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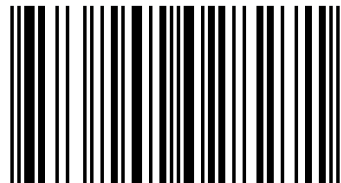


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The Byronic Hero and His Gothic Metamorphoses in Victorian Fiction



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THE BYRONIC HERO AND HIS GOTHIC METAMORPHOSES IN VICTORIAN FICTION

The Victorian era has always been in the focus of my interest. It is the period of the reign of Queen Victoria that extended from 1837 to 1901 but it is a fact that literary movements do not always coincide with the exact year of a royal accession or death. The reign of Victoria or the Victorian Era of the United Kingdom was the longest in British history, and may be exceeded only if the present monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, remains on the throne up to 2017. As the reign was a long period of prosperity for the British people, it is often characterized as a long period of economic, colonial and industrial consolidation although Britain was at war every year during this time. From the literary point of view it was a period of huge literary output. Although sometimes there are diverse opinions about the worth of all of their literature, the Victorians seem to have been obsessed with social and political problems. Despite the fact that the Victorian era prided itself on being the age of progress, ordinary people experienced poverty, injustice, ugliness and different forms of immorality.

In a lot Victorian novels novelists confront similar issues such as the relationship between man/woman and society, manners, morals and money. Victorian novelists appear to have been preoccupied with social relation. In addition Victorian preserves a lot of romantic elements. Some of these are to be found in the conflict between religious feeling and the scientific spirit, between mysticism and rationalism.

This book focuses on the interplay of romantic and gothic elements in the two most famous novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë: *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Special attention is paid to the metamorphoses of the Byronic hero in those novels as well as to the presence of supernatural and gothic elements in them.

In Chapter One, I discuss the two main characters Rochester and Heathcliff in the two novels *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* and their characteristic features as Byronic heroes. First I focus on Heathcliff as a Byronic hero, and then very briefly I describe the brother-and-sister love motif with reference to Byron's *Manfred* to make clearer my views on Byron's influence upon the writer. Further on I dwell on Rochester as a Byronic hero. I likewise identify other types of Byronic heroes in *Jane Eyre*.

Chapter Two is concerned with the supernatural and gothic elements in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* starting with an introduction of Gothicism, its appearance and development. I further consider the question of whether *Wuthering Heights* is gothic or realist. Having in mind the subtypes of Gothicism, I place *Jane Eyre* in the group of new gothic romances which is confirmed by many critics. The final chapter considers gender issues as special attention is paid to the struggle of power and passion in the two novels.

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855), an admirer of Thackeray, dedicated her novel *Jane Eyre* to him but it was her most un-Thackerayan novel. It is a story about a governess who falls in love with her master, married to a madwoman. Here, Brontë launches a passion that can be found neither in Thackeray nor in Dickens, i.e. a love story of great realism, observation and a kind of wit. This masterpiece gives her Byronic strain, refined by religious training and moral discipline. Her sister Emily Brontë possessed a more remarkable talent. Before her death at the age of thirty she had written poems full of fiery stoicism, pantheism and independent spirituality while in her novel *Wuthering Heights*, she sets a tragedy of love in a fantastic and powerful story. The novel is in fact the heart and soul of the romantic spirit, with the wild passion set against the Yorkshire moors. It is a tragedy of love containing the troubled, tumultuous and rebellious elements of romanticism contained in the souls of the Byronic heroes, with supernatural and gothic elements.

INTRODUCTION TO VICTORIAN AGE AND THE BYRONIC HERO

A very distinctive heroic tradition appeared for the first time during the Romantic Movement in Germany with *Sturm und Drang*, and culminated with Goethe's *Faust* which is considered to be the greatest achievement of Romanticism. This 'hero aspect' has always been more important in Germany than in Great Britain. British Romanticism has its representatives but with a priority of the Gothic villain who may be said to be a combination of heroic and demonic characteristics. The British representative in this respect is Byron. If *Faust* stands for German Romanticism then the Byronic hero has a special significance in British literature. Of course we should not forget that the Byronic hero also engendered a European progeny in France, Russia and Poland especially.

A Byronic hero exhibits several characteristic traits, and one of them is that he can be considered a rebel in many ways. The Byronic hero does possess some kind of a 'heroic virtue' but has many dark qualities as well. He is an individual who has great qualities of mind and heart. He is a figure of strength and creativity, like traditional heroes, but who is also a product of inner darkness, and a creature of rebellious passion as well. "With regard to his intellectual capacity, self-respect, and hypersensitivity, the Byronic hero is 'larger than life' and with the loss of his titanic passions, his pride, and his certainty of identity, he loses also his status as a traditional hero." (Thorslev 187) There are at least four distinguishing factors in the Byronic hero's philosophy of life: revolt against society, pursuit of individual goals, romantic expression and the constant experience of strong emotion.

The Byronic philosophy sees love as the ultimate and only essential truth and final resting place for one in this life. The Byronic hero is constantly in search of impossible life and this is why he is doomed to failure. So, according to Deborah Lutz “The Byronic hero’s definition is the tormented melancholy failure that nears the success, fails and experiences the eternal loss i.e. the repetition of the impossibility of bliss.” (Lutz 52)

CHAPTER 1

Rochester and Heathcliff as Byronic Heroes

Man's greatest actions are performed in minor struggles. Life, misfortune, isolation, abandonment and poverty are battlefields which have their heroes – obscure heroes who are at times greater than illustrious heroes.

-Victor Hugo

Heathcliff as Byronic Hero

Charlotte and Emily Brontë differed in their outlook on life and approach to literature. This means that their characters are supposed to be different as well. *Wuthering Heights* is a more difficult book to understand than *Jane Eyre* because according to Virginia Woolf and other critics, Emily was a greater poet than Charlotte. Woolf confirms this with the statement:

“When Charlotte wrote she said with eloquence and splendour and

passion 'I love', 'I hate', 'I suffer'... But there is no 'I' in *Wuthering Heights*. There are no governesses...There is love, but it is not the love of men and women." (O'Neill 53)

The Byronic hero is defined by Thomas B. Macaulay as "proud, moody, cynical, with defiance on his brow, and misery in his heart, implacable in revenge, yet capable of deep and strong affection" (Macaulay157), and this definition perfectly fits the main character Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. When we start reading the novel, at first glance we get a feeling that it is all about love and the obstacles lovers have to overcome and we expect a happy ending. But it doesn't happen to be like that. The impossible love of Heathcliff makes him progressively more and more alienated from the people around him. He only wants what he can't have and this is why so many readers have seen him as a Byronic Hero. The appearance of Heathcliff is typical of Byronic heroes. This is how Mr. Lockwood describes him, and that would surely seem appropriate as a description of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*: "He is a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman: that is, as much a gentleman as many a country squire: rather slovenly, perhaps, yet not looking amiss with his negligence, because he has an erect and handsome figure; and rather morose." (Brontë 3)

This description creates a gloomy yet attractive, reticent and passionate impression of the appearance and character of Heathcliff, which is quite in line with other Byronic heroes. Those words reveal what kind of hero Heathcliff is and foreshadow his extraordinary life experience, which also reflects upon his character. He is conscious of his own frustration and like Milton's Satan, is bent upon destruction. The melancholy in him presents the sickness of the Byronic soul and does not foster in him the cult of 'separateness' which is characteristic of both Manfred and Childe Harold. Because of all these reasons, Heathcliff is a perfect example of a Byronic hero. Heathcliff is also a man who has sinned in

his life, a man who lives to find revenge, and a man for who the reader is capable to feel sorry for.

Heathcliff arrives at Wuthering Heights as a boy who is apparently an orphan and looks like a gypsy. Immediately he finds himself being picked on by Hindley, who feels like he is competing with Heathcliff for his father's attention. This is the moment when Hindley feels alienated from his father. After Earnshaw's death the sorrow of Heathcliff begins to grow. Hindley inherits Wuthering Heights and now Heathcliff is the one who is alienated from everyone but Catherine Earnshaw. At this point Heathcliff gets assigned to do all the degrading jobs around Wuthering Heights. This fills him with anger and hatred of everyone except Catherine for whom he feels obsessive love. Heathcliff is an extremely complex character. This complexity also contributes to Emily Brontë's creation of this Byronic hero. Yet Brontë manages to make her dark hero, at least to a certain extent, a sympathetic figure. After reading this novel, readers may hate Heathcliff, but they will also be greatly impressed by him, which cannot be produced only by hatred. Before a Byronic hero, or villain hero, as the name itself suggested, conventional good and evil lose their value and meaning.

Heathcliff wants revenge but at the same time, he is a victim of the inimical world which pulls out his dark potential. Heathcliff is such a man whose good side is distorted by the external environment. Early in the book, just when the reader has nearly made up his/her mind that Heathcliff is a cruel and insensitive brute, unaware of even the elementary obligation which one human being owes to another, when in a short time, he has gone so far as to drive Lockwood out into the storm alone. There comes one of the overwhelmingly lyric moments in the novel as Heathcliff leans far out of the window and implores the spirit of Cathy to come in: *"I obeyed, so far as to quit the chamber; when, ignorant where the narrow lobbies led, I stood still, and was witness, involuntary, to a piece of superstition on the part of my landlord, which belied, oddly, his apparent sense"*

(Brontë 23).

The depth of feeling, the compassion of which Heathcliff is plainly capable in those scenes, forces us to reconsider our judgment of this character. But it is still a matter of personal opinion. His unswerving devotion to Cathy seems to be Heathcliff's only redeeming quality. To almost everyone else he is a monster; he delights in causing misery, and is described as being a demon several times throughout the book by different characters. But, he still remains one of literature's most romantic, heroic characters ever to grace the page.

Incestuous Love

Cathy and Heathcliff are one. They are brought up as brother and sister and may very well be siblings. They roam the moors, sharing all of their dreams and sufferings. Speaking about the brother-and-sister love of Heathcliff and Catherine, we may say that *Wuthering Heights* figures an immoral love. The Byronic obsession with forbidden love, especially between brother and sister penetrated the imagination of Emily who first read Byron's poetry in 1833, when she was only 15 years old. The influence of Byron on her is often equated with the creation of the Byronic hero, a defiant turn of mind and a taste for ill-fated lovers. So, the question of literal incest doesn't arise directly in *Wuthering Heights* although Heathcliff inherits the name of the dead Earnshaw, i.e. his father, but remains malignant to the family. The book tells us about him that he is "a challenging, gypsy, demon, out-and-outer, and his seed is blight." (Brontë47)

However, the text is in many ways innocent of incestuous imputation. If we conceive Catherine's "resting her darling head on the same pillow with Heathcliff, the deep emotional shudder supplements the reader's glimpse into

their intimacy and has no taint of sexual voyeurism.” (Wilson122) It is mostly governed by Heathcliff’s memory and he himself completes his sentence, “as she did when a child.”(Brontë257) With the adjustment of Emily Brontë’s Byronism and the austerity of her own literary mood, the novel itself gives the denial to the knowingness which tends to characterise the brother-sister love. Thus, the reader has the knowledge of the essential unity and unanimity of Catherine and Heathcliff, it is their likeness. This affinity is because of Heathcliff’s changeling status within the family. His lack of attributable origins means that he could have come from anywhere. He is like a human waste material on the streets of Liverpool that gravitates to a father in Mr. Earnshaw. In their tribal resemblance, the children’s unlikeness as male and female is apprehended as spurious. This theme is quite familiar in Byron. In Manfred for example the hero tells the Witch of the Alps:

*She was like me in lineaments, her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine...
I loved her, and destroyed her... (Manfred II,ii)*

Therefore, if we compare Manfred and Heathcliff, it is obvious that the voice of Heathcliff is no less authentic when he cries to the dead Catherine because Manfred cried with equal passion years before to Astarte:

*Yet speak to me!
Speak to me! though it be in wrath!—but say—
I reckon not what—but let me hear thee once—
This once—once more! (Manfred II,iv)*

Specifically, Manfred's curse, which causes him to be haunted by Astarte, sounds much like Heathcliff's wish to be haunted by Catherine. One difference is that, in Byron, the phantom of Astrate articulates his curse. Manfred is tormented by the fact that he has had an incestuous relationship with his sister in the past. So there is all this grief and love, combined with very conventionally masculine, that is outgoing and adventurous, characters. Heathcliff matches the model of the Byronic hero in that sense as well. However, there is a salient difference in Brontë's case. Heathcliff and Catherine are not spoken of as bearing resemblance. For example the very popular exclamation of Catherine in chapter IX is referred as the manifestation of perfect love: "Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees – my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath – a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I'm Heathcliff – he is always on my mind." (Brontë 73)

According to Graeme Tytler "Catherine's words are interpreted as part of a specific psychological pattern considering the speech as a certain reluctance on the heroine's part to accept the 'otherness' of Heathcliff's identity." (Graeme 47.2) There are many proofs that confirm Catherine's unwary consideration of Heathcliff, despite the fact she identifies herself with him. This phrase is voiced at the moment of her consultation with Nelly about whether or not to marry Edgar Linton. Catherine deems that Heathcliff doesn't know what love is and this would suggest that she was simply anxious to prolong their childhood relationship. Although Heathcliff remains true to his inner nature throughout the novel, Emily does not judge him too harshly. When she marries Edgar and lives at Thushcross Grange, Cathy is symbolically punished with death. Emily's chief defence of the Byronic hero is that he embraces his inner nature and remains true to himself whatever the ultimate cost.

Owing to the novel's enduring fame and popularity, Heathcliff is often regarded as an archetype of the tortured Byronic hero whose all-consuming

passions destroy both himself and those around him. Heathcliff can also be viewed as a reflection and product of his psychological past: the abuse, neglect and scorn of those with whom he grows up render him abusive, neglectful and scornful. If Emily Brontë had not been so strongly influenced by Byron, Heathcliff could not have been conceived, but he goes further than the Byronic hero in his romantic rebellion. His complicated, mesmerising and altogether bizarre nature makes him a rare character, with components of both the hero and the anti-hero.

Rochester as Byronic Hero

It is a mere fact that both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are products of the Victorian era, written by two women of the same family who were sisters. Both novels explore the deep passionate love triumphing against all obstacles and odds, involving brooding heroes with a past. While *Wuthering Heights* brings out diabolism on an earthly level and an imagined union beyond all bondages, *Jane Eyre* sticks to the divine Christian basis and human moral codes of marriage, very common issues of the Victorian era, and a satisfied fulfilment of those codes, on earth itself. Due to this factor, characterisation is also different. Jane Eyre, from one side, is gentle, plain, completely unnoticeable, yet with a dignified, clear, indomitable bearing and will. From another side, she is an orphan, who undergoes indignities right from childhood, sufferings as an adult, till getting true love. Jane cares passionately for Rochester but she often preserves her detachment from him. Charlotte Brontë takes care that the reader who is about to care passionately about the heroine and should preserve his/her degree of detachments as well. “The two sisters were influenced by Byron but they didn’t show the same reaction to Byronism in their novels and poetry. While Emily represents full-scale adoption, Charlotte

seems to demonstrate the tendency to be simultaneously attracted and repulsed.” (Wilson115) This confirms the fact that the two sisters offer slightly different versions of the Byronic hero, which may account for the measurable differences in their reactions. To Emily for instance, the Byronic hero is a force of nature that cannot and should not be tamed or controlled. Charlotte, on the other hand, seems to explore the seductive and redemptive qualities of the character type, who can be reformed. Charlotte, like her sister Emily, was strongly influenced by Byron's poetry in her own writing. She began her writing career as a poet.

The Byronic hero has another dimension in Charlotte's work. He is intact but less overt. He is not a typical seducer and doesn't mesmerize Jane in any way. “Like Heathcliff, Rochester is dark-complexioned but is considered less pleasing to the eye.”(Oneill34) He has “broad and jetty eyebrows, his square forehead, his full nostrils, denoting... cholera, his grim mouth, chin, and jaw” (Brontë183) and all these attributes are more remarkable for 'character' and not attractiveness. Speaking about his body, Jane notices that he has “a good figure in the athletic sense of the term, broad chested and thin flanked; though neither tall nor graceful.” (Brontë 137). Rochester has enough experience in love, although he may not look like a typical Byronic seducer. He has a chequered sexual past. Jane considers Adèle as his daughter and afterwards Rochester, too, hints that she may be. After giving Adèle a pink silk frock, Rochester explains, ‘in a few minutes she will re-enter; and I know what I shall see, — a miniature Céline Varens, as she used to appear on the boards at the rising of— but never mind that.’ (Brontë 158) Rochester makes his affair with Céline quite clear much later, when he denies that Adèle is his daughter. He also reveals that he had two other mistresses, Giacinta and Clara. Byron's heroes have mysterious sexual pasts as well, something unique to Charlotte's version of him. So the main difference between Byron and Charlotte is that Byron had

some homosexuality flirts, unlike Rochester who is strictly heterosexual.

Throughout the novel, except at the beginning, Jane and Rochester's relationship is one of equals, like that of Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. So Manfred and Astarte are also well matched as Manfred recalls: 'She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings, / The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind / To comprehend the universe' (Manfred II,ii). Early on in their relationship, Rochester says: "I don't wish to treat you like an inferior...I claim only such superiority as must result from twenty years' difference in age and a century's advance in experience." (Brontë 152).

Their equality is discussed as a kind of sameness strikingly similar to Heathcliff and Catherine's in Emily's novel and Manfred and Astarte's in Byron's drama. Jane reflects as she observes Rochester's interactions at a party at Thornfield Hall: "(Brontë 199) The same language of equality and kinship is repeated during Rochester's marriage proposal: "'my bride is here,' he said, again drawing me to him, 'because my equal is here, and my likeness'." (Brontë 285)

In fact, what Charlotte offers in the novel *Jane Eyre* are the two versions of Byronic hero and both are based on Byron's models. Not only Rochester but Jane herself is also a true Byronic hero. She is self-possessed and independent but at the same time she is restricted by some of society's conventions. As Susie Campbell remarks: "Ultimately it is Jane who is the true Byronic hero of the novel. In her passage through loneliness, isolation, intense suffering and temptation, Jane asserts her own individuality, forges a sense of identity and proclaims freedom and independence of will."(Campbell 67) Rochester recognizes her Byronic qualities and works to free her from her self-imposed prison. But after she refuses to become his mistress and they fail to get married, Rochester speaks to her: "Jane! Will you hear reason? – because if you won't, I'll try violence."(Brontë 340). A part of her wants to yield to him but she is

reasonable enough and makes her decision with dignity: "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself." (Brontë 356).

Further on in the novel, Jane gains what she always wanted, i.e. self-possession which allows her to test the gender conventions of her society. After Jane's inheritance and Rochester's injuries, Jane becomes the family financier and her husband becomes dependent on her. This reversal even nowadays is rare and demonstrates that Jane and her creator Charlotte are indeed proto-feminists.

Throughout the Victorian age, Byron's influence was manifested in the work of many authors and artists. There are many examples of Byronic heroes such as the ones portrayed by Charlotte and Emily Brontë, who were fascinated by Byron's poetic output and dashing life. The two sisters were mesmerized by the impossibility of his existence based on a quest for love that was doomed to failure. The literary tradition of heroism in Britain may be said to have practically died with Byron but a few notable exceptions represent its continuation. Jane Eyre's Rochester is certainly a descendant of the Gothic villain-hero, as is Emily Brontë's Heathcliff.

CHAPTER 2

THE STRUGGLE OF POWER AND PASSION IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS AND JANE EYRE

This chapter focuses on the interplay of romantic and gothic elements in the two most famous novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë: *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Special attention is paid to the metamorphoses of the

Byronic hero in those novels as well as to the presence of supernatural and gothic elements in them.

At the beginning, the paper discusses the Byronic heroes in the two novels *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* and their characteristic features as Byronic heroes. I likewise identify other types of Byronic heroes in *Jane Eyre*. The following chapters are concerned with the supernatural and gothic elements in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* starting with an introduction of Gothicism, its appearance and development. I further consider the question of whether *Wuthering Heights* is gothic or realist. Having in mind the subtypes of Gothicism, I place *Jane Eyre* in the group of new gothic romances which is confirmed by many critics.

The Byronic Hero in Victorian Fiction

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855), an admirer of Thackeray, dedicated her novel *Jane Eyre* to him but it was her most un-Thackerayan novel. It is a story about a governess who falls in love with her master, married to a madwoman. Here, Brontë launches a passion that can be found neither in Thackeray nor in Dickens, i.e. a love story of great realism, observation and a kind of wit. This masterpiece gives her Byronic strain, refined by religious training and moral discipline. Her sister Emily Brontë possessed a more remarkable talent. Before her death at the age of thirty she had written poems full of fiery stoicism, pantheism and independent spirituality while in her novel *Wuthering Heights*, she sets a tragedy of love in a fantastic and powerful story. The novel is in fact the heart and soul of the romantic spirit, with the wild passion set against the Yorkshire moors. It is a tragedy of love containing the troubled, tumultuous and rebellious elements of romanticism contained in the souls of the Byronic heroes, with supernatural and gothic elements.

The Byronic hero shows many features, and one of them is that he can be considered a rebel in many ways. The Byronic hero has a type of 'heroic virtue' but also many dark qualities. He is an individual who has great qualities of mind and heart. He is a figure of strength and creativity, like traditional heroes, being also a product of inner darkness, and an epitome of rebellious passion. "With regard to his intellectual capacity, self-respect, and hypersensitivity, the Byronic hero is 'larger than life' and with the loss of his titanic passions, his pride, and his certainty of identity, he loses also his status as a traditional hero."(Thorslev 187) The four remarkable factors in the philosophy of the Byronic hero are: revolt against society, pursuit of individual goals, romantic expression and the constant experience of strong emotion.

Other types of Byronic heroes

In the novel *Jane Eyre*, Brontë offers two versions of Byronic hero both of which are based on Byron's models. Not only Rochester but Jane herself is also a true Byronic hero. She is self-possessed and independent but at the same time she is restricted by some of society's conventions. Susie Campbell remarks: "Ultimately it is Jane who is the true Byronic hero of the novel. In her passage through loneliness, isolation, intense suffering and temptation, Jane asserts her own individuality, forges a sense of identity and proclaims freedom and independence of will" (Campbell 67). The other type of Byronic hero in *Jane Eyre* in my opinion is more dangerous. Apart from Jane herself, the female Byronic hero is Bertha as well. Both of them bear different expression of love. Bertha's emotions are characterized by excess while Jane's are marked by restraint. At the end of the novel it can be seen that Jane rationally dominates. Jane gains what she had always begged for i.e. self-possession. This allows her to test the gender conventions of the society she lived in. After Jane's

inheritance and Rochester's injuries, she becomes the head of the family leaving her husband dependent on her. This reversal of the roles even nowadays is rare and demonstrates that Jane and her creator Charlotte are indeed proto-feminists. Bertha is a typical example of what Jane could become if her violent tendencies were not submitted. She never goes mad, unlike Bertha, who is passionate and hot-tempered. Like Rochester himself, the Jamaican feels free to ignore all society's rules in favor to her own inclinations. As a Byronic hero, Jane is interested in her independence but only if condoned by society. Bertha, on the other hand, feels justified and increases her hostility towards Jane when her wedding with Rochester approaches. She seeks revenge and sets her husband's bed on fire while he is asleep. But fortunately, Jane rescues him. Later Bertha also sets the fire that destroys Thornfield Hall. However, she dies in it and this is how she is punished for all her sins.

So, Jane needs to embrace her Byronic independence more fully before she can feel comfortable ignoring certain gender roles, specifically those pertaining to power and wealth. Jane will have to become 'the man' in her relationship with Rochester. Charlotte's impulses lead her both away from and towards the Byronic hero, demonstrating that she is searching for the appropriate middle ground in employing the character type.

Maybe Jane gained all she ever wanted, but at the end Rochester is the one who suffers. He is left blind and crippled and this is all because of the burning of Thornfield Hall. But this can also be interpreted as a cleansing fire which burns away his Byronic past and helps him see the errors he made. Moreover, his material loss forces him to accept the limits placed on the self. He can no longer take care of himself; he is dependent on others even for his basic survival. As Jenny Oldfield remarks, "the blind, disfigured Rochester of the final chapters, imaged as a fettered beast or bird, chained by his injuries to physical inertia and by his grief to social and moral apathy, is the figure of the punished

sinner" (Oldfield 29). If we find his destiny uncomfortable, especially his loss of sexual and masculine energy, we should bear in mind that it is the display of divine justice that the Victorians felt satisfied with. Rochester's immorality is washed away by this penance, he is socialized and reclaimed and is permitted to find ultimate happiness. And the final 'gift' he gets is his and Jane's son. At the end of the novel Jane gives birth to a child.

According to Bloom, there is a connection between Rochester and Byron. "Byron may have been an 'invented' brother for Emily. For Charlotte he was a literary father. When Charlotte 'disciplined Rochester and 'forgave his Byronic past', she also forgave Byron, for 'Charlotte could not allow Byron to be forever beyond her'" (Bloom 3). Thus, through the wedding of Rochester and Jane, Charlotte gets to figuratively achieve the fulfillment of her own erotic drive for Byron. If Charlotte indeed felt an erotic longing for Byron, this suggests one reason for the Byronic tensions found in her work, her interest and attraction lead to approval only when limitations are imposed.

CHAPTER 3

The emergence of Gothicism

The Brontë heroines share an inner life of extraordinary drama; each seeks her own way to connect the inner and outer worlds by confirming the reality of her Gothic psychodrama not merely as the intensity of her unmaidenly passions. There is what Alison Milbank has called a Gothic circle. According to her "the social outsider and damned genius imposes her will by creative power on the world in a Byronic fashion, yet in so doing she provokes further repression and so retains the status of Gothic heroine." (Jerrold 153) "This circle accounts for Charlotte Brontë's duality in terms of a Byronic thrust that produces

a dramatization of repression, while the same provocation of victimization is deliberate and unconscious.” (Hogle153) Brontë in particular is concerned with this duality of the ‘Gothic circle’ in a way that she seeks to dramatize a given social reality and exposing social hypocrisy with Gothic metaphors and thus provoke society to declare its true nature. In *Jane Eyre* we see the reality in the end, the actual corpse, i.e. the smashed Bertha Rochester. Bertha’s mystery exhibits a dose of suspense and terror to the whole plot of the novel and its atmosphere. In this way Brontë deploys a psychological theatre to disclose the marvel of horror in reality. However, this is not a deliberate strategy which springs from a conscious radicalism but the very act of imagining a Gothic counterpart to real terror that reveals the structural extent of that same terror and inspires the will to escape it. Brontë, on the other hand, represents violence and tyranny in the characters of Hindley and Heathcliff and these two characters were the reason that led many readers to see *Wuthering Heights* in the context of the Gothic. In an introduction to the novel, Patsy Stoneman remarks that “the so-called Gothic novels of the late 18c were typically set in a gloomy medieval castle whose massive, grotesque Gothic architecture reflected the repressive power of its baronial villain.” (Stoneman xix) *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, traces the emergence of the modern family, its hegemonic form of domestic realism and a historical tendency in the relations of men and women. “Yet, Emily Brontë uses Gothic elements to represent other versions of domestic life, for instance, domestic space as prison, the family as the site of primitive passions, violence, struggle and control.” (Stoneman xx).

However, spirituality and supernaturalism have always been topics of literary consideration, but there are specific historical moments when controversy erupts and new standards are put into place. In the midst of this disagreement, the Gothic novel emerged as a new genre of writing, and directly addressed this highly contested topic. The realms of Gothicism constrained

within the prose works of the sisters Charlotte and Emily Brontë are the most fascinating and mesmerizing domain. We do not consider the Brontës' works as strictly Gothic but in reality, much of their work falls more or less squarely into the Gothic tradition. Their novels are full of thematic and symbolic references to isolated houses, gloomy, windswept moors, heavy atmosphere, and spectral visitations. Magic, mystery and chivalry commonly form the structural basis of the Gothic novel generating integrity of feeling and depth also make the spectacularly Gothic more than just a stereotype in the works of Charlotte and Emily.

Stereotypes in Gothic revival were different compared to the conventional ones. They were not so attractive and long-standing and they were being treated from Brontë sisters' aspects and their literary aims. Nevertheless, the Gothic genre became an effective literary device for the novels of Charlotte and Emily, thrusting the Gothic novel and all of its attributes into the mainstream of British prose writers and their works. In particular, this fine example of Gothicism is wonderfully depicted and explored in the novels *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*.

The work of Brontë sisters represents genre with a twist, which gives the two novels a timeless quality whilst keeping them alive in the literary domain of the twenty-first century. The Gothic, sinister tone that the writers adopt is bad enough for the Brontës' protagonists, but the really horrifying occurrences have prosaic explanations such as malicious aunts, abusive husbands, perpetrated by their relatives and alleged friends. For the Brontës, hell really was, by definition, rooted in other people. Nevertheless, what remains so fascinating about the Gothic genre lies with the fact that it is anything but a homogenous or static genre. Belief and the suspension of disbelief are at the crux of Gothicism. The credence of belief and disbelief in the supernatural manifests itself in connection to ideas of the sublime, to connotations of sensibility, to the core of

the creation myth, and in theological concepts about damnation.

***Wuthering Heights*: Gothic or Realist?**

As mentioned above, the novel was published in 1847, during the Victorian era, but its style was very different from the style of most Victorian novels. The novel was not generally acclaimed by the literary critics of that early Victorian period. Emily did not strictly stick to the usual literary methods for that time or developed the plot and the characters in the usual way. The style, the setting and the plot, like the arguable darkness of the bleak surroundings and the complexity of the main characters, are essential to decide whether the novel is an example of Gothic romance or not. Over time the novel was differently criticized and accepted. For example, Douglas Jerrold wrote in the *Weekly Newspaper* of 15 January, 1848, as follows:

Wuthering Heights is a strange sort of book, baffling all regular criticism; yet is impossible to begin and not to finish it, and quite as impossible to lay it aside afterwards and say nothing about it...In *Wuthering Heights* the reader is shocked, disgusted, almost sickened by details of cruelty, inhumanity and the most diabolical hate and vengeance, and anon come passages of powerful testimony to the supreme power of love – even over demons in the human form (Jerrold 43). After almost hundred years later, in 1949, *Wuthering Heights* is considered in terms of two conceptions: some readers have found in it the deepest spiritual content and others, a perverse conception in which the exaltation of brutality and hatred borders on the repulsive. Derek Traversy claimed that: “except the romantic passion there is another element present in it which is profoundly characteristic: the tendency to see human life and individual passions in the shadow of death.” (Vogler 61) According to him death is felt intensely in the novel whether in connection with the passionate protagonists or

as a profound intuition of peace.

The novel itself maintains a distinction between gothic and realism and revises the traditional distinction between the 'frame' narrative and 'core' story. Usually, gothic novels were separated from the present in time, place, and atmosphere that they used a modern, civilized narrator to 'frame' the tale which without his/her mediation, might seem too far-fetched to be believable. So, the way in which Emily Brontë describes the manor house and the surroundings of the North Yorkshire moors could rapidly fit in the realist type of writing. She doesn't seek to portray the manor house in which the majority of the story takes place as a warm, friendly and welcoming place. Instead of that she shows it to be dark, bleak and sinister. With these descriptions she fits in very comfortably with the realist style of Charles Dickens. It is not only the description of the manor house in *Wuthering Heights* that demonstrates that Emily Brontë was influenced by realist techniques, but the portrayal of the main characters also reflects elements of the realist style throughout the course of the novel. Heathcliff and Catherine's depictions may be regarded as being very realist in their construction and presentation. Both characters are artfully described as complex ones. Heathcliff is considered as highly enigmatic while Cathy and her personality seem 'believable' enough. The peculiar quality of the descriptions in the first three chapters are high-lighted through the narrator Lockwood who enters *Wuthering Heights* and tries to interpret what he sees in his own way. "The 'cats' are dead rabbits, the dogs 'four-footed fiends' "(Stoneman xx). Heathcliff is equally described as a "gypsy and a gentlemen."(Stoneman xix); Young Catherine is described as a being that belongs to nobody. When Lockwood begs: "Do point out some landmarks by which I may know my way... give me a guide", (Brontë12) he might be referring to the inside and the outside of the house as well.

Despite the realist writing techniques, *Wuthering Heights* makes abundant

use of gothic conventions as well. The discernibly strong gothic influences within the entire novel clearly explains why it could be argued that this book is in fact a gothic romance rather than a purely realist work. To describe a place, an event, or a character of gothic 'nature' what is needed are dark, bleak, or even sinister elements and an ambiguous attitude towards social and moral values. Gothic could be understood as being old and grand, or alternatively, as being evil and abnormal. Stories and novels that are nominally romantic in nature should usually conclude with a happy ending, in which the majority or indeed all of the main characters finish the tale in a better position than when it started.

In many aspects the way in which Brontë portrays Heathcliff as a mysterious, dark and dangerous man is the key to the complexity of his character and the enduring appeal of *Wuthering Heights* as a whole. The descriptions, the thoughts, attitudes, and the behaviour of Heathcliff combine effortlessly to present him as a gothic figure. If anything, Brontë succeeds in portraying Heathcliff as a gothic figure because *Wuthering Heights* is not written from his personal perspective. Instead Brontë makes Heathcliff's appearance dark, more mysterious, and more sinister by having two distinct characters to tell the whole story through their own narration. A great deal of the gothic lies in Heathcliff's past which is simply not known. The mystery is further due to his keeping his motivations hidden from everybody he comes into contact with

Another thing that we should take into consideration is that the roots of the gothic in Brontë's works lie in Byron's influence. *Wuthering Heights* could be juxtaposed with Byron's *Manfred*. In Act II, Scene 2 Manfred recalls Astarte and provokes the Witch of the Alps, rejects her help, rejects humanity and Christianity as well. Byron's poem has little plot and contains little struggle, for no one in it is a match to the hero. Even when the Devil claims his soul he drives him away easily. Both Heathcliff and Manfred have little humanity. Manfred stands in the centre of the stage alone, marveled at by other characters, and

refusing to communicate with them. He is essentially unintelligible. Heathcliff, for all his occasional talks with Nelly Dean, is also an essentially unintelligible character. We find the two, with their haughty reticence, monomaniac passion, and preternatural power, sometimes superhuman and sometimes inhuman, but never human. We get the impression that they suffer great agony inside them and we know that Manfred confirms his welcome to death and we notice how Heathcliff defines his destiny but we do not feel any compassion to their suffering as we do with some other heroes also greater than ordinary men, such as Othello or Macbeth.

Jane Eyre: A New Gothic Romance

Jane Eyre has been classified as belonging to different genres, including the Bildungsroman and the romance novel, but the story relies heavily on key gothic conventions. At first glance, a gothic novel seems to be all about doom and gloom. While all gothic works do have a gloomy atmosphere, there is a lot more to it. Gothic novels are defined by their haunted settings and mysterious tone, bizarre and unexplained events, and characters with strong uncontrolled emotions and a belief in the supernatural. Charlotte's story is conventional. All her characters keep escaping to glorify 'feeling'. Yet, feeling is there, whether evading repression or ranging from nervous excitement to emotional absorption. The elements of a gothic romance are the same, but with few additions. A gothic romance usually has the added element of powerful love which the main character fears that it won't be reciprocated. Through her use of haunted sceneries, ghoulish characters, and unrestrained passions, Charlotte Brontë intricately weaves an eerie sense of suspense and mystery in her gothic romance *Jane Eyre*.

According to Robert B. Heilman, Brontë goes “beyond conventional gothic writing. For her it means a venture into ‘psychic darkness’ “(Rathburn, Steinmann118). Unlike many contemporary gothic novels, Brontë’s intention was not to frighten or to provide a temporary thrill. She uses gothic convention to explore feeling especially sexual feeling in a way adequate to Victorian society. Hailman sees three versions of Gothic writing: Old Gothic, Anti-Gothic and New Gothic. The Old Gothic includes convention of sensationalism i.e. a cheap thrill for its own sake. The basics are there in Brontë’s writing but yet modified. The anti-gothic uses comic manners which are reminiscent of Jane Austen’s novel *Northanger Abbey*. In it she presents the incidents in a dry factual way, so debunking the sensational elements. Brontë’s version of Gothic is the New Gothic respectively. She denies superficial attractiveness to the characters to focus on the powerful inner attraction which exists between them. Love mixes with hostility, violence and presents a deep need. The traditional gothic has often been noted in *Jane Eyre* in terms of childhood terrors to all those mysteriously threatening sights, sounds and injurious acts that reveal the presence of a malevolent force. She always modifies these conventions of fictional art. The symbolic also modifies the Gothic which is a more mature and complicated response than the simple thrill or momentary intensity of feeling sought by primitive Gothic. When Mrs. Rochester was mad, seen only as ‘the foul German spectre’ that spreads terror at night is the one thing; when with the malicious insight that is the paradox of her madness, she tears the wedding veil in two and symbolically destroys the planned marriage is another thing, far less elementary as art. The Thornfield becomes more than a shock when is seen as the fire of purgation and the grim, almost roadless forest is also felt as a symbol of Rochester’s closed-in life. Charlotte manages to make the gothic more than a stereotype. :”She finds new ways to achieve the ends served by Old Gothic, i.e. the discovery and release of new patterns of feeling and the intensification of

feeling.”(Rathburn, Steinmann 132) Jane is portrayed as evoking new feelings rather than as exercising the old ones. Charlotte moves away from standard characterization towards new levels of human reality, and hence from stock responses to a new kind of passionate engagement. In accordance with the gothic conventions, *Jane Eyre* often presents symbols not so much as treasure, hidden in depths of obscurity, as we find in more conventional and certainly more contemporary novels, but as gifts from above, flashing lightening, jumping from the page, making their presence known. Jane's strange, fearful, symbolic dreams are not mere thriller but reflect the tensions of the engagement period, her stress and the longing for Rochester after she has left him. In Hailman's opinion this is the proof of her new dimension of Gothic i.e. *'her plunging into feeling that us without status in the ordinary world of the novel'*. What is essentially important here is that the function of gothic fiction is to give vent to the human interest in the irrational, the inexplicable, the mysterious parts of life and experience. Brontë uses conventions and motifs to symbolize the enigmatic parts of human personality. Thus, the dark mansion, the secrets and the sinister strangers of the gothic genre become symbols of the unknown and frightening parts of the unconscious self.

The character of Jane constructed as a complex one has a multi-layered personality, driven by a number of unconscious instincts and desires. When she first falls in love with Rochester, Jane understands that he will probably never love her back and that even if he did, it would be considered improper for him to marry her. As a victim of love, Jane describes to the reader that: “I had not intended to love him...I had wrought hard to extirpate from myself the germs of love there detected; and now at first renewed view of him, they revived spontaneous and strong.” (Brontë 207) She attempts to contain her emotions and convince herself that they don't exist, but in the end her emotions are too strong. Even when she was young, Jane could not conceal her true emotions.

For example, she does not scruple to tell her Aunt "I do not love you; I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world." (Brontë 45). Hence, she is a mixture of the rational and irrational, calculating and passionate and as I mentioned before she is the Byronic hero as well. However, the central theme in *Jane Eyre* is based on a concept of the self as individual and unique which is a romantic concept. This is confirmed by Susie Campbel as well: "The Gothic novel was just one offshoot of the whole Romantic enterprise to recover the sense of the human psyche as a passion, spirit and imagination." (Campbel 66) This happened as a reaction against the eighteenth-century Enlightenment that devalued the irrational and imaginative parts of human nature. Wordsworth and Coleridge as romantic writers set great store by humankind's ability to reason and exert will-power and placed above the individual's ability to feel and create. The effect on this in Brontë's thinking can be seen in her insistence on Jane's passionate nature and her development as an artist. What is important to understand is that to the Romantic, the human being is an immortal spirit trapped within a mortal frame and only because of this we cannot reach total maturity and perfect fulfillment.

This novel possesses some of the features of a 'classic' gothic narrative when we think about escape, subversion and mobility. Some critics have argued that *Jane Eyre* is not a gothic novel but an example of the use of gothic by a nineteenth-century novelist. Nonetheless, traditional gothic conventions are used, but in a highly individual way. Thus, Charlotte Brontë's novel is heavily influenced by such gothic elements as the supernatural, the abnormal and ultimately the horrible. In *Jane Eyre*, the peculiar, old house with its malevolent atmosphere, the raving lunatic and Rochester's telepathic message to Jane are all derivatives of the gothic novel. *Jane Eyre* is also a good example of how the interrogative texture of the gothic works with regard to the supernatural and spiritual. Jane's refusal to compromise, her departure from Rochester and

Thornfield after the encounter with Bertha, is virtually initiated by the mother as a ghost, in a beautiful gothic scene in Chapter 27: "I dreamt that I lay in the red-room at Gateshead; the gleam was such as the moon imparts to vapours she is about to sever. I watched her come watched with the strangest anticipation; as though some word of doom were to be written on her disk It gazed and gazed on me." (Brontë338)

In this supernatural encounter, *Jane Eyre* depicts the emotional dimension of the gothic interrogative texture. In other words, generic gothic excesses like horror and supernaturalism interact with the emotional aspect of the gothic by association with the realm of dream, desire and nightmare. Despite indulging into the genre of gothic romance with its customary touch of passion and 'dark' emotion; both Charlotte and Emily refine the technique considerably from the 'authentic' gothic of the 1790s. For example, in *Jane Eyre*, we see the richness in the poetry, symbolism and metaphor, which marks it as distinct from the pattern of previous gothic novels. So, what Charlotte Brontë wanted was to create a work, which cleverly unifies elements of the two styles, and yet remains uniquely independent of them at the same time, since it addresses issues, which were at the time rather controversial.

The Supernatural in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*

Any attempt to explain the popularity of these two novels must take into account their depiction of inner life, unrelated to temporary social conditions. Both novels possess a long-standing popular status and despite their differences of tone, style and outlook, their continuing success may be due to similar features. They have many shared factors such as thematic concerns, settings, local color, narrative techniques and most of all the supernatural elements as

opposed to the strongly naturalistic elements. Some modern critics condemn the horror game played by Emily in her depiction of the ghost child and of Heathcliff's final ghost-tormented days, and less skillfully by Charlotte in the mad wife episodes of Bertha. The closed, introspective quality of both writers can easily lead to the use of the supernatural at times of high tension as an exposure of inner traumas suffered by the characters. The supernatural can increase the mood of fear and confusion. The device is simply used by the two sisters. It is the psychologically sound, manifesting some secret aspect of the unconscious.

Jane's sense of anxiety on the eve of her wedding is embodied in two strange dreams: one of the child burden and one of a ruined Thornfield, and in the chilling 'apparition' that enters her room and tears the veil. Jane describes it in nightmare terms as "savage", 'fearful' as 'the foul German specter – the vampire.'" (Brontë 311) One of the most significant supernatural sites in *Jane Eyre* is the looking glass in the Red Room at Gateshead. When she notices the mirror in the tomblike red room she sees an impenetrable surface that merely 'repeated' other surfaces and when she stands before the looking glass she begins to understand the spiritual dimension. The looking glass is to Jane a 'visionary hollow' i.e. a plane of wander with a depth that can reveal truth if one passes through to the other side. Jane has always been susceptible to tales of fairy beings and she thinks of them not only in the red room episode but as well as during her reverie in Hay Lane, when she remembers Bessie's tale of the Gytrash that haunted solitary travellers. Rochester on his part thought unaccountably of fairy tales on their first meeting. However, the novel is scattered through with these small references to the supernatural in order to create a sense of unreality for a particular incident and lifting it beyond the normal standard, taking on a reflection of a character's state of mind. The best interpretation of Jane and Rochester's telepathic communication is one moonlit

night; “the mysterious summons’ which thrill her ‘not like an electric shock, but it was quite as sharp, as strange, as startling.” (Brontë 444) Jane considers it not as a superstition or supernatural deception but ‘the work of nature’ which must be obeyed.

The same indulgence in imaginative extravagance is found also in *Wuthering Heights*. The book’s moral and supernatural elements are very complicated. The presence of the supernatural is introduced with total conviction within an everyday cycle of events. The ‘rude and strange’ hints of the novel are vested in its supernaturalism, as one of Nelly’s ponderings about one of the rudest and strangest characters of the novel, Heathcliff, and she clearly indicates:” ‘Is he a ghoul, or a vampire? ‘, she wanders, ‘I had read of such hideous, incarnate demons.’ “(Brontë 293)

Another supernatural moment is Lockwood’s nightmare. This is the clearest example of the supernatural in the novel and is as well followed by Heathcliff’s ‘gush of grief’ at not finding the specter. This is followed by Lockwood’s descent to the kitchen and the normal early morning activities of the household. The apparition can be accounted for logically by Lockwood’s preoccupation with Catherine’s old diary, but it has a more important function in setting the desperate tone of Heathcliff and Cathy’s dramatic love affair and in embodying the cause of his long years of suffering. Twenty years after Catherine’s death Heathcliff is still seeking for one glimpse of Lockwood’s ghost vision, and the ghost is real to us through the dream, as to Heathcliff himself.

Conclusion

Throughout the Victorian age, Byron's influence was manifested in the work of many writers. Many examples of Byronic heroes emerged in this period such as those portrayed by Charlotte and Emily Brontë who were fascinated by Byron's poetic output and dashing life. Not only the masculine versions of the Byronic heroes are mentioned and elaborated in these two novels. The other version of the Byronic hero i.e. the Byronic heroine is important too. As T. Hull agrees "the Byronic heroine has not received the primary attention which she deserves. Generally, she is not as compelling a figure as the hero nor is she as central in English and European literary history. Nevertheless, these Byronic heroines are important and should be more carefully studied for the following reasons: they are fascinating and worthwhile in themselves, especially since they were drawn by the author who created the most notorious and influential English hero type"

The two Brontës remained enchanted by the impossibility of Byron's existence based on a quest for love that was doomed to failure. The literary tradition of heroism in Britain may be said to have practically died with Byron but a few notable exceptions represent its continuation. Jane Eyre's Rochester is certainly a descendant of the Gothic villain-hero, as it is Brontë's Heathcliff. Both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* can be read as romantic, gothic, and/or realistic texts and according to Derek Traversi, "they refuse to solidify, materialize, or be particularized as one thing or another." (Dickerson 69) These texts about ghosts in the red room, in the mirror and on the mores are ghostly texts whose meanings fall somewhere in the in between.

CHAPTER 4

The Struggle of power and passion in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*

The Victorian era had been an outstanding historical period full of changes in many different aspects. As the reign was a long period of prosperity for the British people, it is often characterized as a long period of economic, colonial and industrial consolidation although Britain was at war every year during this time. From the literary point of view it was a period of huge literary output. In a lot Victorian novels novelists confront similar issues such as the relationship between man and woman, society, manners, morals and money. Victorian novelists appear to have been preoccupied with social relation.

When it comes to gender issues, the accession of Victoria is seen by many critics and historians as a paradox. Back then, the female sex was deemed as the weaker one, always dependent and inferior to men. It was a time when all the decisions, political, economic, legal were taken by men, but the monarch herself, was pre-eminent to all men who were considered as her subjects.

The theme of conflict between power and passion in both novels is introduced by two pairs who seek their balance in order to achieve happiness. It is clear that there are certain differences in the two main relationships presented in the two novels *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*. Power is central in both novels and a balance of power is needed in both relationships to reach the love heaven. Jane Eyre and Rochester reach their balance and a happy ending,

whereas in *Wuthering Heights* the unapproachable balance leads to destruction of both Cathy and Heathcliff. On one hand, as Jane Eyre says, "We're born to strive and endure"(Oldfield 45) and according to her, it is superior to be a governess at school than being Rochester's mistress. On the other hand, in *Wuthering Heights*, the female protagonist Catherine decides to marry Edgar Linton in order to get a better and stronger position in the society. G.H. Lewes in a review made a point describing the nature of Catherine's love for Heathcliff as possessing "a passionate abandonment which sets culture, education, and the world, at defiance" (Lewes 81). Actually from this passionate intensity arises the violence of action of all main incidents. Unrestrained emotion marks the last meeting between Heathcliff and Catherine.

Emily and Charlotte Brontë's evaluation of the relative importance of power and passion is fundamentally different. We cannot be sure whether Hareton and Cathy's quiet domestic love outweighs the wild, powerful passion of Heathcliff and Catherine. We do not know whether Heathcliff and Catherine achieve their private paradise despite their defiance of Christian principles. Emily's own stance seems to suggest her belief in a personal heaven, and certainly her vision of Heathcliff and Catherine's desire to unite in blissful isolation has a more lasting impression than the vague sleepers in the quiet earth of the conventional point of view. Charlotte's heroine is totally ambiguous. She is governed by two forces, passion and power, and she must apply to an outside force for guidance at times when duty and emotion make contradictory claims. Sometimes her directive from the inner voice of conscience is to behave according to power as in her decision to take the post of village school mistress. Sometimes the expression of emotion is permissible, however, and then it is the right and wise thing for that circumstance, as in her longing to gain experience away from Lockwood and in her refusal of St. John's proposal.

Dominant Views of Gender during the Victorian Age

During the Victorian period, industrialization brought changes in the economy, the social structures and all previously common held views began to change as well. The emergence of girls' schools and colleges challenged the commonly held opinion that the proper sphere of women were not politics and publicity but private and domestic life. Despite all the opportunities for women to become more educated, many people did not want them to use their intelligence and capability because they feared they would lose their 'purity and innocence'. Charlotte and Emily Brontë were faced with these oppositions when writing their famous novels *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*. According to G.H. Lewes a "woman's proper sphere of activity is elsewhere than writing. My idea of a perfect woman is one who can write but won't." (Lewes 50) Charlotte Brontë herself admitted that because they had the impression that authoresses were liable to be looked with prejudice, they used the pseudonyms of Ellis and Currer Bell. Because of the fact that things were changing a lot during the Victorian age, it is very difficult to pinpoint the 'dominant view' on gender but, it could be said that the two pairs, i.e. Heathcliff and Catherine, Rochester and Jane Eyre, challenged the norms and conventions of their time. We are aware that there are certain differences in these two relationships whereas on the top of all is the 'balance', which leads to a happy ending in *Jane Eyre*, whereas in *Wuthering Heights* the unapproachable balance leads to destruction.

In both novels, the main theme is the equal or in other words balanced relationship. In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine dominates much of the novel through Heathcliff's undying love for her. In *Jane Eyre*, the heroine is set on marrying only with an 'equal' and for love. Catherine finds her equal in Heathcliff whom she meets while they are still children. As Nelly Dean comments on Cathy, 'she had ways with her as I never saw a child take up before' (Brontë 36)

and prior to Heathcliff's arrival, her request for a whip as a gift from her father is particularly interesting. This is commonly seen as a symbol of power where the whip represents masculinity in contrast with her brother, whose choice of present was a fiddle. While the gift choices would perhaps have been more apt reversed, so too would their reactions to the loss of the gifts. Hindley is driven to tears while Catherine "showed her humour by grinning and spitting at the stupid little thing"(Brontë 32) where she speaks about Heathcliff, and the reaction is not usual for a girl with "the bonniest eye, the sweetest smile and the lightest foot in the parish."(Brontë 36) Hindley, who is seven years old, shows a very 'feminine' reaction to the loss of the gift, while Catherine shows a frightening form of 'male' aggression; the grin suggests that she takes pleasure in her punishment.

Reversal of Gender Roles

Many researchers have argued that this reversal of gender roles while Cathy and Heathcliff are still children is an attempt by Brontë to show that women and men are different intrinsically because of the simple fact they are male and female. The classically beautiful appearance of Catherine enhances this; she is ideally feminine on the outside but a brutish man on the inside. Later on in the novel Catherine comments "I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being."(Bronte73), which some have taken to mean, like in her early life, through this equality, Catherine is made masculine. Heathcliff is never referred to as 'Mr' or 'Master' and Heathcliff acts as both his first name and surname. Therefore, considering the violent nature of Heathcliff with the idea that he is 'feminine', one could ascertain that Brontë is saying that females can be violent too and full of rage, just like Hindley was full of 'female' emotion.

To a lesser extent this is shown by the behaviour of Jane Eyre. As a girl she is undeniably brave and strong for her age, though through the first person narrator we are able to see the underlying fear that we cannot see in Catherine. We can feel her sadness and need to be loved though she faces exclusion from the family initially and others throughout her life; “she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy little children.”(Brontë 3) It is in the bad treatment that Jane receives at the hands of her cousin that many see a comment on the rights of the dominant male gender. Despite being detestable, Master Reed would inherit the family fortune; as John himself says, “I’ll teach you to rummage my book-shelves: for they are mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years”(Brontë 7) while Jane, a naturally loving and good child, would be penniless. It is because of this early injustice, one can assume, that Jane’s key need becomes the search for equality. Jane is told by Bessie: “not to think yourself on an equality with the Mrs. Reed and Master Reed... They will have a great deal of money and you will have none” (Brontë 9) which appears to resonate in the older Jane as she famously proclaims:

...Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex (Brontë 55).

While she is strong against those who forsake her, she is 'soft' to those who love her. She gets in to fight against Master Reed but when she is shown love and friendship at Lowood, she cries and embraces a friend through her death. It seems that throughout her life, Jane doesn't know what sphere she belongs to; she loves Rochester but does not want to be seen as his wife but rather as his equal and likewise, despite her affection for Adele, she never seems to take any real joy in teaching her or other children, for that matter. She does not have the maternal instinct that women are supposed to have. In spite of this, critics tend to agree that through Jane, Brontë wrote effectively about the treatment of women in her society.

The Victorian audience would obviously have been aware of what was expected of the characters in the novels. Jane's expectations are demonstrated through Miss Temple, the pleasant, young, intelligent teacher from Lowood School. The teacher marries a good clergyman and moves away to his new parish, and this is similar to the proposal set forth to Jane by St John. When Jane turns down this sensible proposal as she does not love the man or he her, it could be argued that the expectations of both men and women are being challenged by Brontë. It is apparent that St John has deep feelings for Rosamond Oliver, a beautiful, rich and good-natured woman but she is not such a suitable match for him as Jane, a teacher and a relatively poor woman: 'I want a wife: the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death'(Brontë 432), something Jane definitely is not after her flight from Thornfield Hall. St John conforms to the expectations set for him while Jane decides to go against them. Rochester sees his match in Jane too: "my bride is here...because my equal is here, and my likeness" (Brontë 269) deliberately putting the rich and beautiful Miss Blanche Ingram off him for the plainer governess. Looking at the character of Blanche, the reader can see that she is

not a likeable character. Nor does Rochester love her. She is the typical caricature of a rich, beautiful and talented yet highly unlovable literary character. She follows the convention of her class, to marry for wealth and status and because of that she seems unable to love and be loved in return. Brontë is arguing through this that no love can exist in such situations, a sentiment echoed in the self-conscious Victorian society: "Alas! Our age is not a marrying age; and, therefore, I fear it is an unholy one: neither our young men nor our young maidens honestly fall in love and marry now-a-days" (Ritchie 134).

While Jane appears to be emotionally more sensible than Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, it is interesting to note that Cathy becomes almost the antithesis of Jane in her decision of marriage. Choosing money and well-suited connections over the man she loves, she comments "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now'spurring Heathcliff to run away before hearing her continue 'but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same.'" (Brontë 71). According to W.A. Craik, "Catherine clearly does understand her duties and is not unprincipled. She does not want Heathcliff as a lover in any usual sense: indeed, the physical attraction she feels is to the comely and eligible young Linton." (Craik 17) "Catherine deems that Linton's soul is as different from hers 'as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire" (Brontë 71). And while she was always a healthy, lively child, after conforming to what was expected of her and marrying Linton, she becomes sick, and eventually perished. It seems, it was Cathy's fate to die; she did what convention asked rather than what she really yearned for. Those who stick to the conventions seem to perish in the walls of *Wuthering Heights*; Frances, Hindley's perfect example of a conventional wife, is a sickly woman upon entering the house and dies soon after. Some argue this to be a deliberate attack on the aforementioned marriage ideals of wealth and class. Though Cathy the elder who perishes, her spirit remains trapped at Wuthering Heights

which some take as a symbol of death in oneself through denying natural wants. It has long been an argument that a woman ceases to have her own personality when she is married, some argue that Brontë could have sympathised with this; the death of the personality therefore represented in the physical deaths of the characters. The ghosts at *Wuthering Heights* appear only to stop their haunt once the younger Catherine marries Hareton, righting the wrong of her mother and Heathcliff's separation.

Rather than a portrait of herself as 'model of Victorian femininity', Charlotte Brontë, firstly questions the apparent inequality of males and females through her literary work. Jane comments "women feel just as men feel" (Brontë 114) and devices such as St. John Rivers' denial of his love in order to meet what is expected of him gives him the same predicament as a female where she is faced with the power of her husband in the place of God. Gender boundaries are broken down as Jane's long-wanted equal is found in broad, manly Rochester. Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights*, Emily destroys the normal conventions of gender; a beautiful girl originally has the mind of a man while a rugged looking man has no position in society and therefore becomes female. Both novels show what different character lives are expected to lead and the effect that these expectations can have. In short, it appears that both authoresses are saying not that all men and women are equal, but some can be. The idea that woman's "intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision" (Veeder 81). All this is challenged by the strong women in both the novels.

The conflicts depicted in the two novels lead to happiness and power is often replaced by love, but the balance is different in each case. *Jane Eyre* has a happy ending while *Wuthering Heights* ends with the death of Heathcliff. The sisters, apparently, did not share the same reaction to Byronism and their Byronic heroes were not the same. Gender was an important domain in the

Victorian age and as explained above in the novels of Emily and Charlotte Brontë too. Their heroes and heroines kept the conventions and norms of their time but in *Jane Eyre* this adherence led to happiness, while in *Wuthering Heights* it resulted in destruction. In neither novel is marriage for the sake of status and wealth represented as conducive to love and happiness. The two novels have been seen as prime examples of female gothic by some feminist critics, exploring woman's entrapment within domestic space, her subjection to patriarchal authority and her attempts to escape such restrictions. Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and Emily's *Cathy* are typical examples of female protagonists in such a role.

It is clear that both Charlotte and Emily were so worried about the women's role in the Victorian society and succeeded in creating a new man, a man who would suit the new-emerged Victorian woman. A man who would love his woman for what she is, for her freedom and for her wish to be successful, self-confident and self-sufficient. The new image of the Victorian woman who is supposed to be very different than the former image as explained in an essay written by Peter Gaskell in 1833 :

The moral influence of women upon man's character and domestic happiness, is mainly attributable to her natural and instinctive habits. Her love, her tenderness, her affectionate solicitude for his comfort and enjoyment, her devotedness, her unwearying care, her maternal fondness, her conjugal attractions, exercise a most ennobling impression upon his nature, and do more towards making him a good husband, a good father, and a useful citizen, than all the dogmas of political economy" (Poovey 8)

From all things mentioned and argued above, it can be summed up that

Brontë sisters were thinking in a very visionary way for their time because throughout history and many years after, things with women and their role in society has changed and nowadays women are present in every aspect of life. The Victorian Era saw many changes in terms of social philosophy and gender relations. It was a time of shift from patriarchal pattern of male supremacy to female dependency or in other words towards new modern concepts of equality.

CHAPTER 5

Final Conclusion

In this dissertation I tried to present my views and understanding of the Victorian age as one of the richest periods in names and genius, a period with a long list of writers among whom I have chosen the two Brontë sisters. What I admire about them is their ability to deal with the rational and irrational and their debt to Romanticism. I tried to cover the Byronic heroes in the two novels and their characters that are marked by supernatural and gothic elements. This gives a kind of fear and confusion to readers, on the one hand, and satisfaction, on the other. Their complexity makes the two novels romantic, gothic and realistic – all at the same time.

The conflicts depicted in them lead to happiness and power is often replaced by love, but the balance is different in each case. *Jane Eyre* has a happy ending while *Wuthering Heights* ends with the death of Heathcliff. The sisters, apparently, did not share the same reaction to Byronism. Gender was also an important domain in the Victorian age and in the novels of Emily and Charlotte Brontë. Their heroes and heroines kept the conventions and norms of their time but in *Jane Eyre* this adherence led to happiness, while in *Wuthering*

Heights it resulted in destruction. In neither novel is marriage for the sake of status and wealth represented as conducive to love and happiness.

Another important issue in this dissertation is the relationship of the two novels to the gothic genre. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* transports the gothic to the forbidding Yorkshire moors and features ghostly apparitions and a Byronic hero in the personality of the demonic Heathcliff, while Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre* adds the madwoman in the attic to the cast of gothic fiction. The two novels have been seen as prime examples of female gothic by some feminist critics, exploring woman's entrapment within domestic space, her subjection to patriarchal authority and her attempts to escape such restrictions. Charlotte's Jane Eyre and Emily's Cathy are typical examples of female protagonists in such a role.

To me, both writers remain unique and their two novels. I am truly convinced that they have had a huge influence on other writers.

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