

**ZÁPADOČESKÁ UNIVERZITA V PLZNI  
FAKULTA PEDAGOGICKÁ**

**KATEDRA ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA**

**HRDINKY ROMÁNŮ SESTER BRONTEOVÝCH  
A ŽENA 19. STOLETÍ**

**BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE**

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**Plzeň 2020**

**UNIVERSITY OF WEST BOHEMIA**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**THE BRONTËS' HEROINES AND THE 19<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURY WOMAN**

**BACHELOR THESIS**

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**Plzeň 2020**

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

Plzeň 28.června 2020

.....  
vlastnoruční podpis

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank to my great paragon. The best literature teacher I've ever had, PhDr. Magdalena Potocnakova, Ph.D. Her lectures were full of not only interesting information, but mainly - from every lesson there was a feeling of enthusiasm and passion that the professor Potocnakova has for literature. These feelings are very contagious and thanks to them I myself have opened a lot of books that I did not know before. She always talked about books and writers with enthusiasm, so you felt, that you are part of those stories as well.

I would like to mention people from University in general. All people I met during my studies were amazing, full of wisdom, understanding and help. I already know that I will remember them with love for the rest of my life.

Last but not least, I must thank my family, specifically to my mother and my son. They had patience with me, they helped me a lot when I balanced between my work, my studies and care of the household. Thanks to their approach, my study was feasible.

## **ABSTRACT**

Santana Horváthová, Veronika. University of West Bohemia. June 2020. *The Brontë's heroines and the 19<sup>th</sup> century woman..* Supervisor: PhDr. Magdaléna Potočňáková, Ph.D.

I dedicated my Bachelor thesis to women. I described, how important it was for women to read novels. How creating relations in the 19th century was closely connected with reading literature together, common debates and reflections about books.

I also devoted part of my work to reflecting on job opportunities for 19th century women. I briefly described social differences, even what constituted to be a governess.

The main subject of this bachelor thesis is the exploration of the Brontë's heroines, which appeared in their novels. Searching for similarities between heroines and authors. Reflections on the influence of people who have appeared in the lives of sisters and influenced them. How each of the sisters processed their memories, life experience and possible acquaintances in their novels.

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## INTRODUCTION

I dedicated my Bachelor thesis to women. In the introductory part of my work (Chapter 1) I described, how important it was for women to read novels. How creating relations in the 19th century was closely connected with reading literature together, common debates and reflections about books. I mentioned several important people connected with literature as well.

In Chapter 2, I reflect on the Brontë sisters and members of the household who influenced their work. I went back in time and I stopped at moments in their lives, which may have affected them, leave in them impressions whether good or bad.

Therefore, The main aim of the present research is to find out whether and how each of the sisters processed their memories, life experience and possible acquaintances in their novels. The theses also tries to show whether the heroines of their novels share the same or similar character features with their authors. For this purpose, the core of the theses is devoted to the discussion of three Brontë sisters novels and their female protagonists but other relevant characters and aspects of these texts are also mentioned.

In Chapter 3, I focused on on the eponymous heroine of *Agnes Grey*, who seems to be unjustly neglected by critics, and I was looking for connections between her and the author, Anne Brontë.

In Chapter 4, I look in a similar way at the protagonist of *Jane Eyre*, but the characters of Bessie, Helen Burns, Maria Temple, Mrs. Fairfax or Adele are also mentioned, while Bertha Mason is deliberately left out due to the complexity of critical discussions concernig her role in the novel. Male counterparts of Jane Eyre and their possible models in Charlotte's life are also mentioned.

The only novel by Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, is discussed in Chapter 5. This time, more attention is given to the male protagonist, Heathcliff, who was not a completely fictional character but several similar characters were found around the Brontë family. Catherine is obviously mentioned as well, but surprisingly, the most interesting female character eventually appears to be Elisabeth Linton.

The theses is concluded by a brief reflection on the sisters different approach to life and and how they reflected it in the novels.

# 1 WOMEN AND BOOKS

By means of introduction to the main theme of the theses, the life and work of Brontë sisters, it may be a good idea to look at the status of reading (and writing) by women in those days. Creating relations in the 19th century was closely connected with reading literature together and following discussion about reading. Time was forgotten while reading, feelings appeared and people found their way to each other. Reading was a means to awakening of feelings but it was also an ideal way, how women could get involved in the emerging cohabitation and play a role in it, regardless of appearance and marriage market. Reading literature gave women a voice and social status. And it was, not all the way, but still, to a considerable amount - independent of their origin, belonging to a certain social class and academic education, which was generally unreachable for women. Reading gave them some independence and opened up new ways to enjoy life. It was a message, which got across to all kinds of women. Not just women from aristocracy and middle class but from working class and servants as well. Novels showed them how important it is to face life challenges by soul power. (Bollmann, 2015, p. 32)

Thanks to reading, more and more servants found through novels access to a world of emotions and behavior which was originally intended only for the manors. Novels showed them, how society works, how to find your place in it and among other things how to change this world. The reading of novels influenced ideas that they had created about the world and society. If the maids dressed like the female characters in the novels, or as women in pictures of emerging women's magazines, that was what connected them with their superiors. The ideals they followed were the same regardless of their origin/parentage. Also at this point of view, reading novels had a balancing effect. For example, new Richardson's psychological novel was not in the beginning literature designed for a specific social strata. He denied traditional ties, thereby he encouraged readers' feelings and fantasies, whose experience and sharing was just as exciting for both the peerage and the lower classes as well. (Bollmann, 2015, p. 45)

Still, some people thought that reading was a major threat to the innocence of women. Not a specific lover, but the novels themselves are supposed to inject poison of lust into the girls' hearts. Real temptation is preceded by the temptations of fantasy, or how they go hand in hand in this case. The German novelist, Sophie von La Roche, published

her novel *The History of Lady Sophia Sternheim* (1771) anonymously, with Christopher Martin Wieland as a publisher. He gave the book a new and very catchy label in his preface "female novel". He introduced a new genre, but with fixed boundaries. A women's novel is not an art, just a moral lesson. Perhaps, this is why the Brontë sisters chose the male pseudonyms when publishing their novels.

The pleasure of reading to women was not only mediated by part-time education, but most of them were also compensated by the lack of life experience. Apart from a few meeting opportunities, correspondence, reading was the only medium they had at their disposal, so they could enter the world beyond the walls of their home and experience life in its potential diversity. The emerging book market met this need for women so it is difficult to say what was the cause and the consequence. It was interaction, a kind of coevolution of women's longing for life manifested as a desire for reading, and literature that could satisfy that desire.

Mary Wollstonescraft was known as the author of the *Vindication of the Rights of Women: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792). She was also the first professional literary critic and the only woman in an office full of men. She advocated a change in women's lifestyle and equality between men and women in matters of love. Reading was not for her an escape from reality but a search for the meaning of life and its renewal, same as for Anne Brontë almost half a century later. Also, Mary worked for a while as a governess. She got into disapproval with her employer, a mother of the children she looked after, because of her idea on raising girls. (Bollmann, 2015, p. 96)

Most of the novels that she evaluated as a critic were written by women. Some of them remained anonymous and on the top of the books, there was just the note: By a Lady. The reason was simple: "As soon as women published their work, they immediately atagonized a large part of the female readership against them." (Bollman, 2015, p. 101)

Novels in general were catalysts of experiences. They presented life as an open system, which did not find fulfillment in religion, philosophy, much less in morality with goals and detours, with surprising twists and unexpected ways out. In other words, they were inexorably realistic, either describing events that sometimes looked exaggerated and fantastic. Novels and new ways of thinking were slowly changing ways of living even in small towns. Novels encouraged the dissenting spirit of many women. The existence they

led suddenly began to seem to them as one of many options. The lives of women and thus of men and children, began to change forever. (Bollman, 2015, p. 112)

What is a female novel? A novel written by a woman? A novel whose main character is a woman? Or one that is mostly read by women? Most of Brontë's sisters or Jane Austen novels fit all three criteria.

Jane Austen books were labelled during her life "By a Lady" instead of her name. The prestige of the author was not based on a real name but on the success of the titles itself. Only two public references to her name, which are known to us, are related to the works of other authors. In both cases Austen appears on the list of subscribers, who ordered and paid for a book in advance. This way it was a good opportunity for both the author and the publisher to estimate the future sale of the work, and collect money to cover the costs before printing the title. In the case of the first subscription it was a set of sermons and in the case of the second subscription it was a novel by Frances Burne, who is now known only to literary historians. At that time, however, she was a prominent author.

Between 1750 to 1780, the number of novels written by men was two times higher than the number of "female novels". In the late 1700s, this ratio began to reverse, around 1800 the dominance of women was apparent, and in the second decade of the nineteenth century, in England at least, there were more novels written by women writers every year than those written by men. (Bollmann, 2015, p. 128)

Publishing of novels by Jane Austen did not have to face big resistance as the legend wants, on the contrary, it was more appropriate to the trend at that time. Novels written by women, designed primarily for women, with female heroines and their topics dominated at least the English market at this stage. This ratio begins in the twenties of the nineteenth century move again in favour of men, but in the middle of the century women are catching up again. (ibid. p. 129)

In England we must remember the Brontë sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot. Unlike other areas of culture, women had in the field of modern novel something to say both, as readers, and as authors, and sometimes they even celebrated triumphs despite literary criticism. One of the greatest triumphs is associated with Jane Austen.

To her, reading impressions reacts with written experiments, that reveal a great talent and an incisive sense of humor. Instead of letting the books dictate what life and love

should look like, she overlaps what she read by irony and mockery. The measure for her is what she sees in her family's environment as ordinary life that people really live. Jane Austen became a writer as a result of being a critical novel reader and at the same time she was blessed with an excellent sense of humor.

The innovation Jane Austen is making on the novel of its time has a clear addressee in a female reader. She pays attention not to its form, but what it brings to the readers and what pleasure they have out of it. Whereas women's desire to read continued, it was still criticized in middle-class circles. It was claimed that reading threatens the reader herself, family and society as well. Jane Austen turns this perspective. In principle, it is no longer possible to challenge the woman's desire to read or challenge its justification. Rather it is important to give it the necessary orientation, which is often missing. Jane Austen wants to explain women's desire for reading through herself. The only clue is whether reading promotes the independence of thought and lifestyle. She wanted to write novels that could satisfy the desire for identification with good conscience and benefit. The benefit is that we get to know ourselves better and we will try to find the motives of our actions. However, we will not succeed, if the novel takes us to worlds that have nothing to do with ours. In a review of *Pride and Prejudice*, Walter Scott recognized it as one of the first: "Instead of the spectacular scenes of the fantastic world, it offers a great and concise description of what is happening around us every day." (Sabor, 1991)

Although the novels of the Brontë sisters are in many ways different from the works of their great predecessor, who mastered so well the art of gentle irony, they also processed in their texts the world they knew intimately.

## 2 BRONTË SISTERS AND THEIR FAMILY AS AN INSPIRATION

Charlotte, Emily and Anne, three sisters and all of them were great writers. No one taught them to write – they taught themselves. All three of them wrote some of the great novels of the nineteenth century. They were raised in Haworth, where life was not easy at all. The family was not rich and the children had to work for a living. And one by one, illness and death cut off their lives and their talents. But their novels live on, year after year. (Vicary, 2000)

Among the people, who influenced the Brontë sisters during their formative years, we definitely need to mention their father, Patrick Brontë (1777-1861), a sad patriarch, who came from Northern Ireland, from County Down, where he was born as the eldest of ten children to a poor farmer Hugh Brunty in Drumballyrone. The future reverend changed the original surname to Brontë during his studies in England. After his studies he became a curate. To this profession he devoted his whole life. He was usually depicted as a capricious, selfish man with strange moods. This is how Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë's friend and the author of her first biography, also knew him. Numerous tragedies in his family have altered him same as the serious illnesses with which he suffered for a long time. Stubborn tall old man with extinct eyesight used to be also a funny, spirited young man. This energetic, literary-gifted man, supposedly with good manners and direct posture was originally attracted by a different, more adventurous future - military career. However, he remained in sunken rectory between the mudflats. It was said, that he was focusing all his hopes to his only son. Maybe because of that the sisters had urge to prove him, that they deserved his attention as well.

An integral part of their childhood was also their aunt Elizabeth Branwell (1776-1842). She was the unmarried older sister of their mother. After Maria died, Elizabeth moved into the house in Haworth and helped with the running of the household and the care of the children. Everybody called her Aunt Branwell. She tried her best to instill the principles of good behavior in the orphaned children. And in girls especially the virtues, so much praised in the nineteenth century: humility, neatness and religiousness. She did not tolerate closeness, except for little Anna and Branwell, whom she liked. Unfortunately, she

did not find and apparently did not even look for a way to the hearts of other children. Some sources state that she was a good, kind woman. Others state, that she was strict. Ellen Nussey wrote about her:

She had a horror of the climate so far north, and of the stone floors in the Parsonage .... She talked a great deal of her younger days--the gaities of her dear native town Penzance, the soft, warm climate, &c. She gave one the idea that she had been a belle among her own home acquaintance. She took snuff out of a very pretty gold snuff-box, which she sometimes presented to you with a little laugh, as if she enjoyed the slight shock of astonishment visible in your countenance .... She would be very lively and intelligent, and tilt arguments against Mr. Bronte without fear. (Robinson, 1883, Chapter III)

This memory does not correspond at all to the image of a strict lady, engaged in religious treatises. In any case, if she was helpful and kind or strict and cold, she must have been one of the people who influenced the sisters.

Probably the biggest influence was Tabitha Aykroyd. This simple but honest woman entered the rectory at the age of 53. She held peculiar opinions and often spoke harshly, but she had a heart of gold and everyone loved her because of her emphatic and fair behavior. Brontë's children, who soon lost their mother, gave the most precious gift: home comfort, with a spicy pinch of "pleasant fright" when telling about fairy-tale creatures or local superstitions. In return, she herself entered their novels like a strong but noble figure: Hanah in *Jane Eyre*, Marta in *Shirley* or Nelly in *Wuthering Heights*...

Tabby found out about kids affection earlier than from the books. In December 1836, Tabby was seriously injured. She broke her leg, and at that time in her age, she was very likely to never fully recover again. That is why aunt Branwell decided that Tabby must leave the rectory immediately. In other circumstances, always obedient and good siblings rebelled. They even went on a hunger strike in support of her. Aunt eventually backed away, but in a number of duties, girls had cover Tabby in many responsibilities. The largest share fell on Emily, who eventually ran the entire household after her aunt's death. Still, three years after the accident, Tabby left the rectory for several years and lived with her sister. But in 1842 she returned to the rectory and remained until her death. She died shortly before Charlotte, in February 1855. Tabby is buried in the cemetery behind the church.

Finally, we should not forget to mention sisters' brother, Branwell Brontë. A man, who was also gifted, as his sisters were. But unfortunately he never turned his skills into success. On the contrary, he became addicted to alcohol and drugs. Sisters who witnessed his decline projected this experience into their novels. Watching this self-destruction was certainly depressing, on the other hand, these horrific experiences paradoxically greatly enriched their novels. Charlotte commented the presence of this experience in Anne's work as follows:

She had, in the course of her life, been called on to contemplate, near at hand and for a long time, the terrible talents misused and faculties abused, hers was naturally a sensitive, reserved, and dejected nature, what she saw sank very deeply into her mind, it did her harm. She brooded over it till she believed it to be a duty to reproduce every detail – of course with fictitious characters, incidents and situations - as a warning to others. (Bell/Bronte, 1999, Appendix, p. 158)

Various sources mention how talented Branwell was. He could write, he played musical instruments, he also knew how to paint beautifully. In many books he was described like extrovert, who could talk to anyone for hours. Everyone in Haworth liked him. Branwell never left Haworth for education and everything he knew, he had learned from his father. The reverend had the highest hopes in him. However, the talented but fickle and hypersensitive young man disappointed. When Branwell was a teenager, he did a lot of oil-painting. He painted people in the village and it was easy to recognize the faces in the pictures. Later, he did a fine painting of his three sisters. When he was twenty years old, he tried his luck in vain as a fashion portraitist in nearby Bradford. Then he failed as a private tutor at Broughton-in-Furness in the Lake District. And due to his negligence, he also lost a boring but well-paid place at the rail Leeds-Manchester, where he worked as a railway clerk in Sowerby Bridge and Luddenden Foot. Nobody was interested in his literary experiments, which he randomly sent to magazines or regarded authors. After his failures in jobs, the last being a dismissal from the Robinson family arranged by Anne, he started to use laudanum on top of his drinking. (Mudrová, 2010, p. 91)

He made life hard for all of Brontë family members. Excessive alcohol consumption and later on adding drug addiction led him to a certain end. He died in September 22nd 1848, aged thirty-one. And I think that it was this self-destruction, which sisters witnessed, and by which they were influenced the most. They all interpreted this appalling experience in their novels.

### 3 ANNE BRONTË AND HER *AGNES GREY*

The youngest of the Brontë sisters, Anne is often called the least talented of the three sisters. Her novels are simpler and less dramatic than her sisters' books. Nevertheless, she had a pleasant writing style with a slightly ironic touch. She hadn't had as much experiences in her life as her sisters. She did not get the same education as Charlotte and Emily and she has worked as a governess since she was nineteen years old.

The governess was one of the most familiar figures in mid-Victorian life and literature. The 1851 Census revealed that 25,000 women earned their living teaching and caring for other women's children. Most governesses lived with their employers and were paid a small salary on top of their board and lodging. (Hughes, 2014)

Apart from the Haworth area, she only knew the mansions of employers and the cities Scarborough and York. The only, but bad passion she had seen up close, was her brother's alcohol and drug addiction. While Branwell was falling, his sisters did their best to contribute to the modest family budget. The youngest Anne was the first to choose the difficult profession of governess of children from wealthy families.

The upper classes had employed governesses for centuries. But from the beginning of the 19th century the wealthier sections of the middle classes followed suit. Employing a governess sent a signal that the lady of the house was too 'genteel' to teach her daughters herself. Just as she employed servants to clean her house, she paid another woman to raise her children. Hiring a governess became a status symbol. (Hughes, 2014)

Unfortunately, Anne experienced many disappointments and humiliation from employers and even from small spoiled kids. However, despite her quiet nature and gentle manners, she endured this injustice with courage and composure, as best described by her novel *Agnes Grey* (1847). It is the story about unhappy governess showing, how miserable Anne had been, in a big house away from home, where no one understood her. Anne in the story reflected the repellent cruelty, materialism and chauvinism with which young, single women had to cope. She opened the eyes of society to the injustices of the governess position. It is like taking a probe into the mid-nineteenth century world of the governess,

who, according to Lady Eastlake, is “a being who is our equal in birth, manners, and education, but our inferior in worldly wealth.” (White, 1999, p. 7)

In the north of England, the setting for *Agnes Grey* a new middle class of wealthy manufacturers had arisen, anxious to educate their daughters to succeed in society. And it was an opportunity for educated women in reduced circumstances and to clergymen’s daughters like the Brontë sisters. There were few options open to middle class women who were compelled to earn a living at this time. In 1840s women could not enter the male-dominated professions such as medicine or the law, university entry was not open to women. The governess’s position was one of social ostracism, neither family nor servant and frequently submitting to a heavy workload for a very low salary. (White, 1999, p. 9)

The Governesses’ Benevolent Institution had been founded in 1841 to provide financial assistance for governesses who had been abandoned by their employers once their pupils were too old. In 1848 the Queen’s College for Women was founded to provide further education for women so that their salaries might improve. (White, 1999, p. 9)

The book was published by Thomas Cautley Newby in December 1847 under Anne Brontë’s pseudonym of Acton Bell. The actual events of *Agnes Grey* are straightforward. There are no complicated plot devices, no intrigue or mystery. Maybe because of that some critics dismiss the novel as dull and plain. We can understand, why they thought that way. Especially when they compared *Agnes Grey* to her sister’s novels *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights*. Still, many readers believe that this novel is unfairly underestimated by critics who see it only as a love story. In fact, one can see in this novel a lot of interesting views and probes pointing to the problems of that time. The main theme of *Agnes Grey* is the situation of the governess. The narrator is the main character – Agnes Grey. The youngest daughter of a poor north country clergyman. We see clear similarity to Anne’s own life. Agnes decided to help with family’s finances at the age of eighteen. In reality even Anne did the same, with just a little difference – she was nineteen when she started as a governess.

Without sentiment, Anne described the experiences, disappointments and desires of a young girl, finding herself away from home for the first time. The mansion of Wellwood House, where Agnes met the conceited merchant Bloomfield, his wife and spoiled children - was inspired by Anne’s first job at Blake Hall near Mirfield, where she

went in the year 1839. From the novel, it seems that Anne's time at Blake Hall in the Ingham family was filled with unpleasant experiences. For example, the passages where she describes how young Mr. Tom abused animals must be based on the situations she had witnessed.

It seems that characters in the novel in general are illustrated by their treatment of animals. People with integrity such as Agnes, Nancy Brown and Edward Weston love animals and are kind to them. Those who ill treat animals, such as Tom Bloomfield, his family and Mr. Hatfield, are of dubious morality. Some passages describe the perverse behaviour of Tom Bloomfield. Like the chapter, where Agnes was asking Tom, why is he catching birds and what is he doing with them after he catches them

‘what do you do with them when you catch them?’

‘Different things. Sometimes I give them to the cat, sometimes I cut them in pieces with my penknife, but the next, I mean to roast alive.’

‘And why do you mean to do such a horrible thing?’

‘For two reasons, first, to see how long it will live and then to see what it will taste like.’ (Brontë A., 1999, p. 17)

What a disgust and frustration it must have been for Anne, who witnessed animal cruelty, and yet she could not punish the child, because her power as governess was limited.

The second place of work of the novel heroine, the Horton Lodge residence, where the nobleman Murray lived with his family had inspiration from the real life as well. Namely Thorp Green Hall near the village of Little Ouseburn, about twenty miles northwest from York. The owners were actually called Robinsons. Unlike Agnes Grey from the novel, who was dismissed by the indulgent parents after less than a year on the grounds that the children had failed to improve in either educational attainments or manners, Anne remained in this family much longer than she would have liked. After first four months there, she wrote to her sister that she did not like it there and would rather go somewhere else. Still, she did not change the place of work and even in 1843 she arranged a work position for her brother Branwell. In the summer of 1845, after she left this job for good, Anne wrote: “If I only knew then, that I will stay there for another four years, I

would be unhappy about that, my stay brought me some very unpleasant knowledge about human nature, which I could not even imagine in a dream.” (Mudrová, 2010, p. 175)

Her new position was as governess to Rosalie and Matilda Murray, aged sixteen and fourteen. They were older and more manageable than the Bloomfields kids, but the position presents problems of a different nature. Agnes focused on the superficial Rosalie, who discovered the magic of flirting and began to flirt with men around her. Rosalie is described as a selfish young lady and Matilda as foulmouthed tomboy. Agnes felt that such exposure to immorality and low standards threatens her own integrity of character. This perspective shows how Anne Brontë was brought up and how she could not identify with Rosalie and Matilda's character traits. In chapter XI. of the novel she writes about adapting unintentionally one's own behaviour to the environment in which one lives.

Habitual associates are known to exercise a great influence over each other's minds and manners. Those whose actions are for ever before our eyes, whose words are ever in our ears, will naturally lead us, albeit against our will, slowly, gradually, imperceptibly, perhaps, to act and speak as they do... (Brontë A., 1999, p. 77)

It is easy to understand Anne's feelings and worry. Obviously all Brontë sisters were really smart and they probably felt alone, most of the time, even at the time, when they were surrounded by other people. In the conversation, there was not so much a social barrier or gender barrier, rather a kind of mental barrier. They were polite, still it was probably tiring, to keep conversation with people, who were less gifted. In chapter XI. Anne analyses Agnes' worries, that she is slowly but surely adapting to the behaviour and style of thinking of the people around her. She felt, how her intellect was deteriorating, her heart was petrifying, her soul was contracting. She trembled lest her very moral perceptions that become deadened, distinctions of right and wrong confounded. She worried, that if she could not make her young companions better, they would make her worse. That they would gradually bring her feelings, habits, capacities to the level of their own. In this stage of her life she was happy, that she had her soulmate in in the new curate, the philanthropic and kind Mr. Weston.

Mr. Weston rose at length upon me, appearing like the morning-star in my horizon, to save me from the fear of utter darkness, and I rejoiced that I had now a subject for contemplation, that was above me, not beneath. I was glad to see that all the

world was not made up of Bloomfields, Murrays, Hatfields, Ashbys, etc., and that human excellence was not a mere dream of imagination. (Brontë A., 1999, p. 77)

According to Mudrová, the character of Mr. Weston might be based on Anne's secret love, Reverend William Weightman (1814-1842), who helped her father in Haworth, where he came in 1839. Because of his smiling nature and considerable physical attractiveness, his siblings jokingly called him Miss Célia-Amélia. The cute young man paid attention to all three sisters at the same time. But he was selfless and helped the parishioners. And apparently he paid because of his dedication with his life. During visits to the poor, he infected himself and died of cholera. After his death, Anne wrote a poem: "You are no longer ... From now on, your sunny smile will never charm me ..." and it is said that she mourned for him for a long time. However, the serious priest Edward Weston of *Agnes Grey* seems to have little in common with this mischievous young man. (Mudrová, 2010, pp. 176-177)

James la Torbe (1802-1897) may be a better model. Pastor and later bishop of the Moravian branch of the Unity of Brethren, who worked in Mirfield during Anne's stay at Roe Head School. During her serious illness at the end of 1837, he gave her comfort in a religious crisis, which she was just going through as a result of preaching by local radical Calvinists. A wise and sensitive priest, then thirty-five years old he could impress seventeen-year-old Anne and it is certainly not excluded, that she met him again later during services in Mirfield, when she worked as a governess at nearby Blake Hall. (ibid.)

There is a number of interesting conversations with Mr. Weston, where the themes of interpersonal relationships from the position of a governess are discussed. In chapter XIII, in conversation with Mr. Weston, she incidentally uses the same comparison to Indian rubber, which is used by Mr. Rochester in chapter XIV of *Jane Eyre*.

You might be miserable without a home, but even you could live, and not so miserably as you suppose. The human heart is like Indian rubber, a little swells it, but a great deal will not burst it. If little more than nothing will disturb it, little less than all things will suffice to break it. As in the outer members of our frame, there is a vital power inherent in itself, that strengthens it against external violence. (Brontë A., 1999, p. 85)

Elsewhere, the writer points out, how difficult it was for a governess to find friends.

I'm too socially disposed to be able to live contentedly without a friend, and as the only friends I have, or am likely to have are at home, if it or rather, if they were gone I will not say I could not live, but I would rather not live in such a desolate world.... 'But why do you say the only friends you are likely to have? Are you so unsociable that you cannot make friends?' ... 'No, but I never made one yet and in my present position there is no possibility of doing so, or even of forming a common acquaintance. 'Perhaps you are too wise for them...' (ibid., p. 101)

This reaffirms one's belief that Anne was very intelligent and that it was difficult for her to find a person equal to herself. She would rather spend time reading books instead of wasting her time with people, who could not enrich her in any way. In *Agnes Grey*, the importance of poetry for the heroine is also expressed.

When we are harassed by sorrows or anxieties, or long oppressed by any powerful feelings which we must keep to ourselves, for which we can obtain and seek no sympathy from any living creature, and which yet we cannot or will not wholly crush, we often naturally seek relief in poetry...(Brontë A., 1999, p. 113)

The notion of intellectual superiority seems to be contrasted by her views on her own beauty. Although Anne was considered the prettiest one of all Brontë sisters, from her novel one gets the feeling, that she did not realize that. It almost feels, that the sisters had a little complex about their physical appearance. Their main heroines were all strong mentally, but physically they were inconspicuous and plain. "I could discover no beauty in those marked features, that pale hollow cheek and ordinary brown hair, there might be intellect in the forehead, there might be expression in the dark grey eyes, but what of that? It is foolish to wish for beauty." (Brontë A., 1999, p. 107)

When there was in their novels some description of beauty, it was mostly associated with a poor spirit. "I was amazed, disgusted at her heartless vanity, I wonder, why so much beauty should be given to those who make so bad a use of it, and denied to some who would make it a benefit to both themselves and others." (Brontë A., 1999, p. 98)

While Agnes eventually finds happiness with Mr. Weston, Rosalie ends up in an unhappy marriage, which is preceded by her flirtations in pursuit of a wealthy husband. In the obvious condemnation of such behaviour we can see clear influence of the writer's family background and upbringing. Governess Agnes is shocked by Rosalie's lack of moral standards, eventually culminating in her flirtation with Mr. Weston, just to prove to

herself, that she can control his affections and then choosing the financially advantageous marriage to Sir Thomas Ashby, whom she despises. Still it was better, than staying single.

It is interesting, that Anne gained the friendship of the Robinson girls, who corresponded with and visited Anne long after she had left the family, just as Rosalie Murray kept in touch with Agnes Grey. It was like breaking the unwritten law, where people from better society were not friends with their former employees.

When Agnes is with her mother, starting a new life near the sea, where they want to open a school (a resemblance to Brontë sisters life and intentions), she receives a letter from Rosalie. At that time she was already Lady Ashby, now mother of a child living in luxury. First couple of letters were optimistic but from the last one it was obvious, that it was an unhappy marriage with a drunken husband. She was inviting Agnes to stay as a guest at Ashby Park. Agnes eventually visited Rosalie, and during her visit, her assumptions about a failed marriage were confirmed.

There is a surprising statement made by Anne, although it comes out of Rosalie's mouth and it is supposed to emphasize her opposing way of thinking from Agnes. It was in the chapter, where Agnes visits at that time already married Rosalie. Rosalie confides to Agnes her husband's drinking problem. Agnes is giving her advice – to occupy her husband's mind, to amuse him. Rosalie's reaction is quite strange for woman living in the 19th century:

And so you think I would lay myself out for his amusement! No, that's not my idea of a wife. It's he husband's part to please the wife, not hers to please him, and if he isn't satisfied with her as she is, and thankful to possess her too, he isn't worthy of her, that's all. (Brontë, 1999, p. 140)

It was definitely very strong statement and probably a lot of people were quite shocked by that. Especially in the 19th century, when women were standing unequally to the men. Anne illustrates the differences between the education for boys and girls. Boys like Tom Bloomfield were encouraged in manly pursuits such as hurting animals and bullying his sisters, while girls like Rosalie Murray were groomed to make a financially beneficial marriage, regardless of whether love and mutual respect were involved. Anne pointed that out in her novel as well by describing Rosalie's life after her marriage with drunken Sir Thomas Ashby. All these subjects were developed further in Anne's second novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

Despite the debut novel's deceptive simplicity, the story of *Agnes Grey* conceals a sharply observant critique of society too. Anne Brontë presents here one of the best portrayals of what it was like to be a governess in the mid-nineteenth century. Her depiction of the quiet strength, frustration, indignation and humiliations of displaced young women suffering at the hand of her employers is all the more valuable, because it is based on her own experience.

#### **4 CHARLOTTE BRONTË AND HER *JANE EYRE***

The Brontë sisters had all their novels intertwined with their own experiences. Each heroine of their novels had parts of themselves, their way of thinking, character features. As well as the environment, where the stories took place they were remarkably similar to the environment where they grew up and lived. It was no different in the novel *Jane Eyre* like a parish in the middle of a moor.

Virginia Woolf wrote about *Jane Eyre*:

As we open *Jane Eyre* once more we cannot stifle the suspicion that we shall find her world of imagination as antiquated, mid-Victorian, and out of date as the parsonage on the moor, a place only to be visited by the curious, only preserved by the pious. So we open *Jane Eyre*; and in two pages every doubt is swept clean from our minds. (Woolf, 1925)

Charlotte Brontë started writing *Jane Eyre* in July 1846, at that time she accompanied her father for eye surgery in Manchester. She shortened hours of waiting by writing a novel. She went back in time as she wrote. She returned with her memories to Cowan Bridge Boarding School. She also remembered the later humiliation and insults to which she had been exposed in Stonegappe - the first place, where she worked as a governess. (Mudrova, 2010, p. 135)

The model for the Gateshead mansion where the story of *Jane Eyre* begins was Stonegappe in Lothersdale, where Charlotte started in the early summer of 1839 as the governess for the children of the wealthy factory owner John Benson Sidgwick. She was soon very unhappy there and she wrote in a letter to Emily:

The country, the house, and the grounds are, as I have said, divine. But, alack-a-day! there is such a thing as seeing all beautiful around you pleasant woods, winding white

paths, green lawns, and blue sunshiny sky and not having a free moment or a free thought left to enjoy them in. The children are constantly with me, and more riotous, perverse, unmanageable cubs never grew. As for correcting them, I soon quickly found that was entirely out of the question: they are to do as they like. ...I said in my last letter that Mrs. Sidgwick did not know me. I now begin to find that she does not intend to know me, that she cares nothing in the world about me except to contrive how the greatest possible quantity of labour may be squeezed out of me, and to that end she overwhelms me with oceans of needlework, yards of cambric to hem, muslin nightcaps to make, and, above all things, dolls to dress. I do not think she likes me at all, because I can't help being shy in such an entirely novel scene, surrounded as I have hitherto been by strange and constantly faces. I see now more clearly than I have ever done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living and rational being except as connected with the wearisome duties she has to fulfil. While she is teaching the children, working for them, amusing them, it is all right. If she steals a moment for herself she is a nuisance. (Brontë Ch., 2010) Selected Letters, OUP

Bad Aunt Reed in *Jane Eyre* is very reminiscent of Charlotte's employer with her arrogance and biased pampering of children. There are other matches: the future writer was hit by a stone thrown by a mischievous boy. Proud Charlotte did not complain. "Accident," answered, when Mrs. Sidgwick asked why she had a bloody forehead. A similar incident is described in her famous novel: When a young bully John Reed hit little Jane with a heavy book and he injures her to blood.

At Gateshead, even the servants treated Jane unkindly, except for the nanny Bessie, who the writer portrayed as a woman with a soft heart. Charlotte was probably thinking of Tabby, when she was writing this book: "In the evening Bessie told me some of her most enchaining stories, and sang me some of her sweetest songs. Even for me life had its gleams of sunshine." (Brontë Ch., Chapter IV)

In Brontë sisters memories was probably Tabby always presented since they portrayed her in their novels. It was clear that even though she had a soft heart, she tried to prepare Brontë sisters for life conditions of women in the 19th century. It's obvious from the sentence 'You're such a queer, frightened, shy little thing. You should be bolder.' (Brontë Ch., Chapter IV) This advice Bessie gave to Jane, before she went to Lowood school.

Brontë sisters were well known for their fondness in mysterious stories, which accompanied them throughout their childhood, thanks Tabby. In chapter II. Charlotte tried to mixed mystery with fear. She described the red room as a gloomy and secluded place, where Jane's uncle died and scary stories were also told about this room. She mixed mystery with effort to show the despair that was taking place in Jane's mind.

,My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down; I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort... '(Brontë, Ch., Chapter II)

Based on her aunt's decision, Jane went to Lowood, a charitable educational institution run by the cold and cruel Reverend Brocklehurst. Charlotte recalled her memories of being in boarding school herself. The one where the conditions were below average and her two sisters Maria and Elizabeth died, due to these terrifying conditions. In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte described the initial consternation, grievances and wrongs, bad diet, harrowing treatment and horrible hygienic conditions:

,The tall girls went out and returned presently, each bearing a tray, with portions of something, I knew not what, arranged thereon, and a pitcher of water and mug in the middle of each tray. The portions were handed round; those who liked took a draught of the water, the mug being common to all. (Brontë Ch., Chapter V)

After the release of "*Jane Eyre*", in which the author projected her horrible childhood experiences into the form of Lowood, there was a lot of fuss and indignation, that there could not be such terrible conditions at a "good English school." However, it turned out that Charlotte was not exaggerating. Other memories of former students testify to this:

“While reading the novel, I immediately recognized Cowan Bridge. The descriptions I have to this day are not exaggerated. On the contrary, I believe that the facts are mitigated. I suffered terribly there. I was ill for three months and no one considered it important to inform my family. When I left the boarding house, affected by tuberculosis, my mother was so horrified by my appearance, that she forbade me to go back there. I attribute my illness to an unhealthy climate, walks to the church in the rain and to insufficient disgusting diet.“ (Mudrova, 2010)

In the story Jane found a sincere friendship at school. She became friend with her noble classmate Helena Burns. We could also look at Helen as a heroine although she was not a woman but a young girl. Thanks to her inner peace and faith in God, she was able to endure suffering, which she experienced at school every day. She was in a situation where she knew she could not leave school and therefore she found strength in herself and endured mental and physical pain. It was interesting to see her way of thinking shortly after she was physically punished by one teacher. Although she was in pain, she kept thinking about her family, how she didn't want to give them any worry. When Jane said that she would snatch the teacher's cane and break it. Helen's response was...

'Probably you would do nothing of the sort: but if you did, Mr. Brocklehurst would expel you from the school; that would be a great grief to your relations. It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you'(Brontë Ch., Chapter VI)

Unfortunately, in the story Helen died at school later on, due to an epidemic caused by desperate hygiene conditions. Charlotte's biography by Elizabeth Gaskell mentions the kind disciple Mellany Hane (allegedly from the West Indies), who always treated Charlotte nicely and protected her from the bullying of older girls was model for creating Helen in *Jane Eyre*.

We should mention miss Maria Temple. She was like a sharp contrast to the Miss Scatcherd, other school teacher. "Miss Temple is full of goodness; it pains her to be severe to any one, even the worst in the school..." (Brontë Ch.,Chapter VI)

Without exaggeration, we should consider Maria as a heroine as well. And why? Because she did not adapt to strict or even violent behavior at school. On the contrary she was that shelter, protective wing, comforting soul, which the girls from school needed. She helped them overcome difficulties. She must have suffered on her own when she witnessed the callous treatment and yet it didn't break her. She did not become apathetic. It would be easier for her to adapt to the established school regime and mentality. But it was contrary to her beliefs, and that's what I consider her a heroine.

When Jane moved from school to Thornfield she met with the kind housekeeper Fairfax (again her personality was very similar to Charlotte's Tabby) and a little girl Adele. We

would not mention Adele as a heroine, but definitely we can call her a brave girl. She grew up without maternal love. Luckily for her, Rochester took care of her and provided for her everything she needed. Still, it was probably not easy, living in a different country, most of the time surrounded by strangers. She was all happy to find out that Jane spoke French, as did her nanny Sophie and Rochester. Charlotte through the main heroine Jane described Adele as an energetic girl, previously pampered and unrestricted, for this reason she was sometimes stubborn. But under Jane's supervision, she turned into an obedient and teachable student. We should notice Jane's comments:

“She made reasonable progress, entertained for me a vivacious, though perhaps not very profound, affection, and by her simplicity, gay prattle, and efforts to please, inspired me, in return, with a degree of attachment sufficient to make us both content in each other's society.” (Brontë, Ch., Chapter XII)

We know that Charlotte didn't have a happy childhood. The death of her mother and later of her two eldest sisters must have marked her. Same as strict upbringing. It is clear from the statement about Adele, that Charlotte was incapable of spontaneous expressions, she was bounded by worries, fears, shyness. And although she tried to hide it under the guise of Adele's simplicity I think, that people who acted spontaneously and expressed immediate joy the writer approached as not being completely honest, insincere. Because she herself was not capable of such affections, apparently she could not imagine a manifestation of sincere joy and emotion, without ulterior motives. Maybe her family members, best friend Ellen Nussey or her husband Arthur Bell Nicholls wouldn't agree, we can only assume.

When Charlotte described character and appearance traits of Rochester's ex-mistress Céline, she was probably thinking of her classmates from studies in Brussels. When Charlotte and her sister Emily studied in Brussel – at Madame Heger's educational boarding house.

“They have a hard start. Pale and modestly dressed, poor and strictly led English women stood strangely among flirtatious and spoiled girls in colorful dresses. Everything turned for the better as they spoke more French and could let their intellectual talents stand out. Emily amazed the others with her piano playing. Yet, they did not merge with the other girls. Fortunately, they had girlfriends Mary and

Marty Taylor. They did not study at the same school, but they visited the and went out with them.' (Mudrova, 2010,p 94)

Unlike most other girls, they were not rich, they were certainly not spoiled and instead of rumbustios celebrations, they preferred to study. It must have been hard for them to come from the countryside to busy city. In both sisters I see traces of the heroines in their books, wise, humble, yet not humiliating in front of anyone.

Unpleasant experiences which Jane had in the Thornfield were social events. There were usually people from a better society, wealthy people, who mocked the governess. From the way, how are these events described it's obvious, that Charlotte experienced such events when she worked as a governess and apparently experienced humiliation and ridicule herself.

I have just one word to say of the whole tribe; they are a nuisance. Not that I ever suffered much from them; I took care to turn the tables... poor Madame Joubert! I see her yet in her raging passions, when we had driven her to extremities—spilt our tea, crumbled our bread and butter, tossed our books up to the ceiling, and played a charivari with the ruler and desk, the fender and fire-irons. Theodore, do you remember those merry days?" (Brontë Ch., Chapter XVII)

Even from the debate that took place at the event, it was clear that people from high society looked down at their employes especially governesses. In the novel Charlotte among people from social events at Rochesters residence, devoted time to describing mainly one of them, a young woman Blanche Ingram. She described her as a beautiful but heartless superficial snob.

Life was full of social and emotional tensions for the governess since she didn't quite fit anywhere. She was a surrogate mother who had no children of her own, a family member who was sometimes mistaken for a servant. Was she socially equal or inferior to her employers? If the family had only recently stepped up the social scale, perhaps she'd consider herself superior.( Hughes, 2014b)

The way, how women could gain at least some of their freedom was being a teacher at school. The idea of opening one's own school also appeared in this novel. Once it was when Rochester was asking Jane about her plans in the future.

The utmost I hope is, to save money enough out of my earnings to set up a school some day in a little house rented by myself." (Brontë Ch., Chapter XIX)

That was the way how women could gain at least some of their freedom. The Brontë sisters had the same plans in real life. To be specific, it was in the fall of 1842, when their sixty-six-year-old aunt Branwell died unexpectedly for an unspecified disease. After opening Aunt Branwell's will, it turned out that she divided her small but not negligible fortune only among the girls. So the girls got lesser fortune, which could serve as a dowry in the future or the realization of their dream, an educational boarding house.

At first everything went well. Sister's got money from their aunt. They wrote advertisements for their new school, and sent them to newspapers and to everybody they knew and they waited for the first children to come. They waited a long time and Charlotte wrote more advertisements. They offer lessons in German, French and Latin, also drawing, music education and handicrafts. Despite the wide offer, no children came. Despite the failure to open their own school, this idea appeared in their novels repeatedly, including *Jane Eyre*.

A portrait of neither Charlotte nor Jane would be complete without mentioning their male counterparts. The first to mention is obviously Mr. Rochester.

Jane described his appearance as follows:

'His figure was enveloped in a riding cloak, fur collared and steel clasped, its details were not apparent, but I traced the general points of middle height and considerable breadth of chest. He had a dark face, with stern features and a heavy brow, his eyes and gathered eyebrows looked ireful and thwarted just now, he was past youth, but had no reached middle-age, perhaps he might be thirty-five. (Brontë Ch., Chapter XII)

Anyone who has read about Charlotte Brontë must see a clear connection between Rochester and Charlotte's platonic love, professor Constantin Heger. She first met Constantin in 1842 in Brussels, when she was at girls' educational boarding house in Rue d'Isabelle. Charlotte found pleasure in fiery discussions with an intelligent professor and so did Constantin Heger, whose physical appearance was far from ideal, but in her eyes he became an idol, an adored man of great qualities.

Same as Mr. Rochester, Jane's other suitor, good looking, educated but cold Reverend John Rivers did not arise only in Charlotte's imagination. It was based on her own experience with the Reverend Henry Nussey. When this educated and strong-minded young man was looking for a bride in year 1839, he decided to propose Charlotte. Although he knew her only freetingly. He considered her pious and calm, which he thought was best for the pastor's future wife. But Charlotte declined his offer in a letter from March 5<sup>th</sup> 1839.

You are aware that I have many reasons to feel gratified to your family, that I have peculiar reasons for affection towards one at least of your sisters, and also that I highly esteem yourself. Do not therefore accuse me of wrong motives when I say that my answer to your proposal must be a *decided negative*. In forming this decision — I trust I have listened to the dictates of conscience more than to those [of] inclination; I have no personal repugnance to the idea of a union with you — but I feel convinced that mine is not the sort of disposition calculated to form the happiness of a man like you. (Smith, 1995, p.185)

Fortunately, her decline of the marriage proposal did not destroy the friendship between Charlotte and Ellen.

Charlotte did marry eventually, reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, who had loved Charlotte for years, but there were giant differences between them. We can see an interesting parallel between her life and that of Jane Eyre, showing that living with a man can completely change a woman's life goals setting. Jane Eyre was planning to open her own school. She saw meaning of her life in the education of others and she clung to this dream for most of her life. At a time when she did not have enough money, she saved as much as she could, to get closer to her life goal. Paradoxically, shortly after inheriting a large amount of money she completely abandoned this dream. Of course, we understand that there was a man behind this change. After she married Rochester, she never fulfilled her dream about school.

Similar thing happened in Charlotte's real life. Her passion for writing was giving her life fuel. Writing was helping her in hard part of her life. Nevertheless, she completely stopped writing books after the wedding. In her letter to Ellen Nussey from October 1854, she confided her husband's disapproval with writing books, even letters.

Men don't seem to understand making letters a vehicle of communication--they always seem to think us incautious. I'm sure I don't think I have said anything rash--however you must burn it when read. Arthur says such letters as mine never ought to be kept--they are dangerous as lucifer matches. (Smith, 1995, p. 1)

Despite being a strong person, Charlotte was probably influenced by society. She behaved as a 19th century married woman was expected to behave.

After the publication of the novel in October 1847 a wave of reactions arose, it was both, praised and criticised. It is clear, however, that many governesses in the 19th century looked up to the character of Jane Eyre, and this novel gave women hope that they too could find true love, regardless of their social status. This novel also broke many taboos at the time, drew attention to appalling conditions in some schools, differences between social classes, as well as the issue of pre-arranged marriages.

## 5 EMILY BRONTË AND HER *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Virginia Woolf wrote the following about Emily's *Wuthering Heights*:

We are given every opportunity of comparing *Wuthering Heights* with a real farm and Heathcliff with a real man. How, we are allowed to ask, can there be truth or insight or the finer shades of emotion in men and women who so little resemble what we have seen ourselves? But even as we ask it we see in Heathcliff the brother that a sister of genius might have seen; he is impossible we say, but nevertheless no boy in literature has a more vivid existence than his. So it is with the two Catherines; never could women feel as they do or act in their manner, we say. All the same, they are the most lovable women in English fiction. It is as if she could tear up all that we know human beings by, and fill these unrecognisable transparencies with such a gust of life that they transcend reality. Hers, then, is the rarest of all powers. She could free life from its dependence on facts; with a few touches indicate the spirit of a face so that it needs no body; by speaking of the moor make the wind blow and the thunder roar. (Woolf, 1925)

Unlike Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, in which almost all places and people can be identified following Charlotte's life, we don't know and we can only guess at the novel *Wuthering Heights*. There are several locations around Haworth, which Emily knew and the local tradition attributes them to the novel, but there is no direct evidence, these are all presumptions. The ruins of the former Top Withens Farmhouse are traditionally considered *Wuthering Heights*. There is no direct information, but a family friend Ellen Nussey explicitly marked this place as *Wuthering Heights* and she recommended this very place as a model for the illustrator E.M. Wimperis for a new edition of Brontë's writings in 1872.

The idea of the house itself could be the manor house High Sunderland Hall near Halifax, built in the late sixteenth century and demolished in 1951. Emily knew this house from her stay in Law Hill. Another option is the lonely house Ponden Hall, former

residence of the Heaton family from 1634, where Emily used to go for visits, she also read books here and according to tradition, she also had admirer here, a young Robert Heaton. However, it is said that Emily did not return his feelings. Also the surnames Heaton - Hareton are similar. However, some literary scholars think that Ponden Hall inspired Thrushcross Grange. The location corresponds to it, but it is small for a mansion according to the novel and most importantly it does not have a large park. Another option could be Shibden Hall near Halifax from year 1420, surrounded by a 36-hectare park. It was not far from Law Hill and Emily probably knew about its eccentric owner, Anne Lister, who wore a men's dress.

If we disregard the information about Robert Heaton, there is no other mention, that love would pass through her life. But not only in the novel *Wuthering Heights* but in her poems too, we find phrases that indicate strong feeling. No one knows if she has experienced these feelings in real life, or whether she just dreamed about them. It was said, that she was proud and untalkative and that she was secretive even in front of her sisters. It was known, that Emily and Ann had dogs, and they used to take them for walks on the moors. Anne's dog was called Flossy, and Emily's was called Keeper. But more often than with Anne, Emily went for walks alone. She loved to walk by herself on the wild lonely moors, with her dog Keeper running by her side. Probably she made up her stories during her walks, and not only Emily's character traits but also the surrounding nature has contributed to melancholy and sadness which clearly radiates from *Wuthering Heights*.

The background of the mysterious foundling Heathcliff is interesting. For a long time, people thought that Heathcliff was created only in Emily's imagination. But then one of the stories of the Brontë family was revealed: Reverend Brontë's father – who was the Irish grandfather of Brontë's siblings – Hugh Brunty (1755-1808) had a difficult childhood and young youth too. And a certain black-haired foundling had the largest share in his suffering. According to his dark skin, he was called "Welshman" and in Ireland he was once adopted by the eldest Mr. Brunty (Reverend Brontë's great-grandfather.) He grew up with his own children. But the children did not like him because he was arrogant and self-seeking. He insinuated into Mr. Brunty's favour and he soon gained the upper hand in his business as well. When the old man suddenly died, the widow and the children were completely without financial resources. At that moment, the Welshman allegedly appeared, well dressed and proud. He said he would take care of the family but only if they give him the youngest daughter, Mary, as his wife. At first they disagreed. But he began to threaten

them and realized his threats. He quit the cattle trade and became a rent collector. And that gave him considerable power over the people in the region. Under the false pretext that the family is in danger of eviction (although they paid the rent) young Mary agreed to a night date. But she was so compromised by this, that marrying the Welshman was better than losing a good reputation. Their marriage remained childless. And so the Welshman adopted one of his nephews, and it was Reverend Brontë's father, Hugh Brunty. But he insisted on the condition that other family members cut off all contact with him. Hugh Brunty had to work hard from an early age, beaten and insulted by the Welshman. He also did not give him any education. Only Mary was kind, and she told him the whole story. When Hugh was about fifteen years old, he managed to escape, with the help of a local priest. Fortunately, no persecution took place, and so this ancestor of the Brontë family could begin his own life. (Mudrová, 2010, pp. 161-162)

There is another possible story that Emily could have been inspired by. It was a life story of Jack Sharp and the Walker's family. Emily met them while she was working at Law Hill near Halifax. The 17th century Walterclough Hall mansion was nearby, in which John Walker lived in the first half of the 18th century with his wife and children. Although he had his own sons, he adopted his nephew Jack Sharp. He impressed him by his boisterousness and practicality. He inducted him to his business, the wool trade. But Jack took advantage of his kindness. When John Walker died in 1771, Jack Sharp had the mansion under his control. It took a long time for the family, namely John Walker Jr., to obtain inheritance, which rightfully belonged to them. But Jack Sharp took revenge. He took everything from Walterclough, which had some value and destroyed the rest. Then he deliberately built a new mansion Law Hill. Sharp employed Walker's cousin Sam Stead (the son of one of the old man's sisters). But it was definitely not from charity. Sam was't very smart. Sharp led him to drink and gamble until he completely destroyed himself. Eventually, however, Sharp went bankrupt and fled to London, where he disappeared. (Mudrová, 2010, p. 163)

We can find some inspiration for Heathcliff's life above, but the description of his behaviour, so precisely described, may be traced to Branwell Brontë again.

It was in the enforced companionship of this lost and degraded man that Emily received, I am sure, many of the impressions which were subsequently conveyed to the pages of her book. Has it not been said over and over again by critics of every

kind that 'Wuthering Heights' reads like the dream of an opium-eater? (Robinson, 1884, Ch XIV)

Apparently, even the language used by Heathcliff resembles expressions used by Branwell. The following words may be found in one of his letters: "My own life without her will be hell. What can the so-called love of her wretched sickly husband be to her compared with mine?" In Chapter XIV of *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff claims:

Two words would comprehend my future--death and hell; existence after losing her would be hell. Yet I was a fool to fancy for a moment that she valued Edgar Linton's attachment more than mine. If he loved with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn't love in eighty years as much as I could in a day. (Brontë, E.)

For some readers, the most likeable person in the whole story may be the servant Nelly. There is an obvious connection to a real person, namely Tabby. Nelly has got the strongest personality of all the people who appeared in the story. She has always been fair, she did not favour anyone, she did not hurt anyone either. She tried to bring peace and balance to the relationship in her vicinity, she believed in correcting bad deeds, despite the suffering she witnessed. Although she was just a maid, she was not afraid to say her opinion, even at the possible cost of dismissal.

On the contrary, for many readers, the greatest anti-heroine is Catherine. Emotionally unstable and unbalanced, she was the woman who had caused the misfortune of two men. She aroused feelings and desires in both of them. But at the same time, she aroused sadness and restlessness in them. She was too selfish to imagine the consequences of her actions and instead of directly solving problems, she chose a comfortable path of self-pity. With her approach, she basically abused both men. Nor did the birth of her own daughter change her. Instead of getting up, taking a deep breath and continuing life for the sake of her child, she was unable to change her way of thinking, preferring self-pity instead of responsibility. She dies of exhaustion, but there is not a sign of willingness to fight the disease. She chooses pure surrender.

Isabella Linton is another interesting female heroine in the novel. At the beginning of the story Isabella is described as a gentle, well behaved girl, who has read a large number of books. Perhaps because of that, her way of perception of the world is influenced by the stories she has read or dreamed about. A fine example is the way how she looked at Heathcliff. Her first impressions of him were superficial, almost naive,

corresponding to her age and the environment where she grew up in isolation from the big world. She perceived him as a well-dressed gentleman, who did not have a single flaw. Despite Catherine's warning, Isabella marries Heathcliff and becomes an unwitting participant in his plot for revenge against Edgar. After their wedding, Heathcliff physically and mentally tortures Isabella.

Indeed, Brontë first introduces her readers to Isabella Linton as a silly and credulous girl, yet her transformation from a "petted" darling to a married woman, one who flees domestic abuse, marks her as a singular character that has been far too long unnoticed by Brontë readers. (Pike, 2009, p.349)

The point of transformation from a naive girl to a strong woman comes when Heathcliff, after their wedding, tortures Isabella both, physically and mentally. Although she is pregnant, she escapes to London and there she gives birth to her son, Linton. This must have been a really non-standard situation for a 19th century woman. Most women were completely dependent on their husband's will, and even though some of them were in a worse situation, they did not allow themselves to do anything, much less leave. They knew that they would face the disapproval of the whole society. All the more, we can look at Isabella as a real heroine, because she was able to save her life and the life of her child, even at the cost of her own discomfort to which she was apparently exposed in London. Although this period is not described in detail, obviously, it must have been very difficult for her. Sadly, Isabella's fate ends more than gloomily. Despite the happiness connected to the birth of a healthy son, she dies in abandonment, without family and friends. Even her son Linton, whom she wanted to protect from Heathcliff, and who is entrusted to Isabella's brother Edgar is not ultimately protected from Heathcliff and his life does not last long and is also full of suffering.

Let's take a moment and focus on Hindley Earnshaw, Catherine's older brother. In his childhood he was described as a bully who was always making Heathcliff's life hard. We should not stand up for Hindley. But maybe we can think about reasons, why he did not like Heathcliff. There may be many reasons. One of them was that because of Heathcliff, his childhood went differently. He would probably be closer to his sister if Heathcliff was not be around. Definitely, the relationship with the father worsened after the arrival of the foundling Heathcliff. Apparently, it must have been terrible for Hindley to experience the neglect of the father, who many times preferred Heathcliff to his own son.

There are frustrations in his life, which are deepening until we can perceive his self-destruction. There is a clear resemblance to of Emily's brother. Emily described Hindley's behavior with disgust all exacerbated by his inability to take care of his own son. At first, we can feel sorry for Hindley that his beloved wife died. But as the story progresses, we can perceive his weakness, self-pity. He is a man, yet he has the same weaknesses as Catherine. With the difference that Catherine dies in self-pity silence. But Hinley choosed a slow form of dying, with the help of alcohol. Ruthlessly, he affected the future life of his son, just as he added emotional exhaustion to Nelly. However, Nelly did not let his behaviour break her, on the contrary, it made her stronger to protected and take care of his son Hareton. We can feel indignation over Hindey's weak will. Probably Emily put her feelings, which she had for her brother Branwell struggling with addictions, straight into this novel.

According to a new poll for UK TV Drama 2,000 readers voted Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* the greatest love story of all time. Martin Kettle, however, disagrees and points out the diversity and complexity of the story.

Itt is also about many other things ... about class conflict and obsessive revenge. It is about vindictive soul of a wronger man. It is about society on the Pennine moors. It is a horror story. It is about wealth, power, obsession and death ..... If *Wuthering Heights* is a love story then *Hamlet* is a family sitcom, ... ( Kettle, 2007)

Just like the novel is full of twists and turns, nor was Emily monotonous. Although everyone perceived her as an introvert, quietly yielding to fate, several interesting findings emerged. For example, she was a great shooter, her dad taught her how to handle a weapon, and she was an excellent economist.

She was good at investing in the stock market. Not only that, but she invested her own and her sisters' money in railway shares ... and managed the investment attentively. A surviving letter from supposedly more worldly Charlotte is full of praise for Emily's careful reading of the newspapers for items of railway industry news. (ibid. 2007)

Such a characteristic of Emily seems to correspond well with the intricacy of the narrative structure of her only novel, as well as with its brilliant combination of feelings from sadness, desire for revenge, disgrace, and savagery to expectation, devotion, humility, reconciliation, and hope.

## CONCLUSION

Thanks to this bachelor's thesis, I spent a lot of time reading. I've read books about the Brontë family; I've read books, which Charlotte, Emily and Anne wrote. I've read books about living conditions in the 19th century. I've searched and read books and articles about the relationship of women to books, about female emancipation, about working conditions in the past and present.

My research was mainly focused on tracing possible connections between the Brontë sisters' lives and their writing. I tried to find out to what extent each of them processed her life into fiction and how is the personality of the writers reflected in their heroines

Anne was the strongest from all sisters. Her way of thinking was completely deviated from the traditions captured in the 19th century. This sense of thought may have been amplified by direct testimony of self-destruction of her brother. Although she could do nothing about his decline, at least she gave the heroines of her novels a strong determination to fight against adversity.

Charlotte was also a strong woman. Also the heroines of her books were emotionally stable, although there were obvious effects of difficulties from her real life which appeared in her novels. These may include the horrible memories from her school time, deaths of family members, complex of unfulfilled platonic love, or imbalance and lability of her brother, associated with later addictions. Still, in her novels, there was hope, the possibility that even after difficult times, there is a chance to gain inner peace, mainly in *Jane Eyre*. In *Shirley*, finished at the time, when she buried the remaining three siblings, sadness and disappearance of hope prevail.

Still, Charlotte eventually, lost her freedom in marriage for good. However, she was too proud to complain. And maybe she did not even want to admit to herself how big mistake she had made. Charlotte was hardworking and devoted to her husband. But for her entire life, the "secret world" of colourful stories and correspondence with her friends was a boost for her. Although her husband did not understand writing, she hoped she could keep her passion. „Dear Arthur“ (as she usually called him in letters) saw it differently. That is why the novel *Emma*, which she started writing before the wedding, remained

unfinished. Unlike her Jane Eyre, she married a man who loved her but was not emotionally and mentally equal to her.

Emily was obviously least stress resistant. Sources state that the siblings were very close, but at the same time, they mention that Emily was an introvert. Although she shared housework with other family members, she apparently did not share with them her feelings, worries, anxieties or fears. Although it may seem that she did not fight her illness, that she was tired of her own life same as Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, her activity and awareness of public affairs and economy show, that she was not just a melancholic dreamer

What the texts of all three sisters have in common is the reflection of their childhood and youth experience in their novels. In addition, people they knew in person, but relatives and people they could only heard about, too, can be traced there. The most prominent influence seems to be the most negative and most painful one – that of their brother Branwell, whose features appear in the works of all three sisters.

Although they were brought up the same way, they had almost the same living conditions, and they experienced similar situations, each dealt with the wounds of fate differently, each had a different degree of strength and this was also evident from their novels. All three of them, however, remain a rich source of inspiration for women even in the 21st century, despite the radically changed living conditions and status of women in the society.

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## SUMMARY IN CZECH

Svoji bakalářskou práci jsem věnovala ženám. Popsala jsem, jak důležité bylo pro ženy čtení románů. Jak navazování vztahů v 19. století bylo úzce spojeno se společnou četbou literatury, debatami a úvahami o knihách.

Část své práce jsem také věnovala k ohlédnutí se na pracovní podmínky žen 19. století. Krátce jsem popsala sociální rozdíly a i zamyšlení se, co obnášelo povolání guvernanky.

Hlavním předmětem mé bakalářské práce je zkoumání Bronteovských hrdinek, které se v jejich románech objevují. Hledala jsem podobnosti mezi hrdinkami a autorkami.

Napsala jsem i reflexi o vlivu lidí, kteří se objevili v životě sester a ovlivnili je. Jak každá ze sester zpracovávala své vzpomínky, životní zkušenosti a možné osvojení ve svých románech.