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MARRIAGE IN THE WORKS OF THE BRONTËS'

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

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Abstract

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This thesis deals with the marriage in Charlotte Brontë's three selected novels - *Jane Eyre*, *Villette* and *Shirley*. It analyzes the chosen characters and determines what past experiences affect their opinions on marriage and what drives them. It also sheds more light on the question if they are affected by other, outside, forces or if it is they alone who have control over their lives.

Each chapter analyzes the particular literary work. The first chapter deals with *Jane Eyre*, the second chapter with *Villette* and the third chapter focuses on *Shirley*.

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Introduction

Charlotte Brontë, who wrote under the pen name Currer Bell, was the eldest of the three Brontë sisters who survived their childhood. She was born in 1816 into the family of Patrick Brontë, a Perpetual curate, and his wife Maria. She taught for several years and was also a governess. The focus of her interest was religion and a feminist view of women in general. Her female characters often feel the need to be strong, independent and have control over their lives, though they are also struggling with their inability to initiate action.

This thesis deals with the marriage in Charlotte Brontë's three selected novels - *Jane Eyre*, *Villette* and *Shirley*. It analyzes the chosen characters and determines what past experiences affect their opinions on marriage and what drives them. It also sheds more light on the question if they are affected by other, outside, forces or if it is they alone who have control over their lives.

Each chapter analyzes the particular literary work. The first chapter deals with *Jane Eyre*, the second chapter with *Villette* and the third chapter focuses on *Shirley*.

Marriage in Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre feels to be a book mostly about manipulation. The characters are lied to and coerced to a certain behavior and in many cases are oblivious of the possible life altering consequences. Others are bound and influenced by their pasts and are trying to overcome them in order to have at least a little more satisfying life. Glen (2002) writes that *Jane Eyre* is: “A passionate, headstrong narrative of a young woman confronting the world with obstinate integrity, it treats of marginality and loneliness, of the desire for adventure, intimacy and independence” (p. 99). It is also a book about the true power of will and what is ethical and what is not. Gilbert and Gubar (2000) believe that “we tend today to think of *Jane Eyre* as moral gothic” (p. 337). It is the subjective opinion of what is ethical that defines the actions of an individual. Is it acceptable to be cruel to a defenseless child? Can one marry another even though there is a still living, though mad, wife hidden in the proverbial tower? Will there be any repercussions for using the threat of God’s wrath and eternal damnation in order to frighten and manipulate?

1.1. Mr. Rochester

Mr. Rochester is the main male character in *Jane Eyre* written by Charlotte Brontë, British novelist and poet. The readers first encounter him after Jane’s arrival to Thornfield Hall where she is supposed to start working as a governess, teaching Mr. Rochester’s ward, Adele Varens. And although Mr. Rochester is the focus of the story in only about a third of the book, he is constantly present in Jane’s mind during her stay with her cousins and guides her steps and partially even her decisions.

1.1.1. Bertha Mason

Bertha is a daughter of a very wealthy family living in Spanish Town in Jamaica and is chosen to be Mr. Rochester’s first wife. Being still young, Mr. Rochester is coerced into marrying a complete stranger. The reason is quite simple: there is an older son, Rowland, in the family who inherits everything so the estate is not divided. Mr. Rochester is left poor but his father finds it inappropriate and goes on a search for a possible wife.

It is an ideal situation promising a disaster. A young man freshly out of college, a beautiful woman and too many people around them inconspicuously coercing him to marry. The whole setup seems magical. It seems to be a perfectly arranged marriage with all the advantages and assumed affection. But it is nothing but a ploy and he is too concentrated on her stunning beauty, she is “tall, dark, and majestic” (Brontë, 2001, p. 260), and is too unaware of his surroundings.

From the first moment Mr. Rochester steps on the shores of Jamaica, he is being used because of his ignorance. He has no control over what is happening, but what is even worse, he has no knowledge he is being manipulated towards an outcome that has been agreed on by everyone around except him. It is obvious that Mr. Rochester is only a pawn in the game played by his own family. Subtle manipulation is all it is needed to get the future husband where everyone around him wants him to be. In the end he becomes a part of the pretended act when he voluntarily starts believing that the marriage was what he himself wants.

But is it really true he had no choice?

Mr. Rochester feels cheated and hurt by his family and everyone else who had something to do with his marriage to Bertha for the most of his life. He does not believe he was at fault or could do something differently or better. His family and the family of the bride are the guilty party and that suits him.

The initial affection is gone but he is irrevocably tied to her. Sutherland (1997) explains why Mr. Rochester did not divorce her: “But before the aggrieved husband can use her vile adulteries as grounds for divorce, Bertha cheats him by falling victim to the Mason curse. Lunatics cannot be held responsible in law for their acts. Edward is chained to Bertha” (p. 71). The fact that he determined to refuse her as his legal wife is most likely an act of rebellion. He tries to free himself from the harmful influence of his family (though they are already dead). The act of marrying again, this time from his own will, is a declaration of independence and the fact he is his own master and he alone decides what his future will be. He is trying to take back control he lost as a young man and refused to retrieve during the time he spent running from his own past.

It makes the readers sympathize with him at least as much as with Jane. Though he tries to commit bigamy, his actions are justifiable. He has been manipulated and cheated and his whole life is completely destroyed. Even the light at the end of the tunnel, the “almost unearthly thing” (Brontë, 2001, p. 217) that would not yield, flickers and then is gone from his reach. According to Sutherland (1997), “In *Jane Eyre* we are

encouraged, in the last chapters, to feel sympathy for [...] a husband more sinned against than sinning” (p. 69). It is not only the last chapters that picture Mr. Rochester as a good man slowly destroyed by his past, a man unable to control his future. Jane’s conversations with her employer and his self condemnation evokes rather pity than anger or disgust. At the same time, we are aware of his sins and his past is more filled with his sins than his good decisions and deeds. Yet it does not matter.

It is quite strange that Mr. Rochester did not send her wife to an asylum but provided her with a home. She was hidden inside a house he rarely visited, from obvious reasons since nothing good awaited him there, but provided for. The real question is why did he keep her hidden and did not send her to some kind of institution where she would be really taken care of in a more professional way? Was it kindness or a faint hope that his wife would sooner rather than later die in the unprofessional care of one often drunk woman? Was the fire that destroyed Thornfield Hall just an accident or was it intentional? Sutherland (1997) wonders:

Who is responsible for the fire at Thornfield—the madwoman, the drunk woman, or the husband who, despite these warnings, did not dismiss the drunk woman and put the madwoman under proper supervision? (p. 71)

Is it possible that Mr. Rochester, mourning Jane’s sudden departure and therefore the loss of the real love of his life, was capable of burning Thornfield Hall? Or was the convincing of Bertha on the roof really rather a successful effort to get rid of the woman that was the reason he lost the most important thing in his life? Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper, told Jane later in the book:

I witnessed, and several more witnessed Mr. Rochester ascend through the skylight on to the roof: we heard him call "Bertha!" We saw him approach her; and then, ma'am, she yelled, and gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement.' (Brontë, 2001, p. 365)

If this speculation would turn out to be true, this would make Mr. Rochester a wife-killer and that is a very grave sin.

1.1.2. Blanche Ingram

It is a carefully staged play, Mr. Rochester’s whole relationship with Miss Ingram. To an uninvolved observer and even to Blanche herself it seems very real, and because the book is told from Jane’s point of view, she has no idea what is really

happening and believes everything she sees. Sutherland (1997) believes that “Rochester had every intention of marrying Blanche Ingram“ (p. 78). Though that may be logical Mr. Rochester’s deceiving behavior feels to be more of a test, elaborated and very cruel, a subtle way to manipulate Jane into discovering and then finally showing him her real feelings so he is no longer left guessing. He himself admits that: “I feigned courtship of Miss Ingram, because I wished to render you as madly in love with me as I was with you; and I knew jealousy would be the best ally I could call in for the furtherance of that end” (Brontë, 2001, p. 224).

1.1.3. Jane Eyre

After a lifetime of misery due to his unfortunate marriage to Bertha Mason, Mr. Rochester meets Jane Eyre who becomes the new governess of his ward, Adele Varens. Jane Eyre seems to be almost angelic in her innocence and view of life. He admits: “Ten years since, I flew through Europe half mad; with disgust, hate, and rage, as my companions; now I shall revisit it healed and cleansed, with a very angel as my comforter” (p. 221). But it is not only the angelic side of Jane Eyre that is appealing to Mr. Rochester. It is gradually obvious, not only to him but to readers as well, that there is so much more to Jane.

She is quite content with her life in servitude and often calls Mr. Rochester her master. This acknowledgement of his power and dominance is also very alluring to Mr. Rochester. In *Jane Eyre* he tells Jane: “I never met your likeness. Jane: you please me, and you master me— you seem to submit, and I like the sense of pliancy you impart” (p. 222). Jane’s submission is the main source of her power over Mr. Rochester.

However the idea of her submission is not the only thing that makes Jane who she is. Beyond this apparent need to find her place in the power structure of Mr. Rochester’s home, there is also a hidden strength and fierceness which is shown at the end of the book when she decides to leave him: “I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you” (p. 216). In *The Madwoman in the Attic* it is said that:

His need for her strength and parity is made clearer soon enough—on, for instance, the occasion when she rescues him from his burning bed (an almost fatally symbolic plight), and later on the occasion when she helps him rescue Richard Mason from the wounds inflicted by "Grace Poole."

And that these rescues are facilitated by Jane's and Rochester's mutual sense of equality is made clearest of all in the scene in which only Jane of all the "young ladies" at Thornfield fails to be deceived by Rochester in his gypsy costume: (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 353)

It is the need for freedom and rightness that drives her most of her life and is another appealing aspect of her personality. This duality of Jane's personality makes her unique and she inevitably draws Mr. Rochester's attention and gives him a new desire to live.

Speculations if Mr. Rochester was somehow responsible for his first wife's death aside, he did have an uneasy life. The mad woman hidden in his home and later on his own sinful madness as a result made his life a living hell. Jane appears to be an opportunity to finally obtain forgiveness and receive a chance for a possible better future.

Mr. Rochester without doubt believes that his actions are sanctioned by God and therefore right. He is aware that not always are the ways of men same as the ways of God and sometimes things people would condemn are in God's eyes alright. It might be the reason why he talks about his first wife as Bertha Mason, using her family name. It seems that he does not acknowledge that she is indeed his wife. If he feels to be unmarried, and is able to justify his opinion, the engagement with Jane seems only logical. He is free to find happiness, is he not? He is tired of his promiscuous life, of all the evil and injustice. He himself says that: "I have myself—I tell it you without parable—been a worldly, dissipated, restless man; and I believe I have found the instrument for my cure, in—" (Brontë, 2001, p. 186), and only one woman was mesmerizing and different enough for him to finally catch his breath and settle down. "You—you strange—you almost unearthly thing!—I love as my own flesh" (p. 217), he declares in *Jane Eyre*. Few lines after that Mr. Rochester emphasizes his opinion by saying that he has to own her.

Even though his actions are not always morally correct, he is a character that readers hope will have his happily ever after. According to Sutherland (1997):

We are to assume that—after some moral re-education—Jane will be blissfully happy with a Bluebeard who has wholly mended his ways. It is the more daring since (putting to one side the intent to commit bigamy), Edward Rochester is responsible for Bertha Rochester's death. (p. 69)

1.2. *Blanche Ingram*

We first hear about Blanche Ingram after the fire in Mr. Rochester's bedroom. Soon after that Mr. Rochester leaves Thornfield Hall and travels to the Leas to join the assembled party. Amongst others, there is also Miss Ingram. Mrs. Fairfax describes her in a very eloquent way:

Tall, fine bust, sloping shoulders, long, graceful neck; olive complexion, dark and clear; noble features; eyes [...] large and black, and as brilliant as her jewels. And [...] a fine head of hair, raven-black, and so becomingly arranged; a crown of thick plaits behind, and in front the longest, the glossiest curls I ever saw. She was dressed in pure white, an amber-coloured scarf was passed over her shoulder and across her breast, tied at the side, and descending in long, fringed ends below her knee. She wore an ambercoloured flower, too, in her hair. (Brontë, 2001, p. 135)

Why would such a person, obviously gifted in many ways, a beautiful, intelligent, noble and educated lady want to unite her life with Mr. Rochester? Charlotte Brontë explained this well in one of her letters addressed to her friend Ellen Nussey:

No young lady should fall in love till the offer has been made, accepted – ... the marriage ceremony performed and the first half year of wedded life has passed away – a woman may then begin to love, but with great precaution – very coolly – very moderately – very rationally. (Mitchell & Osland, 2005, p. 180)

It is obvious that in this pairing no love was expected to be included. This is more than understandable. Miss Ingram is the daughter of lord Ingram and lady Ingram who Blanche addresses once as “baroness Ingram, of Ingram Park” (Brontë, 2001, p. 152). She is indeed a member of a noble house and her view of marriage is entirely different from an ordinary person. As a woman of her status she is expected to marry a gentlemen of at least the same status as hers, but possibly with more everything: more money, estates, power, political influence and titles. What she seeks in her potential husband the most is money since she has none and even Mrs. Fairfax mentions her lack of dowry. It is no wonder she does not think of love when she has to keep in mind that she needs to find someone who would secure her financially.

Blanche's character is mentioned later by Jane:

Her face was like her mother's; a youthful unfurrowed likeness: the same low brow, the same high features, the same pride. It was not, however, so saturnine a pride: she laughed continually; her laugh was satirical, and so was the habitual expression of her arched and haughty lip. (p. 147)

The irritable and sometimes almost hostile behavior towards Adele Varens, Mr. Rochester's ward, was seen not only by Jane but also by Mr. Rochester himself and surely was not met with approval. But Jane Eyre also observes: "Surely she cannot truly like him, or not like him with true affection. If she did, she need not coin her smiles so lavishly, flash her glances so unremittingly, manufacture airs so elaborate, graces so multitudinous." (p. 159).

Her obligation is to carry on in her family steps as best as she could and use whatever means possible. Mr. Rochester is the ideal suitor. He is talented a likes society, his wealth and his blood is adequate, and all of this compensates his imperfect appearance.

However, when she is met with unforeseen failure she backtracks her steps to look for a different suitor. Later in the book, Mr. Rochester admits that he spread a rumor that his fortune is not that great and then observed what would happen. He was most likely not surprised by the coldness from Blanche and her mother. Only Blanche herself would be able to answer the poignant question if she did so willingly, and in that case was a striking image of her own mother and the nobility in general, or was made to do so by her mother and her family because the pursuit of money was something that would keep the family and Blanche living comfortably for the rest of their lives.

But what does she want besides the expectations of her status and family? The age difference does not seem to be an issue since Blanche does not mention this even once although she is confident enough to present her opinions to the other companions during one evening in Thornfield Hall. She informs that:

To my mind a man is nothing without a spice of the devil in him; and history may say what it will of James Hepburn, but I have a notion he was just the sort of wild, fierce, bandit hero whom I could have consented to gift with my hand. (p. 152)

She does not find young men of her age charming. She finds them too scared to think or act for themselves. They are self-absorbed and too concerned by their own beauty. She refuses the idea of a beautiful man declaring gentleman should possess strength and courage.

And she continues by saying that if she ever marries, she will suffer no man as a rival. Only she alone will be beautiful and thus get all the attention. This deliberately attracts attention to Mr. Rochester. He is not described as handsome. In the beginning of *Jane Eyre* there is written that: “He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow; his eyes and gathered eyebrows looked ireful and thwarted just now” (p. 96). Mr. Rochester would be no rival to Miss Ingram’s beauty. It is safe to say that she would find this an advantage especially if she was aware of his wealth.

Blanche seems to be an example of a woman yearning to be someone else, a free woman who is able to pursue her own ideas of how her life should look like, someone she cannot be since she is thoroughly shaped by the society she lives in into just another member of her noble house that has no real intention to actually change anything in her own life. In the end she can only declare that: “An English hero of the road would be the next best thing to an Italian bandit; and that could only be surpassed by a Levantine pirate” (p. 157).

1.3. *Jane Eyre*

As we can deduce from the name of the whole book, *Jane Eyre*, Jane is the main female character and the book is told from her point of view.

It is Jane Eyre’s point of view that is the most complex and interesting. As a child she was mistreated and sent away to Lowood School although her relative who was supposed to take care of her certainly was not poor. Perhaps the dreadful experience of this forgotten school seems exaggerated however Charlotte Brontë built on her own experience. She wrote in one of her letters: “Perhaps too the first part of ‘Jane Eyre’ may suit the public taste better than you anticipate—for it is true and Truth has a severe charm of its own” (Smith, 2007, p. 86). These two initial stages of her life, Jane’s childhood at Gateshead where she has suffered with lack of reciprocated feelings and her education at Lowood School where she has gained her strong sense of ethics drove her the rest of her life.

She is not however a passive observer of her life but makes her own choices and is more than able to decide for herself what is right and what is wrong. According to Mitchell & Osland (2005) she is “the forebear of a new breed of romance heroines who participate as much as men in the pursuit of an intense, overwhelming passion” (p. 175).

In *The Madwoman in the Attic* it is written that:

Yet, curiously enough, it seems not to have been primarily the coarseness and sexuality of *Jane Eyre* which shocked Victorian reviewers [...], but, as we have seen, its “anti-Christian” refusal to accept the forms, customs, and standards of society—in short, its rebellious feminism (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 338)

Her relationship to Mr. Rochester is not driven by the desire to obtain his money (which might be Blanche Ingram’s case). This is obvious from the twenty first chapter where she refuses more money than is rightfully hers. She feels no need to become someone who she is not or climb the social ladder. Her main goal is to find her soul mate, a person connected to her on a deeper and more personal level than simply money or social status. In *Jane Eyre* Jane declares that:

He is not to them what he is to me, [...] he is not of their kind. I believe he is of mine; —I am sure he is,—I feel akin to him,—I understand the language of his countenance and movements; though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him. [...] I must then repeat continually that we are for ever sundered;—and yet, while I breathe and think I must love him.’ (Brontë, 2001, p. 149)

Jane is sure that she has found her equal in Mr. Rochester. Still the deep personal connection between them seems almost impossible considering their different social status. After Mr. Rochester’s mind games and then his confession, Jane explodes:

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! (p. 216)

Her need to love and be loved is so strong that even her own will fails. She admits that she tried to resist but failed miserably.

But even though she finds her perfect match and her feelings are finally reciprocated, there is still her strong sense of ethics. Jane makes this clear: “I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will” (p. 216). Her refusal to do something she deems wrong is the only logical thing for her to do. She is an individual with her own set of beliefs and values no matter what the society around her has to say.

Mr. Rochester describes her well when disguised as a gypsy woman:

I can live alone, if self-respect and circumstances require me so to do. I need not sell my soul to buy bliss. I have an inward treasure, born with me, which can keep me alive if all extraneous delights should be withheld; or offered only at a price I cannot afford to give. (p. 171)

1.4. St. John Eyre Rivers

St. John (as well as his sisters Diana and Mary) is the long lost cousin of Jane Eyre. We meet him at the last third of the book when he saves Jane from certain death.

He is Christian, and though he may seem gentle to some, “in some things he is inexorable as death” (Brontë, 2001, p. 304). Although the readers would think that as a Christian St. John would be a supporter of love in marriage we are sadly mistaken. “I will give my heart to God. [...] You do not want it” (p. 346), responded Jane Eyre to his coercion. His behavior is not surprising. St. John seems to be an example of an extreme Christian, a fanatic in a way. He is so absorbed by his belief that he twists it so it would serve him the way he wants. As many of the conservative and extreme Christians even he tends to use manipulations, lies, threats and fear to his advantage.

I shall be absent a fortnight—take that space of time to consider my offer: and do not forget that if you reject it, it is not me you deny, but God. [...] Tremble lest in that case you should be numbered with those who have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels! (p. 348)

The threat of eternal damnation if described in detail with all the inevitable consequences is at least alarming for an ordinary person. For Jane Eyre, a woman who is a believer to the narrow of her bones, it is extremely frightening and therefore she is easily manipulated.

But in his quest to acquire a suitable companion St. John repeatedly changes his statements slightly altering them so they would suit his needs. Even the declaration: “You shall be mine: I claim you—not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service” (p. 343) is a lie and is being refuted by saying he wants someone he could influence. It is questionable if he himself believes his own words. If we take into account he is a believer, his own belief, the silent and corrupted inner voice, controls and manipulates him. He is not free. Not only he enslaves others with fear, he himself is a prisoner without even knowing about it.

2. Marriage in *Villette*

Villette is the book about the endurance and survival and how survivors deal with their pasts in order to have futures; inability to move forward because of the crippling fear; insecurities and the ways to overcome them; confinement and the need for freedom; and most of all, tolerance because even two people raised in different environments with different sets of values and beliefs can love each other truly and peacefully.

Glen (2002) suggests that *Villette* “continues to work within the language and culture of Christianity, even as it focuses more constantly on the secular destiny of one woman” (p. 209) and is “recycling traditional religious mythic language into a language to describe not existence and metaphysics, the outside world, but psychology, the inside world” (p. 210). It may feel as if *Villette* is a book mainly about the conflict between Catholics and Protestants but it is rather a subtle background to a story of two human beings drawn together.

2.1. *Lucy Snowe*

Lucy Snowe is the main female character of *Villette* and the book is written from her point of view.

2.1.1. Dr. John Graham Bretton

From the moment Lucy Snowe meets the mysterious doctor, she is enchanted. They first meet during their childhood in Bretton. This shared time is not excessively long or intense but it sets a strong base to their relationship. If reconnected, childhood friends can become a very important part of one's life. It is the same with Lucy and Graham. After ten years of separation they meet again during Lucy's arrival to Villette. It seems almost fateful that when she finally gives up everything she knows all her acquaintances, her past and her birth country, she accidentally and at that time unknowingly meets her long lost childhood friend. It is only after the young doctor comes to Madame Beck's school that the recognition process begins in Jane's mind. But even as she discovers subtle hints and starts to put all pieces together, she starts to fall in love with him.

She is a woman in foreign country, without family or friends and much money. She has no one to give her a good advice or point her in the right direction, she does not know where she is going or what she is going to do or who will take care of her, aside from the fact that she wants to go away and leave everything behind and become a governess. Peschier (2005) suggests that: “The vulnerability of a young person, male or female, who is devoid of friends, is a common theme in nineteenth-century literature“ (p. 16). It is a combination of courage, foolishness and sheer luck that this journey is successful. She is guided every step of the way by her inner voice and instinct and coincidence brings to her the right people to guide her further. One wrong step and she would be lost in a foreign country, without the knowledge of the language or anyone to help her at all. She bravely fights her way through all the disadvantages of her unfortunate situation and the following inconveniences and secures herself a place where she can rest and further build her future. In *The Madwoman in the Attic* it is said that: “*Villette* is in many ways Charlotte Brontë’s most overtly and despairingly feminist novel” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 399). No other heroine in Charlotte Brontë’s novels had to fight so hard to secure her own future with so little at her disposal.

But while she leaves everything behind, she is lost in her desperation and grief. Dr. Graham who helps her and guides her like a guardian angel to her future home, a safe place, though not easy to live in at all, being most likely the only person who could make her see that her situation is not that horrible disappears for a time. Her decision to run away from her home country is an opportunity to start a new life, a different one and leading her to different places. It is a solid plan but it is only the beginning of the process leading to her own death. Eagleton stated that Lucy is: “both enterprising individualist and helpless victim” (2005, p. 64), while Peschier (2005) believed that:

In *Villette* Brontë uses the symbol of the convent to provide a physical place of enforced isolation for Lucy Snowe. The power exercised within the Pensionnat Beck is in the hands of the proprietress, Madame Beck, who plays the part of a Mother Superior or female Jesuit. (p. 144)

Though these authors think Lucy’s isolation is forced, it feels rather to be her own choice. It is her own decision to not have friends. It is her decision to seek empty rooms and avoid other people. No one, not even the outside forces, strong and powerful personalities such as Madame Beck and M. Emanuel are able to break her from her determination to isolate herself.

Madame Beck may try to make her life a living hell by snooping around, inconspicuously listening behind closed doors and reading her mail; M. Emanuel may be ill-tempered all the time, controlling and insulting; her godmother and Dr. Graham too friendly and accepting, this however does nothing to Lucy. Her life is her own and no one, not those she likes, those she dislikes or those she is disliked by, can change that. The Madwoman in the Attic suggests that Lucy is “locked into herself, defeated from the start” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 400). She often fills her time in an empty classroom, reading or resting, or in her secret and favorite place in the garden where no one else ever comes. This feels like a deliberate choice of giving up on life itself. While she has things to do, she becomes almost a machine always working rarely leaving the sanctuary of the school but outside from this she has no friends and rather chooses the solitude than to actively try to change her situation.

Her reaction towards Madame Beck indicates this apathy. Even though according to Eagleton (2005) she reacts to her “with a similar compound of commonsensical scorn and covert fascination” (p. 66), her behavior seems rather lethargic. She dispassionately announces that during her first night at Madame Beck’s school, Madame herself appeared in her bedroom during the night and examined the contents of her luggage. The lack of reaction or any stronger emotion, fear or anger, and only a silent acceptance indicates that she is not in the right state of mind.

Even after Dr. Graham returns to her life she remains a passive observer of her life and the lives of those around her. It is gradually obvious she is fond of the doctor and would like to rebuild and further expand her relationship with him. The image of a possible future marriage is safely hidden at the back of her mind. It would suit Lucy for sure to have a husband such as Graham with his easygoing temper and phlegmatic nature, his loving relationship with his mother that would be no doubt forwarded to any woman he would be interested in. It is an enchanting image for Lucy and she loses herself to it for a long time. The fact that Graham gives her so much attention, accompanies her to several events and even sends her letters only makes her believe that his feelings are the same as hers and this further encourages her. The only result however is that she decides to abandon her reclusive nature and try to appear more sociable than she is in reality. She is still silent and reclusive and during the seven long weeks she finds no reason to break the silence, uncomfortable at least to her, not even to write at least a letter to the Bretton family. She admits her own passiveness and gives herself an advice she finds will best suit her: “The hermit— if he be a sensible hermit—

will swallow his own thoughts, and lock up his own emotions during these weeks of inward winter” (Brontë, 1853, p. 280) and admits that she “tried different expedients to sustain and fill existence” (p. 281), instead to deal with her insecurities (perhaps even the fear of refusal) and act.

The only logical result is the loss of Dr. Graham’s interest. This discovery is so painful she admits that: “The Hope I am bemoaning suffered and made me suffer much: it did not die till it was full time: following an agony so lingering, death ought to be welcome” (p. 310). Her attempt to extricate herself from her painfully binding way of dealing with others and herself is not bearing its fruit quickly enough and is doomed to fail. She returns to her confinement that “is self-administered” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 403). Glen (2002) agrees with the idea of Lucy as a hermit when he declares that: “*Villette*’s is a narrative of isolation” (p. 135).

The decision to bury the letters, she treasures more than anything, sent by Graham in the shadow of the pear-tree in the “allée défendue” (Brontë, 1853, p. 312), that seems to be a worthy guardian of the grave, where she would put all her foolish hopes, and a witness of her decision to grieve and then move on being even stronger than she has been before is quickly following. At the same time, the usage of this only material representation of the hope of awakening from her apathetic slumber is the last nail in her coffin and the final declaration that she is finally and definitely dead. And as the act of leaving her former home and travel to Villette is a decision to become dead to her past, this is another choice and another death concluding another stage of her life - her love for Dr. Graham Bretton. Indeed she will move on but she will still be bound by the inability to face and deal with anything that would force her to abandon her separation from the rest of the world.

2.1.2. M. Paul Emanuel

As Madame Beck, M. Paul Carl David Emanuel is a strong and omnipresent force of nature. Even though the book follows the story of Lucy Snowe, M. Emanuel is always present in the background almost like some kind of anchor of a ship or a main pillar of a building. He is everywhere - he teaches at Madame Beck’s school and the neighboring one for boys, he organizes birthday plays, has passionate lectures, walks through the forgotten parts of the school (such as almost empty classrooms), visits the theatre, attends flashy celebrations and so much more. It matters not where Lucy’s steps

take her, for the teacher with a very sharp mind and words is no doubt there with her to listen, observe and eventually to correct inappropriate behavior or opinions.

Compared to calm and accepting personality of Dr. Graham, M. Paul Emanuel is an impersonation of a fierce being, though not lacking insecurities of his own, with a paradoxically healthy amount of restraint. Eagleton (2005) described his personality:

Fiery though he is, Paul is also puritanically austere, and so provides Lucy with precisely the right amalgam of passion and censoriousness. He is, in fact, [...] scoffing but covertly a soul-mate, caustic but secretly charitable. Like Madame Beck he is a sly intriguer, but unlike her he is turbulent, impetuous and hair-raisingly ferocious into the bargain. (p. 66)

It is this dualism that both soothes and comforts Lucy by giving her the boundaries and restrictions she so desperately needs and brings her will to live and experience the emotional world of the living.

M. Emanuel and his behavior is a complicated puzzle, luring Lucy's attention and interest. After surrendering to his strong personality, the thoughts of Dr. Graham disappears, leaving no space left and she starts to flourish. It takes time and effort to understand what drives M. Emanuel and his reactions. It is questionable if this is his nature or if it is a deliberate act in order to gain Lucy's attention. The same question can be applied to his almost despotic behavior.

Confusing as his behavior appears to be, completely illogical and frustrating at times, Mr. Emanuel's relationship with Lucy is built from absolute nothing, having no previous base, that could be used and further expanded, as was the case with Dr. Graham, and the building process is not obvious immediately. Although there is not mentioned that Lucy would be in love with him, it is often emphasized that M. Emanuel almost desperately craves her friendship and in exchange offers his and she eagerly accepts. And having the phrase: "those who do not argue, do not care" in his mind, he almost never forgets to argue with her using even the slightest reasons he forgives, or more often, disregards with others.

In time, her need to be in the same room as he is grows stronger and his need for her presence matches hers. The shared time during the lessons only further deepens their relationship, as incomprehensible as it may seem and leads to mutual affection. It is vital to understand that Lucy is aware of all the negative, and in a possible future close relationship even harmful, aspects of M. Emanuel's personality but is not intimidated and discouraged by them. When talking to him, she clearly says: "You are a

philosopher, Monsieur; a cynic philosopher [...] despising the foibles of humanity—above its luxuries— independent of its comforts” (Brontë, 1853, p. 426). She conveys her opinion of him this bluntly so he would understand that her mind is not depicting him in bright unblemished colors, she is not confused and indeed sees clearly, and thus is able to take this into consideration to the best of her abilities. But it is not only the negative parts of his personality she is aware of. There is his loving and nursing nature, hidden and fiercely protected from the outside world (although M. Emanuel and Lucy claim to be friends, he never tells her about neither Père Silas, nor Madame Walravens, two people he is very protective of) because it is likely he thinks of this part of himself as a weakness that could be exploited and used against him. Still, he cannot help himself and tells Lucy that: “You need watching, and watching over” (p. 381). Eagleton (2005) explains that: “Being watched is objectionable, but in so far as it involves being watched over - cared for - it is clearly desirable” (p. 69). There is nothing more Lucy wants than to be cared for. She is like a fragile flower in need of regular care, otherwise she will slowly and inevitably wither away and die. If given the attention and care she needs, she will flourish.

Nevertheless, the old insecurities still haunt her. This is clear from her reaction at the end of the book when M. Emanuel is leaving Villette and comes to say his final goodbye to Lucy, she decides to hide and avoid their encounter. Perhaps it is still her fear of refusal that makes her freeze when he is so close to her, she can simply lift her hand and touch him, and thus give Madame Beck chance to distract his attention.

The fact that M. Emanuel is Catholic (formed and shaped by Jesuits) and she is Protestant matters little to her. For her it is not important (on several occasions she successfully tries to find the good side of his beliefs and support her findings with specific examples), though she fiercely defends her own belief when it is being sullied. Eagleton (2005) believes that: “Paul unites a 'sensible' anti-radicalism with fiery reformist zeal, Protestant rationalism with Catholic spirit” (p. 68), and this strongly appeals to Lucy. According to Glen (2002):

She abandons the Protestant denial of life before the vibrancy of the hissing but caring Professor Paul Emanuel: Paul because he does have a mission to preach and teach; Emanuel not because he is to serve as a type of Christ on earth but because he converts the saving work of a religion based on Christ to a caring work of interpersonal engagement in this world. (p. 211)

As is clear from the beginning of the book, when she decides to leave everything beside, to the last page, where she decides to wait for M. Emanuel, she alone is the sole master of her world. The insecurities plaguing her life are her own and so are her decisions. She is not a victim of manipulation, the strong will other people try to imprint on her, but walks her own path, however thorny it may be.

2.2. Dr. John Graham Bretton

2.2.1. Ginevra Fanshawe

It is often said that women like to fall in love with men that are not good for them and tend to hurt them. In the case of Dr. Graham Bretton the opposite is true. He is the image of a good-natured man seemingly without any significant flaws. Still he falls in love with a woman that most likely only wants to use him for her own amusement while seeking attention of another. “I love Miss Fanshawe far more than de Hamal loves any human being” (Brontë, 1853, p. 159), he declares passionately. It is with passion and by his own decision he loves her and endures her whims.

Lucy retells Dr. Graham what Ginevra herself told her to explain her often cruel and improper behavior:

Her parents have a large family: they occupy such a station and possess such connections as, in their opinion, demand display; stringent necessity of circumstances and inherent thoughtlessness of disposition combined, have engendered reckless unscrupulousness as to how they obtain the means of sustaining a good appearance. (p. 236)

2.2.2. Lucy Snowe

Although the possibility of a marriage with Lucy Snowe most likely never crossed Dr. Graham’s mind, it is appropriate for it to be at least mentioned. The woman he knew from his childhood in Bretton is not an ill-tempered woman and would be a good wife. Still, she is too timid, reclusive and has more or less phlegmatic nature. Dr. Graham is similar to her in his easy, non-violent and almost dispassionateness temperament. To combine two this similar people would be unwise, since neither would be the lively part of the relationship.

2.2.3. Polly Home (Paulina Mary de Bassompierre)

Polly's relationship with Dr. Graham begins during her visit to Bretton during her childhood. Even though she is six at the time and he is ten years older, they connect and build a strong base for their future relationship.

They meet ten years later when Dr. Graham helps her after she stumbles in the theater and faints. Polly Home is in Dr. Graham's eyes a celestial being. Being submitted to the harsh behavior of Ginevra Fanshawe and somehow cold behavior of Lucy he meets this innocent being, shy at first, but dignified with good-natured temperament. Brontë (1853) wrote in *Villette*:

Ten years ago this pair had always found abundance to say to each other; the intervening decade had not narrowed the experience or impoverished the intelligence of either: besides, there are certain natures of which the mutual influence is such, that the more they say, the more they have to say. For these out of association grows adhesion, and out of adhesion, amalgamation. (p. 304)

Not often such a couple finds themselves. No matter how long they know each other, there is still enough to be said. The longer they are together, the quicker their relationship evolves. Even Lucy, though at that time she still loved Dr. Graham, was quite clear in her opinion on the couple: "I think it is deemed good that you two should live in peace and be happy— not as angels, but as few are happy amongst mortals" (p. 396).

2.3. M. Paul (Carl David) Emanuel

2.3.1. Justine Marie

Justine Marie is the heroine of the story father Silas tells Lucy during her visit of Madame Walravens. At first she seems just that, a character of fiction, but later on the connection between her and the specter of a nun at the school is revealed.

Two people of similar social rank in love with each other and interference of fate that makes it impossible to be happily together. It is a rare kind of love that transcends space and time and remains even after everything else perishes. This love is "still remembered, still wept" (Brontë, 1853, p. 413). *Villette* is after all "a story of life after death" (p. 190). End even though it does not end with a proverbial happily ever after, it is exceptional enough to remember. The excessive attention however gives the past too

much power that binds M. Emanuel and others and precludes them the ability to move on and experience life as it was meant to.

It is perhaps the image of a female martyr that gives it this power. Justine Marie is so unhappy, she gives up her life and enters a convent. Soon after that the “suicidal passivity that characterized Justine Marie’s life in the convent” (Lamonica, 2003, p. 205) results in her death. The reason most likely was “going mad from solitary confinement” (Brontë, 1853, p. 288).

The nun in Madame Beck’s gardens, though not a ghost but a fabrication, is another part of the remembrance. Peschier (2005) suggests that: “Perhaps the most powerful feeling represented by the figure of the nun in *Villette* is the sense of loneliness, so strong that it is near to desolation” (p. 145). It not only forces M. Emanuel to not forget, it also gives him reason to contemplate about the present and what should be done differently than in the past.

2.3.2. Lucy Snowe

From the first moment Lucy arrives to Madame Beck’s school, M. Emanuel observes her every move. She must seem to him like a strange creature: she is alone and slowly withering but still strong enough to resist and be fierce in her own beliefs. She is slowly dying in the foreign land she found herself in but she endures her fate and survives, though barely.

It is perhaps the need to right Lucy’s wrongs, to reshape her into a proper Catholic woman, that attracts him to her. The idea of her freedom of mind is disturbing. And though he declares: “you are quiet and pale, and I am tanned and fiery; you are a strict Protestant, and I am a sort of lay Jesuit” (Brontë, 1853, p. 385), it feels like he is the one who is strict and almost unforgiving in his beliefs. It takes him too long to understand they are not as different as he originally thought. It takes him even longer to at least partially liberate himself from the influence of three people controlling his life - Madame Walravens, who firmly holds his past, Père Silas supervising his present and Madame Beck, a woman hoping to control his future. Glen (2002) believes that “Emanuel is sacrificed to the nonsense of priestcraft and vows to dead nuns” (p. 211). And it is not surprising that it does not make him happy, to be controlled and manipulated, and it results in him being “cynic philosopher” (Brontë, 1853, p. 426).

It is Lucy's tenacity and strong will that is continuously alluring. He says: "For you I am neither a man nor a Christian. You see me void of affection and religion, unattached by friend or family, unpiloted by principle or faith" (p. 426). Eagleton (2005) gives further evidence by saying that: "the Roman Church is despised with healthy, rational, Protestant contempt for its lurid superstition and primitive otherworldliness" (p. 67). If she would simply submit, he would not feel the need to give her more of his time and attention than she deserves. But she does not and he wants to prove her wrong and teach her what is the right and desirable opinion.

2.4. Madame Beck

2.4.1. Dr. John Graham Bretton & M. Paul Emanuel

What can possibly drive the head of the female school, Madame Beck? Her cold, calculating and phlegmatic nature is well known, the book gives several examples of her behavior. But is there something else behind the facade that could make the readers understand her better? Gilbert and Gubar (2000) suggest that "she is motivated only by self-interest" (p. 408). Lucy also observes that her motivations purely suits her interests and would possibly be convenient to her and while she might have some feeling towards Dr. Graham, her cousin and a teacher at her school would be most like solely a convenient subject for her to exploit.

Her need to control and manipulate is so strong, she "haunts the school in her soundless slippers and rules over all through espionage and surveillance" (p. 408). It is no secret, however. Everyone knows what she is doing, but are conditioned to be content, or at least not complain about it and thus create a disarray and anger the mistress of the house. Peschier (2005) points out that:

The use of spying, isolating and 'instructing' are the mechanisms by which the custodians of the nineteenth century mental asylum controlled and subdued their female patients. They are also perceived to be the main methods used by the Catholic Church to convert the Protestant and exercise power over its female flock. (p. 145)

In this case the mental asylum is the same as Madame Beck's school. The isolation and lack of care of the mental needs of her students creates a prerequisite for a possible future mental illness. However, this also makes them obedient for the time being and subjects to Madame Beck's need for control of other people. Having a school

she is able to shape, form and influence in a major way the untrained and ignorant minds she has at her disposal. However, she is not aware that “repression breeds revolt, and that revolt (when it comes) will itself involve secrecy, destruction, and deceit” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 409). This is not only the case of her own children, her school in general, but her own as well, though buried under her mask of stone.

If she could find a man similar to her students, submissive and easily manipulated, she would be more than happy. As it is, her luck is not good, since the two men she finds interest in have strong personalities that would not bow to her, only tolerate her for a limited period of time. Not even the fact she is always present during Dr. Graham’s visits, pays more attention to her appearance and is “benignant in her manner to him” (Brontë, 1853, p. 106). In her cousin’s case, her feelings seem to be more forced and rather based on the fact that she wishes to obtain the property of the West Indian estate and make him administer it later.

2.5. *Ginevra Fanshawe (Ginevra Laura de Hamal)*

2.5.1. Dr. John Graham Bretton (Isidor) & Alfred de Hamal

Ginevra Fanshawe is the brightest and the most buoyant character in *Villette*. She is the direct opposite of Lucy Snowe (and all the emotionally and mentally neglected students). From the first moment Ginevra meets Lucy on the deck of the ship that brings them both to Villette, she is the image of spoiled young girl, that has rich relatives but she is quite poor herself. The depressing isolation of the school seemingly has no effect on her, she is always in a perfectly good, and rather joyful, mood. Partly it is her “light, careless temperament“ (Brontë, 1853, p. 58) and her “satiric wit” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 409) that makes her see the world in so vibrant colors, partly the fact she balances the dark hostility of the school by being often in public.

It is no wonder that her behavior intensifies, or worsens as Lucy feels, as she obtains the access to the upper class and with that to Alfred de Hamal. He would seem to be a perfect match for her, though in her letter to Lucy she later admits that he does not have money besides his title and his pay. If the school’s rigidity was not clashing with her vibrant personality, she would most likely be content. In her case, the need for more activity is needed for her to survive without more serious harm and because she used to be interested in Dr. Graham, she creates a love triangle that fills up her free time outside the school and engages her mind.

In *Villette*, Lucy explained her behavior: “stringent necessity of circumstances and inherent thoughtlessness of disposition combined, have engendered reckless unscrupulousness as to how they obtain the means of sustaining a good appearance” (Brontë, 1853, p. 236).

In the end, she finds the confinement of the school too restraining, and having lost the doctor’s favor, and she chooses to secretly elope with her future husband and finally liberates herself.

2.6. Zélie St. Pierre

The relationship she has with M. Emanuel is short-lived a most likely a result of her life in seclusion inside of Madame Beck’s school. It is a place where the ignorance is not only tolerated, but more importantly supported. The mind that is guided to oblivion is not dangerous. It is not without importance that the famed school is a former convent. And as the convent was a symbol of solitude, simplicity of mind and austerity, so is the school. With the watchful eye of Madame Beck, the school becomes almost a prison of sorts. Peschier (2005) emphasizes that: “The nun, the Catholic schoolgirl and the inmate in the mental asylum needed to be regimented and constantly watched to ensure that they did not break the bonds of their confinement” (p. 142-143). And she continues: “Brontë makes the familiar association of the mental asylum with the convent, the hysterical or manic woman with the repressed nun” (p. 141). The connection between a convent, school and a prison is a mental affliction, the a first stage of a possible mental illness.

Although she seems harmless in her naive view of life, occasional occurrences of her aggressiveness are mentioned. Besides the fact she is called “snake” (Brontë, 1853, p. 154), twenty-ninth chapter states that: “Zélie, and the whole class, became one grin of vindictive delight” (p. 358). This clearly illustrates that this was not only Zélia’s problem, but a problem for the other girls as well.

Fleeing the suffocating prison is the only solution. Even Zélie understands this, though unlike Ginevra Fanshawe does not try to escape permanently. Lucy observes, “Poor Zélie! It was much her wont to declare about this time, that she was tired to death of a life of seclusion and labour; that she longed to have the means and leisure for relaxation” (p. 353).

2.7. *Justine Marie*

The mysterious celebration at the end of the book is the place that introduces this dreamy character. Justine Marie is a namesake of M. Paul Emanuel's fiancée who died after becoming a nun. She is M. Paul Emanuel's goddaughter and ward. Although this character is barely mentioned, the few lines the writer decides to share invokes the idea of a fairytale princess born into a beautiful castle with all the privileges and disadvantages connected with her status. She is young, beautiful, has many suitors, and even though she is unfortunate to have manipulating acquaintances, she is supported by an understanding godfather.

3. Marriage in Shirley

Although the book is quite extensive, marriage seems to be a secondary theme. There are so many themes used and analyzed that the few mentions of the marriage and of the people discussing how their own marriages succeeded or not are almost lost under everything else. The book focuses rather on the wartime crisis in England and with this in mind commences the novel about: “the expensive delicacies of the rich, the eccentric cookery of foreigners, the food riots in manufacturing towns, the abundant provisions due soldiers, the scanty dinner baskets of child laborers, and the starvation of the unemployed” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 373). It is the third layer of the book that deals with marriage itself.

While *Villette* was a book about Lucy Snowe, a self-appointed martyr internally dying in a former convent, exploring the theme of loneliness and the inability to move forward and the related results of such life, *Shirley* explores this theme even further. It expands and instead of affection only selected characters it seemingly affects them all. Gilbert and Gubar (2000) believes that *Shirley* is a story: “about impotence, [...] a story about characters defined by their very inability to initiate action” (p. 375). For the most part of the book it seems as if the characters were waiting for something, unhappy and tired, but the book itself continues on without them as if they were not important for the story.

Most characters struggle internally with two for them incompatible desires and lose to the one that makes their lives complicated and even more unhappy.

3.1. *Caroline Helstone*

The refreshing thing about Caroline Helstone and *Shirley* in general is the absence of any disturbing love triangle. Caroline loves Robert from the beginning of the book to the end of it. And though she literally snivels most of the book because she cannot have the love of her life for her own and at one point even falls ill because of that, there is no other that would even for a moment take Robert’s place. The depressive tone of the book is at least partly result of the death of Charlotte Brontë’s brother, Branwell, and two sisters, Emily and Anne.

“The feeling called love is and has been for two years the predominant emotion of my heart; always there, always awake, always astir” (Brontë, 2007, p. 147), declares

Caroline but shows not even the slightest effort to gain Robert's attentions, almost mimicking the actions of Lucy Snowe. Instead, she suffers silently not able to share her burden even with her closest friend Shirley or her uncle. She is oblivious of the fact that he "can offer [...] nothing but stones" since his whole attention is turned towards his beloved factory.

Heartbroken, she tries to find something to chase away the disturbing thoughts of Robert and fill her time. The time spent with the old maids opens her eyes. Lamonica (2003) suggests that "these women only offer Caroline depressing portraits of potentiality in their narrow and loveless existence" (p. 171) and Caroline becomes well aware of this. As her uncle is prepared to take care of her, there is no need for her to fear for her future, still she contemplates the possibility of working as a governess in order to escape her torment. Yet she has no qualification aside from what a proper woman can do. Her own uncle tells her: "Stick to the needle—learn shirt-making and gown-making, and pie-crust-making, and you'll be a clever woman some day" (Brontë, 2007, p. 84) and discourages her from work. The only possibility would be being a governess, but she is again denied the relief she seeks. She is supposed to either marry or become an old maid. Lamonica (2003) agrees that "Caroline's sole aim and opportunity is marriage. She is not given any life-alternatives to marriage" (p. 173).

Though Caroline surely does not lack enough exercise, especially the long walks, and contact with other people she still feels confined. And as Lucy was slowly dying in her former convent, Caroline slowly perishes inside a house that seems like a tomb with graveyard close by. Being rejected, "Caroline is left to scrounge for emotional sustenance" (p. 163) and getting none, she falls ill and nearly dies. The need for a romantic love, the deeper emotional connection (denied to her by both her parents), is pivotal for her survival.

Her stubbornness is not easy to overcome. She is unshakable in her opinion, when she declares that: "I will either be all or nothing to a man like Robert" (Brontë, 2007, p. 219). There is no middle road, no compromise. She will either be happy or die trying.

3.2. Robert Gérard Moore

At the beginning of the book, Brontë presents us with a character, Malone, who voices the course of Robert's future pursues:

If there is one notion I hate more than another, it is that of marriage; I mean marriage in the vulgar weak sense, as a mere matter of sentiment; two beggarly fools agreeing to unite their indigence by some fantastic tie of feeling—humbug! But an advantageous connection, such as can be formed in consonance with dignity of views, and permanency of solid interests, is not so bad—eh? (Brontë, 2007, p. 21)

Robert's heritage is the core of the conflict in the book. His inability to see past the factory and his need to “rebuild the fallen house of Gérard and Moore on a scale at least equal to its former greatness“ (p. 25) is destructive and dangerous and makes him unable to accept Caroline's love. Glen (2002) points out that he is “presented in terms which emphasise passivity and unfreedom” (p. 129). This is what drives him and nothing, not even his own happiness, will distract him from what needs to be done. If the marriage to a wealthy woman is the ultimate answer, his love to Caroline is doomed. Lamonica (2003) emphasizes that:

In practice, however, he, too, applies a single standard of behavior to both his private and public relations—the callous, profit-seeking, self-interest of the marketplace, which he displays to both heroines of Shirley in casting off Caroline and in proposing a loveless but advantageous marriage to Shirley. (p. 166)

Unlike Caroline, he is not passively waiting for everything to magically fit into place and is very careful not to lose the possibility of the success he seeks from his sight. His “ambition and his impotence” (Glen, 2002, p. 130) are the two competing traits that clash in his personality. His mill and his love. The past and the future.

3.3. Shirley Keeldar

Shirley is the most interesting character in *Shirley*. Her vibrant personality yearning for freedom is inspiring. Given the role of the master of her house, she strives for independence and equality (especially towards men in general). Lamonica (2003) agrees by writing: “Able to support herself, Shirley is a figure of female freedom,

unburdened by the need, either financial or emotional, to be a wife or mother” (p. 172). The fact she has her own money means she is able to shape her own life in more prominent way than regular people. The lack of direct family gives her even more freedom. This way she can present her own ideas about marriage without limitation. Her uncle may try to control and manipulate her into doing what suits his interest, but as she is a unique personality, she will not bend to any idea she does not agree with. “Marriages, Shirley insists, not rooted in mutual respect, love, and trust but formed out of worldly interests are the sources of domestic strife, the corrupting agents of family life” (p. 175).

Though she is independent, she claims the need to be mastered:

Did I not say I prefer a *master*? One in whose presence I shall feel obliged and disposed to be good. One whose control my impatient temper must acknowledge. A man whose approbation can reward—whose displeasure punish me. A man I shall feel it impossible not to love, and very possible to fear. (Brontë, 2007, p. 462)

None of the men that proposed to her would be able to master her the way she wants and needs. It seems to be an internal struggle, the need to have the control and to relinquish it at the same time. Eagleton (2005) believes that “Shirley yearns to be sexually mastered” (p. 58).

Conclusion

Charlotte Brontë often focused on women and their fate. Side by side stands a woman bound by the expectations of society and her own family and a free, independent woman pursuing her happiness without an ounce of fear. Not only did her feminist opinions shock the characters in her own books, even the real world was not accustomed to something like this.

Freedom and captivity are another themes her books deal with closely followed by the theme of the past affecting the present and religion. Religion is however never the main and sole focus of her novels. Her efforts of this exploration are subtle and not forced and even in *Villette*, a book partly focusing on this theme, it is on the background of the readers' attention.

The first chapter dealing with *Jane Eyre* is mainly about manipulation and about controlling other people. Most characters are in some way forced to do something or are the ones to force others. It matters not if the reason is a noble one or not, the repercussions are in most cases life altering and crippling. The expectations of those closest and how the character reacted, if the resistance or the surrender is the answer, are another themes of the book. The final focus of the characters is the ethics.

The second chapter focused on *Villette* explores the idea of solitude, stillness and endurance. As almost every character has lost someone close, the book is also about survival. On the opposite side stands the need to rebel against the depressive loneliness by living the life to its fullest. As in the previous book, even this one deals with manipulation and the inability to break free from it and liberate oneself. The last theme, more prominent than in the two other books, is religion. The conflict between Catholic and Protestant is present, however the book is focused more on the characters themselves.

Shirley examined in the third chapter is from the first page drawing attention to the characters' inability to initiate action. It is the decision of some characters to suffer, while the others struggle internally with two incompatible desires. The need for freedom and independence is also very noticeable.

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Summary in Czech

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá manželstvím ve třech vybraných dílech Charlotte Brontëové - *Janě Eyrové*, *Villette* a *Shirley*. Zkoumá vybrané postavy a určuje, jaké zkušenosti z minulosti ovlivnily jejich názory na manželství a co je pohání. Také vnáší světlo na otázku, zda jsou ovlivněné jinými, vnějšími, silami nebo zda jsou to oni sami, kdo jsou pány svých vlastních životů.

Každá kapitola zkoumá konkrétní literární dílo. První kapitola se zabývá *Janou Eyrovou*, druhá kapitola *Villette* a třetí kapitola se zaměřuje na *Shirley*.