

# Charlotte Brontë's Narrative Modes in the Proffesor, Jane Eyre and Vilette

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UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA  
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**Charlotte Brontë's narrative modes in *The Professor, Jane Eyre* and *Villette***

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## **Abstract**

Narrative text, in its almost infinite forms, is present at all times, in all places, in all societies. Narration begins with the very history of humanity. Genette (1980) explains that the function of narrative is not to give an order, express a wish, state a condition, etc. On the contrary, its purpose is merely to tell a story and thus to ‘report’ facts (either fictive or real). In addition, the narrative can provide reader with more or with a small number of details – in a more or less direct way, and can therefore seemingly keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells. The narrative assumes or appears to assume what is usually called the participant’s ‘vision’ or ‘point of view’. It is only narrative that tells the readers of the events that it describes and of the activity that presumably brought it into existence. The activity of writing leaves in it traces that can be obtained and understood. These traces would then be a presence of the first-person pronoun, which illustrates the unity of character and narrator, or a verb in the past tense, which points to a described action happening before the narrating action. Every narrative is supposed to have a narrator. According to Bal (1999), a narrator is the most central concept in the analysis of narrative texts, and it is something I will be dealing with in this paper in great detail. All three novels by Charlotte Brontë discussed in this paper are written entirely from the first-person point of view. *The Professor* was written from the male point of view by the female writer (and this is the most important difference between this and the other two novels discussed in this paper, namely *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*), and it was almost the only such example among Victorian novels.

**Key words:** narrative text, narration, narrative, point of view, first-person, narrator, Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, Victorian novel

## Sažetak

Pripovjedni tekst je, u svojim gotovo beskonačnim oblicima, prisutan u svim vremenima, na svim mjestima, u svim društvima. Pripovijedanje počinje samom povijesti čovječanstva. Genette (1980) pojašnjava da funkcija pripovjednoga teksta nije davati naredbe, iskazivati želju, ili navoditi stanje. Naprotiv, njegova je svrha jednostavno ispričati priču te na taj način „izvijestiti“ o činjenicama (izmišljenim ili stvarnim). Osim toga, pripovjedni tekst može pružiti čitatelju više ili manje izravne detalje i stoga ga može držati na većoj ili manjoj udaljenosti negoli nam to daje do znanja. Pripovjedni tekst sadrži ili se barem čini da sadrži ono što se obično naziva „vidom“ ili „gledištem“ sudionika. Samo pripovjedni tekst obavješćuje čitatelja o događajima koje opisuje te o aktivnosti koja ga je vjerojatno stvorila. Aktivnost pisanja ostavlja tragove koji se mogu prikupiti i razumjeti. Ti tragovi bi tada bili prisutnost osobne zamjenice prve osobe jednine, koja ilustrira jedinstvo lika i pripovjedača, ili glagola u prošlom vremenu, što ukazuje na to da se opisana radnja odvijala prije pripovijedane radnje. Svaki pripovjedni tekst mora imati pripovjedača. Bal (1990) tvrdi da je pripovjedač najvažniji pojam u tekstnoj analizi, čime ću se u ovome radu detaljno baviti. Sva tri romana Charlotte Brontë razmotrena u radu u cijelosti su napisana u prvome licu. *The Professor* je roman u kojem je glavni lik muškarac, a napisala ga je žena, spisateljica (i to je najvažnija razlika između tog i ostalih dvaju romana o kojima se u radu raspravlja, *Jane Eyre* i *Villette*) i bio je gotovo jedini takav primjer među viktorijanskim romanima.

Ključne riječi: pripovjedni tekst, pripovijedanje, pripovijest, gledište, prvo lice, pripovjedač, Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, viktorijanski roman.

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## **Introduction**

Charlotte Brontë is one of the most famous female novelists of the Victorian era. The first thing that comes to one's mind when the name of this author is mentioned is *Jane Eyre*, her most popular novel. She wrote three other novels, two of which I will be dealing with in this paper, *The Professor*, and *Villette*. Though it was coldly received by both the critics and the audience, *The Professor* plays an important role in moulding Brontë into a successful writer, for it was its demise that inspired her to write the masterpiece that is *Jane Eyre*. Her last novel, *Villette* is appreciated by the critics even more, as they describe it as her most mature work. All of these novels are considered groundbreaking in the context of a time in which they were created.

In this paper, I will discuss and describe narrative methods Charlotte Brontë employed in the creation of her three novels mentioned above. First and foremost, I will explore the type of the narrator she used in all three of these novels, which is a first-person narrator, and its characteristics, and finally, what makes it so important that Brontë decided to use it in all of her novels. I will also explore what makes these novels innovative and original in the age of strict social norms, which affected women the most, especially female writers who had to hide their identities in order to make their words known, in the literary world governed by men where they had no place. In addition, the issue of gender will also be reviewed, and the significance of the role it has in the given novels.

Brontë was ahead of current customs of her period. Her female characters were modern, considering they wanted to live their life following the guidelines they set by themselves, rather than those imposed by the society (Lowes, 2008). She was appreciated by the contemporary critics, who described her work as 'original' and 'remarkable', demonstrating 'power', 'vigor', 'truth', 'force' and 'reality' (Nestor, 1987: 99).

## 1. Theory of Narrative

A narrative text can be based on articulated language activity, oral or written, on a film or image, on a movement, or on a particular mixture of all these ingredients (the narrative text is also found in a myth, conveyance, in the fairy tales, short stories, novellas, epics, dramas, tragedies, comedies, in a pantomime, on a painted canvas, on the stained glass, in the film, in conversation). In addition, narrative text, in its almost infinite forms, is present at all times, in all places, in all societies. Narration begins with the very history of humanity (Biti, 1992:47).

The novel is a popular form, which, at some time in the past, could not hope to be taken as seriously as lyric and epic poetry. However, it became more successful and more important than poetry in the twentieth century – in terms of both what writers write and what readers read. In addition, narrative has achieved a major influence in literary education since the 1960s. The novels and short stories have become the crucial element of the curriculum, not only due to a vast number of readers, who prefer stories over poems, but also thanks to literary and cultural theorists, who have asserted narrative to be of greatest cultural importance. They argue that people make sense of things through stories, either by believing their lives will keep moving forward, or by telling themselves what is happening around the world (Culler, 1997:82).

Narrative shows how one event led to another. The narratology is the theory of narrative, which has been an active branch of literary theory, while literary study resorts to theories of narrative structure, i.e. on concepts of plot, of various types of narrators, and of narrative techniques. Not only does the poetics of narrative try to understand the constituent elements of narrative, it also analyses how specific narratives achieve their effects (Culler, 1997:83).

Culler (1997) furthermore explains that narrative is not merely an academic subject. To hear and tell stories is a fundamental human drive. The main question for the theory of narrative would then be:

*What is implicitly known about the basic shape of stories that enables readers to distinguish between a story that ends ‘properly’ and one that does not, where things are left hanging?*

Since that is so, the theory of narrative could be comprehended as an effort to spell out and make explicit this narrative competence, in precisely the same way as linguistics is an effort to make explicit linguistic competence – what language speakers unconsciously know in knowing a language (Culler, 1997:83).

In his book *Narrative Discourse* Genette (1980) explains that the function of narrative is not to give an order, express a wish, state a condition, etc. On the contrary, its purpose is merely to tell a story and thus to ‘report’ facts (either fictive or real). In addition, the narrative can provide reader with more or with a small number of details – in a more or less direct way, and can therefore seemingly (adopt common and convenient spatial metaphor, which should not be taken literally) keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells. Moreover, the narrative has the possibility to regulate the information it delivers, as determined by the capacities of knowledge of one or another participant in the story, while the narrative assumes or appears to assume what is usually called the participant’s ‘vision’ or ‘point of view’ (seeing). Taking that into consideration, the narrative appears to acquire one or another perspective, considering the story (Genette, 1980:161-162).

### **1.1. Concepts of Narrative**

There are three different concepts of narrative, as determined by Genette (1980) that will be listed below.

A first meaning, according to which narrative alludes to the spoken or written verbal exchange i.e. the narrative statement, which takes upon itself to speak of a circumstance or a



number of circumstances. This one is the most obvious and the most important in general usage these days.

A second meaning, according to which narrative refers to the series of events (be it real or fictional) which are subjects of this discourse, and to their various relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc. In this context, 'analysis of narrative' means the examination of entirety of actions and situations taken in themselves, without regard to the medium, linguistic or other, through which the knowledge of that entirety comes to readers. This meaning is not as widespread these days, but it is popular among analysts and theoreticians of narrative content.

A third meaning, according to which narrative once again refers to an event that consists of someone describing something, instead of the event that is described – the act of narrating taken in itself. This meaning is supposedly the oldest.

According to Genette, analysis of narrative discourse indicates a study of relationships. First, there is a relationship between a discourse and the events that it tells (described above as narrative in its second meaning), second, there is relationship between the same discourse and the act that produces it, actually (Brontë) or fictively (William Crimsworth, Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe) - described above as narrative in its third meaning (Genette, 1980:25-26).

It is only narrative that tells the readers of the events that it describes and of the activity that presumably brought it into existence. To put it differently, readers' knowledge of both the events and the action of writing, has to be indirect, inevitably intervened by the narrative discourse, because of the fact that the events are the very subject of that discourse, and the activity of writing leaves in it traces, signs that can be obtained and understood. These traces would then be a presence of the first-person pronoun, which illustrates the unity of character and narrator, or a verb in the past tense, which points to a described action happening before the narrating action (Genette, 1980:28).

## 1.2. Plot, Story and Discourse

In Aristotle's *Poetics*, the concept of a character is not as important as plot; in fact, it is completely subordinated to it. Plot is, according to Aristotle, the most basic feature of narrative, since it can exist without the 'character', while the 'character' cannot exist without the plot. It was only later that the character, who up to this point only had a name and a role to play, was given a psychological characteristics, it became an individual, a 'person', to put it simply, it became a fully established 'being'; the character ceased to be subordinated to plot and became an embodiment of the psychological being (Biti, 1992:64). He furthermore affirms that, in order for a story to be good, it must have a beginning, middle, and end, since these give pleasure because of the rhythm of their ordering. Theorists have suggested different explanations about what gives an impression that a certain series of events has such a shape. A story is not made by a simple series of events. As stated by some theorists, an end relating back to the beginning is a must; an end that suggests what has happened to the desire that led to the events narrated by the story. Culler (1997) presents two ways of thinking about plot; first of all, plot is a way of shaping events to make them into an authentic story; in their attempts to make sense of the things, writers and readers shape events into plot. Secondly, plot is what gets shaped by narratives, since they present the same 'story' in different ways (Culler, 1997:85).

Culler (1997), in addition, argues that events, plot (or story), and discourse function as two oppositions – between events and plot, and between story and discourse. He defines plot or story as the material that is presented, ordered from a certain point of view by discourse (different versions of 'the same story'). Plot itself is already a shaping of events. However, the discourse of a text is what readers actually encounter; the plot is what readers infer from the text. Moreover, the main distinction of the theory of narrative is between plot and presentation, story and discourse. The reader makes sense of the text he or she is confronted with by identifying the story and then seeing the text as one particular presentation of that story. The

readers are able to think of the rest of the verbal material as the way of portraying what takes place, by identifying 'what happens' (Culler, 1997:86).

Genette (1980:27) proposes the term 'story' to be used for the signified or narrative content. Furthermore, he proposes the term 'narrative' to be used for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself, and to use the word 'narrating' for the producing narrative action, and by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place. According to him, it is by means of the mediator of the narrative that story and narrating exist. Only to the extent that it tells a story without which it would not be narrative, can the narrative (the narrated discourse) be such, and to the extent that it is uttered by someone without which it would not in itself be a discourse. He points out that as narrative, it lives by its relationship to the story that it tells, and as discourse, it lives by its relationship to the narrating that utters it (Genette, 1980:29).

He furthermore asserts, by studying possible relationships between the time of story (or plot) and the time of the narrative, that they can be classified in terms of order (while events happen in one order, they are narrated in another); duration or pace (on one hand, the narrative dedicates much space to a momentary experience, on the other it jumps over or quickly sums up a number of years); and frequency (an event that happened only once may be described again and again or something that happened often may be described once). (Genette, 1980:10)

Nowadays, there is a widespread assumption that the narrative text is a semiologic or quasi-semiological structure, separated from the language or from the other medium that conveys this structure, as pointed out by Chatman. As such, it consists of an expressive level (called 'narrative discourse' or simply 'discourse') and content level (called 'story'). (Kramarić, 1989:141)

### **1.3. Narrator and Focalization**

Every narrative is supposed to have a narrator. According to Bal (1999), a narrator is the most central concept in the analysis of narrative texts, and it is something I will be dealing with in this paper in great detail. What gives the text its particular character are the identity of the narrator, the degree and the way in which that identity is indicated in the text, and the choices that are involved. She furthermore points out that the notion of narrator is closely related to that of focalization, with which it has been traditionally identified. These two notions together determine what has been called narration. This is, however, incorrect because narrator is the only one that narrates, i.e. utters language, which may be termed narrative since it represents a story. (Bal, 1999:19-21).

Focalization is being defined by Bal (1999:142) as the relation between the vision and that which is 'seen', perceived, i.e. relations between the elements presented and the vision through which they are presented. There are several identifications for this notion, offered by the theory of narration, most accepted one being 'point of view' or 'narrative perspective'. Terms such as narrative situation, narrative viewpoint, and narrative manner are also being used. Bal (1999:143) moreover argues that typologies of 'narrative points of view' do not differentiate between the vision through which the elements are presented, and the identity of the voice that is verbalizing that vision. This simply means they do not make a distinction between those who see and those who speak. A vital revision of the theory of point of view is precisely insistence on the difference between narration and focalization (Genette, 1980:10).

Moreover, one person can express the vision of another, in fiction as well as in reality. For instance, the narrator who is not a child can present the story through the consciousness of a child. A child is not the narrator; it is described in third person as 'he' or 'she'. However, the novel can describe things from child's perspective, which means the story is being focalized

through the child. Moreover, the focalizer may or may not be the same as the narrator. The events can be focalized from the time at which they happened, from the time following that, or from long afterwards. For example, when a narrator reports something that happened to him/her as a child, he/she can focalize the event through the consciousness of him/herself as a child, by means of limitations of the story to what he/she felt and thought at the time. On the other hand, the narrator can focalize the events through the knowledge and understanding at the time of narration. If the story is focalized mainly through the consciousness of one character, it can be found in first-person narration or in third-person narration. The former alludes to a narrator telling what he/she thought and ascertained. The latter is frequently called 'third person limited point of view', which can lead to unreliable narration due to the limitations of the point of view, and consequently to unpredictability of what happens next (Culler, 1997:88-90).

According to the 'voice' (speaking) of the narrator, narratives have been traditionally called 'first-person' (where a narrator says 'I') or 'third-person' novels (where the narrator is not identified as a character in the story and all the characters are referred to in the third person, either by name or as 'he' or 'she') (Culler, 1997:86). The great difference between the first- and third-person narration is, according to Forstreuter '*that in the third-person form each value judgment and interpretation can claim objective validity because it originates with the author, while the judgment of the first-person narrator is dependent on his person and is thus in no way binding for the reader*' (as quoted in Stanzel, 1984:81). On the other hand, Booth finds that difference structurally insignificant. He concludes in his *Rhetoric of Fiction*:

*"Perhaps the most overworked distinction is that of person. To say that a story is told in the first or the third person will tell us nothing of importance unless we become more precise and describe how the particular qualities of the narrators relate to specific effects."* (Booth, 1961:150)

There are different roles that can be bestowed upon the first-person narrators: they can be the main protagonists of the story they are narrating, they can be minor characters in the

story or participants, and they can be observers of the story – their function then would not be to act, but to describe things to readers. Observers that tell the story in first person can be completely developed as individuals. They can have a name, history, and personality. On the other hand, they do not need to be developed at all. They can instantly disappear as the narration starts, making themselves inconspicuous after the story being introduced (Culler, 1997:86). The narrator and the characters are first of all ‘paper beings’. The author of a narrative text cannot be confused with the narrator. The one who speaks (in the narrative text) is not the one who writes (in life), and the writer is not the one who is (Biti, 1992:69).

From a grammatical point of view, a narrating subject is always a first person. Bal (1999) finds the term ‘third-person narrator’ absurd, since a narrator is not a ‘he’ nor a ‘she’. At the most, a narrator can narrate about someone else, a ‘he’ or a ‘she’, who could, apropos, happen to be another narrator. This obviously does not mean that the distinction between first-person and third-person narrative is itself unfounded. The difference is the object of the utterance, while the speaking subject remains ‘I’. While in the first-person narrative ‘I’ speaks about itself, in the third-person narrative it speaks about someone else. This can be seen in these examples: (I say) I shall be twenty-five tomorrow.

(I say) Lizzie will be twenty-five tomorrow.

There are two types of narrators to be distinguished: external narrator and character-bound narrator. The former is the narrator that in a text never explicitly refers to itself as a character. The latter is the ‘I’ that is to be identified with a character in the story it itself narrates. A character-bound narrator mainly declares that it narrates true facts about him- or herself; in spite of story being highly implausible, fantastic, absurd, metaphysical, ‘it’ pretends to be writing ‘her’ autobiography (Bal, 1999:22). The use of the ‘first person’ or, in other words, the narrator being identified with the hero/heroine, does not in any way imply the focalization of the narrative text through the hero. On the contrary, the ‘autobiographical’ narrator (be it a real

or a fictional autobiography), due to the fact of its identifying with the hero, speaks for himself more naturally than the narrator of the third-person narrative does (Biti, 1992:105).

The readers read the text created by the author, from which they then infer the voice that speaks, i.e. a narrator. These listeners that the narrator speaks to can be implied or constructed, or clearly identified, which particularly applies to the stories within stories, where the inner story is being told by one character (whose role now is that of a narrator) to the rest of the characters. An audience, often called the narratee, is being implicitly constructed by the narrative and by what its narration explains and takes for granted. If a work is from a certain time and place, it requires an audience that recognizes its references and shares particular presumptions, something that a modern reader probably would not be able to do (Culler, 1997:87).

Narration can take place at the time at which events happen or it may follow certain events without delay, as in the novels in the form of letters (epistolary novels), where each letter is concerned with what had happened up to that point. On the other hand, there is the most conventional narration, which takes place after the final events in the narrative, when the narrator looks back on the entire sequence (Culler, 1997:87).

Narrative voices can tell the story in their own specific language, or they can take over and recount the language of others. For instance, if a narrative sees things through the consciousness of a child, it can use either adult language to narrate the child's observations, or can assume a child's language. According to the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, the novels are basically polyphonic, i.e. multi-voiced, or dialogic, instead of single-voiced, i.e. monological; this being said, the core of the novel is then its staging of different voices or discourses and, consequently, of the social perspectives and points of view in a conflict (Culler, 1997:87).

When telling a story, one needs to maintain a certain authority, which is accepted by readers. For instance, when the narrator of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* says of Rochester:

*“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 not reached middle-age; perhaps he might be thirty-five”* (Brontë, 2010:113),

the readers do not doubt this statement, but rather accept it until they are given the reason to think differently. On the other hand, the narrators can be called ‘unreliable’, when they make the readers doubt their interpretations of events by providing enough information about situations and by hinting at their own inclinations, or when the readers find reasons to believe that the narrator does not have equal beliefs as the author (Culler, 1997:88).

## **2. Gender Trouble**

Judith Butler (1999) points out that according to the feminist theorists, the distinction between sex and gender, whose purpose in the first place was to oppose the biology-is-destiny formulation, serves the argument that in spite of sex seeming to have biological intractability, gender is constructed culturally. For this reason, gender is neither the casual result of sex nor as apparently fixed as sex. She furthermore asserts that it does not follow that the construction of ‘men’ will come into the possession of the bodies of males only, or that ‘women’ will portray solely female bodies. Moreover, with the constructed status of gender being theorized as fundamentally independent of sex, gender itself then becomes an uncommitted invention; as a result, man and masculine might at the same time easily indicate a female body as a male one. On the other hand, woman and feminine might signify a male body as easily as a female one. Butler (1999) comes to conclusion that, if sex itself is considered a gendered category, it would make no sense then to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex. If ‘sex’ is as culturally



constructed as gender, then it was maybe always already gender, consequently, the distinction between the two terms would be no distinction at all. She argues that gender should not be considered purely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex, and concludes that gender must, in addition, denote the very apparatus of production, in accordance with which the sexes themselves are established. Because of this, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature – gender is the cultural means by which ‘sexed nature’ or ‘nature of sex’ is produced and established prior to culture (Butler, 1999:9-11).

Simone de Beauvoir puts forward that ‘one is not born a woman but becomes one’. According to Beauvoir, gender is ‘constructed’; therefore, one ‘becomes’ a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one. This compulsion does not come from ‘sex’, for there is not a thing in her report that makes it certain that the ‘one’ who becomes a woman is automatically female. She furthermore argues that the only gender that is marked is the feminine one, while the universal person and the masculine gender are combined, because of that women are being defined in terms of their sex and exalts men as the bearers of a body-transcendent universal personhood. Moreover, women are for her a negative of men – the lack against which masculine identity is differentiating itself. She asserts that the male sex is not marked, while the female is marked within masculinist discourse. Luce Irigaray, on the contrary, maintains that the female sex is not a ‘lack’ that subjectively and negatively defines the subject in its masculinity. She states that the feminine ‘sex’ is a point of linguistic absence, the impossibility of a grammatically denoted substance, and, therefore, the point of view that exposes that substance as an abiding and foundational illusion of a masculinist discourse (Butler, 1999:13-15).

The presence of positions - which, on the one hand, assume that gender is a secondary characteristic of persons, and those which, on the other hand, claim that the actual concept of the person, positioned inside the language as a ‘subject’, is a masculinist construction and

authority which successfully leaves out the structural and semantic possibility of a feminine gender - emphasizes the problematic circularity of a feminist study of gender (Butler, 1999:16).

Finally, Butler defines gender as the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that come together over time to produce the appearance of the substance, of a natural sort of being (Butler, 1999:43). To sum up, Butler doubts that particular gendered behaviors are natural. What her theory describes is the ways that one's acquired performance of gendered behavior (what is generally connected with femininity and masculinity) is an act of a kind; a 'performance' forced on people by normative heterosexuality. She furthermore questions to what extent people's actions are decided for them by their place within language and convention. Butler claims that, unlike theatrical acting, a stable subjectivity that approaches performing different gender roles cannot even be assumed. The very act of performing gender makes who we are. Identity is, according to her, an illusion retroactively created by one's performance (Lind-Olsen, 2016:17:18).

### **3. Victorian Era and its Literature**

Charlotte Brontë was born into the time of a long period of Queen Victoria's reign, known as the Victorian era, which started in the 1830s. It was the turbulent era of revolutions, scientific discoveries, and changes in the society, but also the time of fixed and harsh values, propriety, manners, and morals. She was also born in times of Romanticism, when famous poets and novelists were producing their works that influenced to a high degree not only Victorian literature, but Brontë herself. Charlotte Brontë started to write her famous novels in the early Victorian period, which is described as the direct continuation to the age of Romanticism, with some of the Romantic attributes being absorbed and some rejected. As a matter of fact, one can recognize, by reading her novels, that she was much more inspired by the Romantic cult of the

individual – instead of focusing on political issues of her time like other Victorian writers, Brontë's novels revolved around the exploration of human psychology, inner struggle, emotions, importance of childhood and nature (Gregusova, 2017:11). Charlotte Brontë reintroduces the description of those strong emotions that were usually avoided by both Dickens and Thackeray. Charlotte had Byronic traits that were purified by religious education and moral discipline, and combined with those realistic elements, which are now becoming more prevalent. As a daughter of a Yorkshire parson, Brontë grew up in the rough and bleak emptiness of the moors. In her novels, however, it can be found lyrical warmth and the play of strong emotions (Legouis, 1986:329). She handled issues and fixed values in Victorian society in more indirect way than Dickens, Eliot or Kipling. The only novel where she turned to comment on politics more specifically was *Shirley*.

Brontë did, however, speak about other contemporary issues of the society. She deals with the topics of religion, talking about the hypocrisy of some of the holy orders and excessive devotion to religion. Another thing she concentrates on is education, and above all, on social injustices that women have suffered. Brontë's main objective is, in fact, not to analyze these issues as such, but to demonstrate how these problems of the society personally affect the lives of her characters. To be precise, she decided to concentrate on how these problems affect human psychology and behavior. Kenneth King claims that Charlotte, along with her sisters, in fact transformed Romanticism by adding Gothic and supernatural elements, and has thus broaden its typical characteristics. According to King, Brontë essentially made way for '*modern novel with deft existential strokes - a movement away from religion to the secular with progressive feminist strains, and a socially prescient sensibility*' (Gregusova, 2017:11).

Even though Brontë's novels are tending toward Romanticism, she wrote and published them during the Victorian era, which means her novels were read and judged by the Victorian audience. This audience based its evaluative and critical discourse on the strict moral values

and beliefs that were typical for Victorian era. This period is connected with ‘Victorian values’, which involve familiar values such as cleanliness, temperance, honesty or work, and those connected to work ethic, i.e. promptness, regularity, conformity or rationality. Abiding by these values created ‘good character’ in an individual, which was considered an outright necessity for those who are being employed or getting married, whose aim was to ‘get on’ in the world (the term ‘getting on’ was created in 1840s and it means making a success of one’s life, having a career, finding a place in society). According to Heather Glen, this ‘getting on’ was looked into by Charlotte herself in her novel *The Professor*, where the male character – Crimsworth, tries to ‘get on’ in life and to build his character (Gregusova, 2017:12).

Victorian literature is frequently being based on the critique of the period and its values, and it frequently responds negatively to these. Charles Dickens started this protest in the work of novelists and poets. Moreover, with the publication of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* in 1859, Victorian moral principles and their religious basis were also beginning to be doubted – this is when morality became a replacement for the loss of the religious for many Victorians. Even though all of her novels were published before Darwin’s study, Brontë never lost faith, even though she frequently discussed the issues of religion and how it is often connected with morals and conventionalities, which she commonly renounce. The Victorian era was the great age of English novel, since novels were the most suitable to depict something readers would be able to relate to – life and society. Brontë herself chose the form of a novel and she wrote four complete works in total (Gregusova, 2017:13).

### **3.1. The Status of Women in Victorian era**

The most important responsibilities for many women of the Victorian era were being confined within the four walls of the household and taking care of domestic matters. In addition,

it was expected of them to withhold their own needs in favor of those of their husband and children, as well as centering upon creating soothing and peaceful surroundings (Axen, 2001:1). Besides marriage, other adequate alternatives for middle-class women of the time were dependence on the family patriarch, or becoming a governess. Brontë herself was a governess and even though she despised this job, it provided her with a lot of inspiration for her literary work (Gregusova, 2017:14).

The education of the Victorian era revolved around moulding of young women of the working class into efficient workers, as a part of productive nineteenth century industry that is expanding fast. Women were also trained to become helpful servants and governesses within the bounds of a large household. They were expected to play by the rules of the patriarchal society, which means they had to be docile, devoted, ambitious, but without personal aims, except for serving their employers. Brontë was particularly interested in female state of mind and role in society, since she herself was a woman who wanted to overcome the limitations of the Victorian era. By taking on the topics never used before at such length, Brontë started a revolution. In Victorian era, the public sphere belonged to men only. Robert Southey, a Victorian poet, even claimed that literature *'is not the business of a woman's life, and it cannot be'* (as quoted in Axen, 2001:2), and he was not the only writer of the time who felt that way.

Brontë compares women in her own country with slaves, calling her own employment as a governess a slavery. This issue was examined with great fervor through Brontë's characters who are confronted with anger, desire, violence and repression. This is why her novels were considered tasteless, rough and not feminine enough. When it was discovered that Currer Bell (Brontë's pseudonym) was in fact a woman, it deeply disturbed some of the readers, since woman writing love stories from the female point of view and even letting her heroines to clearly express their passions was something completely new. She received a negative response

from the Victorian audience because she bravely defended women having sexual desires that they expect to be satisfied (Gregusova, 2017:14-15).

#### **4. Charlotte Brontë's Literary Devices**

As reported by Pollard (1968:4), there are specifically two devices used by Charlotte Brontë for presenting her novels' world to our own. The first one is the method of autobiographical narrative, in accordance with which the main character tells his or her own tale. A first-person narration, i.e. the use of an authorial "I", gives the story credibility and authenticity. In Brontë's case, this is further reinforced by the fact that there are numerous similarities between the heroine's history and the author's own.

The second device for describing the world of the novel, as stated by Pollard (1968), is that of the dominant point of view, even though the author has his doubts about using the word device. Not only are Lucy Snowe and Jane Eyre, to a great extent, biographical synonyms for Charlotte Brontë (particularly the last one), but also her moral alter egos. Brontë has been called 'a Puritan moralist' by Lord David Cecil (Pollard, 1968:4). What makes this true is the fact that her heroines can occasionally be upright, nearly to the point of exaggerated and arrogant properness. Pollard states that the important thing is to emphasize that this moralism, in the present context, represents a stabilizing factor. He furthermore claims that "*Brontë's superiority to the Gothic, however, is more than an added infusion of moralism*" (Pollard, 1968:5). In Charlotte Brontë's novels, there is no 'thriller' element for its own sake. The elements such as fire, storm, madness, apparitions, are not to a great extent different from the Gothic. Moreover, the description may at times be clearly intensified, however, the incident and manner of description are always chosen with a purpose of satisfying the necessary requirements of demonstrating a view of life. The characters react to events that affect them. By the revelation

of the ways in which the characters respond, Brontë exceeds the Gothic. Since human adaptability resists and adjusts situation with which it is being confronted, the reader is able to sense the pressures of life. As Pollard (1968:5) furthermore points out, this is where the Puritan strain becomes important, since Charlotte Brontë's moralism and romanticism interact with one another. Her readers are able to accept the at times somewhat crude and obvious black-and-white contrast of good and evil, thanks to this moralism. They believe in Brontë's good and evil because she believes in them, i.e. even though they probably would not accept such simplicities in isolation, they readily accept them in the context in which Brontë tells them to do so. This is how her subjectivism works.

## 5. Narrative of Brontë's Novels

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1855) wrote four novels under the pseudonym Currer Bell, the first of which is *The Professor* (1845-46), published posthumously in 1857. It is an interesting fact that both the plot of her first and last novel – *Villette* (1853), is set in Brussels, where she was learning and teaching in the school of Monsieur Héger. The memories of the time spent in that town provided the author with an inspiration for the novel's topic - a pupil falling in love with a teacher (Pollard, 1968:1-2). *The Professor* was discarded by the majority of critics, as well as the readers. They considered the beginning weak and the plot thin, and the main characters proved unsuccessful in making an impression on many, though they did show some promise (Bloom, 2008:111). *Villette* on the other hand is considered by many critics to be Brontë's most mature work. Brontë got an inspiration for this novel from her intense emotional experience as well. However, a longer period of time between her stay in Brussels and the writing of the novel enabled her to approach the matter with the necessary moderation (Kovačević et al. 1983:258). Brontë's second novel, *Jane Eyre* (1847), also contains

autobiographical elements; Lowood School is modelled after Cowan Bridge School, which she attended along with her older sisters, and Jane Eyre, just like Brontë herself, knows the problems and difficulties of being a governess. Moreover, many of the novels' characters are modelled after the real people that Brontë actually knew (Pollard, 1968:2).

Brontë's all three novels discussed in this paper are written entirely from the first-person point of view. While there are the apparent advantages of the fullest first-hand communication for the main character, having a first-person heroine narrator has its disadvantages, two of which are quite serious. First and foremost, the readers do not get to see as much as they might of the heroine as others see her. Furthermore, they only see the others either as the heroine sees them, or as they tell her about themselves. Therefore, they have to tell a lot about their pasts. This does not give much satisfaction to the readers. However, this is, if nothing else, one of the merits of *Villette*'s opening chapters – they are getting them acquainted not only with Lucy's early years, but also with John Bretton's and with the Bretton family on the whole. Rochester, on the other hand, did not have such an opportunity, which is why he has to tell the readers all about his wife and his mistress. What becomes more important is the fact that Rochester has become a character that evokes strong feelings of empathy in readers; his explanation is accepted without expressing any doubts (Pollard, 1968:102-103):

*“All the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me. I was dazzled, stimulated: my senses were excited; and being ignorant, raw, and inexperienced, I thought I loved her. There is no folly so besotted that the idiotic rivalries of society, the prurience, the rashness, the blindness of youth, will not hurry a man to its commission. Her relatives encouraged me; competitors piqued me; she allured me: a marriage was achieved almost before I knew where I was. Oh, I have no respect for myself when I think of that act! — an agony of inward contempt masters me. I never loved, I never esteemed, I did not even know her. I was not sure of the existence of one virtue in her nature: I had marked neither*



*modesty, nor benevolence, nor candour, nor refinement in her mind or manners — and, I married her: — gross, grovelling, mole-eyed blockhead that I was!”* (Brontë, 2010:309).

Brontë pays a lot of favorable attention to Rochester’s powerlessness in this whole situation; there is his father’s agreement with the Masons, their plotting and showing him off, his future wife’s insincere praise, his immaturity and naivety, he was being pushed into something the significance of which he was unaware of. In this rushed description, the readers cannot find a single reason to question Rochester’s clarification and apology (Pollard, 1968:104).

The world of Brontë’s novels mentioned above is completely dominated by the gift of speech and its equivalent silence, i.e., saying the words and hearing them spoken. The readers’ silence is time and again pressured by the protagonists’ continuous desire to converse with them. In order to be entirely told, the protagonists’ truth must be heard by their reader. As Jane says to the cryptic gypsy fortune-teller: “*the eagerness of a listener quickens the tongue of a narrator*” (Brontë, 2010:201), she may as well be addressing the readers. Despite the fact that the main characters do not know who the readers are, they have to believe that they are interested in listening to their story. When Jane Eyre assures Mrs. Reed that she will tell her “*exact tale*” to “*anybody who asks [her] questions*” (Brontë, 2010:32), she has to truly think that the readers are asking (Freeman, 1984:700).

## **6. Narration in *The Professor***

*The Professor* (whose original title was *The Master*) is the first complete novel written for publication by Charlotte Brontë, but rejected nine times by publishers, and was finally discarded by Brontë herself. The novel was, however, published after her death, following Mr. Nicholls’ additional emasculation through a choice of words such as: “*God damn your*

*insolence!*” (Brontë, 1998:50, Pinion, 1975:94). One of the critics, T. Wemyss Reid addresses an important nineteenth-century reading practice in his benevolent evaluation of *The Professor* – at the time prevailed the idea that fiction should offer an escape from the ordinary concerns of life. According to him, it was this belief that condemned *The Professor* when Brontë offered it to the publishers at the beginning (as quoted in Bloom, 2008:113).

Brontë discusses her rejected novel in one of her letters:

*“I found the beginning very feeble, the whole narrative deficient in incident and in general attractiveness; yet the middle and latter portion of the work, all that relates to Brussels, the Belgian school, etc., is as good as I can write: it contains more pith, more substance, more reality, in my judgment, than much of fane Eyre. It gives, I think, a new view of a grade, an occupation, and a class of characters — all very commonplace, very insignificant in themselves”*

Letter, 14 December, 1847 (in Bentley, 1963:22-23).

Charlotte herself has been aware of the fact that readers preferred romance to reality in fiction, not to mention the ‘*wild, wonderful, and thrilling—the strange, startling, and harrowing*’ (Brontë, 2010:7), to the story of a man who has to manage his life as “*real living men*” (Bronte, 2010:6) do, not accompanied by unforeseen inheritance of fortune, or rather marriage to ‘*a beautiful girl or a lady of rank*’ (Bronte, 1998:6, Pinion, 1975:95).

Moreover, readers’ opinion of the novel was not at all flattering; it was considered insignificant, ill-conceived and incapable of arousing interest in them (Cohen, 2003:443).

Critics speak briefly about *The Professor*, calling it ‘*a rehearsal for Villette*’ (Lane, as quoted in Federico, 1994:186), or an early ‘*failed*’ attempt to create a Jane-Eyre-like hero (Basch, as quoted in Federico, 1994:186). Anne Longmuir (in Monin, 2010:59) argues that critics, when analyzing Brontë’s novels, are prone to dwell on “*an overreliance on the author’s biography*”. Elaine Showalter briefly mentions *The Professor* as an example of how “*women*

writers internalized the values of their society” (as quoted in Federico, 1994:186). Helene Moglen perceives Brontë’s choice of a male narrator as evidence that she is still “*bound to the ambivalent attitudes of adolescence*”, as she is still not able to link a female voice with authority, and names Crimsworth’s voice as novel’s most “*crucial problem*” (as quoted in Federico, 1994:186). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar described *The Professor* as an extension of Brontë’s “*exotic “male”*” Angrian tales (Brontë’s early work about imaginary kingdom) full of “*obsessive and involuntary*” characterizations, and as a “*pseudo-masculine Bildungsroman*”, “*literary male-impersonation*”, and “*male mimicry*”, which implies that the novel’s imperfections are connected to Brontë’s tackling of gender, to be precise, to the use of male narrator. Gilbert and Gubar, not wanting to repudiate the narrator as a mistake of a young writer lacking in skill, try to understand the male voice, interpreting that “*by pretending to be a man, [the woman writer] can see herself as the crucial and powerful Other sees her*”. In other words, by pretending to be a man, Brontë can better examine what truly interests her – being a woman (as quoted in Federico, 1994:186).

Brontë was incited precisely by the critics, who were pleased with the novel’s failure, to write novels that were (and still are) considered her masterpieces: *Jane Eyre* – written the following year, serving as an antidote to it, and *Villette*, in which, as Craik points out, the author would not be able to rework and transform *The Professor’s* Belgian material and characters, had it been published (Cohen, 2003:443).

There is, however, one of its characteristics that deserves consideration: *The Professor* was written from the male point of view by the female writer (and this is the most important difference between this and the rest of the Brontë’s novels), and it was almost the only such example among Victorian novels (Cohen, 2003:444). It appears difficult enough for a female writer to imagine what it is like to be a man even today. In this attempt to be the autobiographical male, Brontë makes an effort to imagine what he imagines, and even to have

a male body - more specifically, she aims at exploring the social consequences of her culture's constructions of gender, by means of treating the burdens of sex from the male point of view (Federico, 1994:186). Lanser (1992:18) explains, "*the authorial mode has allowed women access to 'male' authority by separating the narrating 'I' from the female body*".

Federico (1994:200) maintains that Brontë is not yet able to separate her male "I" from her female body; she further asserts that Crimsworth at times feels sexually threatened. Penny Boumelha claims that in the episode where he is invited to tea with Madame Pelet and Madame Rueter '*he undergoes a fantasy of rape-seduction far more fearful and explicit than anything Brontë assigns to her female characters*' (in Federico, 1994:200). Federico (1994:185) remarks that critics have been inclined to perceive this as both an artistic error and an elision of her feminist voice. She furthermore states that male voice provides Brontë with an opportunity to affront a central issue – power – as opposed to her study of powerlessness in her later novels, the protagonists of which are women (1994:185).

Cohen (2003) finds it tempting to explain this deviation as a consequence of Brontë's passionate feelings for Constantine Heger, her married mentor under whom she worked for two years in Brussels, right before she started writing the novel. He claims that Brontë transmitted her blocked sexual energy into the creation of a fictional work, since she was incapable of openly expressing her sentiments for her former Belgian teacher. He furthermore claims that Brontë's fantasy solution to her unrequited feelings manifests itself in the story of a British man who travels to Brussels to work as an English teacher, and where he marries a French-speaking student (it can be noticed that nationalities are being reversed here). Likewise, Margaret Smith identifies the plot of *The Professor* as "*a transcript of the author's experience rather pathetically brought to a happy conclusion by a piece of wish-fulfillment*" (as quoted in Cohen, 2003:444). In addition, Smith admits that this description is '*boldly stated*' and prudently places Brontë's production of the novel in a range of biographical and literary contexts. However, later

on, Smith sustains the biographical explanation: “*In transforming her life into her art, Charlotte to some extent controlled its pain by making herself – or at any rate her first person narrator – the master. She attributes to William the inward qualities she had looked for in M. Heger*” (as quoted in Cohen, 2003:444).

William Crimsworth, the protagonist of the novel, narrates his tale of an Englishman with the aristocratic background, who must work his way through life, in a resentful first-person voice. The masculinity represented by the hero-narrator in this novel is completely different from Brontë’s later descriptions of powerful and attractive men, who pose a direct threat to heroine’s autonomy (Federico, 1994:186). In the opening stage of the novel, the protagonist turns to his elder brother Edward, who owns an industrial mill, for employment. He reluctantly concurs on hiring him as clerk. Crimsworth decides to travel to Brussels, prompted by Mr. Hunsden – his acquaintance, not long after the employment and relationships with people around him become unbearable. Upon arriving in Brussels, Crimsworth starts to work as an English teacher in neighboring schools for boys and girls.

As reported by Cohen (2003:449), being abroad provides the protagonist with the opportunities to ridicule French etiquette, Belgian nationality, Roman Catholic religion, and Continental schooling. The directress of the girls’ school, Zoraide Reuter, captivates the young Crimsworth, who starts to deny her, after he finds out she is a soon-to-be-wife of the director of the boys’ school. In the wake of these events, Crimsworth gets to know a young Anglo-Swiss woman – Frances Henri, who is both his colleague, as she teaches at Mlle. Reuter’s school, and his pupil in English. Before long, he falls in love with her, which is the main reason behind Mlle. Reuter’s jealousy, regardless of her own engagement. Even though their romance is encountered with some hardships, the couple manages to get married and returns to England with their son, Victor, living in a domestic bliss. Cohen (2003:449) concludes that *The*

*Professor* combines the domains of working, teaching and loving, by means of its plot of a master marrying his student.

Through *The Professor*, Brontë presents a living narrative of self-improvement, which is within reach of those, who spare no effort to achieve an ambitious aim, just like the protagonist of the novel: “*Hope smiles on Effort!*” (Brontë, 1998:213). Charlotte uses an expression “*the needful*” in her first novel, defined by Davies (2002:72) as northern industrial idiom: “*I must live, and to live I must have what you call ‘the needful’, which I can only get by working*” (Brontë, 1998:59). According to Davies (2002:72-73), *The Professor* is a narrative of self-help; seeing that succeeding by one’s own efforts, and carefully achieving financial independence and security are some of the most important themes in Charlotte’s life. However, ‘the needful’ is not all the protagonist needs in order to live happily; he needs love too, but without financial security, emotional needs cannot be satisfied. *The Professor*’s protagonist looks for love, and after agonizing misadventures manages to obtain it.

In addition, the novel was written during the time Charlotte had been experiencing many different emotions, which is why it feels like the novel is suffering from mood-swings. Her nerves were destroyed by years of longing and the tension of a principled woman whose conscience is tortured; she suffered from neurosis, which can be seen in the letters to her beloved teacher, and hypochondria that she attributes to her protagonist too. She voices her anger, racism and sexual envy, hidden behind her male narrator’s ill temper against deviant Brussels schoolgirls (Davies, 2002:75):

“*Aurelia Koslow, a German fraulein, or rather a half-breed... somewhat Tartar features... slovenly... dirty; ‘Juanna Trista ... of mixed Belgian and Spanish origin . . . precisely the same shape of skull as Pope Alexander the Sixth . . . she made noises with her mouth like a horse*” (Brontë, 1998:118-119).

Another narrative mode Brontë uses is a word painting; the technique her narrator adopts from it is that of static portraiture – he asks the readers to “*just look here while I open my portfolio and show them a sketch or two*” (Brontë, 1998:114). Brontë’s technique of word painting provides joyful effects, for instance when William looks at rainbow: “*a sky like opal; azure immingled with crimson: the enlarged sun, glorious in Tyrian tints, dipped his brim already...*” (Brontë, 1998:212). Brontë uses verbal skills such as periphrasis – ‘Tyrian tints’; personification – ‘*dipped his brim*’; high register words with a dash of archaism – ‘*immingled*’, and visionary afflatus – ‘*methought*’ (Davies, 2002:82):

“*...in a dream were reproduced the setting sun, the bank of clouds, the mighty rainbow. I stood, methought, on a terrace...[a visionary form] hovered as on wings; pearly, fleecy, gleaming air streamed like raiment round it: light, tinted with carnation, coloured what seemed face and limbs; a large star shone with still lustre on an angel’s forehead...a voice in my heart whispered – ‘Hope smiles on Effort!’*” (Brontë, 1998:212).

## **6.1. Addressing the Reader**

A very first time Crimsworth addresses the reader in *The Professor* is resulting from him not belonging to his family and feeling lonely, which occurs at his brother’s party where he is ignored and where he “*looked weary, solitary, kept down like some desolate tutor or governess*” (Brontë, 1998:29). He is being emasculated through such a comparison, besides, he is also told to resemble his mother – he possesses her aristocratic features, in particular “*true and tender feeling*” (Brontë, 1998:17, Federico, 1994:191).

Brontë portrays these feelings of loneliness and solitude in her later novels, in her female characters of Jane and Lucy. This is exactly how Jane feels at one of Mr. Rochester’s gatherings at Thornfield Hall, since she is not familiar with any of his guests and most likely

unwelcomed by them, she “*retired to a window-seat*” (Brontë, 2010:171). At this moment, Crimsworth decides to address his reader. He realizes a man standing next to him and says: “*I turned; at my elbow stood a tall man, young, though probably five or six years older than I - in other respects of an appearance the opposite to common place; though just now, as I am not disposed to paint his portrait in detail, the reader must be content with the silhouette I have just thrown off; it was all I myself saw of him for the moment*” (Brontë, 1998:30). Monin (2010:64) finds it interesting that Crimsworth, even though he is well informed about everything he includes into his narrative, does not tell us everything about this gentleman. He is reluctant, at this time, to examine in detail the situation he finds himself in. The moment in which Lucy Snowe starts to have tender feelings towards Dr. John is equal to this one, as she fails to make her sentiments known to the reader. In retaining important information and addressing his reader in this way, both Crimsworth and his reader are to go through the same feelings of mystery, suspense, and ask him/herself who is the gentleman. Since the reader does not understand the entire situation, as the protagonist did not understand it, it allows him to visit the same scene again in the company of someone who knows what he feels like. In this way, he is allowed to have contact with the reader, even though he/she is not physically present, to comfort him about feeling excluded.

## **6.2. Educating the Reader**

Regarding the way in which Crimsworth addresses his reader, Brontë devises him as having a pedagogic approach, which is logical since he works as an English teacher in school. Unlike Jane and Lucy, who address their reader merely for comfort and sympathy, Crimsworth addresses his reader mostly to inform him/her of something. In his addresses, he is usually informing the reader of something new or something he finds valuable, for instance: “*Reader,*



*perhaps you were never in Belgium? Haply you don't know the physiognomy of the country?"* (Brontë, 1998:65). After he posed this question to the reader, Crimsworth gets on with his detailed description of the surrounding area, presuming the reader is not familiar with Belgium. The second time he addresses his reader, after the long description, it is with a firmer tone: *"This is Belgium, reader. Look! don't call the picture a flat or a dull one - it was neither flat nor dull to me when I first beheld it"* (Brontë, 1998:66). Crimsworth wants to give the reader a brief look at what Belgium is like, or, in any case, how he experienced it the first time he arrived. Just like Lucy and Jane, William too feels the need to justify his experiences, but unlike Lucy, who thinks of her reader as educated, he probably believes he is the more educated one between himself and the reader, because of his social position. Though the reader is here granted a brief look into William's life, his professor-like tone keeps him/her at distance (Monin, 2010:65).

William twice evidently patronizes his reader while addressing him/her with the pretentious accentuation of *"Now, reader"* (Brontë, 1998:145, 207). This probably comes from his background as a lecturer informing his students of things they know nothing or little about. First example of William's pretentious address takes place after a long description of a plain, but interesting young lady: *"Now, reader, though I have spent more than a page in describing Mdlle. Henri, I know well enough that I have left on your mind's eye no distinct picture of her; I have not painted her complexion, nor her eyes, nor her hair, nor even drawn the outline of her shape"* (Brontë, 1998:145-146). William makes his reader wait anxiously for more information about mysterious Mdlle. Henri, and then teases his reader informing him/her with the insinuation he really knows more about her and is keeping the reader in the dark on purpose. He later shows his arrogance, revealing the reason why he is holding it back: *"it is not my intention to communicate to you at once a knowledge I myself gained by little and little"* (Brontë, 1998:146). William uses this calculating and controlling method like a tool in his classroom, in order to keep his students engaged and curious. Brontë formed the character of William with

such personal connections, as wanting his readers to learn everything at the same rate as he has (Monin, 2010:66).

The second time William addresses his readers with arrogance is after they learn of William's and Frances' forthcoming engagement: "*Now, reader, during the last two pages I have been giving you honey fresh from flowers, but you must not live entirely on food so luscious; taste then a little gall – just a drop, by way of change*" (Brontë, 1998:270). The 'gall' he refers to is a woman from his past; he is being haunted by an old ghostlike memory that makes him sick for couple of days, amidst his excitement with marriage and love that lasts forever. Just like with his previous address, William wishes the reader to experience everything he has, in exactly the same way, and that would be love, expectation, and hypochondria, as he calls it. This is yet another example of how the protagonist tries to provoke sympathy in readers. Instead of explaining everything carefully and in great detail, he makes the reader wait in order to experience the same feelings he must have at the time (Monin, 2010:66).

William's privileged status in the society, along with his patronizing conceit regarding his addresses to the readers, can be noted in one specific address: "*I possess others [snapshots of the actions of the girls in his classroom], as marked and as little agreeable, but I will spare my reader the exhibition of them*" (Brontë, 1998:119). A protective attitude is noted here. His job as a man is not only to educate, but also to protect his students, and the reader most likely. He addresses his reader in a conceited kind of way; he wishes not to burden readers mind with hardships he has been through. Monin (2010) finally concludes that William is comporting the same way any other man of his time would behave. His manner is, as Federico (1994:188) states: "*aggressively masculine (...) locked into a socially sanctioned tone of superiority*". This can be seen in the manner in which he communicates with the other characters in the novel, and in the way he addresses his readers as well (Monin, 2010:67).

Charlotte Brontë, as explained by Cohen (2003:445), provides her narrator – William Crimsworth, with virtues of mastery, masculinity, and Englishness. He further asserts that she appears to identify right away with teacher and student, man and woman, Englishman and foreigner. The main character of the novel portrays a strange combination of the author herself and her beloved – it is as if Brontë appears to imagine that if she cannot have the master, then maybe she can be him; desire gives way to identification. The choice of a male narrator gave Brontë an opportunity to imagine being a man, more specifically, to think about what it would feel like to inhabit a male body. Federico (1994:184-185) affirms that, unlike male writers who use female narrators and receive praise for their insights into '*feminine psychology*', female writers are hardly ever expected to portray manhood from the male viewpoint. Moreover, it is obvious that in the novels of the nineteenth century, a strict literary double standard reflects a cultural double standard, which diminishes feminine discourse in society.

Despite the fact that the Victorian period is quite rich in literary heroines and female writers, male voice is, apparently, all the same considered more quintessential, more reasonable, and more 'objective' (Federico, 1994:185). Under the terms of fixed Victorian sexual roles, masculinity implies dominance while femininity implies submission. Brontë, on the other hand, does not adhere to associating state of domination and submission to gender (Cohen, 2003:448). Unlike some female writers, who use male narrators, but create a tale revolving around the heroine and a female plot, Brontë's narrator is narrating his own story, while the story of a heroine is secondary. Federico (1994) claims that, in order to understand Victorian attitude towards feminine and masculine, it is important to take this into account; even the title of a novel may make an attempt to raise expectations regarding plot, literary value, and even language. Brontë's narrator uses language that is defined as masculine, according to Dave Spender's use of gender differences as described by linguists: men's speech is "*forceful, efficient, blunt, authoritative, serious, effective, sparing and masterful*" (as quoted in Federico,

1994:199). Female narrators frequently adopt this style of speech for their narrators in order to conceal specific ‘feminine’ inclinations.

The language and the voice of the male protagonist can serve the purpose of putting forward for consideration sexual equality. In favor of this goes the fact that Brontë’s books were called ‘masculine’ by contemporary reviewers. While Gilbert and Gubar describe the voice of William Crimsworth as ‘*curiously androgynous*’, Federico, in contrast, finds it aggressively masculine throughout his narrative; there is no feminine apologizing, nor womanly code of compliance with social mores. Literary qualities assigned to men are identified by Showalter as “*power, breadth, distinctness, clarity, learning...shrewdness, knowledge of life, and humor*”, going hand in hand with “*masculine faults*” such as “*coarseness and passion*” – and Crimsworth’s voice approximates all of these, which leads us to conclusion that Brontë writes like a man (Federico, 1994:187-188).

Brontë took the liberty of being extreme, which is why the protagonist’s voice gives an impression of false machismo – he is a man and thus has the right to say what he wants. Even though Crimsworth tells us “*I always speak quietly*” (Brontë, 1998:24), and regardless of his physical weaknesses – describing himself as short-sighted, thin and delicate - his voice suggests confidence: “*to scout myself as a privileged prig*” (Brontë, 1998:107), and “*Stuff! I have cut them*” (Brontë, 1998:59). As Simone de Beauvoir (as quoted in Federico, 1994:189) says, “*The most mediocre of males feels himself a demigod compared with women*”, and so is Crimsworth; he has an Eton education, choice of profession, influential male friends (Hunsden, Brown, Vandenhutten) who help him out. Moglen implies that gender in the novel is a symbol denoting power; Crimsworth as a man, hence, by default gets granted social and psychological advantages over female heroines like Jane Eyre or Lucy Snowe. Newton claims he possesses four qualities that define power in Victorian society, namely: education, money, mobility, and autonomy (Federico, 1994:189).

All the same, at the beginning of *The Professor*, the protagonist is a victim of male victimization: first of his uncles, who refused to financially aid his dying mother, and then of his tyrant older brother for whom he has been working as a clerk. In the first five chapters of the novel, Brontë uses word ‘slave’ to his situation to emphasize his resentment towards being treated as an inferior by other men. Kappeler asserts that here “*the status of the slave is not in itself objectionable or dehumanizing, it is only so in the context of a male being held a slave, that is to say, held like a woman*” (Federico, 1994:189). Crimsworth has been effeminized, and Brontë understands that. On the other hand, the language that Brontë’s heroines (Jane and Lucy in particular) use, though going through similar hardships, cannot be compared to Crimsworth’s ferocious resentment. His position, being described in the self-satisfied tones of masculine authority, does not evoke sympathy in readers (Federico, 1994:190).

As de Beauvoir (as quoted in Federico, 1994:187) nicely discloses: “*In order to be a complete individual, on an equality with man, woman must have access to the masculine world as does the male to the feminine world, she must have access to the other*”. That other, however, was not always possible; for Brontë, a world occupied by men was closed to her observation, it was mysterious and impenetrable. Carolyn Heilbrun claims: “*No woman writer struggled as [Brontë] struggled against the judgments of sexual polarization*” (as quoted in Federico, 1994:189). If this claim is to be accepted, *The Professor* may be read as Brontë’s earliest effort to come face to face with the ideology of separate spheres (Federico, 1994:187-189).

Federico (1994:185) explains that, since narrative authority abides by, instead of defying “*hierarchical, patriarchal norms*” (Cohan and Shires in Federico, 1994:185), we are able to comprehend how women writers who use the male narrator perceive gender relations, and how they reproduce masculinity while choosing male language, preoccupations, and actions, together with dominant discourse. Federico explains that, in *The Professor*, Brontë is learning what it is to have the power of authorship. She wanted to be a professional novelist even more

than her sisters Emily and Anne, and as Lanser (1992:7) explains it: “*regardless of any woman writer’s ambivalence toward authoritative institutions and ideologies, the act of writing a novel and seeking to publish it...is implicitly a quest for discursive authority: a quest to be heard, respected, believed, a hope of influence*”.

### **6.3. Gender Issue in *The Professor***

The aim of the protagonist William Crimsworth is to acquire financial independence and social status, in addition to searching for his own identity. He wants to escape from the restraints of his way of life by working hard to gain autonomy. William then quits working for his brother and sets out in the world. Brontë succeeded in making her protagonist’s desire for financial security realistic and relatable. She could, however, further research these issues only with her female protagonists. Crimsworth was a man, which means he already had particular privileges, which gave an impression of him achieving his goals in a much easier way. He shows his superiority and dominance working as a teacher in a class full of young girls, even to his future wife who was his pupil first (Gregusova, 2017:51):

*“I saw the new pupil was puzzled at first with the novelty of the form and language; once or twice she looked at me with a sort of painful solicitude, as not comprehending at all what I meant; then she was not ready when the others were, she could not write her phrase so fast as they did; I would not help her, I went on relentless. She looked at me; her eye said most plainly, ‘I cannot follow you.’ I disregarded the appeal, and, carelessly leaning back in my chair, glancing from time to time with a nonchalant air out of the window, I dictated a little faster”*  
(Brontë, 1998:146)

Crimsworth’s urge to show his dominance became even more obvious when he fell in love with the directress of the school, Mademoiselle Zoraide Reuter, who was his superior in

status. After finding out she is engaged to another, he starts to treat her with aversion and cold politeness, showing her that in spite of her superior social status, he is above her in terms of gender. His new love interest becomes Frances Henri, his pupil. He succeeds in making Mademoiselle Reuter jealous, which gives him pleasure. After finding a new job as a professor at a college, Crimsworth achieves financial security, as his wage is exceptionally high, as well as good social position. His wife, though compliant and gentle, shows a glimpse of Brontë's female protagonists in her; she agrees to marry Crimsworth only if she may continue to work as a teacher. In the end of the novel, she shows her disappointment with her earning less money than her husband does. Her ambition was to open the school, which she ultimately does, with her husband's permission. This contributes to an easy transition towards Brontë's employment of a female character in the central position, in her future novels (Gregusova, 2017:52).

## **7. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre***

*Jane Eyre* is Charlotte Brontë's most famous novel, written between August 1846 and March 1847 at home in Haworth. It was the critique aimed at her first novel *The Professor*, describing it as dreary and unappealing, which prompted her to revise her style, making it imaginative and exciting. Her efforts have been awarded, as *Jane Eyre* was accepted by the first publisher Brontë sent it to, and its popularity was instant. This global popularity does not, however, mean that *Jane Eyre* did not receive fair amount of criticism itself. The novel was frequently criticized for its moral dissolution. Critics were not only surprised, but also offended by the heroine's willfulness, her sensed disrespect for figures of authority, and by her attraction to such an ethically suspicious hero as Rochester. She was, however, praised for the novel's composition; for the excitement, suspense, and forcefulness. Moreover, the disapproval was expressed because of Brontë's reliance on coincidence. Some critics, such as Lewis, asserted

they knew at once that it was a woman writer hiding behind the male pseudonym. Others, such as Elizabeth Rigby and Edwin P. Whipple branded *Jane Eyre*, as well as its creator, Currer Bell, as unethical. Rigby went so far as to say it was “*an anti-Christian composition*” written in “*horrid taste*” and regarded its heroine as “*unregenerate*” and “*ungrateful*”. She deemed the possible consequences of such a literary work to be not only offensive, but socially dangerous as well. One could conclude that Rigby’s discontent with *Jane Eyre* derived from her reluctant recognition of the novel’s power. Rigby must have been alarmed by the thought of a young woman (Jane herself) being so self-reliant and opinionated, which is why she rebuked such behavior as asocial and irreligious (Bloom, 2008:71).

The plot of the novel creates the impression of a melodramatic story with strong influences of the Gothic novel, the elements of which are found in the character of Rochester – the Byronic hero, who conceals his past and lives in a mysterious mansion, whose secrets are to be revealed by the heroine. (Kovačević et al. 1983:259). Brontë in this novel focuses on romance in terms of fairy or folk tales and Gothic romance – indeed, the tone of the novel switches from realistic to romantic when Jane falls in love with Rochester (Gurman, 2010:7).

*Jane Eyre* can be categorized as female Bildungsroman – it is a “*narrative which traces a process of individual self-development within society*” (Gurman, 2010:5) – as it follows the growth of Jane from a child to a young woman. The female Bildungsroman narrates the story of a character with limited mobility, education, and freedom, unlike male Bildungsroman, which describes development based on education, apprenticeship, and choice (Gurman, 2010:5).

Karen Rowe, however, indicates that the plot of *Jane Eyre* is more similar to the romantic fairy tale than to the traditional Bildungsroman, which deals with maturation process of the protagonist, both morally and psychologically. Brontë, just like Jane, cherishes elements of fairy tales and gothic romances for the reason that they express numerous possibilities, which



Jane at first believes are outside of blandness of her daily life. Helene Moglen affirms that both Jane and “*Brontë did not write of what was, but of what could be*”, and by introducing these fairy tale and gothic elements, they are able to create a world that is both real and unreal – joined together into a whole. Barker agrees with Moglen, stating that “*the joy of the imaginary kingdoms [in Brontë’s writing] was that different elements, no matter how incompatible or incongruous in real life, could be brought together to form the backdrop for the stories*” (Simpson, 2008:7).

### **7.1. Narration in *Jane Eyre***

By writing her novel from the first-person point of view, Brontë gave life to her heroine Jane, making her the ‘I’ of her work. The novel is strengthened by Jane’s confident and bold narration. This audacity is created by the author when the protagonist announces: “*Speak I must*” (Brontë, 2010:31). Jane is allowed to speak freely in the novel, either to vent her anger or frustration towards Mrs. Reed, or to express her true feelings towards Rochester (Rajan, 2016):

“*Do you think I am an automaton? - a machine without feelings? and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! - I have as much soul as you - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal - as we are!*” (Brontë, 2010:255)

At the beginning of the tenth chapter, Jane herself informs us that “*this is not to be a regular autobiography: I am only bound to invoke memory where I know her responses will possess some degree of interest*” (Brontë, 2010:82). Jane, evidently, turns aside from the limitations of memory (as well as Lucy in Brontë’s *Villette*) by way of leaving out particular parts of her life and inserting stories that would arouse her readers’ curiosity and amuse them (Simpson, 2008:). She intervenes in her own story, wanting us to notice that someone is writing, and that someone has the power over this narrative (Gibson, 2014:55). Gilbert finds it fascinating, since autobiography is non-fictional and truthful by its very nature; it is a chronological description of a person’s life by that person. *Jane Eyre* is, however, a work of fictional narrative. Gilbert (2013) furthermore observes that the element of autobiography provides Brontë with the ability to evade some of the problems encountered by the novelists, for instance, creating a story where all the events interconnect. Apart from containing many settings and events that are, in essence, Gothic, *Jane Eyre* is fairly realistic, especially concerning descriptions of the Lowood school and its filthy conditions. According to Gilbert (2013), what makes the novel so alluring is the presence of the realism in its psychology; Brontë captivates the reader by means of believable emotional responses she creates. Her narrative is shaped around Jane’s constant strive to find love and justice in the world. These two themes are very different in the course of the novel; they are, however, brought together when young Jane finds out about Rochester’s mentally ill wife. This is when she has to evaluate her need for just treatment and her desire for Rochester’s love. Jane’s need for justice prevails and she leaves Thornfield Hall. Furthermore, the themes come together again when St. John Rivers asks her to marry him. He offers her a loveless marriage built around a plan for mutual service. Now, she is in the need of love that prevails, and she rejects him, not wanting to live in loveless, though ‘just’ marriage (Gilbert, 2013:15-16).

## 7.2. Jane's 'Gentle Reader'

Brontë created Jane's ideal reader so she will have someone who will listen attentively to what she has to say. A great number of people that Jane meets through the course of the novel treat her cruelly and unfairly. Moreover, she is often silenced, not only by her rivals, but by her friends as well (Mrs. Reed, Bessie, Miss Temple, Mr. Brocklehurst, Helen Burns, Mr. Rochester). She is not completely and carefully listened to nor heard, which is precisely the reason why Brontë decided to provide her with a good listener. Even though she has couple of friends throughout the novel, Jane confides in the readers, considering them her only way to share important happenings in her life, as Berg observes, it "*inspire[s] a sense of intimacy with the heroine (rather like whispering gossip into the reader's ear)*". The most important reason, which makes Jane rely on her reader, is that he/she is a sympathetic friend, always ready to listen to her stories seriously and without cutting her short, like her friends in the novel do (Monin, 2010:15).

Monin (2010:15) points out that there are two Jane Eyre characters that need to be differentiated. A large part of the book is dedicated to what is happening in the life of the younger Jane character; from her early years to young adulthood. Jane-the-narrator is telling the story of Jane-the-character, a younger version of herself.

The narrative perspective of the novel is only later clearly characterized as that of the thirty-year-old Mrs. Rochester. However, its distance from the action has been indirectly stated all through the novel. In addition, the difference between the composed judgment of the narrator and the agitation of the young Jane is notably emphasized surprisingly early – in Chapter 2 (Millgate, 1968:315):

*"What a consternation of soul was mine that dreary afternoon! How all my brain was in tumult, and all my heart in insurrection! Yet in what darkness, what dense ignorance, was the mental battle*

*fought! I could not answer the ceaseless inward question — why I thus suffered; now, at the distance of — I will not say how many years, I see it clearly”* (Brontë, 2010:9).

The older version of Jane is now married to Rochester; as she declares in the last chapter: *“I have now been married ten years”* (Brontë, 2010:460), and the rest of this paragraph continues with a celebration of their marital bliss (Millgate, 1968:315). She is smarter now and looks back on behavior of her younger self, which was often less than angelic. Lanser (1992:179) affirms: *“the narrator looks back with sharp moral distance at the younger character and can tell her story only because she has changed”*. She furthermore accounts for the lack of addresses during Jane’s stay at Gateshead Hall and Lowood School as *“distinction [...] between the experiencing child and the narrating adult”*. Young Jane often gets in trouble with her cousins and aunt because of her quarrelsome attitude, and she has no real family or friends in her life. Through finding a friend in the reader, and looking back on her childhood, Jane-the-narrator manages to grow and cure the wounds she suffered in her lifetime. The reader – her only friend, helps her through friendly guidance and assistance to grow emotionally and to verify her past (Monin, 2010:16).

Rubenius explains that Jane’s story takes place during the period in which women are not recognized as individuals, but are simply their husband’s property, and patriarchal domination is clear throughout her life. While men are making decisions, protecting and providing for the family, women are expected to be, as Gordon says *“saintly, yielding, forgiving and faithful”*. Likewise, Jane is deprived of the right to say what she thinks, she is expected to be docile, and this is where addressing the reader becomes Jane’s way out in a patriarchal society (Monin, 2010:16).

Jane reveals her opinion to the reader at the beginning of Chapter 2, only at the end of the novel did we find out that it is written by older and therefore wiser Mrs. Rochester:

*“I was conscious that a moment’s mutiny had already rendered me liable to strange penalties, and, like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved, in my desperation, to go all lengths”* (Brontë, 2010:6).

Here, it is clear that she does not approve the behavior of her younger self, who is angry, fiery, and quick to accuse. Moreover, what leads us to think that Jane speaking is an adult Jane and not Jane-child is the use of the past tense – *‘I felt’* (Monin, 2010:17).

In addition to addressing the reader, Brontë uses special grammatical tools in order to draw the reader into her story – this can be noted in both *Villette* and *The Professor*, which make the relationship between narrator and reader even stronger. Brontë uses long dashes ( – ) throughout the novel in order to suggest to reader that there is a pause in speech. First of all, it is supposed to make the reader pause and think about what is made known by the narrator. What is more important is that it acts as a pause in speech does; during face-to-face conversation, meaningful pauses are noticed when speaker stops speaking on purpose to convey a dramatic emphasis. This is when readers know they are being directly addressed. An example of such an intimate conversation between two close people is when Jane cries out: *“Reader! – I forgave him at that moment, and on the spot”* (Brontë, 2010:302). It is on her wedding day that Jane finds out about Mr. Rochester already being married to Bertha, the deranged woman in the attic. After he somewhat explains the situation they find themselves in, Jane addresses the reader with the exclamation: *“Reader!”* it feels as if she has called out our own name. It makes us pay attention to what the speaker is about to say, and is another way that makes Jane’s address to her reader private – she graces us with the revelation of forgiveness. After she has our attention, Jane is going to reveal why her announcement is significant and why she addresses us - the readers, with such emotion - this is where the use of the dash becomes important. Rochester is forgiven the moment Jane sees *“remorse in his eyes [and the] unchanged love in his whole look and mien”* (Brontë, 2010:302). The progress of Jane’s relationship with her reader can be seen in her change from childhood at Gateshead Hall to womanhood at Thornfield Hall. Jane’s need

to communicate with a sympathetic, tender, kind other - at the beginning and middle of her life - can be realized only by her faithful reader (Monin, 2010:19).

### **7.3. Issue of Gender in *Jane Eyre***

The significance of the social hierarchy in the novel about a girl Jane Eyre should not be overlooked. Her story highlights the importance of a social class of the Victorian era. As an engaged writer, Charlotte Brontë advocates gender equality. As Bennett (2010) puts it, Jane Eyre's 'I' has been widely understood as a model of engaging and empowered female voice. Brontë is particularly disturbed by the prejudices that place women in a subordinate position, and do not allow them to be educated and developed in accordance with their abilities. The author is also offended by the women's deprivation of freedom to express their feelings (Kovačević et al. 1983:261). Brontë provides her readers with perceptive confirmation of how women of the Victorian era had to fight to be recognized as equals to men in their repressive patriarchal society. She has accomplished this through the eyes of her first-person heroine. Jane is confronted with different types of constraints throughout the novel, which is why Victorian women could relate to her character. As a woman, Jane was expected to behave in a certain manner; she should have been submissive, compliant and modest. Behaving in any other way was considered crude and improper. This is why Jane had kept down her ardent feelings since she was a child. She learned to hide her true feelings. However, throughout the novel, Jane experienced humiliation, violence, and passionate love (Gregusova, 2017:62).

As a child, Jane is bullied by her cousin John, who punishes her for reading a book. Being faced with this lack of justice, her inner-self revolts. Yet another oppressor she meets as a child is Mr. Brocklehurst, who represents male superiority and tyranny. He demonstrates his power by shaming and intimidating girls and female teachers in the school of which he is a head

master. Jane's stay at the school is made bearable with a help of a kindhearted teacher, Miss Temple and young student Helen Burns who show her how to defy cruelty with love, trust and joint work. Another man on her path is Mr. Rochester, her employer with whom she fell in love. As her master, he is in a superior position. Their relationship, however, is based on flourishing friendship. Rochester is the only person with whom Jane is able to have an intellectual conversation, during which they would challenge each other. Rochester's curiosity is aroused precisely by Jane's boldness and intelligence. She is not afraid to speak her mind in his presence and does not see the reason why she should as she is "*a free human being with an independent will*" (Brontë, 2010:256). Another groundbreaking instance of the novel is Rochester's acknowledgment of Jane as his equal – after all, she is but a female servant and a poor girl without any social status. Looking at it from the Victorian society's point of view, she is basically no one. Rochester, however, got to know her as a person and explained why he sees her as his equal, having never met a woman courageous like her (Gregusova, 2017:62-64):

*"I never met your likeness. Jane: you please me, and you master me – you seem to submit, and I like the sense of pliancy you impart; and while I am twining the soft, silken skein round my finger, it sends a thrill up my arm to my heart. I am influenced – conquered; and the influence is sweeter than I can express; and the conquest I undergo has a witchery beyond any triumph I can win"* (Brontë, 2010:263).

Their love and equality is concluded with his proposal: "*My bride is here, because my equal is here, and my likeness. Jane, will you marry me?*" (Brontë, 2010:257). However, Jane is worried because she desires an equal marriage, but is aware of inferiority of her status, as Mrs. Fairfax reminds her of it. After revealing that Rochester is already married, Jane leaves him as she knows that living as his mistress would make her even more inferior, but also insecure. Yet another test is laid before her when her relative St. John, who saved her along with his sisters (both physically and psychologically), asks her to marry him and go with him

to India. What this means for Jane is having the opportunity to travel the world with her honorable husband and have a purpose as a missionary. In fact, St. John offered her everything Rochester could not, except for love. She refuses his proposal as love is to her of equal importance. Jane finally comes back to Rochester, after ‘hearing’ him calling for her. At this point, she is in a considerably better social position as she inherited a significant sum of money, while Rochester decreased in superiority after losing his house, arm and sight in fire. They are now truly equal and depending on each other. Moreover, Rochester is now a widower, since Bertha died in the fire, and can marry Jane legally (Gregusova, 2017:65).

There is a case where Brontë appears to express her own feelings (that she ought to have experienced at some point, considering her life) through her narrator-character, Jane Eyre’s frustration in the undermentioned passage must be taken into account:

*“It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, to absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex”* (Brontë, 2010:109).

Pollard defines this as passionate feminism, and the moment in which Jane becomes archetypal woman – she becomes a representative in women’s external rebellion against the restrictions imposed on them. She gives power to the phrase *“but women feel just as men feel”*



(Brontë, 2010) through the feeling of being wronged, and the accusation of men being narrow-minded is ensuing (Pollard, 1968:109).

Brontë in the end managed to depict equal marriage. In spite of rigid conventionalities of their time and in a most unlikely way, they found their way to each other. By including moral struggles and the issue of gender and equality, Brontë made this novel, which in other circumstances would be considered simple, more important and relatable. In the time of the Victorian era, this was considered innovative and unprecedented (Gregusova, 2017:65-66).

## **8. Charlotte Brontë's *Villette***

*Villette*, Brontë's last and darkest novel, situated almost fully in Brussels, is an introspective analysis of its protagonist Lucy Snowe – a solitary British schoolteacher. Its plot possesses almost the same characteristics as that of *The Professor*. However, *Villette* is Brontë's more directly autobiographical novel (Cohen, 2003:449). Many of Brontë's own experiences of her time in Belgium are being summoned up in the novel; such as the image of her Belgian schoolmaster Héger, thinly disguised in the hero of the novel – Paul Emmanuel. The novel was greeted with mixed reviews; while most of the critics expressed their admiration for its complex psychological portraiture and at the same time deemed it dreary and its ending aggravatingly hazy, others regarded it as gruesome and unpleasant. However, some readers hold that *Villette* is greater in quality, considering its maturity and depth, than *Jane Eyre*. Brontë herself was aware of some features of *Villette* that would be later criticized by the readers, for instance Lucy Snowe's morbid nature and her lack of emotion, but justifies such portrayal as faithful to Lucy's experience (Bloom, 2008:101).

Brontë decides to deal with the first-person narrative in this novel too, as well as include her personal experience. Even though she already interpreted her memories in her first novel,

it was only in this novel that she managed to completely elaborate her experiences, since she chose a woman as her first-person narrator. However, the narrator should not be confused with the author. Lucy Snowe is seen as Brontë's alter-ego through which she could explore her inner, wild emotions. Furthermore, Lucy is a character that shares some of author's experiences. Lucy as a narrator is, at the very beginning of the novel, vague and ambiguous. It becomes clear, through the restricted observations of her surroundings that she chooses to share, that she does not tell everything to her readers, which makes them curious about her character. This will be further discussed below (Gregusova, 2017:82).

### **8.1. Lucy's 'Educated and Critical Reader'**

The intensity, with which Lucy Snowe addresses the reader in Brontë's *Villette*, in addition to the number of times she does it, makes it clear just how much she needs a considerate and supportive reader. Lucy addressing the reader continually throughout the novel gives an impression of her being distressed, companionless, and at many times unconfident persona, whose need for a connection with a friend seems desperate. Monin (2010:44) furthermore observes that Lucy addresses the reader more often than characters from Brontë's other novels mentioned above. Moreover, she attributes certain and, at many times, critical qualities to her reader which points to her being critical of others, in addition to being afraid of harsh judgment.

Lucy, as a narrator, encourages us to suspect the 'truth' she offers the reader. Brontë constructed a narrator who draws our awareness to her own unreliableness with the intention of disrupting our own belief in undisputed theories about what a narrative of a life should look like (Fletcher, 1992:735). The reader is confused because Brontë, along with her heroine, conceals the information from the reader on purpose, with intention of prompting him or her to search for the meaning for this exclusion of truth (Brokaw, 2011:1). As opposed to Jane, who

was expressive, honest and straightforward, Lucy reveals herself extremely slowly, with her narrative being explicitly unreliable. As a matter of fact, the readers get to know her name only in Chapter 2 when she herself reveals it: “*I, Lucy Snowe...*” (Gregusova, 2017:82).

As stated by O’Dea (1988:41), Brontë has constructed Lucy as a narrative experiment; the narrator which is both remote and arrogant towards the reader, but at the same time remains informative and affectionate. Moglen explains this contradictory nature is referred to right at the beginning; in the protagonist’s name – Lucy Snowe that brings together entirely dissimilar elements of warm light and freezing cold. Brontë created her to make the readers nervous and worried; she just wants to provoke a complex reaction – alienation along with victimization, and with a certain extent of sympathetic connection (O’Dea, 1988:41-42). By slowly revealing her heroine, Brontë managed to create a mysterious character, whose consciousness is not easy to explore, which makes the moments when Lucy decides to open her mind to readers much more rewarding (Gregusova, 2017:82). According to Monin (2010:40), Lucy expects from her readers to critique negatively. However, when it comes to reading Dr. John’s letters (which she does with intense attention), Lucy shapes a reading practice that is both kinder and more engrossed. What helps us in ascertainment of Lucy’s constant remarks to her reader is author’s own state of mind in the time of writing the novel, which plays a big part in the episodes that are revealed throughout the course of the novel.

According to critics, *Villette* is a direct response to a negative evaluation of Brontë’s first novel, *The Professor*, and in addition a comment to her own state of mind. After the last of her siblings - Anne, passed away, Charlotte Brontë was feeling lonely, and this novel reflects times she spent in solitude. Monin does not agree with critics, such as Newman, who claims that “*direct address is a rarer phenomenon in Villette than in Jane Eyre*” (Monin, 2010:41). The critics gave little attention to the importance of Lucy’s addresses to the reader, which are the elements of a predominant part of the novel. Furthermore, they were unwilling to see the

connection between loneliness, solitude, and protagonist's need to address the reader. On account of the fact that Jane addresses her reader with such emotion, Newman came to conclusion that Lucy's cautious addresses '*drive the story she is telling*' (Monin, 2010:41), and nothing more – since Lucy's fearful expectations toward her reader lead to disconnection. Monin (2010:41) furthermore claims that critics failed to notice Lucy's aspiration and need to communicate with others, and the reader in particular. She has a large number of ideas, views, and beliefs, but is unable to share them with people surrounding her, which is precisely why she sees her reader as the only alternative of a communication with a reliable friend. The main reason behind Lucy's frequent addresses to her reader are nothing less than her solitude and her need for social interaction with others.

Lucy Snowe, as she is portrayed by Brontë, is condemned to a solitary life, since she is incapable of finding a friend who is deserving of her trust during her travels. Regardless of her coming across a number of people, there is not a single person who is devoted to being a loyal friend to her (Monin, 2010:41).

Lucy's feelings of solitude and loneliness throughout the novel can be connected to Brontë's own emotional state at the time of the novel composition. Charlotte lost all three of her siblings who passed away within eight months of each other. The change from having three constant companions to being completely alone has taken its toll on Charlotte's state of mind. She took care of her siblings during their illness; she was not only grieved, but exhausted as well. The letters she wrote and which have been collected after her death by Elizabeth Gaskell in a book *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) can indicate Charlotte's mental state during that time (Monin, 2010:42).

Monin (2010:) underlines the importance of the way Brontë forms Lucy's reader as an educated person – with the purpose of Lucy having someone she can identify with. An example of Lucy's determination to tell her story and find an educated friend who would be her equal is

the use of language; during conversation with her colleagues in Villette, Lucy uses a newly learned language, French. At the beginning of the novel, English is the only language used by Lucy and those that surround her. Lucy's use of English becomes entangled with French as she travels to a French speaking country and learns the language, which is when her desire for educated, thought provoking conversation and company. From this point forward, she repeatedly subjects her reader to the French language, but does not offer translation of what other people are saying. She presumes her reader speaks French, for if he/she does not, his/her role as a sympathetic friend is endangered.

Regardless of Lucy's desperate need of a compassionate friend, many a time during her addresses she is extremely critical towards her reader. This was noted by Gregory O'Dea, who says of Lucy: "*Brontë instills in that character a perverse, forbidding attitude toward the reader. Lucy Snowe is designed to keep the reader 'on edge'; to elicit a complex response, combining in the reader a sense of alienation and victimization with a degree of sympathetic affinity*" (O'Dea, 1988:41). Every now and then, she gives her reader characteristics, accusing them of being hard and judgmental towards her. When it comes to figuring out the reason for which Lucy uses such harsh words, O'Dea's statement becomes particularly significant. We have to consider that Lucy is often in a state of agitation; her words indicate how unbelievably insecure she is. She assumes that reader actually judges her and finds fault with her. She imposes on her reader critical reaction to her own feelings. Brontë uses these addresses with a purpose of trying to obtain readers' sympathy and kindness for her protagonist (Monin, 2010:45).

Lucy addresses her reader critically during the long school vacation when she feels particularly lonely. Characteristics she attributes to us, her readers, are not at all flattering, on the contrary: "*Religious reader, you will preach to me a long sermon about what I have just written, and so will you, moralist: and you, stern sage: you stoic, will frown; you, cynic, sneer;*

*you, epicure, laugh*” (Brontë, 2005:156). As Monin (2010:45-46) points out, Lucy is letting her insecurities get the best of her and by being hard on her reader - because of how she perceives he/she is going to react, she is unintentionally being harsh with herself. She is not, however, trying to turn away her reader friend through this hostile characterization, but is (as a consequence of being in her worst state, since she is completely alone at the present moment in the novel) projecting all of these feelings (that she is going through herself) onto the only person she can confide in. Another instance of Lucy’s recognition of a critical reader is immediately after meeting Ginevra, while she is firmly trying to locate Villette: “*Before you pronounce on the rashness of the proceeding, reader, look back to the point whence I started; consider the desert I had left, note how little I perilled: mine was the game where the player cannot lose and may win*” (Brontë, 2005:61). This unprovoked explanation leads us to believe that she, in fact, might think her endeavor to find Villette is perilous, seeing that she has the need to defend herself to her reader, assuming him/her will see the flaws of her decision, and have a low opinion of her. Apart from criticizing her reader, she also calls him/her ‘*sensible*’. It can be concluded, through all these traits assigned to the reader, that Lucy truly thinks highly of her reader (Monin, 2010:46-47).

Apart from being critical of her reader, in several occasions Lucy appears to be suspicious of his/her interest in her narrative. For instance, when we are asked about particular event in her life: “*The reader will, perhaps, remember the description of Madame Beck’s fete; nor will he have forgotten that at each anniversary a handsome present was subscribed for and offered by the school*” (Brontë, 2005:332). There is another case where Lucy gives an impression of accusing and analyzing her reader’s presence during her narrative, it is her choice of words that leads us to believe so: “*Has the reader forgotten Miss Ginevra Fanshawe?*” (Brontë, 2005:85). It is important to Lucy that we remember this because friends remember small things (Monin, 2010:47).

*Villette* is defined by Crosby (1984:715) as both the compelling narrative of a woman's accession to her proper place and a text which continually displaces identities and definitions. According to her, Brontë's last novel is doomed to vary from a norm, which by definition leaves its author out of the traditional voice of coherent and non-contradictory authority, since it is written about a woman and by a woman. She furthermore claims it is impossible to make woman, or her writing, stay in the proper station.

## 8.2. Lucy's Heretic Narrative

The word heretic comes from the Greek *hairitikos*, which means 'able to choose', and it is precisely this ability that Lucy's narrative wants to preserve (Johnson, 1990:618). According to Kazan (1990:543), heretic, on a religious level, is someone who is in a conflict with established church dogma, particularly that of Roman Catholicism. She does not, however, hold her narrative heretic because she is Protestant and proud. Kazan (1990) thinks it is doubtful, since Lucy is not preoccupied with religious matter. Davison, on the other hand, explains Lucy's narrative is heretic because of its Protestant and proto-feminist points of view (Hoeveler, Morse, 20016:393).

Heresy, on the secular level, is merely that which is nonconformist, which deviates from standard practice or belief (Kazan, 1990:543). Lucy herself calls her narrative heretic:

*“Did I, do you suppose, reader, contemplate venturing again within that worthy priest's reach? As soon should I have thought of walking into a Babylonish furnace... the probabilities are that had I visited Numero 10, Rue des Mages, at the hour and day appointed, I might just now, instead of writing this heretic narrative, be counting my beads in the cell of a certain Carmelite convent on the Boulevard of Crecy, in Villette”* (Brontë, 2005:161).

In a way, *Villette* indeed is a heretic narrative, since it is considered an unconventional story of its time; there is an isolated, plain, estimable young woman who falls in love with two men (which is unexpected for a nineteenth-century female protagonist). One of them is attractive and conservative, while the other is peculiar and not handsome. There is a quality regarding heroine's approach that can be called heretic – it is her leaving out the memories: “*Instead of sinking on the steps as I intended, I seemed to pitch headlong down an abyss. I remember no more*” (Brontë, 2005:162). With these words closes Volume 1 of the novel. It is because Lucy awards herself the power of deity that makes her narrative heretic – at the end of the novel, she is the one who is all-seeing, all-powerful and ultimately alone (Kazan, 1990:544).

Johnson (1990:629) sees the heresy in heroine's split narrative – this can be seen at the end of the novel when Lucy leaves to the reader to choose the ending of her story if they wish so. As it is stated by Fletcher (1992:742), she gives the readers enough information to create M. Paul Emanuel's death, or choose sunshine instead of storm. The readers become the participants in her heresy, and she is left swinging back and forth between two sides of her narrative, which according to Johnson (1990:629) provides her with freedom.

### **8.3. Issue of Gender in *Villette***

Brontë examines the theme of the gender issue in all of her novels mentioned here. She does it in a setting with the protagonist's personalities, and circumstances of their storylines. In this particular novel, Brontë describes the issue from her personal experience, since this novel concerns more personal side of it. Brontë continues to criticize society as the main source of the constraints of the society in which women are discouraged to express their inner feelings and talents. In order to survive, Lucy is forced to find work, before which she lived as a typical middle-class woman, of which she gives a metaphor (Gregusova, 2017:87):



*“...I will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass – the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven, his eyes closed: buried, if you will, in a long prayer. A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?”* (Brontë, 2005:36-37)

Lucy then finds herself all alone in an unknown world, which is when the readers are allowed to slowly discover how her inner self suffers from the repressive society. Unlike Jane, Lucy is not fighting against her surroundings and the patriarchy, since none of the male characters in the novel is described as a tyrant who uses his gender superiority. Lucy's struggle is between her outer, rational self and her inner emotions that she keeps holding back. She even asks herself *“But if I feel, may I never express?”* (Brontë, 2005:225). It is the ‘Reason’ that promptly answers *“Never!”* (Brontë, 2005:225). It would be considered extremely unfeminine for a single woman such as Lucy to express her passionate feelings. Brontë, however, asserts that hiding inner feelings is unnatural and it can cause mental breakdown, which was experienced by her heroine after she denies to accept her feelings of love and passion (Gregusova, 2017:87).

Other female characters are complete opposites of the protagonist. They are confident as their social status grants them freedom in their actions. They use their connections and financial resources to get what they desire, adapting to the world they live in. Little Poly grows up to become beautiful and rich woman of Victorian expectations; Ginevra Fanshawe is willing to marry a man for his wealth, favoring social position over love; Madame Beck, smart and accomplished woman who became coldhearted in the process of attaining her professional success. Brontë shows that women rarely get everything – both emotional and professional accomplishments, without losing their identities. Lucy desires both freedom and love, but the latter seems unlikely for her to obtain, which is why she hides her feelings and focuses on work.

It is her colleague teacher Paul Emanuel who encourages her to open up. He challenges her, makes her angry and, finally, makes her fall in love with him. He sees in her “*young she wild creature, new caught, untamed, viewing with a mixture of fire and fear the first entrance of the breaker-in*” (Brontë, 2005:228). Through that love she receives from him, she learns to love herself and becomes a complete personality without experiencing guilt for openly expressing her feelings. Lucy does not get married like Jane; however, Brontë points out it is not marriage to be recognized as greatly longed for accomplishment for people, but acceptance of one’s mind and ending the suppression that restrains the psyche (Gregusova, 2017:87-88).

## **9. Brontë’s Narrators’ Congruences and Differences**

The situations Brontë is faced with in her own life at times express her worry with the ways in which her protagonists address their readers. She constructs the readers who are intended to fulfill the needs of that specific character – Jane Eyre is in want of a warm friend, which is why she addresses her reader in an affectionate manner; Lucy Snowe addresses her reader in a critical manner even though she needs to find a way out of loneliness; and William Crimsworth requires someone he could educate and he addresses his reader in a condescending manner in many cases. Brontë constructed each reader in a detailed way that empowers the character with a feeling of being loved and surrounded by friends, when there are not any. To sum up, all of the protagonists are, essentially, expecting the same feedback from the reader – love, compassion, tolerance. The protagonists’ need for a kind and emphatic friend is determined through a number of times they address the reader, a manner of addresses of each character, and Brontë’s own struggles in life. The reader is the only one who can provide the contentment the protagonists need, without having any ulterior motive (Monin, 2010:78).

William Crimsworth's reader in *The Professor* is designed in a different way than those designed for the heroines in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, notices Monin (2010:58). The only male main character out of the three novels in question, William, has the advantage over his female equivalents - on account of his gender. Jane and Lucy had to be submissive, to a certain extent, and were not allowed to express their opinions as much as they would like during their entire lives. When William addresses his reader, he displays patronizingly superior attitude, and has a tendency of instructing him/her on something. Such a behavior is a consequence of him having more freedom and being subjected to more equality than both of the female protagonists. This is not represented only in his addresses to the reader, but in the number of the addresses as well; William's reader has been spoken to no more than eleven times. Lundberg (1990:308) maintains that, by assuming the male narrative voice in *The Professor*, and by creating a communal relationship between herself and the reader who can understand her undermining of her narrator and his patriarchal community, Charlotte Brontë may be said to have overcome her own female silence and social isolation.

Jane's and Lucy's addresses to their readers, unlike William's, tend to be more amiable, tender, and mannerly. The number of times they turned to their readers is significantly higher too; Jane addressed her reader more than twice as much as William, twenty-six times to be precise, while Lucy communicated with her reader as many as fifty-two times. The absence of communication between the male protagonist and his reader is due to his gender – because he is a man, he is allowed to voice his opinions freely, even though people surrounding him may not have a good opinion of him. William does not rely on his reader for consolation, sympathy, and attention. Instead, he educates his reader, assuming he or she is ignorant; it is because of his social status – he is highly educated, wealthy from the beginning, and is able to achieve success in life relatively easier than female protagonists (Monin, 2010:58).

There is, however, one resemblance between the male and two female protagonists – the feeling of being the outsiders in their lives and within their own families. Even though William’s family helps him, he realizes he is different type of person than his uncles and brother, which places him in conflict with them. Jane, too, is being degraded and exposed to cruel acts from her closest blood relatives. Lucy, who is orphaned and lives with her godmother and her son, also feels like an outsider in the family. These situations, which lead to solitude, are precisely the reason behind each of the characters’ addresses to the reader; Jane is oftentimes silenced and, as a result, lonely; Lucy is convinced that people in her near vicinity continuously criticize her; William, who is treated condescendingly, patronizes those surrounding him in exchange. In spite of the fact that each of them is probably expecting different reaction and relationship with the reader, they are trying to achieve the same result – to find a kind, sympathetic someone, who will make them feel important, and that someone is their reader, who is listening unconditionally and helping them to move on with their lives successfully. To sum it up, the main reason behind Jane’s, Lucy’s, and William’s addresses to the reader is their need for a tolerant friend who will listen attentively to what they have to say (Monin, 2010:58).

## Conclusion

After reviewing the theory of narrative, it can be reported that the function of narrative is to tell a story and thus to 'report' facts (either fictive or real). It consists of someone describing something, instead of the event that is described.

The narrator is the central concept in the analysis of narrative texts. The notion of narrator is closely related to that of focalization. These two notions together cannot determine what has been called narration, because narrator is the only one that narrates, i.e. utters language. Furthermore, the focalizer may or may not be the same as the narrator.

By taking on the topics never used before at such length, Charlotte Brontë started a revolution in the literature of the Victorian era; it was a shocking revelation that Currer Bell was in fact a woman, since woman writing love stories from the female point of view and even letting her heroines clearly express their passions was something completely new in this time period.

The three novels by Charlotte Brontë discussed here are written entirely from the first-person point of view. These novels are dominated by the gift of speech and its equivalent silence, i.e., saying the words and hearing them spoken. The readers' silence is time and again pressured by the protagonists' continuous desire to converse with them. Brontë creates the readers who are intended to fulfill the needs of that specific character - Jane is in want of a warm friend, which is why she addresses her reader in an affectionate manner, and Lucy addresses her reader in a critical manner even though she needs to find a way out of loneliness. Crimsworth, on the other hand does not rely on his reader for consolation, sympathy, and attention. Instead, he educates his readers, assuming they are ignorant.

As an engaged writer, Charlotte Brontë advocates gender equality. Women were expected to behave in a certain manner; they should have been submissive, compliant and modest.

Behaving in any other way was considered crude and improper. This is why Brontë's female characters had kept down their passionate feelings. However, throughout the novel, Jane learns to speak her mind, and becomes equal to Rochester in every sense of this word. Lucy learns to love herself and does not feel guilty for openly expressing her feelings. Her male character already had particular privileges, which gave an impression of him achieving his goals in a much easier way, and he often showed the superiority of his gender. They all, however, share the feeling of being the outsiders in their lives.

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