

**Hana Radová, *A Critical Analysis of the Male Protagonists in the Brontë Sisters' Novels***  
BA thesis

Supervisor's Report

The BA thesis examines the male heroes in the novelistic masterpieces of the Brontë sisters: Heathcliff in Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, Rochester in Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and Huntingdon in Anne's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. The student does not approach these novels only as part of the early Victorian scene; on the contrary, she is aware of the strong Romantic legacy that informs the work of all the three writers and sees a number of affinities to Romantic figures. She also links this fact to the specific conditions of the authors' life in Yorkshire, a place remote from traditional cultural centres and characteristic of specific aspects of nature and rural life.

Heathcliff is viewed as an alien, invasive phenomenon disrupting the harmonious life of the microcosm of Wuthering Heights. In accord with David Cecil's reading she understands him as an elemental character, but at the same time admits that his status is more ambiguous – this is possible especially due to the fact that Heathcliff is a result of the multiple views/discourses of other characters, primarily Catherine, Nelly Dean and Lockwood. All these participate in the formation of Heathcliff as it is through their words that Heathcliff's figure is presented to the reader. The student thus sees these characters as various competing positions in whose interaction the character of Heathcliff is formed.

The chapter on Rochester is perhaps the finest part of the thesis. The student first points out the significance of Rochester's house, Thornfield Hall, which is in fact a variation of Bluebeard's mansion, secreting its master's morally problematic past. Then she neatly analyses the process through which both Jane and Rochester achieve "religious and moral equilibrium", after respective liberation from the restrictions of the past – in Jane's case not only from the tyrannical dominance of her relatives and teachers but also from the passive following of the principles of her role model, Helen Burns. The novel is thus presented as a bildungsroman showing the path to one's true and independent self.

Anne's novel is perhaps the least challenging one, as the character of Arthur Huntingdon is the least ambiguous. It is even problematic to call him a male protagonist and this is why two other major characters, Helen and Markham, get comparatively more space in this chapter. The student rightly reads the novel as a story of the disruption of domestic life and a possibility of its re-establishment. Perhaps a more detailed comparison with the two other novels would be useful, as the theme of reintegration is common to them all.

To conclude: Hana Radová's BA thesis proves the student's ability to analyse a literary text insightfully and cast light on the novels' complexities. It is my pleasure to recommend it for defence with a preliminary grade to be a one (**v ý b o r n ě**).

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PhDr. Zdeněk Beran, Ph.D.