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Upwards and Onwards :Women's Search for Authenticity in the Novels of Charlotte Bronte

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UPWARDS AND ONWARDS: WOMEN'S SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY IN THE NOVELS OF CHARLOTTE BRONTE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a letter to William Smith Williams, a representative of her publisher, Charlotte Bronte wrote:

> I often wish to say something about the "condition of women" question, but it is one respecting which so much "cant" has been talked, one feels a sort of repugnance to approach it...One can see where the evil lies, but who can point out the remedy?[1]

This statement, written before the publication of Shirley, her second novel to be published but her third written, seems to indicate that Bronte believed that she never had, nor would, write on the "condition of women" issue. But she did concern herself with the woman question in each of her novels, from The Professor to Villette. All of her heroines address the problems confronting them as single gentlewomen in Victorian England. Bronte may not have known what the remedy to the problem was, but she knew what outcome to hope for: that women would have enough education and opportunity to lead respectable and meaningful lives. Education, opportunity, and respectability for women would lead to better marriages, to true union between the sexes. In addition, Bronte depicted steps to achieve fulfilling lives for the women in her novels that encompass the hierarchy of motivation later described by Psychologist Abraham Maslow: the needs for physiological comfort, safety, "belongingness," self-respect, and finally, what he called "self-actualization."[2]

There is much in Bronte's novels that is autobiographical: one cannot help but notice the similarities between her small, plain, and often painfully shy heroines and their creator. They are teachers and

governesses, they are women who long to be loved and cherished, they have strong beliefs. This study is not intended to be biographical, however, for there is much in her heroines that does not reflect Bronte. Women of Bronte's background, educated gentlewomen, often lacking financial security, rarely had many options for employment, and even fewer for a career. They were seamstresses, companions, governesses, teachers. They were often poorly educated, receiving only rudimentary skills, and if by some misfortune they were left without family or friends, their prospects for survival were bleak. Women were expected to marry, and yet marriage was certainly not an ideal position, for a married woman had few rights: her husband had the right to her property and income if she had any. Divorce was all but impossible. Bronte's novels depict women struggling to survive and lead meaningful lives in an age when society failed to recognize that women were as rational as men and had as much right to respectability and independence. Such a statement is not too harsh, for Mary Wollstonecraft, writing before Bronte, and John Stuart Mill writing after, complained of the same things. In the seventy-seven years which separate their works, A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792), and The Subjection of Women (1869), few improvements in women's rights were made.

Wollstonecraft's work contended that there could be no transcendental values in mankind until one half of the species was treated equally with the other. She argued that in the absence of proper education, women were unable to develop fully enough to make them moral and rational partners of men. Her initial premise was that for

> ...Man and woman, truth, if I understand the meaning of the word, must be the same, yet in the fanciful female character, so prettily drawn by poets and novelists, demanding the sacrifice of truth and sincerity, virtue becomes a relative idea, having no other foundation than utility, and of that utility men pretend arbitrarily to judge, shaping it to their own convenience. Women I allow, may have different duties to fulfil but they are human duties, and the principles that should regulate the discharge of them, I sturdily maintain, must be the same.

She maintained, further, that women must have opportunity: a woman in order to be truly generous and virtuous, "must not be dependent on her husband's bounty for her subsistence during his life, or support after his death" (p. 146). Women, as rational and equal beings, must be as capable of participating in medicine, politics, and business as men; their occupations, "so far from being liberal, are menial" (p. 148).

Wollstonecraft's ideas are echoed in Bronte's novels, especially when she says, "How much more respectable is the woman who earns her own bread by fulfilling any duty, than the most accomplished beauty" (p. 149). This sentiment is one of Bronte's major themes, especially evident in any mention of "old maids." There are other themes of Wollstonecraft's which Bronte uses. Wollstonecraft's idea that a man who marries a woman beneath him in understanding marries her only for her beauty, adornments, and accomplishments and will surely tire of her is most evident in Shirley. "Friendship or indifference inevitably succeeds love," Wollstonecraft had said (p. 30); Shirley Keeldar says,

> I would never marry. I should not like to find out that what I loved did not love me, that it was weary of me, and that whatever effort I might make to please would hereafter be worse than useless, since it was inevitably in its nature to change and become indifferent.[4]

Wollstonecraft's assertion is that a man and woman of disproportionate understanding must cease to enjoy each other's company. A marriage based on understanding will subside from passion into friendship and compassion, not indifference. This is not far from the "perfect concord" which will mark Jane Eyre's marriage to Rochester.[5]

The assertions that Wollstonecraft had made in 1792 were still being debated when Charlotte Bronte's novels were published; the woman question was one which a female author of Bronte's intelligence could not fail to incorporate into her work. Wollstonecraft's work depicted two different spheres for women, both of which needed improvement. A woman could not be useful in the home unless she were an equal, and a woman's usefulness outside the home was wasted if she were not allowed access to fields in which she might contribute. For Mary Wollstonecraft, a better education and an enlightened society would allow women to be transcendent, moral beings, whether they were in the home, outside it, or both.

The basis for The Subjection of Women is, not surprisingly, much like the thesis of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Mill argues

> ...the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes--the legal subordination of one sex to the other--is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and...it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality...[6]

The condition of the relations between the sexes was to Mill a situation of slavery: men enslaved women by enslaving their minds, by turning the "whole force of education to their purpose" (p. 141). Mill speaks as well of women subjected to physical abuse by their husbands and having very little recourse in such a situation. This is a potential condition

of women which Bronte does not ignore. In The Professor Frances tells William,

> Monsieur, if a wife's nature loathes that of the man she is wedded to, marriage must be slavery. Against slavery all right thinkers revolt, and though torture be the price of resistance, torture must be dared; though the only road to freedom lie through the gates of death, those gates must be passed for freedom is indispensable.[7]

Mill recalls Wollstonecraft in his declaration that marriage is not always the tyranny it could be:

> Happily there are both feelings and interests which in many men exclude, and in most, greatly temper, the impulses and propensities which lead to tyranny: and of those feelings, the tie which connects a man with his wife affords, in a normal state of things incomparably the strongest example (p. 162).

Mill thus presents a condition that Bronte attempted to portray in her novels: men and women, married, content, happy. For Bronte, marriage, and the love and companionship it provided, was at least as important as respectability for the single woman.

Mill echoes Wollstonecraft when he says that it is unfortunate that many women had as their main objective being attractive to men because the basic means to economic survival was, for a woman, marriage. He addresses the issue of women seeking the only opportunity they have in this way: "it would be a miracle if the object of being attractive to men had not become the polar star of feminine education and formation of character" (p. 141). This theme is evident in each of Bronte's novels, with Ginevra Fanshawe in Villette the supreme example of the situation:

> Miss Ginevra's school-studies were little better than nominal; there were but three things she practised in

> earnest, viz., music, singing, and dancing...Very much of her time was spent in visiting...She was obliged to be well dressed.[8]

Mill's comment on the situation is like Wollstonecraft's assertion that passion subsides to indifference; he says that feminine blandishments are important only as long as they are fresh and until lessened by familiarity (p. 167). Mill, like Wollstonecraft, contends that a woman is fit for most occupations, and often more fit than some base, stupid men might be. But a major portion of his essay focuses on problems of a woman's bondage in marriage. He believed it was wrong: "marriage is the only actual bondage known to our law" (p. 217). Like Wollstonecraft and Bronte, Mill believed that a marriage between equals was the best union that could be made.

The concerns of Wollstonecraft's and Mill's essays are issues which Bronte addresses in her novels. Each has as a primary theme the limited choices possible for a woman. Her heroines are forced to exist in a society which does not allow them the same rights and privileges which it affords men. Her heroines are educated in the way Wollstonecraft maintains too many women were, that is, they have learned in a disorderly fashion, as interest and opportunity allowed. Three of them, Frances, Jane, and Lucy, are forced into labor by chance, and each enters a profession less from choice than by circumstance. In Shirley the situation is slightly different for neither Caroline nor Shirley need to choose a career, established as they are in comfortable surroundings, but in this novel the plea for choices is loudest. All of Bronte's heroines eventually face the possibility, or hope of marriage, but before each arrives at this fortuitous circumstance, each woman must consider the

question, "What am I to do with my life?" Charlotte Bronte's consideration of the woman question had first and foremost to do with a woman's role outside of marriage. Perhaps because she was herself faced with the prospect of remaining single for so long, she was steadfast in her belief that an unmarried woman should be able to lead a fulfilling and virtuous life, not despised but respected.

While respect for the single working woman is a major theme of Bronte's novels, they are also filled with the traditional and popular theme of a woman searching for her ideal mate. Bronte had definite ideas about what such a union ought and ought not to be. These ideas are similar to those expressed by Wollstonecraft and Mill, that a union between unequal partners is far from the ideal, and probably more like the slavery described by Frances Henri Crimsworth. Each novel depicts a situation of love and probable marriage, from Frances' shared working partnership with William, through Jane's and Rochester's perfect concord to Shirley's and Caroline's union with the Moore brothers, and almost including Lucy Snowe, whose chance for that kind of happiness is dashed by a storm at sea. A marriage of perfect concord which is a true partnership is for Bronte the ideal marriage--it is on a level much higher than a union made out of economic necessity or out of fear of no alternative. She speaks harshly of those "wrong" marriages, and one is led to believe that Lucy, single despite having loved, is far more respectable than Ginevra Fanshawe, for example, or any number of other women who married to escape solitude or to gain economic security.

Bronte's ideal union is not simply a union of intellects, for in most of the marriages she portrays there is strong sexual tension.

Bronte's unions are overshadowed by a strong sense of mastery and dominance, which is problematic to a feminist reader. Frances persists in calling William "Monsieur" and "master" long after their marriage, and Shirley claims that she wants to be mastered by the man who will be her husband. This portrayal seems to be a remnant of gothic or romantic novels and poetry. Similarly Rochester, dark, strong, and domineering, reminds one of Lord Byron, whom Bronte read and admired. The sensuality of Bronte's novels is unusual considering the Victorian view of sexuality described by Russell M. Goldfarb:

> The truth is, of course, the Victorian age was obsessed with hiding sex, and this obsession accounts for the extraordinary pressures the age brought to bear upon society to satisfy its compulsion. If sexual expression could be hidden deeply enough, if it could be successfully repressed...then one could speak easily and apparently without guilt of being respectable.[9]

But this strong passionate strain is tempered by a picture of men who have flaws, are not particularly attractive, and display more feminine attributes than was common. It is not just her men who are androgynous, that is, have both masculine and feminine characteristics, but her woman as well. At the most obvious level are the scenes in which men dress as women, and women as men: Rochester as a gypsy fortune-teller, or Lucy Snowe as a man in a drama. Unafraid of violating traditional sensibilities, Bronte created women able to assert themselves, and men who wanted partners, not slaves. This blurring of traditional sex roles is just one part of perfect concord between men and women in marriage.

Bronte seems to anticipate Abraham Maslow in her recognition of the needs of human beings. In Maslow's theory of motivation the highest level is that toward self-actualization, which cannot be achieved in the

absence of the preceding levels. First are the physiological needs such as hunger, followed by safety needs, or the need for security, and the avoidance of pain. At least three of Bronte's heroines, Frances, Jane, and Lucy, struggle with basic physiological needs. In addition, orphaned and forced to work, women in a man's world, they must also battle for basic security. The next stage in Maslow's hierarchy is what he calls "belongingness" or the connection with other human beings. The final two stages are self-esteem, and finally self-actualization, the condition in which the individual achieves his or her highest potential. Bronte's novels deal with women's attempts to fulfill their potential. She believed that "belongingness" was central to fulfillment, and along with it, self-esteem which she called "respectability." The conditions Bronte describes as necessary for contentment are so like Maslow's hierarchy that the use of his term "self-actualization" is appropriate in describing the struggle for authenticity a woman faced in Victorian England.

Charlotte Bronte believed that a woman would be most happy if she were able to marry a man she truly loved, and who loved her. Marriages of "perfect concord" are depicted in her novels, but she also recognizes that not all women will be fortunate enough to make marriages which are true unions. If a woman were not married, either by choice or because of unfortunate circumstances, she ought to be considered a contributing, useful member of society and not despised as some freak or drudge. A woman should have the opportunity to choose her career, and if a good marriage were denied, a single life filled with useful work was also fulfilling.

The purpose of this study is to examine Bronte's four novels, The Professor (written before Jane Eyre, but not published until after

Bronte's death in 1856), Jane Eyre (1847), Shirley (1849), and Villette (1853), in the context of a woman's search for authenticity in a society which denied her equality and opportunity. Bronte's theory of authenticity encompasses ideas found in Wollstonecraft and Mill, and anticipates those of Maslow. "Respectability" is the first step toward authenticity: because a woman has the potential to engage in meaningful work, she must have the opportunity and the independence to do so. Next is "perfect concord," a connection based on deep intellectual and physical love with another human being which will allow both to grow through their union. Maslow's theory of motivation presupposes that self-actualization cannot occur in the absence of any of the other stages. For Bronte, while authenticity cannot occur in the absence of self-respect, it can occur without true love. Study of the novels reveals that the happiest course is, however, for a woman to have both "respectability" and "perfect concord."

NOTES CHAPTER I

[1]Harriet Bjork, The Language of Truth: Charlotte Bronte, the Woman Question, and the Novel (Lund, Gleerup, 1974), p. 27.

[2]Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper, 1954), pp. 80-92.

[3]Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 51. All further references to this work appear in parentheses in the text.

[4]Charlotte Bronte, Shirley, ed. Andrew Hook and Judith Hook (New York: Penguin, 1974), p. 223. All further references to this work appear in parentheses in the text.

[5]Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre, ed. Q.D. Leavis (New York: Penguin, 1966), p. 476. All further references to this work appear in parentheses in the text.

[6]John Stuart Mill, "The Subjection of Women," in Essays on Sex Equality, ed. Alice S. Rossi (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 125. All further references to this work appear in parentheses in the text.

[7]Charlotte Bronte, The Professor (London, J. M. Dent, 1922), p. 226. All further references to this work appear in parentheses in the text.

[8]Charlotte Bronte, Villette, ed. Mark Lilly (New York: Penguin, 1970), p. 151. All further references to this work appear in parentheses in the text.

[9]Russell M. Goldfarb, Sexual Repression and Victorian Literature (Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1970), p. 21.

CHAPTER II

RESPECTABILITY: THE "POWER OF EARNING" AND INDEPENDENCE

John Stuart Mill wrote that humanity as a whole would be greatly served if women had the same opportunity for employment that men had:

> Where there is now one person qualified to benefit mankind and promote the general improvement, as a public teacher or an administrator of some branch of public or social affairs, there would then be a chance of two (p. 221).

Mill's advocacy of women's right to employment is for the good of the whole. Charlotte Bronte advocated the right to meaningful employment because she knew what frustration and meaninglessness must occur in someone unable to exercise intellect and ability. Her novels often portray women who occupy their hands instead of their minds, who long for something meaningful to do, who are forced into some work because they have no alternative, and who long for respect and independence through their labor.

The domestic tasks which filled a large portion of the day for women who were not forced into earning a living are the same in each novel: they had to endure tedious and often meaningless household tasks. Matthewson Helstone tells Caroline in Shirley, "Stick to the needle--learn shirt-making and gown-making, and pie-crust making, and you'll be a clever woman some day" (p. 121). According to these novels sewing, cooking, and keeping an immaculate house make up most of the tasks that fill a woman's time. This condemnation of domestic occupations is most evident in Shirley because in this novel Bronte has

created two women not forced by circumstance to seek occupations outside the home. Shirley Keeldar is an heiress and independent, and as such occupies her time as she chooses; Caroline Helstone lives quietly and comfortably with her uncle. Caroline desperately wants something meaningful to do to occupy herself; her pleas in Shirley are Bronte's most vehement assertion that a woman's life ought to be more than sewing and pie-crust-making.

The paragon of domestic virtues in Shirley is Hortense Moore. Although she is responsible for teaching French to Caroline, she also considers darning "one of the first 'duties of women'" and Caroline spends many hours "condemned to learn this foreign style of darning" (p. 107). Described as "breathlessly busy...bustling from kitchen to parlour," Mlle. Moore also devotes time to "rummaging her drawers up-stairs,--an unaccountable occupation in which she spent a large portion of each day, arranging, disarranging, rearranging, and counter-arranging" (p. 104), then "all the afternoon the two ladies sat and sewed" (p. 108). Caroline has been required to darn a pair of hose, which she views as a severe trial:

> This task had been commenced two years ago, and Caroline had the stockings in her work-bag yet. She did a few rows every day, by way of penance...(p. 108).

Caroline dreads this life even more when she fears she will never marry--how much more horrible it would be to endure single than married. She wonders what the old maids do with their lonely hours and finds Miss Mann, in her spotlessly neat and comfortable home, knitting. While Miss Mann has grown bitter in her solitude Caroline finds Miss Ainley serene, kind-hearted and devoted to good works.

Although the lament is more plaintive in Shirley, Bronte's views about time-filling occupations are evident in the other novels as well. Her women seem most often to occupy their hands, with sewing, knitting, or purse-making, and not so often their minds. Incidentally, Bronte does not mention another pastime which is referred to by Mary Wollstonecraft, who asserted that due to inferior education, and "confined to trifling employments," women were "necessarily dependent on the novelist for amusement" (p. 184). Patricia Beer has noted the home-bound nature of women's tasks:

> ...The inevitable consignment of women to the home while the men go out is poignantly presented...As they wait and worry they sew. It is not always useless work; it is sometimes making shirts for the man of the family, it is sometimes darning stockings. But it is made to sound dreadfully boring.[1]

Even so, the women are constantly engaged in it. As Zoraide Reuter sits in on the Professor's English class she is "occupying herself with netting a purse" (p. 99). When Jane Eyre first meets Mrs. Fairfax at Thornfield Hall, she is knitting. Sewing is one of the few things besides "visiting" in which Ginevra Fanshawe participates. Bronte distinguishes her heroines from other women in the novels in the way they occupy their time. Frances Henri participates in the Professor's English class; Jane constantly studies; Lucy Snowe, hired as a seamstress and governess, becomes both a pupil and a teacher. Her heroines possess domestic skills, but they never settle for simply filling idle hours with them. Frances, Jane, and Lucy prefer to study, and probably improve their condition in life by so doing; Caroline, who is not forced to seek paying employment, writhes at the meaninglessness of her tasks. This is

why through her Bronte expresses her view that a woman should have more to do: unlike Frances, Jane, and Lucy, Caroline's primary concern is not economic survival. Caroline has comfort; what she does not have is peace of mind.

A major problem facing the woman who wanted to work in Victorian England was that working was a situation generally reserved for the woman forced into it. Peggy Lee Brayfield points out that

> Tutoring, dressmaking, and millinery--and later--nursing were about the only careers open to impoverished genteel women, but to work for wages even in these capacities marked the woman as socially inferior.[2]

Of course the irony of the situation is that since only needy women worked, working was the stamp of an inadequate economic condition, and not a desire to utilize one's intelligence or ability, a matter of necessity rather than choice. Caroline's uncle tells her, in response to her request for permission to seek employment, "I will not have it said that my niece is a governess" (p. 204), that is, I will not have it said that my niece must work! A further restriction against women working was that the few positions which were open to them were painfully strenuous and distressingly low-paying. Caroline, in her determination to work, tells Mrs. Pryor and Shirley of her desire to be a governess, and is told that "the duties a governess undertakes are often severe" (p. 245).

In her frustration Caroline is likely to find herself in the situation described by Wollstonecraft:

> How many women thus waste life away the prey of discontent, who might have practised as physicans, regulated a farm, managed a shop and stood erect, supported by their industry (p. 149).

Wollstonecraft attributes part of the problem to the fact that women were too poorly educated to have a choice of any of the nobler occupations. Mill's assertion is similar: a woman's education ought not to be different from a man's and once it had been determined that a woman's intellect was not different, her pursuits could be equally great. A woman is, according to Mill,

> ...a human being, like any other, entitled to choose her pursuits, urged or invited by the same inducements as anyone else to interest herself in whatever is interesting to human beings...(p. 222).

Certainly twenty years earlier those pursuits were not available. Women's education and opportunities being as they were, a woman forced to work had little choice, and a woman simply desiring to work was an oddity.

A woman could be a seamstress. According to Bronte, this dreadful occupation was one which afforded the practitioner little money, and almost no time to do anything else if she were forced to make her living by it. After Frances is dismissed from Mlle. Reuter's pensionnate in The Professor she is forced to ply her lace-mending trade for a time until she finds a teaching job. Happy to have found different employment, she writes to William,

> I feel thankful for it [teaching] especially as my sight was beginning to be injured by constant working at fine lace; and I was getting, too, very weary of sitting up late at nights, and yet not being able to find time for reading or study. I began to fear that I should fall ill, and be unable to pay my way (p. 169).

Far from being a choice, Frances' lace-mending is the only means she has to survive. Survival is not fulfillment, nor is fear any condition in which to exist. Frances' escape was her recourse to study and this one

bright spot in her life would have been denied to her as well, by the constraints of time and, possibly, damaged eyesight.

A woman might also be a companion. Villette's Lucy Snowe, without money, and with "no possibility of dependence on others" (p. 95), is forced to take this position. Knowing it will be difficult, Lucy hesitates:

> To live here, in this close room, the watcher of suffering sometimes, perhaps the butt of temper, through all that was to come of my youth; while all that was gone had passed, to say the least, not blissfully! My heart sunk one moment, then it revived (p. 95).

Lucy's heart revives because she has no other options. She must work, and this will be hard. When Miss Marchmont dies, Lucy is saved from seeing her youth spent in the service of an old, ill woman. This circumstance is, in the end, fortunate, but Charlotte Bronte has succeeded in reminding the reader, not gently, that the chance for employment for women is most often drudgery and servitude. Certainly it is not secure. Having found work, Lucy is soon at the mercy of circumstance. Not only has her work been hard, her position is insecure. Once again work is depicted as mere survival.

Another choice was nursing. It is interesting to note that Florence Nightingale, who according to Shari Eason became a nurse to escape an idle life, said,

> We do the best we can to train our women to an idle life; we teach them music and drawing, languages and poor-peopling--'resources' as they're called, and we hope that if they don't marry at least they'll be quiet.[3]

This most famous of nurses might have been dismayed to see the treatment of her life's work in Shirley. Mrs. Horsfall, "the best nurse" available,

is to look after Robert Moore when he has been shot. She "had one virtue...was not a woman, but a dragon...she took her dram three times a day, and her pipe of tobacco four times." She quickly intimidates everyone, including her patient, whom she "turns in his bed as another woman would have turned a babe in the cradle" (p.526). Nurse Horsfall is not a meek woman forced into companionship or lace-mending, but Bronte obviously did not consider nursing a viable alternative for gentlewomen seeking careers. Ironically, with her mannish characteristics, Mrs. Horsfall actually represents an idea that most women are physically unable to enter this profession. A woman of Bronte's small stature (or Frances' or Jane's or Lucy's) would have had significant problems lifting a six foot man in his bed. In addition, Bronte may also have considered that nursing was not "genteel" enough for middle class gentlewomen. Nursing is, after all, often indelicate, and attending to a man's illness, especially if he weren't one's husband, hardly compares with the nursing Lucy engaged in as a companion to old Miss Marchmont.

Many women became governesses. A woman forced into governessing was actually in a slightly better position than a companion or a seamstress. M. Jeanne Peterson points out that the main advantage to governessing was that "while it was paid employment, it was within the home. The governess was doing something she might have done as a wife under better circumstances."[4] But the pay was bad, and as is made painfully clear in Jane Eyre, a governess was caught in a middle ground--not genteel enough to be part of the family, but certainly brought up too well to be one of the other servants. When Mr. Rochester forces Jane to sit in his drawing

room while he entertains others, she is spoken of as if she is not there. The Ingrams group her with other governesses, "half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous" (p. 205). Jane's happiness at Thornfield comes not from her work, but from her proximity to a man she has grown to love. In Shirley, Mrs. Pryor depicts the life of governesses less fortunate than Jane:

> It was in no sort concealed from me that I was held a "burden and a restraint in society"...The gentlemen, I found, regarded me as a "tabooed woman"...The ladies too made it plain that they thought me "a bore." The servents it was signified, "detested me"...It was intimated that I must "live alone, and never transgress the invisible but rigid line which established the difference between me and my employers" (p. 363).

This uncomfortable position was noticed by Wollstonecraft as well, who noted that a governess was not even treated as well as the man hired to tutor sons, and that "women educated like gentlewomen, are never designed for the humiliating situation which necessity sometimes forces them to fill" (p. 148).

In addition, governessing cannot be viewed as a respectable alternative choice for a career, for it was a position too like the role of a woman in marriage. Governesses allowed the woman of the home to be freed from the traditional responsibility of teaching her children. Peterson points out that a governess was a status symbol, an indication that the "wife was truly a lady of leisure."[5] In this way governessing was a situation which was not only unfulfilling to the woman forced into it, but it also served to diminish the role of the married woman. For if, as Wollstonecraft and Mill both make clear, women are too often ornaments in marriage, a wife's function was even less when a governess was engaged

to care for her children. And the governess, too, became an ornament. Rochester's behavior toward Jane is abominable in front of Blanche Ingram; it seems, although this will not be the case, as if his desire to have her present in the drawing room is to proclaim his status, or to further degrade her.

If a woman's few career choices then, were seamstress, companion, nurse, and governess, was there any employment which would afford independence and self-respect? According to Wollstonecraft and Mill, most options open to men were denied to women, but for Bronte, teaching in a school seems the ideal occupation. Each of her heroines is, or will be, a teacher, and finds meaning in it, an autobiographical resolution to theme and character. She hoped that she, Emily, and Anne could establish a school, rendering them independent and allowing them to stay together rather than seeking positions as governesses or in the schools of others.[6] An important aspect of having a school is the added factor of independence. A woman who had a school was not an ornament in another's household, nor was she as likely to be a victim of circumstances beyond her control (as in Lucy's case, the death of her employer). She was independent and had dignity. Mill would later proclaim, ..."the power of earning is essential to the dignity of a woman, if she has not independent property" (p. 179). Significantly, Mill uses the word "dignity," for the way in which a woman earns her independence must be dignified, and not deemed useless, or rewarded at a level barely above subsistence. Frances Henri escapes from lace-mending to running a school with William; St. John establishes Jane in her own school for a time; Robert Moore promises Caroline a day-school to manage; and Lucy Snowe has her school

to run in Villette. Clearly Bronte viewed running a school as one of the ways a woman could gain respectability by working, rather than being judged inferior because forced to do so.

The happy, independent role Bronte hoped for through teaching contrasts with the dependent roles of companions, governesses, and seamstresses. It also contrasts, more poignantly perhaps, with the despised position of the old maid. What Bronte longed for was that a woman deprived of love and marriage could at least be fortunate in finding respectability. In 1846, Bronte wrote,

> I speculate much on the existence of unmarried and never-to-be married women now-a-days, and I have already got to the point of considering that there is no more respectable character on this earth than an unmarried woman who makes her own way through life, quietly, perserveringly, without support of husband or mother...[7]

Her novels depict the struggle gentlewomen face in order to achieve authenticity. That is, her heroines need to find fulfilling work in order to gain authenticity. But they also, as in her letter, depict the struggle a woman faces to gain respectability in the eyes of society. A woman may eventually feel at peace with herself, but for Bronte, women as a group needed to be viewed differently in order for the process of authentication to have real significance.

Two of her novels present the issue of old maids, that is those "never-to-be married" women, rather than simply the unmarried, as her younger heroines are. The portrait of "old maids" is significant because it takes the plea for meaningful work one step further, into the plea for meaningful lives, long after the hope of fulfillment through love is removed. In her first novel, The Professor, Frances Henri

Crimsworth, questioned by her then husband of ten years, explains how she views the life of an old maid. "How would you have liked celibacy?" he asks her, and she responds,

> Not much certainly. An old maid's life must doubtless be vapid--her heart strained and empty. Had I been an old maid I should have spent existence in efforts to fill the void and ease the aching. I should have probably failed and died weary and disappointed, despised and of no account, like other single women (p. 226).

Frances has had the opportunity to escape the despised life of the old maid, but although she views the position with sympathy, she also views it with no hope that an unmarried woman could find fulfillment. In The Professor the status of old maid is one which has fortunately been avoided but the problem remained a concern of Bronte's, so much so that in Shirley it is one of the too-many issues she attempted to cover.

In this novel Bronte portrays two old maids, each resigned to her respective situation in a different way, and seen through the eyes of a young woman who fears that their fate will also be hers. Caroline resolves to try to understand two pitiable woman, Miss Mann and Miss Ainley, in order that her life of celibacy will have meaning and respectability. Bronte's portrait of the old maids is comical, but there is overwhelming tragedy just beneath the humor, particularly regarding the waste of potential. Miss Mann's parlour is described as perfectly neat and comfortable; she is prim and grimly-tidy. Her chief occupation is knitting and "to avoid excitement was one of Miss Mann's aims in life" (p. 193). This is a very amusing description, but Bronte does not leave it at that, for the complete description approaches sarcasm; it is "no ordinary doom to be fixed with Miss Mann's eye," which is compared to

Medusa's, and she is possessed by "goblin-grimness" (p. 194). But there is reason for what is later described as her censoriousness:

> She had passed alone through protracted scenes of suffering, exercised rigid self-denial, made large sacrifices of time, money, health, for those who had repaid her only by ingratitude (p. 194).

Bronte's point, once begun, continues quite stridently:

> Miss Mann felt that she was understood partly, and wished to be understood further; for however old, plain, humble, desolate, afflicted we may be, so long as our hearts preserve the feeblest spark of life, they preserve also...a starved ghostly longing for appreciation and affection (p. 195).

Perhaps Bronte is trying too hard to make a point, but she certainly succeeds in portraying an aspect of life not often encountered in novels. Miss Mann, although not wealthy, is comfortable, but having no meaningful reinforcement for her gestures of kindness and love, has retired into "lethargic...tranquility" and "censoriousness" (p. 194). And who, understanding her situation, could blame her?

Miss Ainley is like Miss Mann in one significant way--both are ugly. Bronte's description again begins comically, with a description of her ugliness, but once again a sympathetic portrait emerges. "In her first youth she must have been ugly; now at the age of fifty, she was very ugly" (p. 196). This comical but cruel statement echoes an opinion Wollstonecraft held:

> A pretty woman, as an object of desire, is generally allowed to be so by men of all descriptions; whilst a fine woman, who inspires more sublime emotions by displaying intellectual beauty, may be overlooked or observed with indifference (p. 47).

Miss Ainley possesses a kindly spirit, is good-hearted, and unlike Miss Mann, contents herself with service to others. Once again the

significant word "respectable" appears: Miss Ainley's religious beliefs, her kindliness, and her good works are sincere, and "sincerity is never ludicrous; it is always respectable" (p. 197). Miss Ainley spends her time in active participation, helping people needier than she is. Caroline still fears the single life, not because it is devoid of meaning but because it is emotionally deprived. Nevertheless Charlotte Bronte has made evident in her portrayal of the two old maids in Shirley that a career was not a viable possibility for an unmarried woman. Left to their own resources, and not having the opportunity of independence through the "Power of Earning" each is ridiculed by some portion of society. Miss Ainley is respected by the ladies for her kindheartedness but "one gentleman only gave her his friendship" (p. 198); he is a clergyman. Further, Miss Ainley's life is unsatisfactory to Bronte in another way. As Roslyn Belkin states, part of the problem in gaining dignity is "the commercial mentality which demands that single, older women should sacrifice their lives for others, that is, give free service whenever help is required."[8]

Bronte's view of the opportunity for meaningful work by any gentlewoman was bleak. Faced by a society which viewed gentlewomen as creatures of leisure, unable either because of physical or intellectual inferiority to compete with men for meaningful employment, women had few choices. The woman in the home was expected to occupy her time in needlework, good works, and of course the management of her children if she had any. A woman deprived for whatever reason of the comfort of a home, could expect to face a difficult time at whatever of the few occupations she might be forced into. Those occupations, from seamstress to

governess, held little chance for even the barest of comforts, even less for the transcendence Wollstonecraft spoke of, or the general improvement of the human race that Mill addressed.

Charlotte Bronte's belief that a woman should have the opportunity for a meaningful career did in part stem from her belief that a single woman should not have to feel degraded by working. She believed that life ought to hold more meaning than mere existence. While she did believe that true love was probably the highest meaning a woman could find in her life, she also believed women should be allowed the opportunity of fulfillment through meaningful occupations. She wanted women to have the opportunity to exercise their talents, whatever they might be. Thomas Carlyle said "every being that can live can do something: this let him do;"[9] Bronte's similar sentiment would be "this let her do." The significance of the difference is that women should not fear being single, but rather seek meaning in their lives, whether single or married, in areas outside the home. In each of the novels this theme is evident, but it is a major theme in Jane Eyre and Shirley. Bronte does not envision the situation which is central to George Gissing's The Odd Women; none of her characters chooses a career over marriage, nor expects that authenticity will come from a career alone. But her characters do wish that they could have that opportunity which was not possible until Gissing portrayed it in 1893.

In the novel so often read as a love story, Jane Eyre, some passages are jarring in their stridency. Jane is forced to rely on herself; thrust into a hard world by age eighteen, she longs for happiness, and if not wealth, comfort. Contemplating her situation,

rather more educated than many other women would have been in 1847, Jane ponders a society which treats her differently than men. Janet Gezari points out that it should be remembered that in 1847 society widely accepted theories based on fundamental differences between men and women.[10] These perceived differences are some of the issues Mill raised, and was unable to answer, except to indicate that changes ought to be tried. Jane muses:

> Women are supposed to feel 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 piano and embroidering bags (p. 141).

Jane, who will ultimately make one of the best marriages Bronte ever portrays, is not concerned about what she will do, should she remain single. Rather she is concerned with some major issues: "they need exercise for their faculties" she says. Once again at issue is the idea of wasted potential--whatever she can do, this let her do. Jane wants opportunities for her superior intelligence and nature--she is really not concerned with Mill's idea of the "Power of Earning" yet; she simply wants women to have the same opportunities for self-actualization that men have.

Jane's plea is a theme Bronte returns to in Shirley, and while Caroline's self-doubt resembles so much bildungsroman adolescent questioning, it is different because Caroline and Shirley talk about what their lives mean when compared to those of men. Caroline's question, "What was I created for, I wonder?" (p. 190) seems fairly commonplace,

until it is read alongside "Men and women are so different: they are in such a different position. Women have so few things to think about--men so many" (p. 234). Caroline desires to work in one of the few occupations open to women; the reaction she gets to her request has already been discussed. But even Shirley knows the importance of work for satisfaction. "Caroline, don't you wish you had a profession--a trade?" she asks (p. 235).

Shirley's position differs from Caroline's in that, although neither is forced to work as Bronte's other heroines are, Shirley has an unusual position for a single woman. The heiress is a landowner and considers herself a business woman. She talks to Robert Moore of business and participates to a certain extent in the management of Hollow's Mill. Her position is so unusual, though, that Bronte does not quite come to terms with it as a natural position for a woman. Shirley speaks of herself as a woman, and then a gentleman in the same breath:

> Business! Really the word makes me conscious I am indeed no longer a girl, but quite a woman, and something more. I am an esquire...They gave me a man's name; I hold a man's position: it is enough to inspire me with a touch of manhood...really I feel quite gentlemanlike (p. 213).

In the end when Shirley marries she relinquishes her land and business to the control of her husband, as required by law, but also as she wishes. Shirley has participated in business, not as an equal, for she often remains somehow "outside" the business of Hollow's Mill, with the other women, but she has not really chosen a career either. As an intelligent, competent, and assertive heiress Shirley proclaimed her right to participate, but her involvement is not the situation one would desire for a woman. She gives herself the appellation "Captain Keeldar,"

and others, including Reverend Helstone, ascribe masculine qualities to her. Shirley's situation is not the answer to the gentlewoman's question, "What am I to do with my life?" However problematic this scenario is, Caroline and Shirley do engage in long questioning conversations regarding woman's role in life. The fact that the ending seems a little trite does not detract from this aspect of the novel. Shirley, desiring to be mastered, "abdicated without a struggle" (p. 592), and Caroline is promised the management of a day-school by her future husband. Nevertheless, in Shirley Bronte has dared to have a woman declare:

> I believe single women should have more to do...better chances of interesting and profitable occupation than they possess now...The brothers of these girls are every one in business or in professions...their sisters have no earthly employment but household work and sewing... and no hope in all their life to come, of anything better (p. 377).

What Caroline and Shirley talk about, Lucy Snowe does. Lucy is Bronte's "working woman," akin to Thomas Hardy's Sue Bridehead in Jude the Obscure:

> ...the woman who was coming into her notice in her thousands every year--the woman of the feminist movement--the slight pale, "bachelor" girl--the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing mainly in the cities as yet, who does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession.[11]

Writing fifty-nine years after the publication of Villette, Hardy was able to portray what Bronte could still only hope for: that a woman should have the opportunity to work, to deny that marriage was her only course, and still be happy. Sue is still, like Lucy, a "bundle of

nerves." While Bronte could not yet depict a woman totally alone by choice (c.f. Rhoda in Gissing's The Odd Women), she moved toward it in Villette. Lucy represents that woman of the feminist movement who will attempt to seek fulfillment outside of marriage. Lucy does not choose her career because that opportunity did not yet exist. She is a terribly passive heroine who must always be forced to make decisions; it is not surprising, then, that she is forced to act independently. Her independence at M. Paul's death signifies not a choice of freedom, as Kate Millett maintains,[12] but the fact that a single woman must have something in her life which can provide meaning. Fortunately for Lucy that something exists for her. Her prospering school, her pupils, her hard work will give her the kind of self-respect and independence for which Caroline and Shirley longed.

In her four novels Bronte is concerned with the way in which a woman will live her life. She concerned herself largely with young unmarried women, whose fates were not determined by fortune and the promise of marriage. Their choices were few, and the few choices available were hard and provided a level of comfort only slightly better than subsistence. Those of her heroines forced to work apply themselves to it with zeal and attempt to rise above mere survival and reach toward what Wollstonecraft, Carlyle, and Mill believed was the right of all human beings, profound socially useful and personally fulfilling employment. Caroline and Shirley, while not forced into labor, still question the role a woman should have in life and assert that fulfilling labor is as much their right as any man's. Bronte thus proclaims in her novels not only that a woman's work should have been better than it was, but also

that a woman should have the same opportunities for any fulfilling work as a man. Her question "What am I to do with my life?" should not have to be qualified with the statement "since my choices are so much more limited by education and opportunity than my more fortunate fellow creatures'." In addition, Bronte was concerned with the way a woman was seen by society. If she chose to remain, or was left, single, society ought not to view her differently from its unmarried men; Reverend Hall in Shirley should be accorded no greater respect than Miss Mann simple by virtue of his sex. Bronte's concern was, first that a woman should be able to have respectability in decent labor, and next that she ought to gain satisfaction and self-fulfillment from it.

NOTES CHAPTER II

[1] Patricia Beer, Reader, I Married Him: A Study of the Women Characters of Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot (New York: Harper, 1975), p. 118.

[2] Peggy Lee Brayfield, "A New Feminist Approach to the Novels of Charlotte Bronte," Diss. Southern Illinois Univ. 1973, p. 261.

[3] Shari Louise Barefoot Eason, "Ambivalent Views Toward Woman's Role in the Novels of Charlotte Bronte," Diss. Bowling Green State Univ. 1977, p. 8.

[4] M. Jeanne Peterson, "The Victorian Governess," in Suffer and be Still: Women in the Victorian Age, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), p. 6.

[5] Ibid., p. 5.

[6] Elizabeth Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Bronte (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1947), p. 164.

[7] Charlotte Bronte, Letter to Miss Wooler, January 30, 1846, in The Brontes: Life and Letters, ed. Clement Shorter (New York: Haskell House, 1969), Vol. 1, p. 316. It is interesting to note how this sentiment echoes Wollstonecraft's "how much more respectable is the woman who earns her own bread by fulfilling any duty..." (p. 149).

[8] Roslyn Belkin, "Rejects of the Marketplace: Old Maids in Charlotte Bronte's Shirley," International Journal of Women's Studies, 4, No. 1, (1981), p. 58.

[9] Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, n.d.), p. 150).

[10] Janet Gezari, "Marriage or Career: Goals for Women in Charlotte Bronte's Novels," Bucknell Review, 24, No. 1 (1976), p. 84.

[11] Thomas Hardy, "Preface" to Jude the Obscure (New York: Signet, 1961), p. viii.

[12] Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), p. 146.

CHAPTER III

PERFECT CONCORD: LOVE AND EQUALITY

The gentlewoman in Victorian England was expected to be married. According to Martha Vicinus, "the cornerstone of Victorian society was the family; the perfect lady's sole function was marriage and procreation."[1] Although the perfect lady was expected to be a wife, a wife did not necessarily find marriage to be the perfect way to spend her life. Mary Wollstonecraft acknowledged this fact: "the laws respecting woman ...make an absurd unit of a man and his wife" (p. 145), and she portrays middle- and upper-class women as mere appendages of their husbands; if not yet married, women strove to make themselves attractive so as to get married. John Stuart Mill's essay, The Subjection of Women, deals far more harshly with the situation which enslaved women and in which they had no legal rights. Mill, like Wollstonecraft, believed that once women were treated as equals, with the benefits of better education and greater possibilities for employment, men and women would join in mutually satisfying and transcending unions. Charlotte Bronte looked at the society she found herself in, appraised her inferior status, and hoped that men and women would join in marriages that would be far better than what Mill called "mutual toleration" (p. 232). Bronte went one step further, for she believed that a woman, while she ought to be allowed fulfillment through work, found her greatest happiness in mutual love. Annette Schreiber claims that Bronte's stories are:

> ...feminine versions of a theme rooted in folk and fairy tales of the poor son who sets out to seek his fortune. Both Bronte's protagonists and the folk tales' heroes seek more than this ostensible gain. They seek themselves,

> their integrity, identity, their place in the world. Love and marriage have traditionally attested to a woman's success in these goals and to Bronte's heroines they are particularly and peculiarly tantamount to them.[2]

Beginning with The Professor, Bronte portrays a successful union between the heroine and her one true love, a situation which continues in Jane Eyre. In Shirley Bronte begins to question the institution, and in Villette, although the heroine loves, she will not marry. Bronte, as she matured, seemed to come to a greater conviction that love was important, but it was perhaps not necessary in a woman's life.

Wollstonecraft and Mill both address the issue of a woman's attempts to make herself attractive enough to marry. Both consider that an attractive and wealthy woman has an advantage over her unattractive and poor sister, a proposition with which Bronte agreed. In each of her novels many women are engaged in the task of economic survival through marriage. In Shirley this circumstance is called a "matrimonial market" (p. 377); the term is applicable in Jane Eyre and Villette as well. A Victorian woman's real domain was marriage and family; consequently it is not surprising that many women in Victorian novels manuever toward this goal. Charlotte Bronte depicts this aspect of Victorian life in the novels, and although she believed that a woman need not be married to have a meaningful life, her women are all necessarily participants in the "marriage market." Bronte's heroines rise above the marketplace, searching not merely to be kept, pampered, or idolized, but for real love, and their place in the world. Her minor characters, providing contrast, suspense, and even humor are participants, viewing themselves and their prospective partners as predators or prey, to catch or be caught.

Jane Eyre, small, plain, and alone, never considers marriage as her first goal in life. Working at Lowood, and dissatisfied there, she plans a new course of action, and relies on herself first, not the care of another individual. Considering her choices, this course comes to her: "Those who want situations advertise" (p. 118). But there are women in Jane Eyre who are not forced to work, and who are active participants in the market, seeking not only to be pursued, but actively pursuing; Blanche Ingram is representative of this type of woman. It is immediately clear to Jane that Blanche is a woman who intends to marry, and marry not only a wealthy man, but one who will be devoted to her, and place her on a pedestal. She goes as far as to announce it to Rochester and others:

> Whenever I marry...I am resolved my husband shall not be a rival, but a foil to me. I will suffer no competitor near the throne; I shall expect an undivided homage; his devotion shall not be shared between me and the shape he sees in the mirror (p. 208).

On occasion Blanche appears as a bride at Thornfield. When Jane first sees her she is dressed in a brilliant riding habit, but the second time she is clad in "spotless white." Blanche even plays a bride to Rochester's groom in a charade. According to Jane, she flirts and strives to snare Rochester with her looks and actions. But she loses interest in him when he, disguised as a gypsy, misinforms her that her assumptions regarding his fortune are exaggerated. Blanche is caught in the traditional bind of primogeniture. As Nancy Pell points out, it is not unlike the situation Rochester was involved in when, as second son, he was tricked into his loveless but economically necessary match with Bertha Mason. Nevertheless,

> ...he indulges in the luxury of contempt for Blanche Ingram. He has no sympathy for one who, like himself in his youth is compromised in her choice of a mate by an elder brother's precedence in the family economy and who is, in addition, excluded because of her sex, from ever inheriting entailed family land.[3]

Blanche, wealthy and traditional enough not to have to think of low alternatives to marriage like working, must seek fulfillment in her life through a good match. Her situation really is not unlike that of so many other women married or marrying for money or position. In order for Blanche's comfortable life to continue she must marry or become dependent on her brother. The nature of this predicament is a sort of double bind: if women do not participate they will surely lose, and some may be worse off than when they started. Rochester flirts with Blanche, but according to Sandra Gilbert, "the character of courtship in which [he] engages her suggests a grim question: is not the game of the marriage 'market' a game even scheming women are doomed to lose?"[4] Although Rochester is contemptuous of her and the way in which she loses interest in him, Blanche is just another victim of the predicament of women in Victorian England.

Blanche Ingram has an even poorer sister: Ginevra Fanshawe in Villette will be in straits more dire than Blanche's should she not marry. Although she has wealthy relations, her immediate family is poor, and she must make a good match to alleviate her dependence on them. Her excessive coquetry is comic and silly, but her cruelty to Lucy is severe. That a woman could treat another as Ginevra treats Lucy (or Blanche treats Jane) is acknowledgement of the competition to be married in which women are engaged. As Wollstonecraft argues, "They are all running the same

race, and would rise above the virtue of mortals if they did not view each other with a suspicious and even envious eye" (p. 187). Ginevra never questions that she must marry, and marry well. Again, the plain, almost destitute, woman is the one who can consider her integrity first; Ginevra, on the other hand, considers her beauty her most marketable asset. Lucy acknowledges this:

> Most of her...faculties seemed to be in the same flimsy condition: her liking and disliking, her love and hate, were mere cobweb and gossamer; but she had one thing about her that seemed showy and desirable enough, and that was--her selfishness...How pretty she was! How charming she looked, when she came down on a sunny Sunday morning, well-dressed, and well-humoured, robed in pale lilac silk, and with her fair long curls reposing on white shoulders (p. 148-9).

But Ginevra is not merely pretty and vapid; although she and Lucy seem friends, she attempts to use Lucy, just as she uses men to achieve her ends. Ginevra is more than a comic and pretty foil to Lucy. The modern reader is surely not merely supplying modern feminism in saying that Ginevra is representative of that woman too weak to be independent, and too smart not to feign stupidity to get what she wants. Lucy sees this, telling Ginevra who has said that she is not clever, "On the contrary, I consider you <u>are</u> clever, in your way--very clever indeed" (p. 216). Kate Millett's condemnation is strong, but not too strong: Ginevra is "the flirt, an idiot beauty callously using men to acquire what she has been carefully taught to want; admiration, money, the petty power of dominating a puppy."[5] The fault is not Ginevra's alone. Indeed it is with society, as Ginevra "has been taught to want" marriage, because there are no other choices for a well-born but poor girl. She vacillates between the men in her life; she likes the attention and the gifts they

bestow on her, she likes to tease Lucy about what she will soon have that Lucy will not. Barbara Baines argues that Lucy understands Ginevra's position and forgives her; Baines too sees marriage in the novel as a marketplace:

> The realization that Ginevra is herself a victim of a crass marriage game in which she is little more than a marketable commodity softens with a charitable tolerance Lucy's judgment of her exploitation of Graham Bretton.[6]

That marriage is a competition in which the prize is a mate is based on the realization that many women did not consider that they had other options, as indeed they did not. In each of the novels the women in the game are representatives of a sad state in society as perceived by Wollstonecraft, Bronte, and Mill; her heroines rise above this state. It is interesting that Jane and Lucy do not have any of the traditional assets with which to enter the fray. Armed with neither wealth nor beauty, each does, however, find true love and happiness, while their foes, Blanche and Ginevra, may marry, but are less likely to achieve real satisfaction in life. Bronte seems to say that only in the absence of wealth and outward beauty could a woman at that time be forced to grow, and not become a commodity on the marriage market.

Bronte, however, gives women more credit than this, for in Shirley she presents a character both beautiful and wealthy, who although perceived as quite a "catch" never views herself as anything but independent and capable. Shirley Keeldar is a woman who could easily succumb, but she does not. And Caroline Helstone is presumably that type of woman who, like Ginevra Fanshawe, ought to try to snare a man to ensure her escape from the confines of the rectory. But these two women, although

each marries in the end, do not see marriage as the best way for a woman to realize her human nature, despite the fact that Caroline recognizes that marriage is the normal way to gain it. Judith McDaniel suggests that Caroline

> ...has been able successfully to appraise the requirement of her environment in spite of her lack of education; she knows what it means to be a woman: she must marry. Whether she wishes to marry or not is irrelevant, everything else she may wish is forbidden.[7]

Caroline does recognize that her education has been insufficient and she believes that a single woman ought to have more to do; each would allow a married woman to lead a more fulfilling life as well. Shirley, not needing to marry to survive or escape, rejects offers from two suitors: marrying Robert Moore would be selling herself to save his mill; marrying Sir Philip would have been selling herself to appease the expectations of others. Neither Shirley nor Caroline engages in coquetry to snare a man, even when they are in love. In this way, they differ from Ginevra and Blanche and become more like Lucy and Jane. Bronte's heroines will not compromise on the issue of marriage: a marriage must be made for love, and for love only.

The question of marriage is a difficult one, for Bronte's views on it range from the blissful to the sordid. Her opinion is reflected not only from novel to novel, but within novels as well. The progression seems clear, however, from the blissful marriages at the end of The Professor and Jane Eyre, through the ambivalence in Shirley, to the seeming rejection in Villette. This progression is not representative of a developing belief that a woman is better off single, but that a woman ought to have more opportunities, and that if single, a woman should still be able to

lead a fulfilling life. Love in a woman's life is an important theme in all of her novels. It is important, but marriage is not sufficient to bring total happiness to a woman. The progression, then, stems not from disillusionment about marriage per se; rather it is a reaffirmation that being single is not a tragedy, if one has meaningful occupations.

Although The Professor is largely William Crimsworth's story, it is Frances Henri's as well. Frances is offered a marriage of leisure; William wants her to retire from all her labor. She refuses: "Think of marrying you to be kept by you, Monsieur! I could not do it" (p. 200). Instead she and William embark on a partnership, eventually running their own very successful school in England. Their endeavor is at Frances' urging, "I don't work enough," she says (p. 219). And for their hard work, their "harmony of thought and deed," (p. 221) they are rewarded and happy.

Jane Eyre believes that her appearance and status preclude any hope of a happy marriage. She does not expect to marry, although she loves; her independence and self-sufficiency are portrayed throughout the book. Nevertheless, Bronte's theme of love's importance to a fulfilled existence manifests itself when Jane is fortunate enough to be able to marry the man she loves. Each partner in Bronte's vision, must have an equal share in the union, or in Wollstonecraft's words, "In the choice of a husband [women] should not be led astray by the qualities of a lover--for a lover the husband, even supposing him to be wise and virtuous, cannot long remain" (p. 119). Jane and Rochester achieve this equal union at the end of Jane Eyre, but before they reach this state, there is much to be resolved in their relationship.

The marriage at the end of Jane Eyre and Jane's subsequent total fulfillment occur despite Rochester's diminished physical capabilities. Externals are not important to a real marriage: economics and physical mastery have no place when two people attempt to form a union; their souls and minds must be alike. It has been argued that "equality" is not the key word at the end of Jane Eyre,[8] but that the important phrase is the "perfect concord" Jane says she has in her marriage with Rochester:

> I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest--blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine...All my confidence is bestowed on him, all his confidence is devoted to me; we are precisely suited in character--perfect concord is the result (p. 476).

But Jane and Rochester are equal, "perfectly suited" to one another in their marriage. Bronte has not allowed this blissful state to simply evolve; it must be contrasted with Rochester's marriage to Bertha, Jane and Rochester's early relationship, and Jane's near marriage to St. John Rivers.

Rochester's marriage to Bertha was an economic necessity for him. Bertha too must have been unhappy in their relationship before she was completely incapacitated; "her family wished to secure [Rochester] because [he] was of a good race" (p. 332). Rochester says, "I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her" (p. 333). The mistake of this marriage is one he has been forced to endure for almost twenty years when he meets Jane. The description of Bertha when Jane finally sees her, and the realization of what she is, is horrible. Rochester's words "That is my wife" (p. 322) are filled with contempt not only for Bertha but for

himself. The revelation of Rochester's marriage to Bertha is necessary for Jane's true happiness, because in addition to the obvious impediment of his "wife now living," Jane and Rochester are not yet equal. Bertha signifies something else, and that is the fate of a woman forced to marry because of circumstance, and now held in contempt by her husband. As such she represents all those women "doomed to lose" in marriage and society.

Her madness is not relevant in this context, except that it gives an explanation for her rages. Bertha's rage is a rebellion against a system in which she is caught and from which she cannot escape. Her chains are the strictures society places on all women, as Karen Mann states:

> It is at least possible that Bertha's rage--expressed in fits of temper and defiant acts of sexual indulgence--is the outward expression of malevolence bred by a system which denies her a separate will and imprisons her in a marriage that is primarily a monetary bargain.[9]

This is perhaps too strong, but in the context of the marriage market, of Wollstonecraft's depiction of unequal marriages, and Mill's view of marriage as slavery, Bertha must be seen with at least as much sympathy as Rochester. Jane tells Rochester that she thinks he would hate her if she, too, were mad, but he informs her that it is not the madness which causes him to hate Bertha, but the fact that they were married for the wrong reasons. Bertha Mason Rochester is not simply an impediment to Jane's marriage; she is representative of the consequences of an unequal marriage based on economics and the subjection of women.

The acknowledgement of Bertha at this time and Jane's escape from Thornfield indicates that had Jane's marriage occurred, it too would be a mistake, for Jane and Rochester are not yet equal. They have something

which joins their two souls from the beginning, but neither is ready for their marriage when it is first set to occur: "In their first meetings...they recognize each other's physical and psychological similarities; neither is conventionally attractive or socially graceful..."[10] By the time Rochester proposes to Jane, he can tell her,

> I sometimes have a queer feeling with regard to you--especially when you are near to me as now: it is as if I had a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of your little frame...(p. 280)

and Jane tells him,

> I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even mortal flesh: it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal--as we are! (p. 281)

But as soon as these avowals have occurred, Rochester begins to treat Jane less like an equal and more like a possession. Sandra Gilbert states that "Rochester, having secured Jane's love, almost reflexively begins to treat her as an inferior, a plaything, a virginal possession."[11] Before their marriage he wants to dress her "like a doll" (p. 297), and Jane is forced to keep in check her future husband, of whom, unfortunately, she "had made an idol" (p. 302). Wollstonecraft uses the same terminology in describing a marriage in which a woman does not consider as her first duty that to herself as a rational being: "This rank in life...degrades them by making them mere dolls" (p. 145). When Jane rebels against this, she is acting on another of Wollstonecraft's assertions: "But women only dress to gratify men of gallantry; for the lover is always best pleased with the simple garb which fits close to the shape" (p. 129). That is Rochester would not seek to change even Jane's appearance if he loved

her for herself. After Bertha is revealed as Rochester's wife, Jane resolves to separate herself from one she loves but cannot marry, saying, "I care for myself" (p. 345).

When she has arrived at Marsh End, sick, hungry, weak, no longer able to care for herself, she is accepted into the Rivers household and recuperates. As Jane regains her health, she gains the admiration of a man who seeks, according to Sandra Gilbert, to enslave her in his vocation by making her his wife and taking her with him to India.

> At first...it seems that St. John is offering Jane a viable alternative to the way of life proposed by Rochester. For where Rochester...ended up appearing to offer a life of pleasure, a path of roses (albeit with concealed thorns), and a marriage of passion, St. John seems to propose a life of principle, a path of thorns (with no concealed roses), and a marriage of spirituality.[12]

But Jane cannot subjugate her passions and marry St. John, a marriage of duty and work, not one of love. He requires work of her, and she offers to go with him, but not as his wife. His wife would be a slave, as described by Mill, but in Charlotte Bronte's novel, a marriage must be made between equals and soul-mates. Jane asks, "Can I receive from him the bridal ring, endure all the forms of love (which I doubt not he would scrupulously observe) and know that the spirit was quite absent?" (p. 430)

She cannot. Instead, following Rochester's eerie cry for her in the night, she returns to him, where she finds him blind and crippled, but finally free to marry her. Many critics have equated Rochester's crippling with a symbolic castration[13] but Sandra Gilbert points out that sightless, he can finally see, and mutilated, "he draws his powers from within himself, rather than from inequity, disguise, deception."[14] Not only has he been humbled, but Jane arrives at Ferndean a different woman,

for she is now independent, and thus, socially and economically Rochester's equal. In their earlier relationship Jane and Rochester avowed that her low status and his wealth, her naivete and his experience, her youth and his age, were irrelevant, but despite their "connectedness" they were not equal. The death of Bertha, Jane's economic independence and choice to return, and his physical crippling, bring them together, finally in perfect concord. This mutuality and union of souls is Charlotte Bronte's vision of marriage. It is the most complete union that she will ever portray.

If Jane Eyre has the happiest marriage of all Bronte's women, the marriages of Caroline and Shirley are the two which leave the reader with the most questions. Both women love the men they marry, but Shirley is filled with so many dire portraits of marriage that one wonders why Caroline and Shirley ever decided to embark on married life. It is also problematic to the feminist reader of Shirley because the pleas for improved women's roles are so strident in this novel that one wants to see its heroines forge new ground, and not fall into marriages in which Shirley terms her husband "master" and Caroline has almost starved herself to death. The images of marriage in Shirley are more gloomy than the domestic tasks which fill a woman's day, and yet its heroines marry. Is marriage an escape from drudgery and loneliness, or is it the choice of the lesser of two evils? It is important to remember that Bronte believed a woman needed love to be completely fulfilled; still the double marriage in Shirley, occurring as it does against the backdrop of loveless marriages, domestic drudgery, and lack of alternatives for women, seems to be an inferior choice. Bronte's ambivalence regarding marriage

in this novel does not diminish her emphasis on love; rather it strengthens her emphasis that a woman's choices are too limited.

The Reverend Helstone speaks first and most harshly on the topic of marriage in Shirley:

> Millions of marriages are unhappy: if everybody confessed the truth perhaps all are more or less so...[people] tire of each other in a month. A yokefellow is not a companion; he or she is a fellow-sufferer (p. 142).

These comments come during a conversation with Caroline, and it is only the beginning of a long series of declarations on marriage. Mrs. Yorke likes to "crack a dry jest against matrimony" (p. 171); Robert Moore thinks "these are not times for marrying of giving in marriage" (p. 171); Joe Scott proclaims, "...women is to take their husbands' opinion both in politics and religion: it's wholesomest for them" (p. 323); and Mrs. Pryor with the saddest tale to tell, says, "If I had not been so miserable as a governess, I should never have married...the single should not be too anxious to change their state, as they may change for the worse" (p. 367-368). According to McDaniel, Caroline and Shirley are bombarded with "decisively negative or extremely ambivalent views on marriage: this is in direct contrast to Jane Eyre where marriage is never condemned per se and is seen primarily as a reward."[15] If Jane's marriage is a reward, the marriages in Shirley are a severe punishment, or at least a burden which its participants, especially the women, are forced to bear. Bronte's stridency regarding the issue is troublesome, but she portrays all the choices for a woman negatively in this novel: domestic occupations are drudgery; work outside the home is unsatisfying and limited. McDaniel suggests that while marriage is unappealing, the alternatives are worse,

and it is not surprising that under such circumstances a women would choose to marry.[16]

Caroline understands that a woman must marry to change her life, and in her case, the lack of change will confine her to darning, working on the "jew basket," and staying largely at home, whether that home will be with her uncle or her mother. Marriage to Robert Moore would not be much different, except that in marriage Caroline would be caring for someone she truly loved. Robert, however, has grand notions about how the repeal of the Orders of Council will affect their life: he will become rich; they will care for the poor; Caroline, Shirley, and Miss Ainley will run a day-school. In fact, Caroline has not been rescued so much by marriage as by the repeal. This is beside the point, for Bronte's heroines do find happiness and fulfillment in love and marriage. Robert has been Caroline's confidant; he knows she feels confined by societal strictures. He has loved her from the beginning, but placed business first in his life. Typically, each must undergo a change, and a presumed growth before they are free to marry their one true love. Caroline suffers from the lack of opportunity, and in her belief that she will never marry. Robert is shot by men opposed to his business ventures. They are rescued by improved economic times, but it is not unlike Jane and Rochester's "luck" at Bertha's death in the burning down of Thornfield. Caroline escapes the life of the old maid she has seen by marrying a man she loves and who loves her, and who will establish her in an occupation, however shallow and gratuitous it might seem to modern readers.

While Caroline really has no better choice in her struggle to escape, Shirley does. Shirley ostensibly has no need to marry to occupy

her life, although she acknowledges that in the world of business she is not treated as a male would be; certainly marriage is not the lesser of two evils for her. The two young women in this novel have numerous long discussions on life, women, and marriage, and both believe, as Bronte did, that true love and union is possible, despite some evidence to the contrary. Shirley seems at first to savor her independence more than the possibility of married life: "I could never be my own mistress more. A terrible thought--it suffocates me" (p. 223). In fact, the fear of losing her freedom is not what bothers her; it is her fear of "being a burden and a bore,--an inevitable burden,--a ceaseless bore" (p. 223). Once again Bronte echoes Wollstonecraft: "familiarity might have turned admiration into disgust" (p. 32). Shirley and Caroline have not only bought Helstone's one-month time limit, but they have bought his, and society's, idea that a woman should be "as light-headed, as vain, as open to ridicule as possible, because they were then...inferior" (p. 139), or as Wollstonecraft bitterly stated, "she was created to be the toy of men" (p. 34). In addition Shirley thinks men "fancy women's minds something like those of children" (p. 343). A woman inferior and childish may easily be viewed as an object, which will soon indeed become a burden and a bore to its possessor. Shirley and Caroline both believe, however, in the possibility of mutual love, harmonious and transforming, as Bronte did.

Probably the most disconcerting section of Shirley is the portion in which Shirley describes to her uncle her right and desire to be mastered by the man she chooses as her husband:

> I know full well, any man who wished to live in decent comfort with me as a husband must be able to control

> me...I prefer a master...A man I shall feel it impossible not to love, and very possible to fear (p. 514).

To account for this statement from a woman who earlier had feared the loss of her independence in marriage is difficult. It should be noted that Frances calls William "master" and Jane frequently refers to Rochester in the same way; although she is his paid servant at the beginning, she still calls him "master" on one occasion at Ferndean. Mastery must, then, imply a state of mutual control, and conversely, growth. Shirley wants a practical man with sense, a blend of hero and philosopher (p. 515). She wishes to be taught and guided, not forced to be a slave. Peggy Brayfield points out that Shirley "seems too much an individual ever to be dominated except in the way she chooses to be 'dominated.'"[17]

Bronte's view seems muddled, nevertheless, and the ending of Shirley is a problem. Bronte allows her two heroines to marry, probably as an affirmation of her belief in the possibility of mutuality in marriage. The fact that they have married, in the midst of extreme negativism regarding the institution, does not necessarily mean they have chosen the least painful course in life. Caroline probably has, but it is doubtful that she would ever marry anyone but Robert, for he is her one love, and she his. Had she not married him, her outlook would have been more bleak. Perhaps Bronte, in making Shirley speak of her need to be mastered was putting society's words in her mouth. This was a time when no woman could behave as Shirley did without some degree of censure. Bronte may have been acknowledging it, and Shirley's words may be the recognition of the fact that a woman's place was not yet a man's, no

matter how clearly she sees the injustice, or how keenly she desires her independence. The women have not chosen, as a modern feminist reader may think, marriage over career, for the possibilities of a fulfilling career were slim. But they have chosen a mate with whom they can hope for happiness and fulfillment, and mutual love.

In The Professor and Jane Eyre Charlotte Bronte portrays mutual love ending in marriage as "perfect concord." In Shirley marriage made in real love is possible, but alternatives are considered, and the wives will have more to do than Jane does, although Jane no longer needs outside occupations. In Villette marriages are made between minor characters, but Lucy Snowe, despite having loved, is left single. Villette portrays the step that Bronte could not quite bring herself to in Shirley: what meaning could Caroline have in life if not married? Lucy Snowe, unlike Caroline, will have meaning in her life. Her single life contrasts with Paulina's and Ginevra's married lives. Lucy seems, like Jane, to actually have benefited in being forced to call on herself from the beginning. If she does not marry she will not languish and nearly die, for Lucy represents the new stronger woman for which Bronte hoped.

In Villette three very different women have very different lives in the end. Polly, a girl who idolizes and serves her father, becomes a woman who idolizes and serves her husband. Ginevra, the coquette, marries a fop. Lucy, forced into independence, remains independent. Again Bronte is not advocating singleness at the expense of marriage; she simply asserts that an unmarried woman should have happiness just as her married sisters may. The marriages with which Lucy's celibacy contrasts imply that a single woman may in fact be happier. Millett notes that

> ...every Victorian novel is expected to end in a happy marriage; those written by women are required to. Bronte pretends to compromise; convention is appeased by the pasteboard wedding of Paulina Mary to Prince John; cheated in Lucy's escape.[18]

In Villette Bronte has allowed a woman to be fulfilled outside of marriage.

Polly Home Bretton does not need to seek fulfillment outside the home; her life has been oriented around pleasing the men in her life--at least from the time that Lucy first meets her. Polly represents traditional Victorian woman, making men happy, seeking any happiness through theirs. She does assert herself upon occasion, but she is from the first described as doll-like; generally her assertions are in the service of her father, or later, Graham. There is nothing wrong in Polly's marriage to Graham for it is happy: Lucy tells Polly, "In all that mutually concerns you and Graham there seems to me promise, plan, harmony" (p. 467). Although it is "pasteboard" to Kate Millett, their union signifies Bronte's belief that mutuality can exist between men and women, but further in Lucy's observation regarding it, some bitterness is also evident:

> I do believe there are some things so born, so reared, so guided from a soft cradle to a calm and late grave, that no excessive suffering penetrates their lot, and no tempestuous blackness overcasts their journey (p. 532).

The bitterness from Lucy comes from her not being one of the elect she describes. Polly and Lucy are different women; their lot in life will be far different, for Lucy was not born into a cozy cradle and cannot seek comfort through dependence.

Ginevra does seek comfort through marriage, with far different results from Polly. "She had no notion of meeting any duties single-handed" (p. 577). Far from being a pasteboard conclusion, Ginevra's marriage to Alfred de Hamal reflects the superficiality with which she has viewed marriage. It is a marriage in which a "good trade" (p. 576) is made: Ginevra becomes a countess, Alfred is bailed out of troubles and debts. Ginevra, "suffering as little as any human being I have ever known" (p. 557), is like Polly, a woman who will not be forced to call on herself in troubled times. Lucy does not see her marriage, however, in the same way she sees Polly's: Chapter Forty is ironically titled "The Happy Pair." Bronte's views on marriage remain constant: only marriages made by equal and mutual soul-mates can be "perfect concord."

The real marriage issue in Villette does not lie in the marriages which occur, but in the one which does not. Lucy Snowe is left single, in contrast with her married non-suffering friends. Lucy finds her true love in M. Paul:

> ...penetrated with his influence, and living by his affection, having his worth by intellect, and his goodness by heart--I preferred him before all humanity (p. 592).

Lucy does not remain single by choice. As Brayfield states, Lucy has no hand in M. Paul's death.[19] Charlotte Bronte did, however. M. Paul's death finds Lucy established in her own school, funded by money from her soul-mate. Brayfield asserts that Bronte meant to show "the importance of having loved to the woman who must make her way independently."[20] This seems to stretch a point. Bronte did believe in the importance of love in a woman's life, but she also believed a woman ought to have more

choices. The reader knows Lucy does not advocate marriage as a "profession," as Hardy put it, by her description of Ginevra's "nonsense." That Lucy remains single does not imply that marriage is never important; rather it shows that marriage cannot be the only course a woman considers.

Bronte, like Wollstonecraft and Mill, believed marriage could be mutual growth for husband and wife, and in The Professor and Jane Eyre depicts it as such. She doubts that all marriages can be completely happy because too many are made out of convenience, economics, and lack of other options, as well as the failure of equality and love. Although she believed in love and marriage, her more ambivalent portrayals in later novels reflect her doubt that a woman's complete satisfaction could come from it. In Shirley, she asks what are a woman's options, and why are they so limited? If one believes Wollstonecraft and Mill, it is because women are not equal--options would come from equality, and equality would also bring better marriages. Thus, a society in which women were as esteemed, respectable, and independent as men would bring not only the possibility of fulfillment outside marriage, but within it as well. Bronte seems to recognize this, for unlike Jane who finds "perfect concord" in marriage, Lucy must gain authenticity alone. Although readers might, romantically, wish that Lucy and M. Paul had married, they must recognize that Lucy's authenticity is not dependent on marriage, but on herself. Had she married, there is no doubt that it would have been a union of perfect concord; although she has not married, happiness can still be hers in a society which recognizes single women as human beings and not objects, children, or old maids.

NOTES CHAPTER III

[1]Martha Vicinus, "Introduction: The Perfect Victorian Lady," in her Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), p. x.

[2]Annette Schreiber, "The Myth in Charlotte Bronte," Literature and Psychology, 18, No. 1 (1969), p. 49.

[3]Nancy Pell, "Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre," Nineteenth Century Fiction 31, No. 4 (1977), p. 413.

[4]Sandra M. Gilbert, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Jane Eyre," in The Madwoman in the Attic, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), p. 350.

[5]Millett, p. 141.

[6]Barbara Baines, "Villette, a Feminist Novel," Victorians Institute Journal, No. 5 (1976), p. 53.

[7]Judith McDaniel, "Charlotte Bronte and the Feminist Novel," University of Michigan Papers on Women's Studies, 2, No. 3 (1975), p. 92.

[8]See Margaret Moan Rowe, "Beyond Equality: Ideas and Images in Jane Eyre," Ball State University Forum, 21, No. 4 (1980), 5-9, in which she states, "Equality is a word that has much significance in the first stage of the Jane-Rochester relationship at Thornfield Hall. Interestingly enough, neither Jane nor Rochester uses the word at Ferndean Manor. In the final chapters of the novel, equality is supplanted by concord, the 'perfect condord' in Jane's description of her marriage." It is really not overwhelmingly important what term is used, equality or concord, for each signifies a different relationship than a marriage based on power or economics.

[9]Karen B. Mann, "Bertha Mason and Jane Eyre: The True Mrs. Rochester," Ball State University Forum, 19, No. 1 (1978), p. 34.

[10]Pell, p. 408.

[11]Gilbert, p. 355.

[12]Ibid., p. 365.

[13]See for example, Richard Chase, "The Brontes or Myth Domesticated," in Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1948), p. 108.

[14]Gilbert, p. 369.

[15]McDaniel, p. 94.

[16]Ibid., p. 97.

[17]Brayfield, p. 185.

[18]Millett, p. 146.

[19]Brayfield, p. 217.

[20]Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

AUTHENTICITY: PERFECT CONCORD AND RESPECTABILITY

If as Charlotte Bronte wrote, "there is no more respectable character on this earth than an unmarried woman,"[1] but her novels depict no more happy woman than one who is married, where was true fulfillment for a woman? Carolyn Platt has stated that Bronte's opinion changed, and that by the time she completed Villette, Bronte was beginning to reject the traditional belief in love as the source of growth and happiness.[2] It is doubtful, however, that Bronte would ever have rejected the idea of the importance of love in an individual's life. In each of her novels, both men and women are isolated and often lonely beings, searching for meaning in existence through labor and if not always passionate love, at the very least, some degree of "connectedness." Her most poignant descriptions are those of the lonely. Miss Mann in Shirley comes to mind, as does Lucy's despair in Villette when she is left alone at the school with only the cretin for company. She was, she says, "perishing for a word of advice or an accent of comfort" (p. 233).

It often seems that Bronte was confused about what authentic existence for women should be. She consistently portrays two avenues to growth in her novels, however, meaningful labor and love. The happiest outcome would be for a woman to have both, but essentially a woman needed the opportunity to make choices: she needed to be allowed to work in respectable labor, and she needed to be able to choose whether or not, and whom, to marry. Bronte seems to believe in the more recent psychological theory, termed by Abraham Maslow "self-actualization," with its physiological needs first, followed by needs for "belongingness," then

self-esteem, and finally, self-actualization.[3] Because her heroines often seek such passionate love the rest of her intent is sometimes distorted. Bronte's passionate love, unfortunately, often seems as if it will suppress and swallow the heroine. Ultimately her novels make the point that autonomy and growth may come from different sources: through love, through work, and overriding both, through the opportunity to influence the direction of one's life.

An important and consistent theme in Bronte's four novels is the isolation in which many of her characters function. William Crimsworth's solitary existence in The Professor makes him seem petty and while he is free to seek change in his life, he is often very lonely. Jane Eyre contains many examples of the heroine's isolation: first at Gateshead, again at Lowood, once again following Jane's flight from Thornfield. If Jane is seeking a mate, she is also seeking an end to solitude. Miss Mann and Miss Ainley in Shirley are fighting for respectability and fighting against loneliness. Even Caroline, surrounded as she is by people, is isolated from love and happiness, until Shirley arrives in the neighborhood. Lucy Snowe, Villette's lonely heroine, is without family in England and left alone in the end. Images of solitude in Bronte's work are yet another theme which can be traced to her own life. Mrs. Gaskell's description of Haworth, where Bronte grew up, begins "...life in an isolated village, or a lonely country house..."[4] It is easy to see that this fact became more deeply rooted as Bronte and her sisters were separated, by circumstance, and then by death.

In Maslow's hierarchy of motivation, if an individual has attained satisfaction of such physiological needs as hunger, thirst, and

security, the need which next needs to be gratified is that of "belongingness." Bronte anticipated Maslow in her perception that overcoming isolation and loneliness was central to the needs of women. Isolation is not autonomy, nor is seclusion necessarily peaceful solitude. Characters in The Professor and particularly in Jane Eyre, must overcome isolation, through some type of union with other individuals. Jane attempts to form friendships and sister-like relationships, a theme better developed in Shirley and Villette. While critics of Bronte's work who address the issue of love address the issue of sexual love, they have generally ignored the mutual and sustaining love of friendship. Jane's lowest moment comes when she flees from Rochester and Thornfield. Despairing, she finds friends in the Rivers family. Jane's good fortune at finding friends does not end here, for she is actually related to the Rivers. This news brings not simple gladness to an orphaned girl, but "Glorious discovery to a lonely wretch! This was wealth indeed!--wealth to the heart!--a mine of pure, genial affections" (p. 411). Jane's new found family is more important to her than the wealth which accompanies it. Although the money will leave her economically independent, the family gives her happy union, "belongingness."

In Shirley Bronte portrays a series of relationships in which the most realistic are not those between men and women, but those formed between two women--Caroline and Shirley's growing friendship and Caroline's relationship with her mother, Mrs. Pryor. Forced into isolation at Briarmains by her uncle's demand that she spend no more time at Hollow's Mill, Caroline's health is threatened, and she begins to waste away. In the context of the novel, she is ostensibly wasting for want of seeing her

love, Robert, but in fact, Caroline's health is threatened by the lack of opportunity for marriage (a woman's role), career, and by her friendless isolation, dependent on a man who "could not abide sense in women" (p. 138). But Shirley arrives in the neighborhood, and the reader does not need Susan Gubar to point out that Shirley is Caroline's "double;" Shirley acts when Caroline's passivity has completely immobilized her.[5] But more importantly, Shirley represents the beginning of the end of isolation and loneliness for Caroline. They become friends, they discuss issues which not coincidentally concern the restrictions placed on women in their society, and they form a union which is complete concord, but for the absence of passion. Caroline tells Shirley:

> ...I never had a sister--you never had a sister, but it flashes on me at this moment how sisters feel towards each other. Affection twined with their life...affection that no passion can ultimately outrival, with which even love itself cannot do more than compete in force and truth (p. 265).

Affection is important in life, because as has been discussed, Bronte believed that too many marriages were based not on love or even affection, but on economics. Marriage was no guarantee of love, and Bronte's heroines, unlike Jane Austen's, do not have the security and comfort of love at home should they not find perfect concord with a mate. Caroline's and Shirley's sisterly affection is an important recognition of the individual's inability to effectively function in a state of isolation; it also makes very clear Bronte's point that a woman's forced dependence on another is detrimental while the mutual dependence which comes from affection is not.

Shirley is not a natural sister, though, and Caroline continues to languish as her hopes are thwarted. She needs more than sister-like

love, and is fortunate in receiving real motherly love when Mrs. Pryor reveals their kinship. Finding a mother's love, she says, "But if you are my mother, the world is all changed to me. Surely I can live..." (p. 410). Caroline becomes the only one of Bronte's heroines to ever feel a mother's love. In this novel in which the women are not forced to survive by their own strength and wit, Caroline is saved by the only thing which could have saved her--love.

Lucy Snowe has long since been deprived of any familial love when she arrives in Villette. There can be no doubt that Lucy, like Bronte's other heroines, desires a husband, but Lucy's isolation is not half-imagined, as Caroline's is, but a real and constant fact of her life. Inga-Stina Ewbank has noted the emphasis in Villette on isolation. The independence Lucy gains at the end of the novel is far different from the isolation that threatens her throughout. According to Ewbank, "In its stubborn concentration on Lucy, Villette becomes a novel about loneliness, lovelessness...Lucy's emotions rather than any external events create the real structure of the novel...[Lucy's life is] the empty life of an unloved being."[6] Ginevra Fanshawe is as close to a friend as Lucy will have for some time, but the two can never feel sisterly affection toward one another. She feels security with the Bretton's but they have their own life, and Lucy often goes weeks with no contact with them. M. Paul initially offers Lucy friendship, in a conversation which roughly parallels Caroline's with Shirley: "Will Miss Lucy be the sister of a very poor, fettered, burdened, encumbered man?" (p. 500). At this point M. Paul offers Lucy not love like Rochester offers Jane, but love like that Caroline feels for Shirley. His friendship makes her "substantially happy" (p. 501), typical

understatement from Lucy, but this is friendship and brotherly affection, not perfect concord, nor even the "something like passion" with which Jane describes her feelings for Rochester (p. 281).

Those feelings of passion are another important aspect of Bronte's work, and this is rare, considering Victorian views regarding sexual expression, particularly among women. Bronte's novels were not pulp novels, after all. Goldfarb claims that the following Victorian statement was typical: "I should say that the majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind."[7] Furthermore, he comments that "sexual repression was both a social and an artistic way of life."[8] Passionate, i.e., sexual, love was important to Charlotte Bronte. While her characters strive toward that egalitarian unity described as perfect concord, her portrayal of passion is such that she seems confused. This confusion is what prompts her heroines to call their lovers "master," and it has caused much analysis of her work. Patricia Beer writes of her portrayal of love in Shirley, "this is sad, reactionary, mixed up stuff. Even Jane Austen saw marriage as a state of mutual improvement."[9] The confusion is what prompts Kate Millett and Carolyn Platt to see her novels as a progression from her "immature" view of love in Jane Eyre, to her "mature" view of women in Villette. If Bronte's views matured, it was in her acceptance of the fact that passionate love was not always possible; her growing realization was not that passionate love, dominated by a strong hero, was bad, or wrong, but that a woman needed the opportunity to live authentically whether she found passionate love or not. And despite the fact that sexual love as portrayed

in her novels is problematic, she did believe men and women could have egalitarian unions.

It is necessary to examine some very descriptive aspects of Bronte's portrayals of sexual love, beginning with The Professor. In this first novel, told from the point of view of William Crimsworth, Bronte's passionate strain is not evident until Frances Henri becomes an integral part of the story, near the end. That Frances calls William "master" has already been mentioned, as has her own avowal that she might have died had she been doomed to a life of celibacy. The following passage is representative of Bronte's sexual fervor:

> She threw her arms round me, and strained me to her heart with passionate earnestness: the energy of her whole being glowed in her dark and then dilated eyes, and crimsoned her animated cheek...Half-an-hour afterwards, when she had become calm, I asked her where all that wild vigour had gone...(p. 227).

Similar passages are to be found in each of the other novels. Jane and Rochester, on the night they confess their love, spend an exultant evening in a garden. Jane describes Rochester, Byronic in appearance and demeanor:

> ...if I had loved him less I should have thought his accent and look of exultation savage; but, sitting, by him, roused from the nightmare of parting--called to the paradise of union--I thought only of the bliss given me to drink in so abundant a flow (p. 284).

Shirley does not contain passages of such extreme emotional nature as those in the first two novels, but it does contain lengthy conversations and flirtations, and it is the novel in which the heroine claims that she wants to be mastered by the man she will marry. Again, the men appear at least nominally Byronic. For example, Robert Moore, alone until freed by Orders of Council which allow him enough economic security to marry, is

> ...rather a strange-looking man; for he is thin, dark, sallow; very foreign of aspect, with shadowy hair carelessly streaking his forehead..He seems unconscious that his features are fine...His eyes are large, and grave and gray; their expression is intent...(p. 59)

This is not a description by a woman who was beginning to relinquish a belief in and hope for erotic fulfillment in life. Similarly she has not dispensed with it in Villette, or Lucy Snowe could not declare, "he was roused, and I loved him in his wrath with a passion beyond what I had yet felt" (p. 581). One cannot simply ignore the deep passion in these novels, in order to proclaim that Bronte was a feminist. The feminist strain exists. The passion remains.

Helene Moglen has stated that Bronte's insistance on the qualities of a Byronic hero demonstrate "that it was morally desirable to establish her heroines on the same terms...--by virtue of her interiority: her qualities of mind, character, personality."[10] It seems unlikely, however, that this was the case. Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill both advocated the equality of women and their stridency reflects the fact that women had a great deal to overcome before equality was possible. Bronte's heroines are isolated; isolated, they were forced into a situation which demanded that they work at menial and low-paying jobs. Women in the Victorian age must have been more concerned with mere survival, and as Bronte said, "respectability," before they could even consider developing their minds and character, although respectability would lead to that development. It cannot be denied that one issue is their inability to do so because of poor education and lack of opportunity, but for Bronte the issue was first and foremost one of equality--with the majority of men, not the exceptional among them.

The issue of the dominating, or Byronic, hero remains, as does the sexual nature of Bronte's works. Carolyn Platt noticed that Bronte's "longing for freedom and her longing to adore a dominating lover war with each other throughout her adult work."[11] Furthermore, she makes the observation that Bronte is "drawn to the myth, so deeply rooted in patriarchal society, that heterosexual love is essentially a matter of exerting or submitting to force."[12] Why was Bronte so drawn to the patriarchal myth? Because she was a product of a patriarchal society. In addition, the reader should bear in mind the similarity between Bronte's beliefs and Maslow's hierarchy of motivation. Having achieved basic needs, a woman seeks an end to isolation. "Belongingness" can take the form of sisterly love, or it can take the form of erotic love. Maslow argues that, "ordinarily sexual behavior is multi-determined, that is to say, determined not only by sexual but also by other needs, chief among which are the love and affection needs."[13] Therefore Bronte does not seem to take one step toward equality and two steps away from it. She was simply portraying the patriarchal myth, and combining it with her own needs for affection. As already suggested, marriage was not necessarily a positive situation for a woman, but it could be better if it were egalitarian like those envisioned by Wollstonecraft and Mill, or if it were formed by two people sharing deep passionate, sexual love of which equality must be a part.

Bronte does depict egalitarian concord in marriage in her novels. A marriage may be, like Frances' and William's, or Jane's and Rochester's, a seemingly perfect sharing partnership. Bronte in fact rejects the dominant macho lover for a more androgynous hero. She confuses

traditional male and female attributes and roles. This makes it possible to see Rochester's blinding and crippling at the end of Jane Eyre not so much as a symbolic castration, but a process of androgynizing him, of equalizing Jane and Rochester. Rather than being dominated by her lover, Jane then becomes a helper. She has returned to him by choice, has become more active, and less submissive in her relationship with him. Thus, not only has Rochester become less dominant, she has become less submissive. Patricia Beer claims that Bronte's novels contain a large amount of transvestism which represents "the bisexuality present in every human being... Certain men and women are seen to be each other's physical counterparts."[14] F.A.C. Wilson's study on androgyny in the novels concurs: "Charlotte Bronte especially evolves an ideal of love and union by which both partners freely alternate between 'masculine' or controlling, and 'feminine' or responsive, roles."[15] This is a circuitous route to Mill's point that "It is not true that in all voluntary association between two people, one of them must be absolute master" (p. 168). Or, indeed, that the partners cannot be equal by balancing "control" and "response." Bronte develops the confusion in roles to demonstrate that there is not a dominant, nor is there a submissive, sex, in a union of "perfect concord."

Frances Henri and William Crimsworth are her first depiction of simple sharing in marriage. If it is difficult to find a careful, intentional balance in William Crimsworth's character, it may be because Bronte was trying too hard to make her narrator seem a believable male. He attempts to assure Frances that she will not need to work and then explains, "there is something flattering to man's strength...in the idea of becoming the providence of what he loves" (p. 200). And rather comically, he

engages in a brawl with York Hunsden: "...we had a try for it, and... we had both rolled on the pavement..." (p. 215). But Frances remains quietly assertive and they share a fulfilling career together, as well as a happy marriage.

Rochester's and Jane's equal union is one of "perfect concord." Before they achieve that state, however, Bronte does show the way in which they balance each other. Despite the fact that they are not yet able (because Rochester is already married, and because they are not yet true equals) when Rochester proposes to Jane, he asks her to be his second self (p. 282), and tells her he loves her as his own flesh (p. 283). And despite Jane's small stature she never fails to support him, even before he is crippled, as when she aids him when he has fallen off his horse. Wilson points out that Rochester is potentially androgynous and "it is his open enjoyment of the shifting roles of their relationship that chiefly persuades the reader of Mr. Rochester's emotional flexibility."[16] Rochester's potential androgyny is significant, because while Bronte, like Wollstonecraft and Mill, believed that women ought to be treated equally with men, here she says that men, too, must be perceived differently. In Jane Eyre Bronte begins with a portrait of passionate love, in which the male lover dominates a dependent woman who possesses a fiercely independent mind. She ends with a characterization of that woman attaining economic independence while the man, seemingly stricken by his physical deformation, attains his true androgynous self. Bronte makes evident that this relationship does not degenerate into a situation where Jane will assume a traditional mothering role with Rochester, for she tells him, "...you are no ruin sir--no lightning-struck tree; you are green and

vigorous: (p. 469). He is not castrated, he has become a man able to see mutual independence between lovers as a true partnership.

In Villette, the hero is never as masculine as Rochester. M. Paul is small, dark, and emotional. His manner is often overbearing, but he does not possess any of the attributes one would traditionally associate with masculine beauty or charm. At one point he forces Lucy to play a man's part in a drama--rather than play it himself, which seemingly does not occur to him. But she refuses to dress as a man, which he desires. Lucy and M. Paul have a respectfully antagonistic friendship in Villette. He teaches her, lends her books, goads her into action. And while Lucy is a passive heroine, she is never submissive. She possesses traditionally masculine attributes, among them her defiance. Lucy, failing in her love for Graham Bretton, goes on, unlike Caroline Helstone, who nearly dies in the absence of her lover. In Villette Bronte's fusion of masculine and feminine roles is not restricted to Lucy and M. Paul. Alfred de Hamal possesses a "figure...trim and natty... [and] womanish feet and hands" (p. 281), while Madame Beck is hard, sensible and independent. Lucy has the opportunity to examine three very different men. Alfred de Hamal is described, sarcastically, as "a refined gentleman of superior taste and tact" (p. 281); his main virtue is his beauty, which does not have the potential for androgyny which Rochester's does. Graham Bretton represents the traditional deeply masculine man; he is handsome, charming, intelligent, and Lucy loves him while he loves another. But he is not her one, true love, or she would not so easily proceed to another man, M. Paul, who is that potentially androgynous hero.

As in Jane Eyre, this characteristic represents Bronte's belief that men must also be different if the sexes were to be equal. M. Paul teaches Lucy and seems threatened by the intelligence she exhibits: "I was vaguely threatened with, I know not what doom, if I ever trespassed the limits proper to my sex, and conceived a contraband appetite for unfeminine knowledge," Lucy says (p. 440). But it is he who goads her on, and he respects her ability. Wilson goes so far as to say that their equality might be the cause for the most passionate love imaginable.[17] Even if one does not accept this analysis, it is evident that the love Lucy and M. Paul share is not unlike that of Jane and Rochester. They balance and support each other, and one suspects that their relationship would have been one of mutual growth.

In three of her works Bronte's view of more androgynous men loving more independent women results in more equal partnerships between the sexes. In Shirley, however, she seems unconvinced that men are capable of possessing qualities which can make them true partners to women. Louis Moore comes closest to the type of man depicted in other novels, such as William, Rochester, and M. Paul. Moore is indeed, almost like a governess in the Sympson household in his dependence on them. His dogged affection toward Shirley, represented by his hoarding of her things, and his romantic musings in his journal, make him seem, however, feminine rather than Byronic, or androgynous. More significant in this novel is Shirley's insistence on referring to herself as a man. She calls herself "captain" and "esquire," and she is warned by Mrs. Pryor,

> ...my dear, do not allow that habit of alluding to yourself as a gentleman to be confirmed; it is a strange one. Those who do not know you, hearing you speak thus, would think you affected masculine manners (p. 217).

In Shirley Bronte attempted to compare the subjection of the Yorkshire workers and the unfair way they were treated before the Luddite riots to the subjection of women. In the other novels individuals are able to overcome the barriers and restrictions on their sex and form happy relationships; in this novel the issue Bronte was attempting to deal with was not transcendence of one woman, but all women. This is why Caroline and Shirley constantly question women's lot: "But are we men's equals or are we not?" Caroline asks (p. 226). In Shirley the marriages do not seem to be the type that will allow for mutual and sustaining growth. The men are too preoccupied with themselves and their superior place, the women too willing to marry to end isolation and troublesome questioning. Because she was concerned with a bigger issue in Shirley, the resolution seems to be forced happiness, or in Kate Millett's term, "pasteboard."

Bronte's more believable resolutions come when she probes the intimate ways in which human beings struggle to gain self-actualization, rather than when she attempts to probe what she believed was injustice to all. In Shirley, while her heroines have comfort but still feel the injustice, their probing seems to be intellectualization of the problem. When her characters, like Frances, Jane, and Lucy, are forced to feel the injustice directly Bronte portrays the struggle less verbosely, but more eloquently. In addition, when she concerns herself with the more intimate struggle of individuals, her desire for passionate love becomes evident, and her longing for equality between partners, if not the sexes, is clear. The reason Shirley seems unsatisfactory is in part due to the way Bronte removed herself from the struggle of the individual, to the struggle of her sex.

Shirley is consistent with Bronte's major themes, however, and the way individuals strive toward happiness is the same in this novel as in the others. Jane tells Rochester at one point, "...human beings never enjoy complete happiness in this world" (p. 287). Bronte's novels examine the way in which women like herself attempted to make life as happy as it could be. She began with the premise that a woman had every right to try for happiness that a man had. The most obvious example of equality is for a woman to be able to gain happiness, not subsistence, but sustenance, from meaningful employment. Bronte examined the lives of single women in her novels and wished that their lot could be in some measure happy. She called it "respectability," a necessary choice of words because of the general Victorian inference that an unmarried woman was somehow not even proper. Maslow calls this need "self-esteem." Whatever the term, it is one part of the movement toward happiness and self-actualization.

The life of the unmarried Victorian gentlewoman was not such that it allowed her to consider whether she wanted a career. She did not, unless she were forced into it; or if she did, like Caroline Helstone, or Florence Nightingale, she was encouraged to at least want it in private. Janet Gezari argues that in the novels there exists a tension between labor and the home life.[18] But Bronte's heroines do not choose between the two. Traditionally a woman would like to be married, but if married life be not within her grasp, Bronte says she should have the opportunity to be happy anyway.

Bronte also examined the status of marriage in the Victorian age. She did not believe that marriage as mere economic union, or simple sexuality was a desirable situation. A woman should have the choice of tasks

and should not be forced into the "profession" of marriage. Her ideal marriages are unions between soul-mates, intellectual and physical bonding which allows each partner growth and a certain degree of independence within the marriage. For example, Frances retains her separate identity in her marriage to William, and Jane marries Rochester only when she has the freedom to retain autonomy within her marriage, by virtue of her inheritance, and his inability to dominate her. The successful marriages depicted by Bronte are those in which the partners freely choose the marriage out of deep love, and in which they can continue to grow. Kate Millett's assertion that Lucy is free by virtue of not marrying is troublesome:

> Free is alone; given a choice between "love" in its most agreeable contemporary manifestation, and freedom, Lucy chose to retain the individualist mentality she had shored up, even at the expense of sexuality."[19]

She misinterprets Bronte, for Charlotte Bronte never asserted that a marriage of "perfect concord" was slavery. Wrongly-made marriages were slavery, but Lucy's relationship with Paul Emmanual contains enough of her usual design to show that they shared a love not unlike Jane's and Rochester's. Autonomy, self-directed moral independence, can exist within the marriage that Bronte depicts as ideal.

In fact, the ending of Villette is terribly sad, not simply because Paul has drowned, but because it seems to assert that if "no human beings are completely happy" some are destined to much worse fates. Some critics have chosen to believe that since Lucy has loved, her life is complete. Rather, the end of Villette demonstrates that a woman cannot pin her hopes on marriage--she must be able to fend for herself and gain as much

happiness as possible from other options. In this novel Bronte portrays two women who are married, and do not suffer. Ginevra and Polly are the kind of woman Lucy cannot be, but not because she does not desire the kind of happiness they have. She simply must obtain it in some other fashion. One must wonder about Lucy after Paul's death. As passive as she is, and driven on during his absence by her love for him, one questions whether running her school will be enough to sustain her. She certainly does not choose her destiny. Bronte's heroines would never choose to spend life alone. The images of isolation and loneliness in each of the novels are overwhelming. If a woman must spend her life alone, Bronte hopes she can gain respect. But more important is the end to isolation, the connectedness with other human beings, which comes from love and marriage, or sometimes from simple affection. It is doubtful that she would have believed one could reach one's full potential in isolation from others with whom one shares beliefs or a future, or like Caroline Helstone and Mrs. Pryor, a past.

In three of the novels, self-actualization comes as a result of the heroine's obtaining satisfaction through work, independence, and passionate love. She gains her highest contentment when she is allowed to be both a woman and an equal, an individual worthy of fulfilling work, not dependent on menial labor, and not dependent on a man for subsistence. Her dependence on her mate is balanced by his mutual dependence on her. Their relationship is the sharing partnership envisioned by Wollstonecraft and Mill. In Villette, the reader can only hope that Lucy will attain self-actualization. She has loved but remains alone. At least she has

been given confidence in herself, respectability in the eyes of others, and the independence to attempt fulfillment.

According to Q. D. Leavis, Bronte believed that the changing culture of the nineteenth century

> ...centred in the role newly imposed on woman in courtship and the marriage relation, which seemed to her false and insulting to the woman. Her heroines cling to the right to love passionately, not to be adored as angels but accepted as equal but different and to be allowed to enter a working partnership.[20]

Each novel represents this idea, and read as a complete oeuvre, Bronte's belief that a woman's right to proclaim herself "equal but different" encompasses the idea that a woman might be accepted in this way outside of marriage as well. Bronte longed too desperately for passionate love to proclaim that a woman should choose not to marry, but Lucy's loss is acknowledgement that a woman needed to be prepared for other choices. Lucy had much earlier stated, "I did long, achingly, then and for four-and-twenty hours afterward, for something to fetch me out of my present existence, and lead me upwards and onwards" (p. 176). This seeming separateness may once again be the push Lucy requires to move beyond independence to self-fulfillment.

Charlotte Bronte's vision for women was not so different from Mary Wollstonecraft's or John Stuart Mill's. All three acknowledge that a woman is different, but equal to a man. According to Leavis, Bronte's perception of the changing culture of Victorian England focused on woman's changing role. But Wollstonecraft before her, and Mill after, saw the problem as deeply embedded in the culture and beliefs men and women held. Today many women grapple with the question of "marriage or career;" in

Victorian England there was no opportunity to choose. Even if there had been, Charlotte Bronte would probably still have proclaimed that for most, authenticity resulted from marriage and career. For those who did not marry, authenticity lay in the opportunity to choose, and the right to respectability.

NOTES CHAPTER IV

[1]Charlotte Bronte, Letter to Miss Wooler, January 30, 1846, in The Brontes: Life and Letters, ed. Clement Shorter (New York: Haskell House, 1969), Vol. 1, p. 316.

[2]Carolyn V. Platt, "How Feminist is Villette?" Women and Literature, 3 (1974), pp. 16-27.

[3]Maslow, pp. 80-92.

[4]Gaskell, p. 71.

[5]Susan Gubar, "The Genesis of Hunger According to Shirley," in The Madwoman in the Attic, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), p. 382.

[6]Inga-Stina Ewbank, "Charlotte Bronte: The Woman Writer as an Author Only," in Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Bronte Sisters as Early Victorian Female Novelists (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966), p. 175.

[7]Goldfarb, p. 38.

[8]Ibid., p. 57.

[9]Beer, p. 100.

[10]Helene Moglen, Charlotte Bronte: The Self Conceived (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 106.

[11]Platt, p. 19.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Maslow, p. 90.

[14]Beer, p. 113.

[15]F.A.C. Wilson, "The Primrose Wreath: The Heroes of the Bronte Novels." Nineteenth Century Fiction, 29 (1974), p. 41.

[16]Ibid., p. 47

[17]Ibid., p. 83.

[18]Gezari, p. 83.

[19]Millett, p. 146. Millett's error in asserting that Lucy "chose" freedom has already been discussed. Of course for Lucy to have chosen freedom she would have turned down the school, or left long before M. Paul was due to arrive home.

[20]Q. D. Leavis, "Villette," in Collected Essays, ed. G. Singh (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), p. 219.

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