love* me. I suppose your love will effervesce in six months, or less.”⁹⁹ This could be also interpreted as her fear of the loss of Rochester's love or as her sober and realistic notion of real marriage. In fact both of them begin to be aware of their reciprocal inequality.

Mrs. Fairfax presents the social inequality by means of reminding Jane of the inappropriateness of a marriage that would join a master with a governess.¹⁰⁰ Even Jane herself realized this during her inward struggle: “He is not of your order: keep to your caste, and be too self-respecting to lavish the love of the entire heart, soul and strength, where such a gift is not wanted and would be despised.”¹⁰¹

Another form of inequality is demonstrated in their age difference. Stone defines the younger woman and older man relationships as follows: “They appear to reinforce the subservient role of the female as child, as student, as victim, and the dominant role of the male as father, as teacher and as aggressor.”¹⁰² On the other

⁹⁷ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 197.

⁹⁸ See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

⁹⁹ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 260.

¹⁰⁰ See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹⁰¹ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 160.

¹⁰² Stone, “Why Charlotte Dissed Emily.” *Literary Review*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3. (Spring 2006) pp. 63-70.

hand Stone emphasizes that feminists find a power reversal possible - the older man can become inferior, e.g. by means of illness or finally his death.

Moreover Rochester's treatment of Jane as she is supposed to become his wife changes from the treatment of an equal partner to the treatment of an inferior doll. What Rochester regards as "delicate and ærial"¹⁰³, Jane understands to be "puny and insignificant"¹⁰⁴ and correctly feels all these efforts would weaken her integrity and degrade her equality. What she wants is to be just herself: "I shall not be your Jane Eyre any longer, but an ape in a harlequin's jacket – a jay in borrowed plumes."¹⁰⁵ As Pell emphasizes, in her despair, she wants to preserve at least the form of independence that is provided to her by means of governessing. Thus she decides to continue with her work till the wedding day.¹⁰⁶

These obstacles, ostensibly possible to be overcome, result in a fatal one. As Gilbert and Gubar argue, there is a 'sexual inequality' which is demonstrated in the existence of Adèle Varens – evidently Rochester's daughter, which indicates his 'guilty sexual knowledge' and consequently his 'superiority'.¹⁰⁷ Moreover having tricked many people; "he himself senses his trickery is a source of power."¹⁰⁸ However, his tendency to hide the reality finally turns out not to be a self-devastating weapon. "The hidden facts suggest the master's inferiority rather than his superiority."¹⁰⁹ As soon as the literal obstacle – Bertha Mason, that prevents them from getting married, is unveiled, Jane, despite her deep love, decides to leave. Refusing the offered position of Rochester's mistress instead of the status of a wife, she also refuses to understand his reasons for the marriage with Bertha: "I would scorn such a union therefore I am better than you."¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 274.

¹⁰⁴ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 274.

¹⁰⁵ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 160.

¹⁰⁶ See Pell, "Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre." *Nineteenth-Century fiction*, Vol. 31. No.4. pp. 397-420.

¹⁰⁷ See Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹⁰⁸ Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹⁰⁹ Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹¹⁰ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 289.

When we consider the role of Bertha, despite that she seemingly functions as the main cause of the unrealized marriage, she is more Jane's ally than her enemy. Gilbert and Gubar capture Bertha's influence well: "Bertha is still another – indeed the most threatening – avatar of Jane. What Bertha now does, for instance, is what Jane wants to do."¹¹¹ Jane's secret wish is to postpone the marriage and the fulfilment of this wish is acted out by Bertha.

Both, Rochester and Jane need more time to realize what they expect from each other and moreover as Gilbert and Gubar argue, Rochester needs to be got rid of his feeling of masterful superiority – and it is again Bertha who 'helps' them. She also represents Rochester's burden of the past. In the same way as Rochester has to carry it, Jane's burden of the past represents "her orphaned alter-ego"¹¹²

Bertha herself feels imprisoned in an obviously unequal marriage and in the right time escapes from this torture – through madness. As Bertha dies, the burden of the past perishes – it enables an equal marriage and also having destroyed Thornfield, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, she destroyed 'the symbol of Rochester's mastery and Jane's servitude'.¹¹³ Bertha can also function as a demonstration of how an unhappy marriage can result. As Pell states: "Here at the centre of a novel about one women's struggle for independence and love, is a woman who is utterly restrained and considered socially dead."¹¹⁴ While Bertha escapes her imprisonment in the marriage through madness, there are two other possibilities of escape from the inferior social position in the nineteenth and twentieth century literature written by women. According to Gilbert and Gubar it was apart from madness – which Jane experiences when fainting in the red room, 'escape through flight' – present in also Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and Jane Eyre's decision to leave

¹¹¹ Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹¹² Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹¹³ 114 See Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹¹⁴ Pell, "Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre." *Nineteenth-Century fiction*, Vol. 31. No.4. pp. 397-420.

Thornfield, and ‘escape through self-starvation’¹¹⁵ – well-known from Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* and again Jane’s effort to escape the horror of the red room: “- as running away, or, if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more and letting myself die.”¹¹⁶

As Gilbert and Gubar state, “Yet, though her escape may seem as morally ambiguous “... it is necessary for her own self-preservation.”¹¹⁷ As it has already been mentioned, this Jane’s struggle for self-preservation – i.e. ‘remaining healthy and not to die’ is a theme that leads us through the entire novel. This is the next example of Jane’s self-esteem. Though she loves Rochester a lot, and is aware of the possible impact of her decision to leave on him, she still does not want to sacrifice her own integrity: “Still indomitable was the reply – *I care for myself.*”¹¹⁸

However, Jane experiences another similar struggle for ‘self-preservation’ at the Moor House. The Moor House and its inhabitants first provide her with a shelter and later, as she discovers they were her relatives, she discovers her identity. She does not only discover it in the form of her family, but she also gains financial independence in the form of money she inherited from Uncle Eyre. And although she understands this was necessary for her independence from any patriarchal dominion, she values her newfound family even more: “This was wealth indeed! – wealth to the heart!”¹¹⁹

Nevertheless, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, this discovery does not stand for the end of her life-journey. There still remains one thing Jane has to learn.

Her closeness to her female cousins Diana and Mary is opposed by her contradictory attitude to St. John’s strong patriarchal authority, coldness, the threat of the next imprisonment and the temptation of leading a useful dedicated spiritual life with him. St. John’s proposal offers Jane the view of a spiritual self-sacrificing life in comparison with her passionate union with Rochester. According to Gilbert and

¹¹⁵ See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane’s Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹¹⁶ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 289.

¹¹⁷ Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane’s Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹¹⁸ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 318.

¹¹⁹ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 389

Gubar, “Like Salome ... Jane must symbolically, if not literally, behead the abstract principles of this man before she can finally achieve her true independence.”¹²⁰ Surprisingly, although St. John represents a strong patriarchal authority – the authority Jane wants to escape, it is still quite difficult to resist his proposal. She keeps offering to join him on his way to India as his sister. This demonstrates her indecisiveness in this case. She correctly realizes that St. John's coldness would not satisfy her passionate desire of life, it is difficult for her to resist his authority from a spiritual point of view. And again, it is her deep commitment to life which decides this struggle. Pell puts it as follows: “Refusal to accept her death at the arms of others is Jane's chief motive for resisting St. John's commanding proposals of marriage.”¹²¹ Jane's fear for her life and no particular interest in self-sacrifice, the already mentioned deep interest in ‘self-preservation’, actually saves her from making a wrong decision. As Pell argues, there are some similarities between St. John Rivers and John Reed. Both stand for a life threat to Jane which is demonstrated in John Reed's tyrannical behaviour and St. John's martyr's attitude to life.¹²² Jane herself captures her awareness of this threat well in her speech to St. John: “If I were to marry you, you would kill me. You are killing me now.”¹²³ Moreover, John Reed is claimed to have committed suicide and St. John's devotion leads up to it as well. Jane values her life too much to abandon it in this way: “God did not give me life to throw away; and to do as you wish me would, I begin to think, be almost equivalent to committing suicide.”¹²⁴

Consequently, Jane's resistance to St. John's proposal lead her further to her independence. On the other hand there is still the burden of the past which prevents her from gaining it wholly. As Rochester occupies at least her thoughts and mind, it makes her still dependent on the unresolved past. The telepathic communication with Rochester which makes her resolve it was, as Gilbert and Gubar state,

¹²⁰ Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹²¹ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 389.

¹²² See Pell, “Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre.” *Nineteenth-Century fiction*, Vol. 31. No.4. pp. 397-420.

¹²³ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 342.

¹²⁴ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 419.

understood as purposeless by many critics, it has been enabled by her ‘new independence’ and his ‘new humility’.¹²⁵

She comes to Ferndean as an independent woman: “I am an independent woman now.”¹²⁶ Although her independence in the novel is demonstrated in the inheritance of her uncle's money, it can be also understood as independence through Rochester's loss of superiority – by means of destruction of Thornfield and also through the weakening of Rochester. According to Gilbert and Gubar, Jane and Rochester are now free from the burden of the past. This enables them to progress towards a new kind of marriage – a ‘marriage of equality’.¹²⁷ Regarding their final ‘equality’, it is essential to realize that at least physically they are not really equal. Rochester's weakening could be understood from several points of view.

As Gilbert and Gubar state, “many critics have seen Rochester's injuries as ‘a symbolic castration’, a punishment for his early profligacy and a sign that Charlotte Brontë (as well as Jane herself) fearing male sexual power, can only imagine marriage as a union with diminished Samson.”¹²⁸ On the other hand, according to Pell, the injuries could be seen as something that helps him to realize the restrictions of his power¹²⁹ and as Gilbert and Gubar argue, it actually strengthens him in the way he perceives the power of mind rather than the power of a superior social position, physical power and the possibility to disguise and trick others.¹³⁰ In this way, they are more equal (despite Rochester's blindness and injury) than they have ever been. There is no such limit as social difference or domineering manner, because both have gained the knowledge and experience necessary to enable their equal marriage.

¹²⁵ See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹²⁶ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 412.

¹²⁷ See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹²⁸ ¹²⁹ See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹²⁹ See Pell, “Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre.” *Nineteenth-Century fiction*, Vol. 31. No.4. pp. 397-420.

¹³⁰ See Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

However, there is also a dark side to the Ferndean romance. As Gilbert and Gubar point out, Ferndean is a place situated in isolation in a deep forest and it is quite an unhealthy environment too, which Rochester himself confirms in his previous expression, that the place was even not fitting for Bertha.¹³¹ Frankly, this indicates Charlotte's doubts upon the 'marriage of equality' and it suggests that in order to preserve their equality, the partners must stay outside society to live in their own – equal solitude. Gilbert and Gubar put it as follows: "True minds, Charlotte Brontë seems to be saying, must withdraw into a remote forest, a wilderness even, in order to circumvent the strictures of a hierarchical society."¹³²

Other critics find their final equality insecure as well. While Pell defines it as an unequal union of a man who is physically dependent on a financially independent woman, Lamouca emphasizes Jane's rebellion against conventions and domesticity, which leads us into the question of whether her life at Ferndean is not exactly a conventional and domestic life. Here, again her capture of independence must be doubted.

On the other hand, Jane acts according to her own will. She is independent in the way that she herself decides her own future. She is still self-assertive and still cares for herself. As Pell states, throughout the entire novel: "We see, in short a woman's struggle to 'keep her body healthy and not to die'."¹³³

Jane was unwilling to sacrifice herself for the first – domineering Rochester who would never acknowledge her equality, she was unwilling to sacrifice herself for the patriarchal authority of St. John; and her reunion with the second Rochester – who is able to 'see' her as his equal partner is not a self-sacrifice either. Although Rochester first suspects her of this attitude, Jane clarifies her conviction: "Sacrifice! What do I sacrifice? Famine for food, expectation for content. To be privileged to put

¹³¹ See Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹³² See Gilbert and Gubar, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹³³ Pell, "Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre." *Nineteenth-Century fiction*, Vol. 31. No.4. pp. 397-420.

my arms round what I value – to press my lips to what I love – to repose on what I trust: is that to make a sacrifice? If so, then certainly I delight in sacrifice.”¹³⁴

Consequently in spite of the fact that Rochester is weakened and their final partnership and marriage may and may not be understood as fully equal, Jane has gained her independence at least by means of her financial security and the freedom to act upon her will.

But were the women financially independent after the marriage after all? It is essential to realize that in that period, women had no right to dispose of their possession as they wished after getting married. This issue will be discussed with regard to Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* more thoroughly.

4.4. Male Characters

We can observe a different polarity of the male characters which in some way influence Jane's life or at least her notion of independence.

There are purely patriarchal superior characters who symbolize the oppression and her inferiority – e.g. Mr. Brocklehurst, John Reed and St. John Rivers.

According to Gilbert and Gubar, Mr. Brocklehurst represents the “personification of the Victorian superego”¹³⁵ which is later demonstrated in the character of St. John as well. In contrast, Rochester's function is slightly different. Although he first stands for a patriarchal superior master, he experiences some progress. He initially draws his power from his social position and hiding of the truth and as his progress has not already been completed, after the confession of Bertha's existence, he is unable to admit his mistake. Jane is strong enough to overcome this betrayal and Rochester is conceited enough to fail to admit being manipulated into a regrettable marriage. As Peel emphasizes: “He continues to play the role of the master not only with his household servants but toward all men and women. The contradiction between his inward suffering and outward dominance makes his position essentially false.”¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 451.

¹³⁵ Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹³⁶ Pell, “Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre.” *Nineteenth-Century fiction*, Vol. 31. No.4. pp. 397-420.

On the other hand, he attempts to weaken his masculine role as well. According to what had already been mentioned, there was a certain sexual inequality between Jane and Rochester. Aware of the burden of his superiority demonstrated in his previous sexual knowledge, he tries to reduce his sexuality. Gilbert and Gubar put it as follows: “His attempt to impersonate a female gypsy may be seen as a semi-conscious effort to reduce the sexual advantage his masculinity gives him (by putting on woman's clothes, he puts on a woman's weakness).”¹³⁷

Finally as it has already been mentioned, Rochester's injuries can represent both, the punishment and progress towards equality. When we consider the loss of sight and injury as a form of punishment, Stone puts it as follows: “Although Rochester's sight is eventually restored, Jane marries him – blindness being the plain woman's revenge on the beauty-addicted man.”¹³⁸

Consequently, Rochester's blindness, no matter whether it also functions as a punishment, enables him to ‘see’ and perceive the equal partnership with Jane.

4.5. Summary

All in all, as Gilbert and Gubar argue, in none of her books, Charlotte “was able consciously to define the full meaning of achieved freedom.”¹³⁹

During her life-journey Jane struggles for independence in an active way. According to Lamonaca: “Jane's suffering is not like Helen Burns's passive endurance of persecution (a mode of suffering typically associated with feminine), however but rather an active (masculine, heroic) decision to renounce, however painful, the thing she most ardently desires.”¹⁴⁰

Although Jane is offered several forms of independence, as Pell exemplifies, the spiritual independence of Helen Burns or St. John or Eliza Reed's independence

¹³⁷ Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹³⁸ Stone, “Why Charlotte Dissed Emily.” *Literary Review*. Vol. 49, Iss. 3. (Spring 2006) pp. 63-70.

¹³⁹ Gilbert and Gubar, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 336-372.

¹⁴⁰ Lamonaca, “Jane's Crown of Thorns: Feminism and Christianity in Jane Eyre.” *Studies in the Novel*. Vol. 34, Iss., (Fall 2002), pg. 245; 19pgs.

in “living for, in and with yourself”¹⁴¹, she refuses them for the sake of her own vision of independence. Her position in the reunion with Rochester is not the position of a doll-like lady to be led by a superior master. Her new position is to be a self-sufficient mistress and to look after her blind and injured husband – not because of necessity but because of love. This, conceivably can be called independence, however if it also relates to equality, which is not so certain.

¹⁴¹ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. 267.

5. Wuthering Heights

In this part I would like to analyze the novel *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë with regards to the main topic of my thesis – the independent woman. First I will shortly mention the structure of the novel, discuss the theme - which was often subject of criticism, and then I will briefly comment on the public reaction.

The essential part of the analysis deals with the gender issue and the question of marriage focused on the main women characters of the novels, the two Catherines. I will explore the evolution of these characters, the development and changes directly addressing independence or at least the equality of men and women.

5.1. Structure

Regarding the structure of the novel, it is created quite elaborately. There are some hidden facts which are gradually revealed during the reading but the reader is still left in expectation of something new. The novel deals with dualism in many aspects which has often served as a subject of criticism. There are two contrasting places – Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, two narrators, two Catherines, two Heathcliffs, two Earnshaws, two Lintons and this all creates a symmetrical and at the same time, a contradictory environment. What seems to be similar turns out to be totally different and in the end, there is still something appallingly consistent to be found in this total divergence. The novel could be divided into two parts, which, by some critics, is referred to as a tedious repetition. This dualism is defined by Miller as follows: “The time shifts, multiplication of narrators, narrators within narrators, double plot ... are used to invite the reader step by step by way of a gradual ‘penetralium’ of Brontë’s strange vision of life.”¹⁴²

Ch. P. Sanger points out two interesting facts considering the novel. The first is Emily Brontë's surprising knowledge of the law even though her social environment and contact could not have enabled her to obtain such information easily (in contrast with e.g. Jane Austen whose acquaintances were competent enough to provide her

¹⁴² J. Hillis Miller, “Wuthering Heights: Repetition and the ‘Uncanny’.” Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. pp. 378-393.

with relevant facts).¹⁴³ Moreover the novel is set in the years 1771-1803, thus she had to have knowledge of the earlier law. This denies previous suggestions, that she got her inspiration from German romances. “German romances can hardly have been the source of her knowledge of English law.”¹⁴⁴ Secondly, Sanger emphasizes the “symmetry of the pedigree”¹⁴⁵ with all the dates derived from the book which includes only three dates directly stated (i.e. years 1778, 1801 and 1802). Although Daley in her critical essay states that “Sanger’s chronology leaves much to be explained or corrected”¹⁴⁶, this undoubtedly indicates Emily Brontë’s analytical thinking and great combination abilities.

5.2. Public reaction

As has already been mentioned, the reviewers agreed that the novel was dealing with a coarse subject; some of them expressed even disgust. Being published together with Anne’s *Agnes Grey*, it was found shocking and consequently more interesting and it received a higher amount of attention from the critics. The authorship of the novel was for some time subject of a fervent discussion, and as it was once believed that this was a product from the same hand as *Jane Eyre*, those two novels were often compared. The difference between the two stories was undisputed, however. *Wuthering Heights* caused puzzlement, astonishment and also offense as the environment of the novel was found too rough and harsh. Goreau defines the reaction of the reviewer from Douglass Jerrold’s weekly as follows: “In *Wuthering Heights* the reader is shocked, disgusted, almost sickened by details of cruelty, inhumanity, and the public most diabolical hate and vengeance.”¹⁴⁷ According to the review published in *Atlas* (1848), the tone of the novel is rather dismal and the reader is not supposed to get rid of this mood during the reading. All

¹⁴³ See Charles Percy Sanger, “The Structure of *Wuthering Heights*.” Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. pp. 331-336.

¹⁴⁴ Miller, “*Wuthering Heights*: Repetition and the ‘Uncanny’.” Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. pp. 378-393.

¹⁴⁵ Sanger, “The Structure of *Wuthering Heights*.” Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. pp. 331-336.

¹⁴⁶ A. Stuart Daley, “The Moons and Almanacs of *Wuthering Heights*” Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 336-349.

¹⁴⁷ Anonymous, “Emily Brontë’s First Edition Reviews” Douglass Jerrold’s Weekly Newspaper (1848). *Wuthering Heights*. 299-301.

the characters are described as repulsive and scornful. Moreover it was often referred to as not very comprehensible or an uncanny story of revenge. It is essential to realize that the story is set in two mansions and it describes relationships and the machinations of their inhabitants. All occurs in relative solitude, surrounded by the far-reaching moors with almost no distraction of the atmosphere by anything unfamiliar. And even if something unfamiliar enters the story, it does not affect it fundamentally – e.g. the input of the narrator Mr. Lockwood does not have any impact on the plot. This reliably parallels Emily Brontë's life which she spent in a relative solitude surrounded by just her family members and the moors.

Charlotte Brontë was convinced that, if Emily had lived in a different environment and the more lively atmosphere of a town, she would have had a different style. “Doubtless it would have been more wider – more comprehensive, whether it would have been more original or more truthful is not so certain.”¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, as it has already been mentioned, although Charlotte took up the mother's role in the family and she surely was a caring and affectionate elder sister, she is also known for her disparagement of her sisters' work which covers ‘corrections’ and rewritings of their poems after their deaths and some of her rather discouraging commentaries on it. In contrast to Charlotte's possible undervaluation of the novel, the *Palladium* the review points out that: “It is the unformed writing of giant's hand.”¹⁴⁹ In my opinion, *Wuthering Heights* does not lack originality and while it may cover some unpleasant facts about human lives, it is a great masterpiece and more admirable is the fact that this piece of writing came out of the head of a young, relatively inexperienced young lady living a solitary life among her family and the moors.

5.3. Theme and Genre

It has often been stated that it is not easy to determine the genre and theme of *Wuthering Heights*. It is essential to realize that it is not just a romantic story which the public would expect to be the product of female writing at that time.

¹⁴⁸ Charlotte Brontë, “Editor's Preface to the New Reviews” (1850). Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 313-319.

¹⁴⁹ Anonymous, “Emily Brontë's First Edition Reviews” *Palladium* (1850). *Wuthering Heights*. 308-309.

As a matter of fact it deals with the gender issue, struggles between feminine and masculine elements and also marriage – which is captured in a totally different perspective in contrast with e.g. Jane Austen's work. N. M. Jacobs mentions the gender issue with regard to Emily Brontë's feelings of the 'sameness' of men and women. He suggests that Emily (and also Anne) did not really believe in the conventional categories of men and women: "To them, gender is a ragged and somewhat ridiculous masquerade concealing the essential sameness of men and women."¹⁵⁰ However, according to Jacobs, many authors used the female character as a "literary masquerade"¹⁵¹ which enabled them to express natural qualities and feelings which society considered to be inappropriate for a man but acceptable or even expected within a woman's character. Emily Brontë's use of male characters rather differs from this restrictive ideology.

Her female characters are not as feminine as expected and her male characters do not always behave according to the established social rules. The differences between male and female elements are not so evident. The author deals with violence, coarseness and brutality which is projected into both male and female characters and even the fact that this coarse piece of writing is a product of a female hand was quite provocative at that time. As Jacobs points out, "Dealing with 'coarse' subject matters, was seen by the Victorians as a masculine activity, unnatural to woman"¹⁵² In other words, society was not willing to accept a woman writer. Thus when an already unaccepted woman writer addressed violence and coarseness reflected even in her female characters, it must have caused social indignation. The writing expected to be a product of a young girl would cover naive romantic stories, not dealing with social power, violence, law, revenge, doubt upon a marriage issue and class differences.

¹⁵⁰ N.M. Jacobs, "Gender and Layered Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*." *Contemporary Critical Essays*. pp. 74-85.

¹⁵¹ Jacobs, "Gender and Layered Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*." *Contemporary Critical Essays*, pp. 74-85.

¹⁵² Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, "Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. 1984. Second Edition. pp. 248-308. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, , 2000.

Regarding the genre of *Wuthering Heights*, we can talk about the 'Female Gothic' genre, which, as Pykett defines, differs from the eighteenth and nineteenth century Gothic genre in constituting women's distresses and functions as a mediator for getaway from reality.¹⁵³ Catherine Earnshaw is stated to be a perfect example of it. Pykett finds Female Gothic aspects in *Wuthering Heights* mainly in: "Representation and investigation of women's fears about the private domestic space which is at once refuge and prison."¹⁵⁴ Catherine's misfortunes certainly began with her manipulation at the Linton's, transformation into a proper Victorian young lady – a role for which she was totally unsuitable and end by her fall in her unhappy marriage – a form of imprisonment of her liberal-minded soul.

As has already been mentioned, the second part of the novel was often a subject of criticism because of its retelling of the same story twice, it was also suggested that the power and rebellion from the first part was reduced into a rather tiresome second part. Pykett emphasizes that: "Most notably recent feminist critics have argued that the novel does not simply repeat the same story, but that it revises it, rewriting the Gothic first generation plot as a Domestic novel."¹⁵⁵

There definitely are some traits of evolution and there is a reason why the second part of the novel is set in a rather 'milder' mood. Sandra Gilbert captures this evolution well in the following observation: "by the end of the novel, "the Heights - Hell – has been converted into the Grange – Heaven."¹⁵⁶

This 'repetition' also means a certain type of evolution. Whereas Pykett speaks about "an evolutionary version of history that is both more feminine and more egalitarian, a history in which women are no longer the victims of patriarchal authority"¹⁵⁷, Gilbert argues that the novel describes Catherine's evolution. Catherine Earnshaw's way through Catherine Heathcliff and Catherine Linton goes back

¹⁵³ See Lynn Pykett, "Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*" *Contemporary Critical Essays*. 86-99. London : The Macmillan Press LTD, , 1993.

¹⁵⁴ Pykett, "Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*" *Contemporary Critical Essays*. pp. 86-99

¹⁵⁵ Pykett, "Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*" *Contemporary Critical Essays*. pp. 86-99.

¹⁵⁶ Gilbert and Gubar, "Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁵⁷ Pykett, "Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*" *Contemporary Critical Essays*. pp. 86-99.

to Catherine Earnshaw through her daughter, the first Catherine Linton, then transformed into Catherine Heathcliff. Moreover Gilbert states that the theme of the novel is a female protest, rebellion and it deals with the 'problem of equality'¹⁵⁸

This evolution can be interpreted as Catherine's victory through her milder but still self-confident longing for independence. She manages to win love and property – thus independence and has a chance for a happy life by the end of the novel. Her mother's fall, on the other hand might be interpreted as a result of her imprisonment in an undesirable marriage and mainly in her social role as a dependent Victorian wife. Her denial and desire for escape from this convention, causes her death, but what went wrong for Catherine I, seems to be reclaimed in the case of Catherine II. I will examine this issue more thoroughly in the following part.

5.4. Gender issue

The evolution of the central female character, described above, is reflected in various situations of the plot. This covers the story of Catherine I and her fall, Catherine II and her 'victory' and also some features of the male characters, mainly Edgar Linton and Heathcliff, as those two are fundamentally involved in Catherine's evolution. It is also possible to speak about a certain reversal of gender roles. Emily Brontë presents the female characters with some particular masculine features, and they can be defined as strong, independent female characters or at least as characters longing for independence.

5.4.1. Catherine I.

The little Catherine, since her early childhood acts as a dominant mistress, who is self-confident and wants to gain power. Sandra Gilbert captures her early longing for power well by providing an example in the situation when the old master asks the children what he shall bring them from Liverpool.

Gilbert points out that "by requesting their heart's desires, they reveal their true selves"¹⁵⁹ The two children occupy different roles in the family – Hindley should

¹⁵⁸ See Gilbert and Gubar, "Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

become the next master thus his wish is expected to confirm his social position. His longing for a fiddle seems superficial and as Gilbert states, “he does not ask for a particularly masterful gift.”¹⁶⁰ In contrast “Catherine's longing for a whip seems like a powerless younger daughter's yearning for power.”¹⁶¹ Moreover her domineering character and behaviour is intensified by means of her union with Heathcliff. As Gilbert argues, Heathcliff preoccupies the place of the symbolical Catherine's whip. By his means she is able to oppose Hindley's ascendancy. He was her instrument for a presumptuous fight for independence and power. She was like him – wild, intractable and stubborn and she felt self-confident and secure with him. She needed his company which helped her to find her own – independent identity in a world of conventional social rules and norms: “She was much too fond of Heathcliff. The greatest punishment we could invent for her was to keep her separate from him.”¹⁶² It is essential to realize that in her childhood union with Heathcliff, Catherine loses her traits of femininity and becomes “a perfect androgyne.”¹⁶³ She does not behave very ladylike, because a young lady of that time would be expected to be obedient and pliable, not wild and domineering. Although traits of ferocity, vigour and longing for power were considered to be appropriate masculine features, Catherine's nature consisted of such features and Heathcliff functioned as a ‘guide’ who helped her to find her real identity and nature in the world rotten by conventions. This time was probably the happiest part of her life, because she was independent, free and mostly by herself.

Catherine's fall was initiated by their separation which became an inevitable result of her succumbing to the conventions. This happens during the period of Catherine's adolescence and sexual awakening – a complicated period of one's life, where

¹⁵⁹ Gilbert and Gubar, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁶⁰ Gilbert and Gubar, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁶¹ Gilbert and Gubar, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁶² Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. 37.

¹⁶³ Gilbert and Gubar, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

the feelings of extreme self-confidence and optimism mix together with uncertainty and naivety.

Catherine's development which could be called an unsuccessful effort to transform her into a perfect Victorian lady began during the period she spent at the Linton's (after being injured by their dog when experiencing the last adventure with Heathcliff). Firstly, the Thrushcross Grange must have appeared to her as a heaven when she was treated with such care and attention, but there was still something really 'unhealthy' in this attitude. Gilbert defined this treatment as follows: "For, assuming that she is a 'young lady', the entire Linton Household cossets a wounded (but still healthy) girl as if she were truly an invalid."¹⁶⁴ Their treatment and attendance on the young lady results in her transformation into a lady which initiated her fall as a result of her restricted freedom and the loss of her true self and also the loss of her 'guide', companion and 'whip' – Heathcliff. Gilbert also compares the process of her attendance at the Grange to "some sinister ritual of initiation, the sort of ritual that has traditionally weakened mythic heroines from Persephone to Snow White."¹⁶⁵ This points to the typical education of young ladies who were manipulatively forced to deny their true nature and identities. Catherine's youth and the naivety related to it can be an excuse and although the change is really considerable, there are still some remains of her previous nature, at least in the fact that she still wants to keep her fellowship with Heathcliff. How striking the change was, is demonstrated in the scene when Catherine comes back from the Grange to the Heights. "Instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house and rushing to squeeze us all breathless, there alighted from a handsome black pony a very dignified person with brown ringlets falling from the cover of a feathered beaver, and a long cloth habit which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Gilbert and Gubar, "Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁶⁵ Gilbert and Gubar, "Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁶⁶ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. 40.

Although manipulated into this degrading female role – denial of one's own mind, opinions and desires, Catherine still had a chance for awakening. She was never fully converted into a proper suitable lady – at least because she still realized her desires. What destroyed her chance for a 'rescue', was her fatalistic decision to marry Edgar Linton. Gilbert states that; "Catherine's education in ladylike self-denial causes her dutifully to deny herself and decide to marry Edgar."¹⁶⁷ She is blindfolded by that education and behaves as society expects – becomes a lady and as becoming a lady used to mean becoming a caring figurine without her own opinion, denying herself, denying her personal desires and lowering her ego deep under the ego of a masculine leader – her husband. Catherine accepted Edgar's marriage proposal as a result of this brainwashing. When she talks to Nelly Dean and gives her reasons for her desire to marry him, every word seems to confirm her pitiable transformation. "I love the ground under his feet and the air over his head and everything he touches and every word he says – I love all his looks and his actions and him entirely, and altogether."¹⁶⁸ This is quite a naive and unconvincing expression of love which indicates her rather submissive and obedient attitude. Her naivety can be observed also in her focus just on the present and denial of thinking about the future. This might covertly show her – still unmanipulated core, because she knows her desire is not to marry Edgar but Heathcliff whom she loves and realizes this love more than anything else as she states: "I love him because he's more myself than I am. I am Heathcliff."¹⁶⁹ After this statement, Catherine reveals her true intentions to sacrifice herself for the sake of Heathcliff's uplift and 'rescue' from her brother's power. In this philanthropic attempt, she plans to use her husband's money to obtain independence – not for herself, but for Heathcliff, even if it may it cause her own fall and death.

First it is her soul that dies and then as an inevitable result – her body. On the other hand, as Gilbert points out: "Her explanation that it would degrade her to marry

¹⁶⁷ Gilbert and Gubar, "Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell." *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁶⁸ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*.61.

¹⁶⁹ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*.62.

Heathcliff is an equally inevitable product of her education.”¹⁷⁰ In the light of this fact, her incorrect decision to marry Edgar Linton is both, the product of her manipulation by society and a kind of self-sacrifice as a result of her own decision. Her fall is nearly completed by means of a marriage which functions as an imprisonment of her soul and body as well as her pregnancy. For Catherine, the marriage means an absolute attenuation of her personality, loss of her ideals as she is forced to live her life in an ostensibly peaceful and calm Thrushcross Grange Household, while in her soul and heart she longs for her lost independence and freedom. According to Jacobs: “Her years as Mrs. Linton before Heathcliff’s return pass in a sort of somnolence, a most un-Cathylike acquiescence and calm, as she acts out the ideal of a flower-like woman without desires and passion.”¹⁷¹

As she has never been suitable for the role of a perfect, obedient wife, Heathcliff’s return causes a storm of emotions, and anger in her, and she begins to realize what she has lost and how desperate her situation is. Heathcliff represents her alter-ego, the lost traits of her personality, the real and unmanipulated Catherine’s nature, the dominant, self-confident, unfeminine girl she used to be. “The marriage locked Catherine into a social system which denies autonomy.”¹⁷² Through realizing this fact, the devastating process of her imprisonment becomes intensified and it causes her mental and physical decline and death seems to be the only way out. Pykett defines it as follows: “Gothic plot involves her imprisonment in increasingly confined spaces: the house, her room, and finally ‘this shattered prison’(p. 196), her body, from which she longs to escape as she does from the womanhood itself.”¹⁷³ Catherine’s reaction to this situation consists of several mad scenes and a long period of a hunger strike. It is essential to realize that Catherine was pregnant during this time. Gilbert describes this self-starvation together with other psychoneurotic

¹⁷⁰ Gilbert and Gubar, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë’s Bible of Hell.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁷¹ Jacobs, “Gender and Layered Narrative in *Wuthering Heights*.” *Contemporary Critical Essays*, pp. 74-85.

¹⁷² Gilbert and Gubar, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë’s Bible of Hell.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁷³ Pykett, “Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*” *Contemporary Critical Essays*. pp. 86-99.

symptoms to be “associated with female feelings of powerlessness and rage.”¹⁷⁴ This hunger strike can be interpreted as Catherine's weakness, result of her fall which costs her life. Her pregnancy under these circumstances goes together with her feeling of imprisonment, because it represents just another form of it, or its intensification. Catherine's escape from marriage and maternity is escape from womanhood itself, because here womanhood means powerlessness, obedience and dependence – issues which a strong woman with independent opinions and soul denies. This is the effect of the female education of that time, a result of her previous self-denial in the decision to marry Edgar instead of listening to her own heart and head as she felt she should stay with Heathcliff. Catherine expresses this longing for her lost independence shortly before her death when she speaks to Nelly and wants her to open the window: “Oh, I'm burning! I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy and free; and laughing at injuries, not maddening under them. Why am I so changed? Why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at a few words? I'm sure I should be myself when I am once among the heather on those hills.”¹⁷⁵ In this situation she realizes her mistake and her true – independent nature arises. However it is too late for any change and she is not capable of reversal because her destruction is nearly completed. Before her death, Catherine notes to Heathcliff that she died of a broken heart on account of him and Edgar. Heathcliff's response captures the true reason of her death well: “Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy? You deserve this. You have killed yourself.”¹⁷⁶

All in all, Catherine Linton does not die of a broken heart, her death is not caused by Edgar's or Heathcliff's mistake. She chooses self-destruction and hunger strike – a certain form of suicide as her means of escape from the conventions, social role and the degrading function of womanhood itself.

¹⁷⁴ Gilbert and Gubar, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁷⁵ Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. 97.

¹⁷⁶ Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. 124.

5.4.2. Catherine II

The daughter is not a perfect copy of her mother but there are still some features of her wild character. According to Gilbert this new Catherine who grew up at Thrushcross Grange – ‘the Heaven’ is more tolerable and dutiful than her mother, the dead Catherine who came from the environment of Wuthering Heights – ‘the Hell’.¹⁷⁷ Even Nelly Dean speaks about her in a more affectionate way, expressing her love to Cathy, whereas when she was referring to her mother she revealed her dislike of her fierce and domineering nature. Gilbert describes the difference between the two Catherines as follows: “Catherine II. is a cook, nurse, teacher and housekeeper. Where her mother was a heedless wild child, Catherine II promises to become an ideal Victorian woman, all of those virtues are in some sense associated with daughterhood, wifehood, motherhood.”¹⁷⁸ She can be understood as a definitely more feminine character and she behaves in a certainly more obedient way. When we consider Catherine Earnshaw's rebellion against the tenants of Wuthering Heights and mainly against her father, Catherine II acts in the entirely opposite way. Catherine Earnshaw's escapes from her father's dominion are contradictory to Catherine II's obedience. Catherine II expresses her love to her father in her words: “I should never love anybody better than papa.”¹⁷⁹ and also in her action when locked at the Heights. She longs for coming back to her father. Moreover she gives an impression of a patient, gentle teacher when she firstly helps coarse Hareton with reading. This could be interpreted in two ways – she is a typical helpful docile Victorian lady or she does it on purpose. This can be understood as a certain reversal of gender roles. According to Pykett: “Catherine's civilising of Hareton is an interesting variant of a common scene in eighteenth – and nineteenth – century fiction in which a male character offers to improve the reading of an ‘ignorant’ (but improvable) female.”¹⁸⁰ Catherine's commentary on the marriage issue was definitely not connected with a naive notion of romantic love: “People hate their wives

¹⁷⁷ See Gilbert and Gubar, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁷⁸ Gilbert and Gubar, “Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell.” *The Madwoman in the Attic*. pp. 248-308.

¹⁷⁹ Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. 182.

¹⁸⁰ Pykett, “Gender and Genre in Wuthering Heights” *Contemporary Critical Essays*. pp. 86-99.

sometimes, but not their sisters and brothers.”¹⁸¹ In this case she – without knowing how unhappy her mother's marriage was – realizes that it does not necessarily mean a victory and it also may not guarantee a happy life.

Her independent character can also be observed in the situation when she comments on the difference of her and Linton's nature. “He wanted all to lie in an ecstasy of peace, I wanted all to sparkle and dance in a glorious jubilee. I said his heaven would be only half alive, and he said mine would be drunk; I said I should fall asleep in his and he said he could not breathe in mine.”¹⁸² In this case she turns out to be very similar to her mother. She did not behave so extremely vigorously thus her longing for independence was rather hidden and it did not agitate her surroundings so much.

On the other hand, she was comparably capable of defiance and rebellion. Her stay at the Heights, after a forced marriage with Linton Heathcliff and his death can be also interpreted as a form of imprisonment. Although her situation is quite unpleasant, she bears it bravely and does not attempt to surrender. This can be observed in many situations when she opposes Heathcliff – e.g. in her denial to obey Heathcliff's commandment: “I'll not do anything though you should swear your tongue out, except what I please.”¹⁸³ Her stay in this unpleasant environment caused her loss of girlish naivety and she got a little more coarse as a result of the solitary life in the gloomy house accompanied by the tenants who did not express even a little sign of kindness. Consequently she behaves appropriately to the situation and inappropriately with regards to the position of a young lady: “I reject any pretence at kindness you have the hypocrisy to offer! I despise you, and will have nothing to say to any of you! When I would have given my life for one kind word even to see one of your faces, you all kept off.”¹⁸⁴

Catherine Heathcliff behaves more diplomatically and thus, she manages to weaken the roughness of the Wuthering Heights environment and through her union with Hareton which later turns into love, causes attenuation of Heathcliff's power and his

¹⁸¹ Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*.182.

¹⁸² Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*.225.

¹⁸³ Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*.242.

¹⁸⁴ Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*.278.

fall. By the end of the novel, she is confident enough to attack Heathcliff's usurpation of her and Hareton's property in quite an unoffending way: "You shouldn't grudge a few yards of earth for me to ornament, when you have taken all my land. And Hareton's land and his money."¹⁸⁵ In this case Catherine does not defend only her but also Hareton's rights.

Consequently the novel ends with Catherine's victory and Heathcliff's fall, the victory of womanhood over conventions. As Pykett emphasizes, Catherine's property is restored which gives her financial independence and also Hareton's heritage is regained by means of the female line. "The restoration of Catherine's property equalizes the balance of power between marriage partners."¹⁸⁶ Catherine is no longer the victim as her mother, but she manages to win both, love and independence. Her marriage with Hareton is not expected to function as a prison but is supposed to provide her with a real home in which both partners would be equal.

5.4.3. Male Characters

The two men closely connected with Catherine I. – Edgar Linton and Heathcliff both represent a certain image of power, but the way in which their power is represented fundamentally differs. Edgar Linton may at first seem to be a timorous and calm character – representing the qualities of sensitivity and constancy – qualities which were believed to be suitable for female characters. Charlotte Brontë's commentary confirms this theory, but she also adds that, "Ellis Bell held that mercy and forgiveness are the divinest attributes of the Great Being who made both men and women."¹⁸⁷ Edgar's mild and sensitive attitude is demonstrated in the way he treated the vigorous Cathy during her period of madness. This is acknowledged in Nelly Dean's remark: "I observed that Mr. Edgar had a deep-rooted fear of reflecting her humour."¹⁸⁸ According to Jacobs, "Edgar Linton is certainly not

¹⁸⁵ Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*.280.

¹⁸⁶ Pykett, "Gender and Genre in *Wuthering Heights*" *Contemporary Critical Essays*. pp. 86-99.

¹⁸⁷ Brontë, "Editor's Preface to the New Reviews" *Wuthering Heights*, 319-323.

¹⁸⁸ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*.72.

a violent man, but he is equally ready to assert control over his household.”¹⁸⁹ Jacobs defines his firm intervention against Catherine and Heathcliff's reunion and also the way he despised his own sister on behalf of her marriage with Heathcliff. Although Edgar Linton, in comparison with Heathcliff's coarseness and arrogance acts as a mild man, his power is, as Gilbert states – hidden in his knowledge of law. Even at his deathbed, he thought of the possibilities on how to protect his beloved daughter from Heathcliff's power. However unsuccessful this attempt was, it still proves his abilities; “Instead of leaving Catherine's fortune at her own disposal, he determines to put it in the hands of trustees, for her use during life, and for her children, if she had any, after her. By that means, it could not fall to Mr. Heathcliff should Linton die.”¹⁹⁰

In contrast, Heathcliff according to his coarse, ruthless image seems to be a super-powerful, almost heartless man, blinded by his desire for revenge. It is essential to realize that he needed Catherine as a mediator for the expressing of his emotions – those which were considered to be devaluating for a man.

As Jacobs points out; “after Cathy's death, Heathcliff is incapable of any ‘feminine’ sort of emotion”¹⁹¹ When he first loses Catherine's favour – he leaves and creates a plan of revenge and later, when he loses Catherine irreversibly, he feels he lost part of himself with her death.

His story is a story of an unsure past and after the old master takes him out of the Liverpool street, he starts to feel a very passionate love to Catherine, experiences major disappointment when she marries Edgar and then starts his revenge against everyone. He used to feel very comfortable in his former union with Catherine, but things turned against him after the very first incident at the Linton's. They enjoyed themselves when criticizing Edgar's and Isabelle's behaviour, their superficiality and in how spoiled they were, when suddenly, after being betrayed, Heathcliff, as a dirty gypsy brat, was sent away and young Cathy – as a lady, was treated and taken well.

¹⁸⁹ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*.72.

¹⁹⁰ Jacobs, “Gender and Layered narrative in *Wuthering Heights*.” *Contemporary Critical Essays*. pp. 74-85.

¹⁹¹ Jacobs, “Gender and Layered narrative in *Wuthering Heights*.” *Contemporary Critical Essays*. pp. 74-85.

His feelings of injustice, grievance and later loss of Catherine lead him into his brutality.

5.5.Summary

In summary, although the ending of the novel could be understood as a female victory, in my opinion, Emily Brontë did not want to devalue male characters and elevate female characters. Her aim was to show that the greatest independence of both, men and women is in their equality. It also shows that it is not devaluing for a man to express emotions – Heathcliff's fall functions as a deterrent example of this inability. On the other hand it is not right for a woman to deny herself – which is reflected in Catherine's fall and self-destruction.

6. The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

This part is focused on the analysis of Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Firstly the structure and public reaction will be shortly mentioned with a special notice on traces of early feminism in the work and Anne's personal attitude to the public comments will be also included.

The essential part of the analysis covers – as in the previous analyses – the gender issue with regards to women's independence in marriage, life and society. I will examine marriage as a devastating institution for both men and women of middle-class Victorian society which is masterly depicted in the novel. The particularities of female and male characters will also be discussed.

6.1. Structure

The most interesting fact about the structure of the work is the involvement of the narrator. Through the male narrator, Anne obtains the power to address a wider range of readers, because the society at that time which, as has already been mentioned, did not respect a female writer and would devalue any work just for this reason. The same loss of esteem could have affected the narrator as well, thus under a male primary narrator, the novel might have been read without these prejudices.

The narrator Gilbert Markham, leads us into his correspondence with his brother-in-law Halford. Markham reveals to his friend the very details of the life and secrets of somebody who boundlessly trusts him – his wife, Helen. Gilbert is, except Helen's brother Mr. Lawrence, the only one to know the truth about her hardship and is supposed not to reveal it. There are two possible interpretations of the involvement of this correspondence, as Matus points out, this correspondence is obviously used as a 'pretext' for the narrative and we may come across the unpleasant fact that: "Helen's husband offers up her private and intimate journal for another's perusal."¹⁹²

This could be interpreted as low the authority of women in marriage, as Matus confirms: "But we could also read these details as conveying the novel's scepticism

¹⁹² Jill Matus, "Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*." *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*. pgs: 99-121. Glen Heather (Ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2007.

or even pessimism about the authority and voice woman retain in marriage.”¹⁹³ In my opinion, this also challenges the woman's voice in friendship – because despite Gilbert's reticence during the time they were just friends, after their relationship switches from friendship to partnership – marriage, he reveals her privacy to someone else regardless of her attitude, given throughout the novel – not to tell anything about her, and if necessary – tell as little as possible. There is no necessity to write the letters to Halford in such a detail, which is demonstrated in Gilbert's permanent inquiries about Halford's interest in the story: “Now, Halford, I bid you adieu for the present. This is the first instalment of my debt. If the coin suits you, tell me so, and I'll send you the rest at my leisure: if you would rather remain my creditor than stuff you purse with such ungainly, heavy pieces – tell me still, and I'll pardon your bad taste, and willingly keep my treasure to myself.”¹⁹⁴

Though we may understand this in several ways – and there could be readers who do not consider this too striking, we should remember, that the novel was written on purpose to address the ‘Woman Question’ and is regarded as a work written in a certain feminist tone. Anne herself confirms this in her *Preface to the Second Edition*: “I wished to tell the truth, for truth always conveys its own moral to those who are able to receive it.”¹⁹⁵

By mentioning ‘those who are able to receive it’, she obviously addresses the problems of a prejudiced society. Anne, like her sisters, refuses the classification of the society according to gender, and tends to present the ‘gender sameness’ identical to that previously mentioned with regards to Emily's work.

Although, as Mrs. Ward mentions in her *Introduction to the Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Anne scarcely shows the delicate inborn ability to perform the imagination and the connection among her eye, brain and hand and she presents rather ‘the truth of a tract

¹⁹³ Matus, “Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*. pgs: 99-121.

¹⁹⁴ Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. 1848. London : John Murray, Albemarle Street W. 1920; 12.

¹⁹⁵ Anne Brontë, “Author's preface to the second edition.” Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. 1848. London: John Murray, Albemarle Street W. 1920.

or report', her message – partially on behalf of this clearness – was easily understood.¹⁹⁶

The passive, gentle Anne's inner feelings about the woman issue, independence and equality, were obviously more resolute than one could imagine. The reader is guided throughout the entire novel with the firm and determined voice of Helen Huntingdon – the mediator of Anne Brontë's own voice.

6.2. Public Reaction

Although *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* was not as celebrated as Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, it was more successful than Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and definitely more successful than Anne's first novel *Agnes Grey* – although it includes some signs of the discussed issue. It is a tale of a governess depicting the reality and hardship of this employment (and Agnes' decision to not to stay at home to be supported, but to earn her own living is – of course an indisputable reference to the woman question). *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* deals with violence, dysfunction of marriage and abuse, it depicts the hardship of a Victorian dissatisfied wife who escapes from her husband and also escapes the law – because she has no right to custody of her child and no right to leave her husband. There is no veil to hide the reality, and it may be regarded as evidence of the fact that while Anne's literary abilities were poorer than Charlotte's and Emily's, there are still certain qualities.

As Hyman states, the novel is famous for its evident 'proto-feministic sensibilities'.¹⁹⁷ Ian Ward argues that '*The Tenant*' breaks up the traditional notion of matrimonial harmony.¹⁹⁸ It is essential to realize that the novel was supposed to be read by this particular Victorian middle-class and it is not surprising that the hypocritical patriarchal society felt unwilling to acknowledge this reality, thus the novel was found scandalous. This is why modern criticism treats it milder due to

¹⁹⁶ See Gwen Hyman, "An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs. Cambridge University Press. *Literature Resource Center*. Web 3 Feb. 2013 <<http://go.galegroup.com>>

¹⁹⁷ See Ian Ward, "The Case of Helen Huntingdon." *Criticism*. Vol. 49, Iss. 2. (Spring 2007), pp. 151-183. Detroit. *Literature Resource Center*. Web 3 Feb. 2013 <<http://go.galegroup.com>>

¹⁹⁸ Hyman, "An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

valuation of what Hyman puts as follows: “Anne Brontë's novel represents something of a classic of mid-Victorian feminist protest.”¹⁹⁹

The Tenant should definitely be appreciated for Anne's directness by which she deals with the taboo issues of the position of men and women in both marriage and Victorian society.

6.3. Gender

Anne Brontë used to share the imaginary kingdom ‘Gondal’ with her sister Emily. They were working on the Gondal writings together, which testifies that they must have shared some opinions and views. There are some similarities in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, and as Jacobs states, it is a certain ‘gender sameness’. While in *Wuthering Heights* women are in some way masculinised, Anne shows us also the opposite point of view – feminization of men on behalf of the harmful influence of Victorian society. Both novels depict marriage as a certain form of prison and deal with motherhood. Each novel sees motherhood from a different point of view. While *Wuthering Heights* offer us a portrayal of escape from womanhood, it is possible to interpret that in *The Tenant*, Anne also depicts the dark side of gentlemanliness.

6.4. Marriage

As has already been mentioned, the novel offers us a description of a horrific, abusive marriage which becomes a prison for both the wife and the husband. Helen Huntingdon enforces an independent choice of her husband, which turns out to be a wrong decision. In her misfortune, she fights her situation and the law – and the final escape is a brave step to free herself and what is more – to protect her son. The strong mother is afraid neither of her abusive husband, nor the law against which she acts and fights the wrong of an established system.

Broadly speaking, it is not surprising that women could have the feelings of imprisonment in early 19th century marriages. As Matus points out, before 1839

¹⁹⁹ Hyman, “An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451.

there was no way out of marriage except through an ‘ecclesiastical annulment’ or a ‘private act of Parliament’.²⁰⁰ But there had to be a serious reason – and it was not acknowledged that a husband's unfaithfulness (if not incestuous), or even worse domestic abuse (if not brutal) were sufficient reasons. A wife had no possibility to escape because she would be found ‘guilty of desertion’ and would have no right to dispose of “her” property and no right to custody of her children.²⁰¹

According to Matus, Anne Brontë describes “the context of the male power and privilege”.²⁰² “Specifically comparing the situations of men and women in marriage, the novel offers a sustained consideration of issues such as domestic abuse, and marriage, custody and law.”²⁰³

Regarding the law, I. Ward puts it as follows: “In marriage the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being of legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband.”²⁰⁴ In other words even though a wife brought some property into the marriage, she had no right to this property anymore after she became married. As the married couple were regarded as one person this, as I. Ward explains, would “suppose her separate existence”.²⁰⁵

A wife was expected to be obedient and patient, silent, blind and dumb with regards to her husband's possible misconduct. What was expected from a perfect wife in household matters is well described in the novel by one of the perfect wives, Mrs. Markham: “In all household matters, we have only two things to consider; first what's proper to be done, and secondly, what's most agreeable to the gentlemen

²⁰⁰ See Matus, “Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*. pgs: 99-121.

²⁰¹ See Matus, “Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*. pgs: 99-121.

²⁰² Matus, “Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*. pgs: 99-121.

²⁰³ Matus, “Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*. pgs: 99-121.

²⁰⁴ I. Ward, “The Case of Helen Huntingdon.” *Criticism*. Vol. 49, Iss. 2. (Spring 2007), pp. 151-183.

²⁰⁵ 206 I. Ward, “The Case of Helen Huntingdon.” *Criticism*. Vol. 49, Iss. 2. (Spring 2007), pp. 151-183.

of the house – anything will do for the ladies.”²⁰⁶ It is not surprising that all those expectations – which definitely denied anything concerning the wife's own will and supported husband's superiority – must have been unacceptable for a woman with a sense of justice.

6.5.Helen

Helen, who was growing up with her aunt and uncle, became a young self-contained lady influenced by her aunt's advice and being warned not to fall for “the first foolish or unprincipled person”²⁰⁷ who would try to obtain her heart. Helen obviously obeys this advice but she also acts according to her natural moral principle. She wants to decide the important matters of her life herself – as e.g. in case of her marriage. She is blind to old Mr. Boarham's courting and she strictly refuses all his attempts to make a proposal: “No consideration can induce me to marry against my inclinations.”²⁰⁸

The object of her interest - Arthur Huntingdon – who eventually becomes her husband is purely her personal choice and she marries him even though the reaction of her surroundings is not very encouraging. Helen is warned to be careful about the signs showing that there is something wrong with Arthur – e.g. the company he keeps and his general look which points to his relish in drinking, but she still cannot imagine how coarse and unpleasant the reality is. She is determined to help him and in her charitable attitude she answers her aunt's objection concerning Arthur's acquaintances: “I will save him from them.”²⁰⁹ It is essential to realize that this was only her decision and it may be a mistake or not – nobody had driven her into a marriage which she would refuse.

By this, the author admits, that in spite of being free to decide about her future herself, a woman might make a wrong decision. Helen realizes this also and admits that if she had been aware of Arthur's real character before, she would not have married him. On the other hand she is still too proud to regret her decision entirely.

²⁰⁶ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.57

²⁰⁷ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.29.

²⁰⁸ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.35.

²⁰⁹ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.66.

She definitely does not behave as the obedient Victorian wife who suffers various misconducts of her husband in silence without saying a thing. She is not even very inclined to Arthur's occasional exaggerated demonstration of 'love', because she correctly understands their superficiality: "I should like to be less of a pet and more of a friend, if I might chose."²¹⁰ As Arthur's selfish attitude starts to restrict Helen's freedom in common things – he reproaches her on her interest in anything else but himself. She starts to understand what he really expects from the marriage: "Judging from appearances, his idea of a wife is a thing to love one devotedly, and to stay at home upon her husband and amuse him and minister to his comfort in every possible way while he chooses to stay with her, when he is absent, to attend to his interests, domestic or otherwise, and patiently waits his return, no matter how he may be occupied in the meantime."²¹¹ This perfectly depicts the common attitude of these sorts of men in Victorian society. The function of the wife here is similar to the unpaid work of a slave, because the 'perfect' wife is expected to give and should not expect to receive.

Similarly to the social prejudices against female writers, there were prejudices against women in general. What was acceptable or even suitable for a man would be scandalous and disgraceful for a woman. Helen never agrees with or behaves according to the established social rules. She has her own head, is able to control herself and has learned to pretend – which was necessary for her to 'survive' in that society. When she first discovers Arthur's sympathy for Annabella, instead of outbursts of emotions – which would be considered just as a typical sign of a woman's weakness, Helen calmly warns Arthur: "You may think it all very fine, Mr. Huntingdon, to amuse yourself with rousing my jealousy but take care you don't rouse my hate instead. And when you once have extinguished my love, you will find it no easy matter to kindle it again."²¹²

Helen might have gained Arthur's love and admiration due to her difference from other ladies. Self-confident, determined to enforce her own opinions, Helen was like

²¹⁰ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. 98.

²¹¹ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.105.

²¹² Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.121.

a rose among the bushes for young Mr. Huntingdon. Over the course of time, however, he grew to dislike what firstly might have attracted him, because as he recognized Helen's emancipation, he realized how much it went against his notion of life. In Arthur's world, a man was a superior powerful master, who needed his wife just as a supplement. Hyman puts it as follows: "Arthur really needs his wife not to reform him, but to adore him, to reaffirm his power, and to demonstrate his gentlemanly badness by her very goodness, as Helen herself realizes."²¹³

Though she first fights the uncomfortable marriage with patience and hope for improvement, there are some boundaries, which after being exceeded, result in the change of her attitude. Helen begins to realize her naivety in her charitable attempt to save her husband and understands that she, though a strong woman, is in this case powerless: "Fool I was, to dream that I had strength and purity enough to save myself and him!"²¹⁴

Helen's final awakening includes the detection of Arthur's long-term infidelity, which disrupts even the very remains of her trust in him. As she reveals, she would flee immediately if she were just on her own. But in this situation, she does not find herself only in the role of a wife, but also in the important role of a mother – and this prevents her from making a hasty decision: "I would leave you to-morrow, and never again come under this roof, but for my child."²¹⁵

Helen's motherhood is entirely different from Catherine's motherhood in *Wuthering Heights*. While in *Wuthering Heights* Catherine has no possibility to be a real mother because of her early death, Helen is fully involved in her role of mother. On the other hand, although Catherine dies as early as her daughter is born, she does not even show any signs of her awareness of and preparation for the role of mother during her pregnancy. Even her hunger strike at that time is a demonstration of her attitude towards the child – she did not care about the possible consequences of her behaviour. For Helen, marriage was a prison from which she had to escape. Whereas in *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine escapes the imprisonment of marriage, womanhood

²¹³ Hyman, "An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

²¹⁴ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.132.

²¹⁵ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.174.

and motherhood by means of her death, Helen chooses – a not easier, but more rewarding way.

Helen's attitude is the opposite; she does everything to protect her son, fights against the established social norms, legal system and the entire society – for her independence and mainly for her son. Although the novel does not depict the bright side of motherhood, it certainly describes the proper, protective, but still self-contained, emancipated mother. Berry puts it as follows: “The novel almost universally portrays motherhood as dangerous, never sanctified.”²¹⁶ Whereas *Wuthering Heights* deals with the absence of motherhood, motherhood in *The Tenant* is more than present. This motherhood, as Berry argues, is interrupted by ‘paternal rights’.²¹⁷ Helen's decision to escape from the marriage is closely connected with it. Hyman puts it as follows: “Helen eventually finds herself compelled to flee her marriage in order to protect her son from his wealthy landed and outrageously drunken father's influence.”²¹⁸ As has already been mentioned, as she flees, Helen has no right to the custody of her son and is ‘guilty of desertion’, but these circumstances are nothing in comparison with the devastating influence of Arthur on his son – e.g. teaching him coarse manners, letting him drink as much alcohol as he wants - and it is essential to realize that the child is barely 5 years old. Helen, who was staying with Arthur at that time just because of her son and his financial security, finally makes a resolute decision: “This should not continue, my child must not be abandoned to this corruption better far he should live in poverty and obscurity, with a fugitive mother, than in luxury and affluence with such a father.”²¹⁹

Helen, with the help of her brother starts to live a lonely – but independent life in Wildfell Hall, where she immediately becomes the subject of public discussion. Aware of the danger of being revealed, she reasonably keeps herself at a distance from the local people. However she becomes the target of gossip anyway. As it was

²¹⁶ Laura C. Berry, “Acts of custody in incarceration in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*” *Providence*. Vol. 30, Fss. 1 (Fall 1996), pg. 32, 24 pgs. *Literature Resource Center*. Web 10 Feb. 2013 <<http://go.galegroup.com>>

²¹⁷ See Berry, “Acts of custody in incarceration in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*” *Providence*. Vol. 30, Fss. 1 (Fall 1996), pg. 32, 24 pgs.

²¹⁸ Hyman, “An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19 pgs.

²¹⁹ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. 126.

inappropriate for a woman to live alone, earn her living (which Helen does by means of painting pictures to sale them both to repay her brother and to secure herself and her son), and as she was seen with Mr. Lawrence and their close relationship was misinterpreted – her reputation is disrupted. Helen is really proud and is not even afraid to speak against the priest's suspicious warning. However despite the initial hardship, she manages to settle down. The more surprising is the fact that Helen's sense of obligation makes her come back to Arthur once he is ill to nurse him. But this ostensibly regressive step turns out to be next important advancement towards her independence. Helen manages to persuade Arthur, or better to say by her firm attitude and stubbornness, to sign a written agreement to confirm her custody of their son. Her resolution springs from her natural character and is intensified by her motherhood: “All this may strike you as harsh, but I felt I must not lose my present advantage, and my son's future welfare should not be forgotten.”²²⁰ Hyman puts it as follows: “As her retaining of her son makes clear, Helen has long been moving away from mere temperance and towards something more powerful.”²²¹

In the end Helen seems to find happiness, security, love and equality in her second marriage with Gilbert Markham. But it is a question whether their relationship really points to equality. Firstly Gilbert provides us with “no picture of a rich and masterful hero who is the means of raising the heroine to a social station her beauty deserves. Helen is superior to Gilbert in almost all aspects.”²²² Secondly, this superiority is increased, as Maters argues by Helen's inheritance of her uncle's property (which was in fact her aunt's before her marriage). Helen now becomes an independent woman with enough property to secure herself and her son and with her own rights to custody of her child and to dispose her property (until she marries again of course). Here Anne Brontë depicts “how marriage diminishes a woman's power and

²²⁰ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.176.

²²¹ Hyman, “An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall.” *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

²²² Matus , “Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontë's*. pgs: 99-121.

how women may help to empower each other in spite of the inescapable and pervasive institutions of patriarchy.”²²³

Consequently, we may ask if Helen managed to win her independence and equality in the end. This is a difficult question to answer because although she had chosen a better, moderate man who was supposed to respect her, she married him – which again leads her into the role of the inferior part of a powerful superior patriarchal entire. On the other hand staying unmarried would not do much good because an unmarried woman was – at that time as I. Ward states regarded as ‘unnatural’.²²⁴

After her second marriage by the end of the novel, her resolute voice is weakened, and Gilbert closes the narrative. This directly leads us into the main question and message of the novel, which, according to Matus, is: “What kind of marriage might be possible for a woman who values her independence and integrity.”²²⁵

In my opinion, by the final weakening of Helen's voice and also by means of her second marriage, Anne Brontë refers to – in some way a hopeless situation with regards to the position of woman in a conventional society and also in the legal system of that time.

6.6. Male Characters

Arthur Huntingdon, as has already been mentioned, presents a portrayal of a brutal, abusive husband with no respect for women. This again offers us the comparison with another, coarse and brutal character - Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. There definitely are some similarities in their behaviour and with regards to the Brontë family situation and the alcoholism of Branwell – it offers us a suggestion that not only the character of Heathcliff, but also the character of Huntingdon were modelled on him. H. Ward confirms this theory: “Much of *Wuthering Heights* and all of ‘*Wildfell Hall*’ show Branwell's mark.”²²⁶ Huntingdon is imprisoned in his serious

²²³ Matus, “Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*. pgs: 99-121.

²²⁴ See I. Ward, “The Case of Helen Huntingdon.” *Criticism*. Vol. 49, Iss. 2. (Spring 2007), pp. 151-183.

²²⁵ Matus, “Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*. pgs: 99-121.

²²⁶ Humphrey Ward, “Introduction.” Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. 1848, 7-14.

drinking, influenced by the bad company he keeps and he is also imprisoned in his marriage. As Hyman argues, his friends' reaction on his engagement was not very supportive because they felt pity that the unbound life full of parties, drinking and flirtation would come to the end. Although marriage did not prevent him from occasional misconduct he still felt restricted by this state: "As he begins to pay off his debts and becomes a father, Arthur becomes at once more outdated – stranded on his estate, choking on his idleness."²²⁷

His deeper alcoholism was, partly a result of his boredom and feelings of uselessness as he has nothing to do except the "enjoyment" of his leisure time. Helen Huntingdon captures this situation well in her journal: "Arthur is getting tired – not of me, I trust, but of the idle, quiet life he leads – and no wonder, for he has so few sources of amusement. he never reads anything but newspapers and sporting magazines; and when he sees me occupied with a book, he won't let me rest till I close it. (...) It is quite painful to witness his ennui."²²⁸ These circumstances lead him into a role which has nothing in common with power, decisiveness and strength – characters connected with a patriarch. His masculine gender role is disrupted and as Hyman states, by means of drinking he turns into "the archetypal Victorian fainting lady."²²⁹ Berry defines the reversal of gender power as follows: "In Huntingdon's decline we witness an almost perfect reversal of the gendered power relations that dominated courtship."²³⁰ During the courtship the gentleman is supposed to prove his abilities to protect and secure the lady. This is a portrayal of a bored, weak, drunk man – an inevitable product of his lack of duties and responsibilities. This lack of employment and work could be defined as follows: "While a man of privilege might technically be a market producer, he was entirely estranged from the process of production. His hands were never dirtied, his brain never taxed, he simply reaped

²²⁷ Hyman, "An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

²²⁸ Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. 225.

²²⁹ Hyman, "An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

²³⁰ Berry, "Acts of custody in incarceration in Wuthering Heights and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" *Providence*. Vol. 30, Fss. 1 (Fall 1996), pg. 32, 24 pgs.

the benefits of other people's effort."²³¹ As they had nothing to do, the gentlemen had only the possibilities on how to entertain themselves (or better to say how to outlast their time), in drinking, flirtation and games. On the contrary, ladies – though supposed to need control and leadership – were always able to employ themselves. But the same occupations could not be offered to men. According to Hyman, "Reading, drawing and piano are the occupations of ladies, and Huntingdon cannot take them up without running the risk of feminizing himself."²³² Consequently he avoids any activity and prefers drinking which helps him to overcome the long hours of idleness. Paradoxically, this idleness weakens him much more than any reading or drawing would.

Gilbert Markham, in contrast to Huntingdon represents a good, 'healthy' attitude. He presents temperance and humility. Hyman defines his role in the plot as follows: "Gilbert's status as a gentleman who is also a working farmer implies that his replacement of Huntingdon in Helen's affections – and finally in marriage – resuscitates gentlemanliness as a useful, socially redeemed state."²³³

This 'resuscitation of gentlemanliness' is demonstrated in his respectful attitude to Helen and also in the difference of his and Huntingdon's lifestyle. Huntingdon's idleness, boredom and serious drinking is opposed to Markham's temperance and mainly in his ability to occupy himself. As Hyman argues, when considering his occupation as a farmer, it offers him the certitude of some activity necessary to be done and thus it prevents him from falling into the previously described idleness. However, there is something that influences his occupational performance and it is the relationship with Helen.²³⁴ Not for Helen herself, but more for the feelings which fill his head and make him unable to work or decrease his interest in these matters. As Hyman argues, "Gilbert, the useful, active farmer who shoulders responsibilities despite his inclinations in other directions, neglects his work on the farm more and

²³¹ Hyman, "An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

²³² Hyman, "An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

²³³ Hyman, "An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

²³⁴ See Hyman, "An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

more as the narrative processes.”²³⁵ This could be understood as a certain feature of his demasculination, because as it has already been stated, emotions were considered to be a sign of weakness pertaining to women. On the other hand after Helen's departure he becomes interested in it again and his working productivity increases. All in all the situation of the inactive life of the gentlemen of property offers us quite a critical view of men of that social class. This novel demonstrates how devastating it can be, when one has nothing to do except find forms of entertainment.

6.7. Summary

In conclusion, Anne Brontë addresses the question of women equality and independence in all of Helen's words and actions. The novel provides us with a consideration about marriage – if it was possible for a woman to marry and retain her independence. It clearly communicates the message that the marriage might not be the best one could reach. The novel written in a feministic tone suggests that it is better and even more appropriate for a lady to refuse a proposal, although it would incense her family and background, than marry against her will and regret. It clearly communicates Anne's ideas and was written on purpose to inform audiences about the issue rather than to impress them with artistic abilities.

²³⁵ Hyman, “An Infernal fire in my veins: Gentlemanly drinking in the Tenant of Wildfell Hall.” *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Vol. 36, Iss. 2. (Sep. 2008) pg. 451, 19pgs.

7. Conclusion

The theme of discrimination against women in various spheres throughout history and the beginnings of feminism seems to have acquired more and more public interest in contemporary society. Although the actual social position of women, in general has gone through several essential changes, certain important issues still remain unresolved.

Nevertheless, women over past centuries had few opportunities to fight for their independence in comparison with their contemporaries at present. When we consider the situation in Great Britain, the beginnings of emancipation of women and early feminism, the ways women could struggle against their bleak situation were considerably limited. They addressed the 'Woman Question' most often by means of literature. The prejudiced patriarchal Victorian society was unwilling to admit that women would be able to write remarkable work, instead of being just involved in preposterous naive romantic plots. Although female writing was not valued in public and the publishers would not accept such works very often, there still were strong, remarkable women who managed to make their mark despite this discrimination.

The Brontë sisters were neither the first pioneers of this effort, nor the most resolute interpreters of the issue, but there is something that makes their work remarkable for both, the emancipation which is mirrored in it and the literary abilities.

Therefore the first aim of the thesis was to introduce Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë as distinguished writers addressing the 'Woman Question' in their novels. I focused on searching for the issues of independence and equality in the novels *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. The novels, apart from 'The Tenant' (where the purpose was to inform) were not primarily written on purpose to be regarded as feminist pieces of writing, but still retain a slightly emancipated tone. The Brontë sisters were original, excellent writers, who either shocked through a coarseness which was not expected to be a product of a female hand or simply amazed their readers through their great literary abilities. In their time, they demonstrated what is (or at least should be) well-known and accepted now

– that women are equal partners, counterparts and rivals. These issues are somewhat hidden in their novels out of which the most direct is Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of the Wildfell Hall*. When reading the Brontë's novels, I discovered certain common aspects – primarily the examples of the wrong function of marriage and the poor opportunities for a woman at that time to become independent. What I find interesting about the exploration of this theme is that none of the Brontë sisters actually had plentiful experience of it. The only one who at least experienced marriage was Charlotte, who actually married after creating her major work. What is more they had no possibility to observe the marriage of their parents either, because of their mother's premature death. Thus the three highly talented, quite inexperienced girls who lived in the relative solitude of the Yorkshire moors, and who did not have many opportunities to observe real life, made up stories which authentically depict the social position of women at that time. What is more, when reading their works carefully, one might realize that they contain certain hidden cautions or possible solutions to these issues.

The Brontë sisters should definitely not be considered as one unit. Each of them was an original individual, although their creation bears certain common autobiographical features as for example, the unpleasant experience with drunkenness and the decline of their brother Branwell, the settings of the novels, which correspond with the environment of the Yorkshire moors, etc. In my opinion, all the Brontë's managed to demonstrate their view of independence and equality in a unique way. Although the only novel out of those three, which was appreciated by the critics at that time was *Jane Eyre*, the other two are no less remarkable at least with regards to their discussed topic. Whereas *Wuthering Heights* depicts the devastating influence of social norms on both men and women in quite an uncanny way, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* addresses the issue of women's independence and equality more directly. The novels also deal with aspects of female education, earning one's living as a form of female independence, the social position of governesses, etc.

In conclusion, in my opinion *Jane Eyre* describes the progress of a strong female character towards independence and equality which, in the end, could be doubted. Jane's life journey ends up in a marriage with a physically weakened man. This

might suggest that even Charlotte herself was not sure about the possibility of a 'marriage of equality'. On the other hand, what might be interpreted as a necessary weakening of the 'superior' male character, when we consider that a woman is supposed to be naturally physically weaker, could be also understood as a balance of their powers and consequently – their equality. However, this rather ambiguous ending suggests Charlotte's uncertainty about these issues.

What is more, when considering the marriage, *Jane Eyre* does not deal with the legal problem, which was another major impediment in a woman's path to independence. Both the other sisters Emily and Anne Brontë addressed the legal issue in their novels. Apart from the fact that Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* was considered the most scandalous, coarse and shocked the public, it is remarkable for dealing with the legal issue and depicting the social situation of Victorian women. Even more interesting is the fact that Emily, who it is claimed did not have many opportunities to gain information about this field, describes the legal aspects of marriage and inheritance in the plot precisely. Although she describes the main female character's fall – obviously a result of the 'unhealthy' impact of female education and unsuitable marriage – by means of the 'repetition' of the story in the milder second part of the novel, the dualism involved in the characters and places, she suggests there is a chance for improvement, independence and equality. In my opinion, in spite of the fact that the novel is written in quite a depressing mood, the ending suggests that there is a possibility for equal coexistence of men and women and that it is not necessary to weaken one and elevate the other. The way to achieve, it is suggested to be in the understanding of each other. However, Emily Brontë's message seems to provide us with a warning on how destructive the wrong influence of the prejudiced patriarchal society can be in which men are forbidden to express emotions (demonstrated in Heathcliff's fall) and women are expected to deny themselves, their opinions, feelings and desires (demonstrated in the first Catherine's fall). As concerns Anne Brontë, I also tried to argue that, in spite of the fact that Anne Brontë was regarded as less rich in literary abilities as Emily and Charlotte, her second novel should be appreciated at least for the directness in dealing with the taboo gender issue of Victorian society. Moreover, in spite of the fact that the novel

is claimed to have the character of a report, it reads quite well and it is even remarkable just how resolute the opinions of the main character – Helen Huntingdon are. Written on purpose to inform people about gender inequality, in my opinion, the aim of the novel was fulfilled and the message of the novel is clear as well. What I also discovered is that Anne, who is considered to have been passive and silent, is actually the most direct and most feministly tuned Brontë.

All in all, the work of the Brontës suggests that it was possible for a woman to gain independence and equality but that it was going to be a long journey with a number of impediments in the forms of laws, social norms, the influence of the society, etc. The ambiguous endings of *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* suggest that it is a difficult way and the results are not yet sure. The slightly optimistic ending of the otherwise relatively depressing novel *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, provides the readers with hope for better times.

The fact, that somewhere in the middle of the wilderness in the Yorkshire Moors, there were three ostensibly passive, docile sisters with such outstanding writing abilities and with the resolution to struggle against a prejudiced society, is absolutely breathtaking. I hope my work can help readers interested in the gender issue of the Victorian period to understand the feelings of the authors and provide them with the image of the possibilities for independence and equality depicted in the novels of the Brontë sisters.

8. Resumé

Hlavním tématem této bakalářské práce je zobrazení nezávislé ženy v románech sester Brontëových. Postavení ženy ve společnosti v 1. polovině 19. století ve Velké Británii skýtalo velmi skrovné podmínky pro boj za nezávislost a rovnoprávnost a prostředky, jejichž pomocí mohly ženy prosazovat své názory, byly značně omezené. Nejčastější způsob, kterým emancipované ženy své doby vyjadřovaly své názory, byl prostřednictvím literatury. Problémem ovšem zůstává, že si předpojatá patriarchálně založená společnost nedokázala připustit, že by žena vůbec mohla být schopna tvořit pozoruhodná, kvalitní literární díla. V atmosféře, kde vydavatelé odmítali publikovat díla napsaná ženskou autorkou, bylo pro ženy velmi těžké a demotivující pokoušet se o prosazení svých názorů formou literárních děl. Od žen se neočekávalo, že by měly být jakkoli literárně aktivní a i kdyby ano, pohled na ženskou tvorbu byl plný předsudků. Ženská tvorba byla asociována s představou naivních, nikterak hlubokomyslných romantických příběhů. Z tohoto důvodu ženy často publikovaly pod mužskými pseudonymy, což je i případem sester Brontëových, které využívaly pseudonymů Currer, Ellis a Acton Bell. Třebaže cesta k uznání a úspěchu byla velmi obtížná a odrazující, nacházíme zde spisovatelky, které se nebály bojovat proti konvencím a předpojatosti.

Přesto, že Charlotte, Emily a Anne Brontëovy nepatří ani mezi průkopnice těchto snah, ani mezi nejkritičtější představitelky ženské emancipace své doby, jejich díla se této tematiky pozoruhodně dotýkají a je až s podivem, jak silná byla touha po nezávislosti a rovnoprávnosti u těchto zdánlivě pasivních a pokorných mladých žen. První kapitola této práce popisuje situaci ve Velké Británii v první polovině 19. století za vlády královny Viktorie (1837-1901) zejména v souvislosti s postavením ženy ve společnosti. Zmiňuje počátky feminismu a zvyšující se vědomí o nerovnoprávnosti a diskriminaci. Vysvětluje, jak si ženy začaly uvědomovat svou bezútešnou pozici a začaly se aktivněji angažovat v boji za nezávislost a rovnoprávnost ve sférách vzdělání, pracovních možností a zejména v literatuře, jakožto prostředku k vyjadřování svých názorů, tudíž velmi důležitým nástroji sloužícímu k informovanosti okolí. Práce v neposlední řadě zmiňuje problematiku

sňatků, která byla v této době velmi aktuální. Ukazuje sňatek z ženského pohledu jednak jako nutný prostředek pro zajištění si slušného životního standardu (ženě, které nebylo dovoleno studovat, veřejně se angažovat, nebo si vydělávat na živobytí poctivou prací ani nic jiného nezbylo), jednak jako jistou formu uvěznění pod patriarchální autoritou, naprostou finanční závislost na manželově libovůli, jelikož právě on byl jedinou osobou kompetentní nakládat s majetkem přineseným do manželství oběma stranami. Tato kapitola v neposlední řadě také zmiňuje, která je tato problematika prezentována v dílech Anne, Emily a Charlotte Brontëových. Třebaže mladší Anne a Emily nikdy nepoznaly manželský život a Charlotte se vdala až po publikaci svých nejvýznamnějších děl, je až s podivem, jak na ně tato „manželská hrozba“ působila.

Druhá část této práce seznamuje čtenáře s životopisem samotných autorek. Rozebírá jejich rodinné zázemí a vzájemné vztahy členů rodiny. Zde nacházíme některé autobiografické prvky, které se promítají v jejich dílech, mezi které patří nejčastěji různá zpodobnění opilství a úpadku jejich bratra Patrick Branwella Brontë – podobnost s postavou Arthura Huntingdona v románu *Dvojitý život Heleny Grahamové* nebo postava Heathcliffa v románu *Na Větrné Hůrce* je zde více než náhodná. V románu *Jana Eyrová* můžeme spatřit více autobiografických prvků, reprezentovaných zejména postavou Heleny Burnsové (jejíž vzorem byla Charlottina starší sestra Maria) a traumatickým zážitkem z internátní Lowoodské školy.

Rodinná atmosféra byla narušena předčasnou smrtí jejich matky krátce po narození nejmladší Anne Brontë. Její role se částečně ujala jejich teta Elizabeth Branwell, a částečně nejstarší dcera – Maria. Ačkoli sourozenci tetu respektovaly, její přístup k dětem nebyl nijak zvlášť srdečný a nikdy se jim nepodařilo vztah více upevnit. Nejstarší sestra Maria svým způsobem nahrazovala matku v rodině svou láskyplnou a starostlivou péčí o mladší sourozence. Po její smrti padlo toto břemeno na Charlottina bedra, ta si však nikdy nedokázala tento přístup plně osvojit. Rodina žila v Haworthu a toto místo, rozkládající se v krajině Yorkshirských vřesovišť hraje důležitou roli v tvorbě autorek. Zejména Emily Brontë vřesoviště přímo učarovaly a nacházela v nich inspiraci, svobodu a nezávislost, po které tolik niterně toužila.

Jelikož se jim nedostávalo příliš možností pro kontakt s okolím, toulky po této drsné, krásné krajině fungovaly jako jistá forma útěku z jejich osamělosti.

Tato část bakalářské práce dále stručně popisuje životní příběhy těchto tří autorek. Charlotte Brontë se zde jeví jako poměrně ambiciózní spisovatelka, která o sobě chtěla dát světu vědět. To je patrné na její korespondenci s básníkem Robertem Southeyem, úsilí o prosazení publikování svých děl, tím že se nedala odradit prvotním neúspěchem románu *Profesor*, snaze přesvědčit své méně asertivní sestry o význačnosti jejich práce a v neposlední řadě také negativní zpětnou vazbou, kdy, i přes to, že své sestry velmi milovala, jim byla schopna nezdvořile předhazovat negativní komentáře kritiků v dobách jejich vážné nemoci a po jejich smrti dokonce některé části jejich děl přepisovala a “upravovala“. Na druhé straně tato práce prezentuje Charlotte a její vztah k manželství – prvotní čtyři odmítnuté žádosti o ruku a zdráhavé přijetí nabídky k sňatku s panem Nichollsem. Jak práce později rozebírá v analýze románu *Jana Eyrová*, Charlotte si nikdy nebyla jistá tím, zda manželství může opravdu být rovnoprávné a zda v něm může být uchována jistá forma nezávislosti a individualismu.

V souvislosti s Emily Brontë je často zmiňováno, že její tvorba nese určité znaky rozervanosti a je těžké jí porozumět. Emily rozhodně nebyla ta rozhodná, rezolutní osoba jako Charlotte, žila uzavřená ve svém nitru se svými myšlenkami, toulající se po vřesovištích. Její intelekt a schopnosti vyzdvihl pan Heger, který ji a Charlotte vyučoval v Bruselu. Její tajuplné psychické rozpoložení v souladu s jejím intelektem a jedinečnými literárními schopnostmi je patrné v její tvorbě, která vždy nese nádech jakési záhadnosti. Ačkoli její současníci její tvorbě nerozuměli a považovali ji až za urážlivě hrubou, nyní je její dílo velmi ceněno a stavěno naroveň dílu její sestry Charlotte.

Anne Brontë je sice pokládána za pasivní, klidnou a tichou osobu, nicméně její tvorba mluví o opačných vlastnostech. Tato práce mimo jiné zkoumá, že Anne, třebaže vždy stála ve stínu svých sester, za svůj krátký život prokázala stejnou emancipovanost a touhu po nezávislosti jako její sestry. Zejména její druhý román *Dvoji život Heleny Grahamové* lze pokládat za velmi povedený v souvislosti s tím, jak dokázala přímo vystihnout problematiku rovnoprávnosti. Jelikož dílo bylo

napsáno za účelem informovat o útlaku a útisku žen společností, byl tento účel splněn dokonale. Anne Brontë se možná neprokázala tak skvělými literárními schopnostmi jako její sestry, ale její dílo dokazuje její odhodlání pro boj za nezávislost.

Následující rozsáhlejší část této bakalářské práce obsahuje podrobnou analýzu tří románů – *Jana Eyrová*, *Na Větrné Hůrce* a *Dvojitý život Heleny Grahamové*. Součástí analýzy je stručný pohled na reakci veřejnosti a strukturu díla. Hlavním aspektem této analýzy je pohled na genderové role, rozbor hlavní ženské hrdinky vzhledem k problematice rovnoprávnosti, emancipace a ženské nezávislosti. V souvislosti s tímto tématem je často zmiňován pohled na manželství jako na jistou formu uvěznění v konvenční patriarchální společnosti s malými vyhlídkami na rovnoprávnost a zároveň je zde zkoumána otázka, zda autorky vůbec viděly nějaké východisko z této situace. Analýza také stručně rozebírá mužské hrdiny a jejich vztah k dané problematice.

V románu *Jana Eyrová* jeho autorka Charlotte Brontë poukazuje na to, že ačkoli je hlavní hrdince během její životní pouti nabídnuto rovnou několik forem nezávislosti, jako třeba duchovní nezávislost v podobě dobročinnosti či seberealizace prací, odmítá tyto formy pro svou vlastní vizi nezávislosti, která se skrývá ve svobodném rozhodnutí o svém životě po boku ač raněného a závislého, ale milovaného muže. Na druhou stranu právě Rochesterovo zranění je důkazem toho, že sama autorka cítila potřebu jeho mužskou nadřazenost a pánovitost nějakým viditelným způsobem snížit, z čehož vyvstává otázka, zda toto vůbec může být pokládáno za rovnoprávný svazek. Charlotte Brontë měla sama o tomto pochybnosti, vezmeme-li v úvahu její vlastní manželství a způsob, jakým do něj vstoupila. Na druhou stranu hlavní hrdinka – Jana Eyrová je silná žena, které záleží na sobě samotné, není ochotná se podřít konvencím, ale vždy jedná podle svého vlastního uvážení, podle toho co je nejlepší pro ni, pro její integritu.

Román *Na Větrné Hůrce* nám poskytuje dvojitý pohled na věc - dualismus v podobě umístění děje do dvou naprosto protichůdných atmosfér, dvou vypravěčů, a zejména dualismus postav a dvojitý vyprávění příběhů zdánlivě podobných s rozdílnými konci. Ačkoli druhá – mírnější polovina může čtenáři připadat jako zbytečné opakování

příběhu, je velmi důležitou částí románu. Dvojitý děj, stejně jako dualismus jednotlivých postav naznačuje jistý vývoj, kterým postavy procházejí. Druhá část poskytuje čtenáři poněkud optimističtější pohled na věc a navozuje pocit, že i přes zdánlivě beznadějnou situaci, je zde naděje na nápravu. To, že Emily nechala svou hlavní hrdinku – Catherine v první části románu zemřít, lze chápat jako ukázkou toho, jak špatný a destruktivní vliv může mít “nezdravý“ způsob vzdělávání žen a jejich příprava pro roli dámy bez vlastního názoru, poslušné vyšších patriarchálních autorit. Analýza se soustřeďuje na Catherinin pád a její pocit uvěznění v manželství s Edgarem Lintonem. Catherinin vývoj není dokončen smrtí první Catherine – matky, nýbrž “vítězstvím“ druhé Catherine – dcery. Emily Brontë v tomto díle neřeší jen problematiku nezávislosti, rovnoprávnosti a emancipace v manželství, ale dotýká se i právních problémů. Je až překvapující, jak vynikající znalosti práva – soudobého i dřívějšího zde prokázala. Mimo znalosti práva lze vyzdvihnout i poněkud komplikovanou strukturu díla, kde je vše dokonale symetrické a přece tak protichůdné. Dvě protikladná sídla, dvě rozdílná prostředí, dvě Catherine, dva Heathcliffové, dva Earnshawové, dva Lintonové – co se zdá na první pohled stejné nebo velmi podobné se ukáže být naprosto rozdílné a přesto na konci nacházíme mezi těmito protiklady až děsivou shodu.

Román *Dvojitý život Heleny Grahamové* je sice strukturován formou korespondence mezi vypravěčem a jeho švagrem, autorce Anne Brontë bylo mnoha kritiky vytýkáno, že dílo má spíše charakter reportu. Nicméně, vezmeme-li v úvahu účel informovat o diskriminaci a nerovnoprávné pozici ženy ve společnosti, za kterým byl román napsán, rezolutní tón kterým se Helena Grahamová této problematice dotýká, síla a odhodlání, kterým Anne Brontë obdařila tuto postavu, jako kdyby prezentovaly její vlastní myšlenky a touhu po nezávislosti. Dílo pojednává o násilí, dysfunkci manželství, týrání a manipulativní chování a zobrazuje těžký úděl manželky ve viktoriánské společnosti. Zároveň zobrazuje špatný vliv společnosti na muže – vlivem zahálky a alkoholismu tak dochází k jeho oslabování spíše než posilování jeho autority. Popisuje rozhodnutí hlavní hrdinky z manželství utéci a nevynechává ani právní problematiku věci, která značně komplikuje celou situaci. Z poměrně feministického ladění celého díla dobře vyznívá poselství, že manželství v této době

nemusí vždy znamenat výhru a že by mladá dívka měla raději odmítnout žádost o ruku, a postavit se tak přání své rodiny než se vdát proti své vůli a poté toho litovat. Toto je jasným důkazem, jak emancipovaná žena byla Anne Brontë a jaký odkaz ve svém díle zanechala.

Závěrem lze říci, že sestry Brontëovy byly originální, vynikající spisovatelky, které jednak šokovaly hrubostí a rezolutním tónem promítajícím se v jejich tvorbě, jednak ohromovaly čtenáře svým talentem. V době, kdy společnost byla plná předsudků, dokazovaly to, co dnes je (nebo by mělo být) všeobecně známo – že ženy jsou rovnocennými partnerkami, protějšky a soupeřkami. Neměly by rozhodně být považovány za jeden celek, protože každá z nich byla originální a třebaže společným znakem jejich tvorby je emancipace, přestože pojednává o podobných záležitostech jako je manželství atd., každá z autorek se dokázala dané problematice dotknout jedinečným způsobem.

K tomu lze dodat, že tvorba sester Brontëových naznačuje, že žena má možnost dosáhnout nezávislosti a rovnoprávnosti, ale cesta k úspěchu není jednoduchá a naráží na mnoho překážek v podobě právních ustanovení, negativních stanovisek společnosti atd.

Skutečnost, že kdesi v pustině Yorkshirských vřesovišť žily zdánlivě pasivní, tiché sestry s vynikajícími literárními schopnostmi a s odhodláním bojovat proti předpojaté společnosti, je naprosto strhující.

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