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The Spaces of Charlotte Brontë's Writing:

Domesticity, Emigration and Markets in Victorian Women's Culture

by

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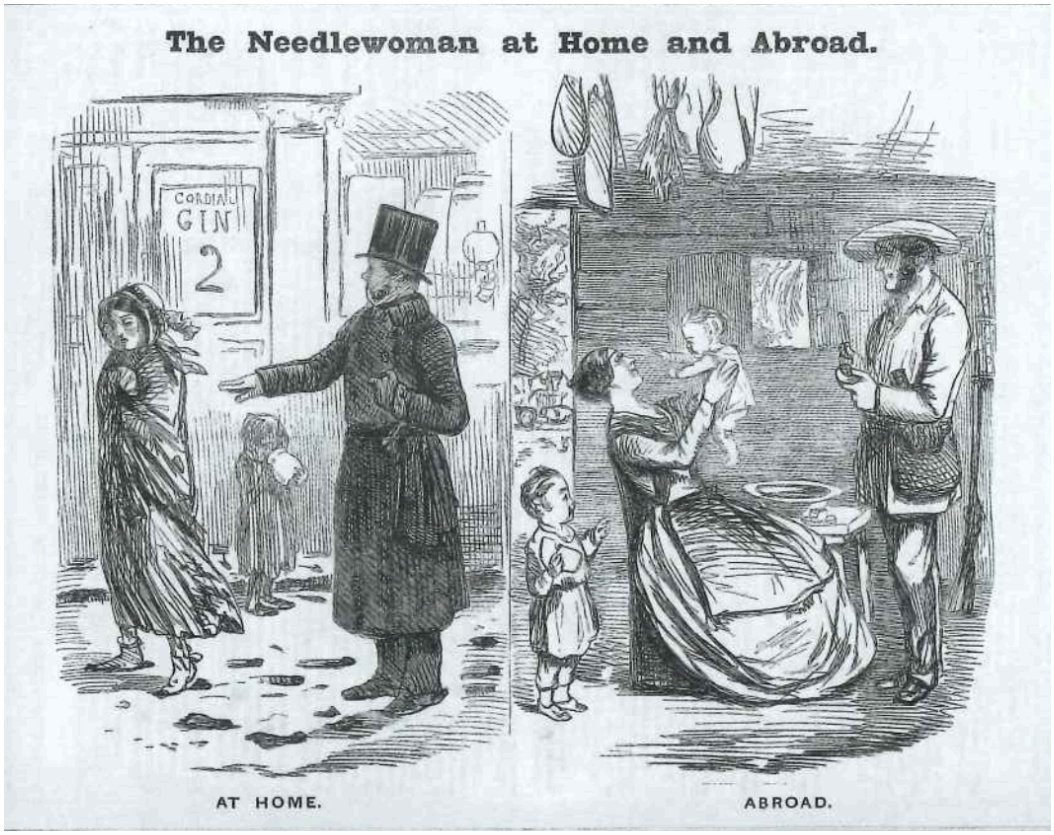

"The Needlewoman at Home and Abroad"

Punch, or the London Charivari. Vol. 18, January to June,
Punch publications, 1850, p. 15.
(*Punch*, 12 January 1850)

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Introduction

In her novels, Charlotte Brontë contextualises global spatiality by connecting geographically disparate spaces such as the British colonies and continental Europe with England, while also reflecting the regionality of her hometown, Yorkshire, the industrial area in northern England. Though Victorian women were socially required to cultivate their own domestic spaces and dedicate themselves to their families, Brontë creates a path for her female characters between the two spheres, private and public, by having them move not only geographically through female emigration but also financially through their participation in economic activities. While acknowledging Victorian domestic ideology, her fiction presents a unique solution for the contradiction between domesticity and women's financial independence by overlapping three key spaces: domesticity, emigration and markets. I use the word, "markets," polysemously to refer to markets of matrimony, labour, wine trade and financial transactions. This dissertation discusses how Brontë uses these key spaces to create her own complex literary space that illustrates to her female readers how to engage with society as well as how important female bonds can be in both the private and public spheres.

1. Brontë as a "Spinster" Writer

On 12 January 1850, *Punch* carried an illustration entitled "The Needlewoman at Home," which is the frontispiece in this dissertation. It shows the contrasting life of a woman in England and in a foreign country. On the left appears a lonely, ragged, miserable young woman in England. There is a pub advertising gin behind her. A hatted man is reaching out an admonishing hand towards her as if detecting a criminal. The picture on the right depicts a woman who builds a family after emigration abroad. She

smiles happily with her children and husband in a comfortable home. The contrast shows that an unmarried woman in England is poor and unfortunate, and a married woman abroad is satisfied with her life. What did the picture attempt to tell the Victorian readers? Despite not being a "needlewoman" literally in the illustration, why are the two women, or is a woman who emigrated from England to a foreign country, called "the needlewoman"?

The Victorians had a derogatory word for an unmarried woman: it is "spinster." The term "spinster," according to *OED*, appeared in the mid fourteenth century signifying a woman, or a man in rare cases, who "practises spinning as a regular occupation." The meaning gradually changed in the sixteenth and seventeenth century: "Appended to names of women, originally in order to denote their occupation, but subsequently (from the 17th century) as the proper legal designation of one still unmarried." In the eighteenth century, the term contained a derogative implication which alluded to an old maid who missed a chance to get married in youth. "Needlewoman" is a synonym of "spinster" – a woman who spins – and the Victorian readers identified the "needlewoman" in *Punch* with a "spinster," a woman "beyond the usual age for marriage, an old maid" (*OED*).

In Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), a clergyman, St John, utters the word "spinster" when asking Jane Eyre whether she is married: "You have never been married? You are a spinster?" Laughing at his question, one of his sisters, Diana, says, "Why, she can't be above seventeen or eighteen years old, St John" (*Jane Eyre* 397). Diana implicitly points out his misuse of the term because Jane is still so young that they cannot call her "spinster." In her third novel, *Shirley* (1849), Brontë describes some "spinster friend(s)" (291, 382): Caroline Helstone, Miss Man, Miss Ainely and Hortense Moore. Caroline is also still young like Jane, but she becomes pessimistic about her future as an unmarried

woman because of her disappointed love with her cousin, Robert Moore.

Caroline is not just disappointed at her own situation as a "spinster"; her monologue refers to dire predicament that unmarried women face in England.

> I have heard them [gentlemen] say it with sneering laughs many a time – the matrimonial market is overstocked. Fathers say so likewise, and are angry with their daughters when they observe their manoeuvres: they order them to stay at home. (*Shirley* 370)

Her complaint also suggests a Victorian social problem of "surplus" women caused by the increase of unmarried women. W. R. Greg wrote about the problem in *Why Are Women Redundant?* (1869). He warned that a large number of single women harmed social health: "there is an enormous and increasing number of single women in the nation, a number quite disproportionate and quite abnormal; a number which, positively and relatively, is indicative of an unwholesome social state, and is both productive and prognostic of much wretchedness and wrong" (Greg 5). There were three reasons for the contemporary social phenomenon of women being "surplus"; differences in mortality between men and women, differences in the number of emigrants between the two sexes, and tendency of upper- and middle-class men's late marriage (Banks 28–30). Brontë contextualises this serious social issue in *Shirley*.

Many middle-class unmarried women, who were marginalised from the matrimonial market, had to seek jobs to earn a living outside the home (Hall 64–65). Governessing, in particular, was a common and important job, but the governess labour market was oversaturated. Governesses also suffered from their ambiguous positions in homes they worked for because they were recognised neither as a part of the family nor

a servant, as Brontë shows in *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Shirley* (1849).

Brontë herself may have thought seriously about a plan for her future as one of those "superfluous" women before she married her father's curate, Arthur Bell Nicholls, at the age of 38 in 1854. She studied in Brussels from 1842 to 1843 to learn French and German languages. Yet, her contemporaries seemed to think that she had another purpose in going abroad. In April 1843, she showed her "wrath" at the people in a letter to her friend, Ellen Nussey, who told her the gossip:

> There was one observation in your last letter which excited for a moment my wrath – at first I thought it would be folly to reply to it and I would let it die, afterwards – I determined to give one answer once for all – "Three or four people" it seems "have the idea that *future époux of Mademoiselle Brontë is on the Continent*" . . . I must forsooth have some remote hope of entrapping a husband somehow – somewhere – if these charitable people knew the total seclusion I lead . . . they would perhaps cease to suppose tha[t] any such chimerical & groundless notion has influenced my proceedings . . . (Smith, Vol. 1, 315, italics mine)

Without the Victorian social context, it is difficult to see why they misunderstood her purpose and why Brontë was angry. In the Victorian period, there was a social discourse of "emigrant spinsters" that single women should go abroad, especially to British colonies, to find a husband. Brontë was also considered to be one of them.

To the unmarried women who could not secure their own places in England, the government offered official support for emigration in the 1830s (Longmuir, "Emigrant Spinsters"). This was effectively government propaganda suggesting that spinsters, who

would in the worst cases become prostitutes in England, had a chance to find jobs or to marry and make their own homes by going to a colonial "Elsewhere": the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or the Cape of Good Hope (Kranidis 11, 21). They went to British colonies to secure their own space that they could not get in their homeland.

Considering this social background, we can see that Brontë's "wrath" in her letter was directed towards the social discourse of female emigration which reminds us of the illustration of "The Needlewoman at Home." The aim of her studies in Brussels was not to look for a "future époux." It was to gain educational experiences for when she might open her own school. Still, it is clear that she was concerned with the social problem of "superfluous" women: on 30 January 1846, she wrote her opinion in her letter to Margaret Wooler, the headmistress of Roe Head School where she studied between 1831 and 1832.

> I speculate much on the existence of unmarried and never-to-be married women nowadays and I have already got to the point of considering that there is no more respectable character on this earth than an u[n]married woman who makes her own way through life quietly pers[e]veringly – without support of husband or brother and who having attained the age of 45 or upwards – retains in her possession a well-regulated mind – a disposition to enjoy simple pleasures – fortitude to support inevitable pains, sym[p]athy with the sufferings of others & willingness to relieve want as far as her means extend – . . . (Smith, Vol. 1, 448)

Brontë's view of "the condition of women" is not pessimistic; instead, she praises the modest, independent and charitable spirit of spinsters. The efforts of single women to

pave their way to independence, rather than relying on men, are a consistent theme throughout her works. In *Villette* (1853), Brontë presents a new way of life for an unmarried woman by adopting positively the emigrant-spinster discourse as the caricature, "The Needlewoman at Home," represents.

2. Economic Activities in Brontë's Fiction

Brontë devoted her life to care for her old, blind father, sickly sisters, and alcoholic brother. She dedicatedly engaged in domestic service while writing novels. In Victorian families, unmarried daughters were generally expected to devote themselves to their parents as companion, nurse, and housekeeper (Hill 69). Given her dedication, it is not hard to imagine that, despite her devoted care, the successive tragic deaths of her sister and brother had an influence on her writing. On 28 July 1852, she reveals in a letter to her publisher that her dedication to her father kept her from writing *Villette*: "my time and thoughts are at present taken up with close attendance on my Father whose health is just now in a very critical state" (Smith, Vol. 3, 59). The biography of Brontë by Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), makes the readers visualise Brontë diligently writing her novels in the closed space of the parsonage in the desolate and lonely wilderness of northern England.

However, contrary to the image of a miserable self-sacrificing Brontë at home in the remote countryside, Brontë might not always have spent her days in such misfortune. It is no exaggeration to say that *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* has partly implanted the general image of the isolated Brontë parsonage in our minds. Indeed, as Gaskell describes, Brontë's hometown, Haworth, is situated in a rural area, which has a wilderness and a moor behind the parsonage, similar to what we might imagine it when reading her sister Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Yet, on the other hand, Haworth

was a “busy industrial township” in the nineteenth century (Barker, “The Haworth Context” 15). The surrounding area was an essential and important industrial zone that underpinned the economic development of northern England after the Industrial Revolution.

Moreover, the people in Haworth might not have been ignorant of English socio-economic and financial trends. Gaskell tells us that Brontë was acquainted with an investor: “A man that she [Brontë] knew, who was small manufacturer, had engaged in many local speculations, which had always turned out well, and thereby rendered him a person of some wealth.” Men in West Riding of Yorkshire (including Haworth) were “sleuth-hounds in pursuit of money” who had an “eager desire for riches” (Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* 18). Considering the fact that there were “many local speculations,” we can find that they were familiar with investment and speculation. They were actively involved in the economic activity through the financial network.

Brontë herself invested in the York and Midland Railways. In the same letter to Miss Wooler in which Brontë wrote about unmarried women, she also explained the investment.

> I thought you would wonder how we were getting on when you heard of the Railway Panic and you may be sure that I am very glad to be able to answer . . . that our small capital is as yet undiminished. The York and N. [North] Midland is, as you say, a very good line – yet I confess to you I should wish, for my own part, to be wise is time – . . . I have been most anxious for us to sell our shares ere it be too late – and <inve> to secure the proceeds in some safer if, for the present, less profitable –, investment. (Smith, Vol. 1, 447)

She went on writing that she was not confident enough to convince her sisters to make other safe investments. During Charlotte's stay in Brussels, Emily succeeded in investing on her behalf, so Charlotte knew it was better to follow Emily's opinion. The Brontë sisters were not merely dedicated to domestic work and writing activities. They also positively and indirectly participated in economic activities through investment.

In the Victorian era, a number of women invested to keep and increase their property to maintain their social status (Sakamoto, *The Rise of the Investors Society* 171). Single women and widows enjoyed investing their money in "shipping, insurance, and joint-stock companies financing canals, railroads, and banks, as well as a wide range of foreign and domestic bonds and securities" (Henry 7). Victorian female writers, such as Gaskell, Jane Austen, George Eliot and Margaret Oliphant, were also interested in investment. They described female investors in their works while also investing themselves. Victorian women created a female culture of investment, but until 1870, women were not allowed to have their own property after marriage. The Common Law stipulated that husbands controlled their wives' property (Henry 6). This changed in the late nineteenth century as women protested these discriminatory laws. Gaskell and Eliot supported the campaign for the married women's property act in 1856 (Merryn Williams 62). Victorian women actively participated in the financial market, and simultaneously, they claimed married women's property rights, resisting economic dependency on men.

By describing investment and speculation, Brontë gives her four novels imaginative space to explore the global financial market. Critics have already discussed the colonial spatiality in Brontë's second novel, *Jane Eyre* (1847). Postcolonialists such as Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak (1985) and Susan Meyer (1996) have examined the relationship between the novel and imperialism, focusing on landed-class Edward Rochester's Jamaican Creole wife, Bertha Mason, who represents slaves in a British

colony. In this dissertation, I will demonstrate how Brontë also contextualizes other geographical expansions of the European empires: Portuguese Madeira in *Jane Eyre*, French Guadeloupe in *Villette*, and Belgium in *Villette* and *The Professor*. These contexts of imperialism and financialization open up global spaces in her works.

3. Female Writers' Space in the Literary World

As for the writer herself, Brontë employed a pseudonym, Currer Bell, to disguise her gender. Emily and Anne also used pseudonyms, Ellis and Acton, respectively and the three published a book, *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell* (1846). Regarding their pen names, Brontë wrote, in the biographical notice of the second edition of *Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey* (1850) that "the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names, positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women" (Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* 215). In 1846, she sent the manuscript of her first novel, *The Professor* (1857), with manuscripts of Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Anne's *Agnes Grey* (1847) to a publisher. Only *The Professor* was rejected by several publishers, and it was finally published posthumously.

Smith, Elder & Co., one of the publishers that rejected her manuscript of *The Professor*, wrote to her about shortcomings in her narrative. The letter also said that they would consider publishing a novel by her seriously if she would write one in three volumes (Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* 242). In response to this letter, Brontë immediately posted the manuscript of her next novel, *Jane Eyre* (1847), to the publisher. It gained popularity, but at the same time, her pseudonym raised questions about the gender of the author. Yet, her letter to the publisher on 1 November 1849 reveals that she refused stubbornly to disclose her identity even when people began to realise that

the author may be female: “I wish you did not think me a woman: I wish all reviewers believed ‘Currer Bell’ to be a man – they would be more just to him” (Smith, Vol. 2, 275). After the publication of *Shirley*, a reader from Haworth who lived in Liverpool identified the writer, and he betrayed her to a newspaper. This event unmasked the author of *Jane Eyre*. Besides Brontë, several other few female writers used male or ambiguous pen names: Mary Anne Evans as George Eliot, Amandine Aurore Lucile Dupin as George Sand in France and Louisa May Alcott as A. M. Bernard in the United States, to name a few. Female authors were not reviewed fairly in the androcentric societies.

While Brontë became a successful writer after the publication of *Jane Eyre*, she had to manage both her life as “a writer” and her life as “a woman.” In the biography, Gaskell wrote about Brontë’s “two parallel currents” as a writer and a woman.

> Henceforward Charlotte Brontë’s existence becomes divided into two parallel currents – her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman. There were separate duties belonging to each character – not opposing each other; not impossible, but difficult to be reconciled. When a man becomes an author, it is probably merely a change of employment to him. (Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* 258–59)

Many other Victorian female writers might have the same experience. It was not easy to secure space and time to write novels, especially for women who devoted themselves to caring for their family as Brontë did. As I have explained above, Brontë struggled to establish her own space as a female writer for two main reasons: dissatisfaction and anxiety about the unfair evaluation of female writers and a lack of time for writing

because of her dedication to her family. In this dissertation, I analyse how her novels seek out ways to enable women to solve the contradiction between their domestic and socio-economic activities.

4. A Critique of Brontë's Literary Oeuvre

The depiction of class, gender and race in Brontë's novels has been a popular theme of critical expositions since the 1970s. Terry Eagleton's (1975) Marxist critique, posited that Brontë's bourgeois ambitions and values remained notable despite her attempts to resolve inter-class conflicts in her texts and portray a sense of solidarity across social strata. Adrienne Rich's (1973) feminist study of *Jane Eyre* emphasised the associations between the motherless Jane Eyre and other female characters who compensated for the maternal absence. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) probed the anguish and resistance of socially oppressed women, focusing primarily on the characterization of "the madwoman in the attic," Bertha Mason. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1985) opposed their discussion that female characters in Brontë's novels share their social vulnerability. Taking a postcolonial feminist standpoint, Spivak addressed the discrimination and oppression against women belonging to ethnic minorities, asserting that the Jamaican Creole Bertha and the white Jane were positioned in very different circumstances because of their racial differences. Susan Meyer (1996) also focused on the figure of Bertha, whose description is reminiscent of black Jamaican slaves, to examine the British imperialism underlying Brontë's writing.

Brontë's scholars subsequently switched focus from postcolonialism to the impact of political relations between European countries. In 1975, Enid L. Duthie invoked Brontë sisters' experience of studying in Belgium from 1842 to 1843 to discuss Brontë's acute insights into European nations in her novels. Since the 2000s, however, scholars

have investigated socio-political and cultural interactions between England, Belgium and France instead of grounding their analysis on the author's biographical realities. Anne Longmuir (2008, 2009) examined the Englishness of Brontë's emigrant protagonists in the Continent in *The Professor* (1857) and *Villette* (1853), and explored the significance of expatriate Victorian emigrant spinsters in the latter novel. Tanya Agathocleous' *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century* (2010) initiated increasing scholarly interest in cosmopolitanism in the domain of Victorian literary studies, leading Richard Bonfiglio (2012) to conclude that the cosmopolitan city depicted in *Villette* offered women the possibility of an unshackled life through liberal self-cultivation.

In recent years, the theme of women and financial economics has engaged Victorian cultural and literary scholars. Mary Poovey (2003, 2009), whose academic work spans fiscal as well as feminist studies, explored the cultural aspects of the Victorian financial system, especially, as it related to investments. Nancy Henry (2018) discussed financial transactions pertaining to the lives and works of Victorian women writers such as Gaskell, Eliot, Charlotte Riddell and Margaret Oliphant, incorporating Poovey's analysis into her literary investigations. Henry also briefly mentioned a few financial expositions in *Villette*; however, she dominantly appraised how late-Victorian female writers introduced financial transactions into their novels. Economic historian Yuichiro Sakamoto (2017) assessed Victorian investment culture using the letters, diaries and works of female writers as primary historical sources. For example, he illuminated the historical and cultural contexts of investment and speculation in Victorian era based on description of financial transactions in letters written by Jane Austen and Brontë as well as *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*.

This dissertation investigates this theme that couples women and finance,

previously explored by Poovey, Henry and Sakamoto, while also aligning with inter-disciplinary critiques that include feminism, postcolonialism, political sociology and economics to discuss Brontë's literary oeuvre. In doing so, I reveal that Brontë deployed fiscal transactions as significant tools for women who are confined to domestic space to use so that they may interact with society.

5. Demystifying the Myth of Gaskell's "Brontë"

In this dissertation, I demystify the myth created by Gaskell in her biography of Charlotte Brontë: the image of a poor Brontë who quietly endured her miserable environment in the closed spaces of her father's parsonage on the dreary Yorkshire moors. Contrary to this image, Brontë was actively and imaginatively reconfiguring conventional fictional forms in order to tell her complex stories. For her novels, Brontë strategically adopted narrative formats that usually featured male protagonists and male experiences such as the *Bildungsroman*, the industrial novel, the story of a self-made man. She also adapted for her own purposes the figure of the emigrant spinster, a figure that was part of a social discourse which was shaped and justified by men. This dissertation examines how in her four novels Brontë reimagines these narrative formats to not only give her female characters a chance to gain both financial independence and domesticity but also suggest ways for women to connect with society while valuing female bonds and accepting Victorian domestic ideology.

Reading *Jane Eyre* as a *Bildungsroman* in Chapter 1, I discuss the significance of what Jane inherits from her uncle, John Eyre, who emigrated to Madeira. He amasses his wealth by utilising a trade network, and it enables a governess, Jane, and a member of the landed-class Edward Rochester, to marry as equals. John, "a sneaking tradesman," works as a Madeira wine merchant (*Jane Eyre* 110) whose wine is traded in the global

market. By delving into the history of the Portuguese island, we can find a network of wine trade by British merchants. The source of his wealth differs from landed gentry Rochester's property, which grew through plantation ownership in the West Indies. I also address the flow of John's wealth, which streams from Madeira into England via investment. Jane takes part in the financial market by inheriting his invested fortune. Brontë introduces a new theme of women and finance in the Victorian society into *Jane Eyre*. While she shows that the Victorian domestic ideology and legal restriction disturb compatibility between Jane's economic independence and marriage life, she seeks to achieve it offering an alternative gender relationship other than marriage.

In Chapter 2, I explore an industrial novel, *Shirley*, in which Brontë employs, as the main plot, a historical movement, Luddism: the male conflict between an Anglo-Belgian mill owner, Robert Moore, and his labourers. A young lady, Caroline Helstone, tries to reform his egoism and points out "brotherhood in error" (*Shirley* 89), which affects the industrial relationship with his workers, by using William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Her act of reading the play with Robert includes not only public but private purposes: she tries to tell him to be affectionate and love her. But, Robert's harsh attitude disappoints her, and her loss of romance gives her a vision of her miserable future as an old maid. She seriously ponders how she will live the rest of her life as a spinster. To alleviate the anxiety, Brontë suggests sisterhood for the women in the novel to support each other mentally and financially, in contrast to the "brotherhood in error" which values male pride. I analyse how Brontë explores the possibility of achieving both women's economic activities and domestic life, creating female bonds.

Brontë wrote two novels based on her own experience in Brussels: *The Professor* and *Villette* (1853). Before discussing the heroine's experience abroad in *Villette*, we need to focus on her male counterpart in *The Professor* to clarify how Brontë changes

the narrative format between the two. Hence, in Chapter 3, I consider her critical attitude towards the masculine narrative of the self-made man in *The Professor*. The protagonist, William Crimsworth, heads to Belgium for self-improvement and becomes an English teacher there because he is unlikely to succeed as a member of the industrial bourgeoisie in England. While reaffirming Englishness as an Englishman, he demonstrates its superiority by controlling foreign boys and girls in his English education. He successfully becomes a "gentleman" not only by building his fortune steadily as an English teacher but by amassing more wealth through investment. However, it is an Anglo-Swiss woman, Frances Evans Henri, who underpins his success. She is transformed into an ideal Victorian woman by his English education. I examine Brontë's critical gaze on the masculine narrative format in which William takes advantage of Frances for his own success.

In Chapter 4, I discuss *Villette* as part of the emerging emigrant-spinster discourse. The homeless female protagonist, Lucy Snowe, cannot find her own space in England. This chapter assumes that her emigration is prompted by Victorian social propaganda. Lucy as one of the "surplus" women moves to the continent and starts to live in a fictious cosmopolitan city, Villette, under Catholic surveillance. While working as an English teacher, Lucy wonders whether she can gain a "true home" after achieving independence (*Villette* 400). Her romance is disturbed by a ghost of a nun who symbolises Lucy's future as a spinster, and by her lover Paul Emmanuel's immigration to a French colony, Guadeloupe. Therefore, it seems difficult for her to achieve romance, that is, to obtain a home via marriage. I will analyse how Brontë gives Lucy a chance to balance domesticity and independence, while contextualising the negative social discourse of the spinsters who were excluded from the English society.

By analysing her novels, it becomes clear that Brontë was an ambitious, energetic

and strategic female writer with a sense of humour despite experiencing family misfortunes. With the ironical uses of masculine narrative formats, she experimented with the creation of female spaces in a male-dominant society without deviating largely from the Victorian domestic norms. Through her writing activities, she aimed for establishing her own space as a female author in the Victorian literary world.

Chapter 1

"A sneaking tradesman" of Madeira:

Inheritance and Female Investing in *Jane Eyre*

1. Introduction

In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Edward Rochester's Jamaican Creole wife, Bertha Mason, who is hidden in the attic, has always been a controversial figure in feminist and postcolonial criticism. From a feminist viewpoint, Bertha acts as a substitute of suppressed Jane to resist male domination rather than as a hinderance to her matrimony. For instance, Adrienne Rich (1973) asserted that Bertha interrupts the romance between Jane and Rochester to prevent the unequal marriage that would make Jane his property. Furthermore, in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar stated that Bertha functions as Jane's alter ego.

Although critics mainly analysed the gender problem in *Jane Eyre* in the 1970s, many postcolonial critiques have appeared since the 1980s. In the distinguished article "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argued that both *Jane Eyre* and Dominican-born British writer Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) are stories of British colonies that reinforce the Empire's justification for colonisation, namely that the colonisers should civilise the natives. Subsequently, Mary Ellis Gibson (1987), Penny Boumelha (1990), Joyce Zonana (1993), and Susan Meyer (1996) have discussed the issue of British imperialism in *Jane Eyre*.

While scholars have detected instances of the imperialism in the description of Jamaican Creole Bertha, they have also considered Jane's inferior status as a governess who is socially marginalised. In *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970), Raymond Williams noted how women are deprived of equality and opportunity in the

works of the Brontë sisters, who sought to break "a whole structure of repression" in their own way (Williams 63). In *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontë* (1975), Terry Eagleton criticised that Jane's ingrained bourgeois values that despise poverty, despite her own poor situation; eventually, Jane finally becomes an independent "mistress" (501) through the inheritance received from her uncle in Madeira. Many scholars have emphasised that the inheritance allows her to marry Rochester with gender and economic equality.

However, the specific place name, "Madeira," has not attracted these scholars' attention. The island of Madeira, which is located in the North Atlantic Ocean, about 1,000 kilometers away from Portugal and part of the country, plays a key role in determining Jane's fate. Her uncle enriched by engaging in the Madeira wine industry as a merchant on Madeira. Although scholars have already pointed out how the connection to Madeira helps Jane's class mobility, they disregard the island's specificity and how her uncle accumulates his wealth. Focusing on the island, we can find a global network of wine trade by British merchants. The source of the uncle's wealth differs from that of Rochester, who belongs to the landed gentry and whose wealth is built by plantation ownership in the West Indies.

Jane's upper-middle-class aunt and the widow of her mother's brother, Mrs Reed, calls Jane's paternal uncle, John Eyre, "a sneaking tradesman" with contempt (110). In this chapter, taking particular note of these disparaging words, I will examine the difference between Jane's uncle's wealth – which promotes Jane's economic independence – and Rochester's property supported by land ownership and management of plantations. In addition, we should note the financial flow of John's fortune: it streams from Madeira into England via "the English funds" (441). Brontë incorporates the new theme of women and finance in Victorian society into *Jane Eyre*. Clarifying the

relationship between Jane's independence and the two global networks of wine trade and finance, I will analyse how this novel, while describing marriage, which maintains Victorian domestic norms, presents the way that a middle-class woman with no economic base could become independent.

2. "A sneaking tradesman": John Eyre, Wine and Madeira Island

As I mentioned above, researchers have mainly investigated *Jane Eyre* from the perspective of feminism. In the 1970s, Gilbert and Gubar discussed Bertha as "the madwoman in the attic" (Gilbert and Gubar 369). They explain that Bertha Mason, who is confined in the attic, is Jane's "truest and darkest double," representing Jane's suppressed fury (Gilbert and Gubar 360). Jane's "egalitarian relationship" with Rochester, who is symbolically castrated by Bertha's arson, is achieved at the end in exchange for Bertha's tragic death (Gilbert and Gubar 369). However, their discussion of Bertha does not pay sufficient attention to her race.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Susan Meyer discuss imperial ideology in *Jane Eyre*, emphasising Bertha's racial otherness because she comes from the British West Indies. Spivak reads *Jane Eyre* as a text which constructs British national identity by sacrificing Bertha, "a figure produced by the axiomatics of imperialism" (Spivak 247). Moreover, discussing "the figurative strategy" in the novel, Meyer notes that "when she [Bertha] actually emerges as a character in the action of the novel, the narrative associates Bertha with Blacks, particularly with the black Jamaican antislavery rebels, the maroons" (Meyer 67). These critics argue that *Jane Eyre* depicts the resistance of Jamaican slaves under the rule of the British Empire by describing the West Indian woman's violence against Rochester.

Nevertheless, I will pay attention not to the West Indies but to Madeira, from

which Jane's inheritance comes, to examine her economic independence. The island implies another geographical expanse separate from that of the British Empire. In Chapter 10, Bessie, a nurse for Mrs Reed's children, visits Lowood girls' boarding school to see Jane. Bessie tells Jane that her uncle John Eyre has come to Gateshead Hall, Mrs Reed's mansion and that he would leave for a foreign country soon.

> 'What foreign country was he going to, Bessie?'
>
> '*An island* thousands of miles off, where they make *wine* – the butler did tell me—'
>
> '*Madeira?*' I suggested.
>
> 'Yes; that is it – that is the very word.'
>
> 'So he went?'
>
> 'Yes; he did not stay many minutes in the house: Missis [Jane's aunt Mrs Reed] was very high with him; she called him afterwards *a "sneaking tradesman."* My Robert believes he was *a wine merchant*.'
>
> 'Very likely,' I returned; 'or *perhaps clerk or agent to a wine merchant*.'
>
> (109–10, italics mine)

When Bessie describes the foreign country John left for as "An island thousands of miles off, where they make wine," Jane quickly answers, "Madeira?" and guesses her uncle to be "a wine merchant" or "perhaps clerk or agent to a wine merchant." Madeira wine is often described in other Victorian novels such as Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son* (1846–1848), William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847), Anthony Trollope's *Doctor Thorne* (1858) and so on. It is a luxury product for the Victorians and an important commodity for British merchants to accumulate their wealth in business.

In Chapter 21, just before Mrs Reed's death, Jane reads a letter from her uncle John, which Mrs Reed has hidden for three years. It says that John's "endeavours" were remunerated and he amassed "a competency" in Madeira (274).

> 'MADAM, – Will you have the goodness to send me the address of my niece, Jane Eyre, and to tell me how she is? It is my intension to write shortly and desire her to come to me at Madeira. Providence has blessed my endeavours to secure a competency; and as I am unmarried and childless, I wish to adopt her during my life, and bequeath her at my death whatever I may have to leave. – I am, Madam, etc., etc.
>
> 'JOHN EYRE, Madeira.' (274–75)

In this letter, John does not concretely write how he acquired his fortune. Yet, considering the conversation between Jane and Bessie in Chapter 10, he might have built a fortune working as "a wine merchant" or "perhaps clerk or agent to a wine merchant" in Madeira. As he is "unmarried and childless," he offers to "bequeath" his property to his niece Jane to support her economically.

Another important point is that Bessie tells Jane how Mrs Reed called John "a sneaking tradesman" (110). We may generally interpret that this adjective, "sneaking," signifies Mrs Reed's classism towards her social inferiority. The upper-middle-class Mrs Reed despises the "merchant," John. Her disdain for John is rooted in the Reeds' classism towards the Eyres. She abhors Jane at the beginning of the novel because Jane's father was "a poor clergyman" (31), and her mother "made her low marriage" (267) with him in spite of the Reeds' objection against their matrimony.

The word "sneaking" means "furtive and contemptible" (*OED*) and implies that a

person is despicable because they deliberately conceal something stealthily. Following this signification, we can construe that John is "sneaking" because Mrs Reed cannot know how he built his wealth as a merchant in Madeira and because he does not explain how he amassed "a competency" in his letter. Regarding the source of his wealth, Susan Meyer notes:

> [Jane's wealth] comes from her uncle in Madeira, who is an agent for a Jamaican wine manufacturer, Bertha's brother. The location of Jane's uncle John in Madeira, off Morocco, on the West African coast, where Richard Mason stops on his way home from England, also indirectly suggests, through Mason's itinerary, the triangular route of the British slave traders, and suggests that John Eyre's wealth is implicated in the slave trade. (Meyer 93)

Richard Mason stops by Madeira, which is located off the coast of West Africa, before returning to his country of Jamaica. His travel route implies "the triangular route of the British slave traders." Therefore, the wealth of John Eyre, who has a business relationship with Mason, also suggests the slave trade. Meyer intimates a latent link between slave trade/labour and the invisible source of John Eyre's wealth.

Though Meyer does not assert that slaves were exploited in Madeira, she hints at it by highlighting the geographical propinquity between the British West Indies and Portuguese Madeira. However, I will focus on the political economy of the latter. As I will further explain in the next section, according to David Hancock's *Oceans of Wine* (2009), slaves had not been exploited in the Madeira wine industry since the seventeenth century owing to their rising cost (Hancock 47).

Yet, scholars have disregarded the history of Madeira, easily connecting the island with slavery. For example, while Terry Eagleton mentions Jane's colonial inheritance, he does not explain the details of the colony.

> *Jane's colonial uncle* dies and leaves her a sizeable legacy, enough for independence. *The colonial trade* which signified a decline in status for Rochester signifies an advance in status for Jane, so that although they are of course socially equal, their fortunes spring from *the same root*.
>
> (Eagleton 29, italics mine)

Eagleton asserts that Jane and Rochester share "the same root" economically. Certainly, Madeira was also a colony, as Eagleton says, but we must clarify which European country historically ruled the island. It is significant that Jane's inheritance comes from outside the British colonies, as I will discuss in the next section. Critics who examine the relationship between imperialism and *Jane Eyre* tend to ignore the significance of Madeira's specificity.

On the other hand, Alexandra Valint focuses on the island itself. She points out the problem of "excessive consumption" of Madeira wine in imperialism. Slaves were exploited for producing this foreign luxury product to meet the desires of the ruling class in both England and its colonies. She explains that Madeira wine production and trade represent British imperialism. Given that Madeira wine is an imperialistic product, Jane succeeds to her uncle's colonial fortune. Yet, Valint asserts that we should not overlook the fact that Jane is "at least intuitively aware of the inheritance's ties to slavery, colonialism, and oppression." When Jane inherits her uncle's wealth, she hesitates to receive the full amount (twenty thousand pounds). Therefore, she decides

to divide the inheritance into four equal parts among St John Rivers and his two sisters, in other words, “her own sense of justice” represents her “moderation” (Valint 321, 324, 336). As a result, the divided inheritance alleviates the crime of wealth which was built in the colony. In addition, Jane’s “moderation” means her resistance – and that of *Jane Eyre* itself – against imperialism, which is different from the slave rebellions of Bertha’s arsons.

I do not intend to discuss imperialism itself in *Jane Eyre*. Rather, I will underline the significance of merchant John Eyre’s social class by focusing on his business, highlighting an economic base different from that of Rochester. We must investigate the relationship between the wealth amassed by John in Madeira and middle-class Jane’s independence in England. In the next section, I briefly trace the history of English merchants in Portuguese Madeira.

3. History of Madeira: Wine Production and Trade

In 1386, England concluded the Treaty of Windsor with Portugal, which was the principle of Portuguese diplomacy, and the two countries maintained the alliance until the twentieth century (Birmingham 21). During the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), Portugal finally took the English side. During the Napoleonic Wars, England supported Portugal in resisting the French invasion. Geopolitically, Portugal had an important position in the long history of Britain’s conflicts with Spain or France.

After Portugal colonised Madeira in 1425, they exported locally produced sugar, wine and timber to the Portuguese mainland and the African markets. At that time, sugar was the main export; on the island, the Portuguese ran sugar plantations while trading slaves. However, sugar production declined at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and wine became the main commodity to export. As sugar production declined, the slave

trade also gradually declined. Because of the rising cost and scarcity of slaves, the Portuguese themselves started to work to produce wine (Hancock 47; Liddell 7–11).

For the wine production, the Portuguese employed the same system as sugar cultivation: owners rented their land to cultivators. They directly contracted with the owners to rent the land and cultivated, gathered and pressed the grapes by themselves. In the mid-eighteenth century, farmers emerged as agents for the owners and the cultivators, renting the land from the owners and subleasing it to the cultivators to manage their farm (Hancock 47–48).

With the improvement of the production system, distributors appeared around the seventeenth century. They exported and distributed the wine to the market, functioning as "merchant, agent, consignee, agent-consignee, and representative" (Hancock 133). In *Jane Eyre*, John works as a distributor, that is, "clerk or agent to a wine merchant," as Jane guesses (109–10).

By 1537, Madeira wine started to be imported into England. Since 1590, British merchants began to immigrate to Madeira and they commenced the Madeira wine trade around 1640. "The British Factory" was organised in 1658 by British merchants who engaged in business in Madeira; in addition, the distribution system of Madeira wine developed because of the 1660 Navigation Act and the 1663 Staple Act. Except for English ships coming directly from English ports, the Navigation Act prohibited any other ships entering the English colonies. Yet, three years later, the Staple Act allowed English ships to distribute Madeira wine directly from Madeira to the British colonies. This Act granted British merchants in Madeira a virtual monopoly of the wine trade with the West Indies and the American plantations. Moreover, the Methuen Treaty of 1703, concluded between England and Portugal, allowed Portugal to export their wine to England with a third less custom duty than that of French wine and allowed England to

export their woollen textiles to Portugal – including Madeira (Hancock 107; Liddell 11, 24, 33).

With the development of Madeira wine production, triangular trade was established among Britain, Madeira, and North America/the West Indies, echoing the well-known triangular trade among England, West Africa and the West Indies: textiles and weapons from England to West Africa, slaves from West Africa to the West Indies and sugar from the West Indies to England. In the triangular trade related to Madeira wine, England exported textiles to Madeira, the island exported wine to North America/the West Indies and the colonies exported sugar and tobacco to England. In the eighteenth century, British merchants delivered the wine to East India – including to non-British possessions – with an improved distribution system. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the number of British merchants in Madeira increased and doubled that of the Portuguese (Hancock 107; Jeffreys 94; Liddell 25, 33, 50).

Scholars have observed that the British imperial framework by which the conventional landed gentry gained their wealth exists in Brontë's works because Rochester marries the daughter of a plantation owner in the West Indies. However, I will examine the flow of wealth built by "a sneaking tradesman" of Portuguese Madeira, earned not by managing a plantation but by the global trade of the wine. Such wealth circulates in the system of the new triangular trade of Madeira wine among England, Madeira and North America/the West Indies coming to Jane as the inheritance via "the English funds." At the end of the novel, Jane can declare her independence, saying to Rochester, "I am my own mistress" (501). Her economic independence is supported by the property accumulated by an English merchant who relies on the global network of the Madeira wine trade that transcends the territory of the British Empire.

Many readers may feel that Jane's financial independence due to her uncle's

heritage is suddenly achieved at the end and scholars have disregarded the sequence in which Jane expects to inherit something from her uncle before her wedding. Jane does not desire to buy jewellery and expensive dresses with Rochester's money. When Jane finds it ignominious to be dressed "like a doll" by Rochester (309), she remembers her uncle's letter, which she read just before Mrs Reed's death.

> I remembered what . . . I had wholly forgotten – the letter of my uncle, John Eyre, to Mrs Reed: his intention to adopt me and make me his legatee. 'It would, indeed, be a relief,' I thought, 'if I had ever so small *an independency*; I never can bear being dressed *like a doll* by Mr Rochester, or sitting like a second Danae with golden shower falling daily round me. *I will write to Madeira the moment I get home, and tell my Uncle John I am going to be married, and to whom*: if I had but a prospect of one day bringing Mr Rochester an accession of fortune, I could better endure to be kept by him now.' (309–10, italics mine)

Jane regards her uncle's property as a countermeasure to avoid economic oppression by Rochester and, in this scene, she already expects her financial independence. We must remember that, before the disclosure of Bertha's existence, Jane accepts an unequal marriage because she is expecting John Eyre's wealth to make it less unequal.

Jane writes a letter to her uncle to tell him about Rochester soon after the above passage: "I failed not to execute [the idea] that day" (310). By her letter, John knows that Jane will marry Rochester; after the wedding interruption, a solicitor, Briggs, explains that John sent him and Richard Mason to save her from Rochester's "snare" (340).

> Mr Eyre has been the Funchal correspondent of his [Richard's] house for some years. When your uncle received your letter intimating the contemplated union between yourself and Mr Rochester, Mr Mason, who was staying at Madeira to recruit his health, on his way back to Jamaica, happened to be with him. Mr Eyre mentioned the intelligence; for he knew that my client here was acquainted with a gentleman of the name of Rochester. Mr Mason, astonished and distressed as you may suppose, revealed the real state of matters. . . . He [John] could not then hasten to England himself, to extricate you from the snare into which you had fallen, but he implored Mr Mason to lose no time in taking steps to prevent the false marriage. He referred him to me for assistance. (339–40)

Jane's notification of her marriage to her uncle by a letter unexpectedly leads to the interruption of the wedding and the exposure of Bertha. Stevie Davies explains that, by her letter to John Eyre, "Jane sets in train the events that will bring about exposure of Rochester's existing marriage and her own tragic suffering" (*Jane Eyre* 564, n.14).

Certainly, as Davies notes, Jane will experience agony because she must leave Rochester after the disclosure of his secret. Yet, her action – writing a letter to her uncle – indirectly plays an important role to eventually realise a marriage with equality. Brontë avoids depicting an unequal marriage without solving the economic inequality between Jane and Rochester. Jane's desire for an equal union requires John Eyre's indirect disruption of her wedding and for her to escape from Thornfield. Brontë utilises John Eyre in Madeira not only to leave a legacy for Jane's independence at the end but also to prevent an unequal marriage to Rochester before Jane learns about his hidden wife, Bertha.

4. The New Middle-Class Wealth and Financial Transactions

John Eyre, who made a large profit through the Madeira wine trade, represents the "new middle class" that emerged in the nineteenth century. The "new middle class" is defined by David Cannadine in *Class in Britain* (1998) as "awkward, ill-mannered, under-bred, middle-class upstarts, who had made their money in business or trade" (Cannadine 71). This signification is consistent with Mrs Reed's classism towards John Eyre, calling him "a sneaking tradesman."

John, one of the "middle-class upstarts," is involved not only in the Madeira wine trade but in financial transactions such as speculation. In Chapter 30, one of St John Rivers' sisters, Diana, explains who John Eyre is before she and Jane learn that they are relatives.

> He [John Eyre] was my mother's brother. My father and he quarrelled long ago. It was by his advice that my father risked most of his property in the *speculation* that ruined him. Mutual recrimination passed between them: they parted in anger, and were never reconciled. My uncle engaged afterwards in *more prosperous undertakings*: it appears he realised a fortune of twenty thousand pounds.
>
> (411, italics mine)

When John Eyre lived in England, he advised Diana's father to invest his property in a "speculation"; as a result, her father became bankrupt. Diana does not clarify about the detail of the "speculation" and John's loss, but the readers discover that he left for Madeira after the bankruptcy as, historically, bankrupts like John Eyre moved there. "The British Factory" records the presence of many English bankrupts in Madeira (Hancock 14). On the island, he engaged in "more prosperous undertakings" and rose

to become “quite a gentleman” (109) by utilising the global network of the Madeira wine trade.

The fortune that newly middle-class John Eyre amassed overseas by the trade reaches his home, England, through investment. St John explains Jane’s inheritance by telling her that her fortune is “vested in the English funds” (441). A solicitor in London, Mr Briggs, manages the inheritance.

> ‘Well, what did he [Mr Briggs] want?’
>
> ‘Merely to tell you that your uncle, Mr Eyre of Madeira, is dead; that he has left you all his property, and that you are now rich – merely that – nothing more.’
>
> ‘I! – rich?’
>
> ‘Yes, you, rich – quite an heiress.’
>
> Silence succeeded.
>
> ‘You must prove your identity, of course,’ resumed St John presently: ‘a step which will offer no difficulties; you can then enter on immediate possession. *Your fortune is vested in the English funds*; Briggs has the will and the necessary documents.’ (440–41, italics mine)

Yuichiro Sakamoto notes that it was common for the Victorians living away from England to maintain their assets by investing (Sakamoto, “Women, Consols, and Culture” 11). As John Eyre did, the English generally chose investment as one of the ways to keep their property; hence, “the English funds” and the solicitor in London, Mr Briggs, imply a connection between John Eyre in Madeira and the City in London through the financial transactions.

It was not rare for Victorian novelists to write about financial matters, having started to adopt financial themes in their works in the mid-nineteenth century. As for the relationship between Victorian literature and financial themes, referring to Charles Dickens' *Household Words* (1850–1859) and George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Mary Poovey explains that Victorian writers began to introduce financial themes into their works in the mid-1840s (Poovey, "Writing about Finance" 40). Ten years earlier than Eliot, Brontë also adopted financial themes such as John Eyre's financial transactions in *Jane Eyre*.

Besides *Jane Eyre*, Brontë employs finance as a theme in her fiction. In her first and posthumous novel, *The Professor* (1857), the male protagonist, William Crimsworth, who originally came from a bourgeois family but had no wealth in England, moves to Belgium for self-improvement. He opens his own school there and saves enough "capital to invest." By investment, he realises "an independency" (*The Professor* 280). He explains three reasons for his wealth:

> Behold us now at the close of ten years, and *we have realised an independency*. The rapidity with which we attained this end had its origin in three reasons: — Firstly, we worked so hard for it; secondly, we had no incumbrances to delay success; thirdly, as soon as *we had capital to invest*, two well-skilled counsellors, one in Belgium, one in England, viz. Vandenhuten and Hunsden, gave us each a word of advice as to the sort of *investment* to be chosen. The suggestion made was judicious; and, being promptly acted on, the result proved gainful . . . (*The Professor* 280, italics mine)

In Brussels, he accumulates assets not only by managing his school but also by

investment. His fortune changes him from a clerk and an English teacher into a gentleman and enables him to go back to England with his wife and a son in triumph. Brontë adopts investment as one of the significant elements to underpin a male success story in this novel.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane changes "from indigence to wealth" thanks to the inheritance of twenty thousand pounds. Yet, she decides to divide the fortune equally among St John, his sisters and herself: five thousand pounds each after Jane learns that they are her paternal cousins. Jane once heard Diana's wish: if John Eyre left his property to the Rivers, "Mary and I would have esteemed ourselves rich with a thousand pounds each; and to St John such a sum would have been valuable, for the good it would have enabled him to do." The letter informing the Rivers of John Eyre's death states that "the other relation," Jane, will succeed to all his property (411).

When Jane realises that they are cousins after she inherits John's property, she thinks: "They were under a yoke – I could free them: they were scattered – I could reunite them: the independence, the affluence which was mine, might be theirs too" (445). While she is pleased with the inheritance of the large sum of twenty thousand pounds, she is simultaneously burdened with it. However, she reassures herself in thinking that it would no longer "weigh" on her if she shared it with St John and his sisters.

> Twenty thousand pounds shared equally, would be five thousand each – enough and spare: justice would be done – mutual happiness secured. Now the wealth did not weigh on me: now it was not a mere bequest of coin – it was a legacy of life, hope, enjoyment. (445)

It is not Jane's uncle's will but the distribution of the inheritance to the Rivers due to Jane's sense of "justice" that compensates for the loss sustained by St John's father in speculation. Jane recognises that "the wealth" she inherited would shift from "a mere bequest of coin" to "a legacy of life, hope, enjoyment." The inheritance apportioned from Jane enables St John to do "the good" – that is, missionary work in East India – which was his "long-cherished scheme" (471). The division of Jane's inheritance and "the good" of St John's mission function to purify qualms which are generated from the wealth built by "a sneaking tradesman."

St John, who accepts this fortune to fulfil his long-standing scheme, asks Jane to come to East India with him as his wife to support his missionary work. She answers him, "I am ready to go to India, if I may go free" (467). She explains that she wants to go to India maintaining their relationship as brother and sister because she realises that he does not love her as a partner in life. Yet, he strongly opposes Jane's words and denies the brotherly-like relationship:

> ". . . you must have a coadjutor: not a brother – that is a loose tie – but a husband. I, too, do not want a sister: a sister might any day be taken from me. I want a wife: the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death." (468)

Concerning St John's arrogant offer, Gilbert and Gubar note that "as St John's wife, . . . she will be entering into a union even more unequal than that proposed by Rochester, a marriage reflecting, once again, her absolute exclusion from the life of wholeness toward which her pilgrimage has been directed" (Gilbert and Gubar 366). His offer of "the good" in India temporarily fascinates her and she looks forward to escaping from

England, the "loved but empty land," where she can no longer be allowed to love Rochester (466). However, St John also acts as a ruling figure who imposes his patriarchal values on her like Mr Brocklehurst in Lowood and Rochester did.

Jane chooses her own independent life, which has been brought by John Eyre's inheritance as "a legacy of life, hope, enjoyment" (445), refusing St John's proposal to go to India with him as his wife. As for Jane's rejection, Jenny Sharpe quotes Diana's words to Jane: "You are much too pretty, as well as too good, to be grilled alive in Calcutta" (479). Sharpe indicates that Diana's anxiety reminds us of a Hindu custom, *sati*, by which Hindu women had to immolate themselves when their husbands died. Of course, Jane does not need to follow the custom because she "exercises her free will and voice-agency," unlike Hindu women, who were regarded as their husbands' property (Sharpe 53). For Jane, going to India with St John would not fulfil her own independent life as long as she is forced to obey and serve him as his wife.

Refusing St John's offer has important implications in terms of not only gender but also female bonding between Jane and other female characters. In *Jane Eyre*, sisterhood tends to be fragmented to develop the story in a heterosexual setting. When leaving for Lowood, Jane is separated from Bessie, who cares for motherless Jane affectionately at Gateshead. Subsequently, in Lowood, Jane loses her close friendship with Helen Burns, who embodies an "impossible ideal to Jane" (Gilbert and Gubar 345), because of her death. Moreover, Miss Temple's marriage tears their sisterhood apart because she quits school. In addition, Jane has no choice but to break off her relationship with the housekeeper, Mrs Fairfax, when escaping from Thornfield because Rochester already has a wife. Adrienne Rich indicates that "Bessie, Miss Temple, Helen Burns, even at moments the gentle housekeeper Mrs Fairfax, have acted as mediators for her along the way she has come so far" (Rich 236). Although these female characters, even

Bertha who prevents the uneven marriage between Jane and Rochester, always function as Jane's life-savers, or sometimes as her mothers, each relationship is interrupted every time Jane must move to the next place.

In the Rivers' house, Jane deepens intimacy "naturally and rapidly" with the two women, Diana and Mary, by reading books and chatting together (403). However, St John's proposal to go to India threatens their sisterhood. He advises Jane, who enjoys the female friendship, "I hope you will begin to look beyond [St John's] Moore House and Morton, and sisterly society and the selfish calm and sensual comfort of civilised affluence" (451). His words here imply that she should engage in the mission in India as lofty work; he frowns upon female bonding and tries to disrupt it. Diana discourages Jane from leaving for India because of her poor health, saying, "You would not live there three months there, I am certain" (478). Death can break their sisterhood and this is reminiscent of the friendship torn by Helen's death in Lowood.

However, Jane's refusal of St John's proposal enables the women to keep their sisterhood even after Jane marries Rochester. Jane divides her property with Diana and Mary through a formal legal process. This partial alienation of property from Jane to the Rivers makes the sisters become "possessed of a competency" (448) and they no longer need to work as governesses in other towns far from their home. Jane narrates the friendly interaction with them at the end: "Diana and Mary Rivers are both married: alternately, once every year, they come to see us [Jane and Rochester], and we go to see them" (520). Diana marries a captain of the navy and Mary marries a clergyman. The inheritance shared by Jane saves them from poverty and allows each of them to get married to a wealthy man.

Focusing on Jane's connections with Bessie, Helen and Miss Temple, critics tend to conclude that Jane's relationships with women are fragile. Certainly, as Carla Kaplan

states, Jane's interactions with Diana and Mary reminds us of those with Helen and Miss Temple in Lowood (Kaplan 88). However, Jane regains her lost sisterhood through her female friendship with the Rivers sisters. More notable is that Jane firmly maintains the female bond with the Rivers sisters both psychologically and financially after their marriage, though Brontë puts less stress on sisterhood in *Jane Eyre* than in *Shirley*. Their friendly interaction – such as reading books together, having a "girl talk" (Kaplan 92) and exchanging letters – shapes the intimacy between them. More importantly, the economic factor reinforces their sisterhood.

5. Culture of Victorian Female Investing

I have mentioned Jenny Sharpe's discussion that Jane's refusal of St John's offer to come to India as his wife represents her free will and "voice-agency" as a woman. In this section, I suggest that his proposal means he will deprive her of her property ownership. Just after Jane inherits her uncle's property, she shows her negative attitudes towards "marriage" in a conversation with St John.

> '. . . Jane, your aspirations after family ties and domestic happiness may be realised otherwise than by the means you contemplate: you may marry.'
>
> 'Nonsense, again! Marry! I don't want to marry, and never shall marry. . . . No one would take me for love; and I will not be regarded in the light of a mere money speculation. . . .' (447)

St John recommends that Jane "marry" because she seeks her own familial ties. Yet, she refuses marriage because she does not want to marry someone who marries her for her inherited "money" rather than for "love." In the middle of the nineteenth century, a

wife's property was legally owned by her husband. The Married Women's Property Act was enacted in 1870 and married women's property rights were ratified in a more improved form in 1882 with further revisions of the bill (Combs 1028–33). Women were required to be under the male protection not only by ideological gender norms but also by the property form.

Jane, who inherits the wealth of a new middle-class merchant, marries the landed-class Rochester for "love" beyond the gap of their social standing. Regarding Victorian society's socio-economic structure, the marriage reminds us of the rise of gentlemanly capitalism which P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins define in *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688–1914* (1993). They point out that "the landed interest . . . had come to lean on money made in the service sector, especially in the City of London" by the late nineteenth century (Cain and Hopkins 52). In other words, gentlemanly capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century integrated agricultural capitalism, which empowered traditional landowners and aristocrats, with "service-sector capitalism" consisting of financial and commercial interests in the City (Cain and Hopkins 40).

At the end of *Jane Eyre*, Rochester, who is seriously injured by Bertha's arson, gradually recovers through Jane's devoted support: two years after marriage, he recovers eyesight in one eye and they have a child. While Bertha's incendiarism implies the end of wealth accumulation by plantation management in a British colony (Meyer 70–71), Rochester's recovery represents gentlemanly capitalism through the revival of the landed class by absorbing the wealth of the new middle class.

Though Brontë describes a marriage that seems to represent gentlemanly capitalism, she seeks a way to make Jane fulfil her romantic love for Rochester and achieve her economic independence. Rochester asks Jane about the meaning of her words, "I am an independent woman," to which she answers, "My uncle in Madeira is

dead, and he left me five thousand pounds." It is impossible to detach the enunciation of her "independence" from property ownership; therefore, she says that she can build "a house of [her] own" next to Rochester's manor-house even if they cannot live together (501).

> '. . . Are you an independent woman? A rich woman?
>
> 'Quite rich, sir. If you won't let me live with you, I can build a house of my own close up to your door, and you may come and sit in my parlour when you want company of an evening. . . . I told you I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress.' (501)

Being her "own mistress" means that Jane continues to possess inherited property, and that she has rights to spend it at her own will to express her love for Rochester. She says to Rochester that she can be his "neighbor," "nurse" or "housekeeper" (501–02) to offer an alternative relationship to marriage between a man and a woman.

In addition, when Rochester says, ". . . you are young—you must marry one day," she answers, "I don't care about being married." Regarding her words, Jane, as the narrator, discloses to the readers that she intends to make him propose marriage to her (503). However, at the same time, her expression of love here – becoming his "neighbor" while she is her "own mistress" – implies an alternative to marriage. In this scene, Brontë suggests the legal limitations that women face when they try to balance love for men and their property ownership. Brontë does not write how Jane keeps the property that John Eyre "vested in the English funds." Yet, at that time, it was historically uncommon to liquidate stocks immediately (Sakamoto, *The Rise of the Investors Society* 186); thus, Jane may continue to hold on to the inheritance as invested property and

obtain periodic income.

Although I have mentioned the investment by the male protagonist in *The Professor*, more noteworthy in this section is the theme of women and finance in Brontë's works. In her last novel, *Villette* (1853), she describes Lucy Snowe's observation of the City of London and her godmother Mrs Bretton's bankruptcy by "some joint-stock undertaking" (*Villette* 40). Nancy Henry points out that "[t]he plot of Charlotte Brontë's (1853) *Villette* involves multiple financial failures, including those of the Brettons; Paul Emmanuel's father; and the father of his fiancée, Justine Marie" (Henry 62). According to Sakamoto, in the Victorian period, the number of women interested in investing had increased (Sakamoto, *The Rise of the Investors Society* 171); since the rise of investment in the seventeenth century, women and even children had started to invest.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, more female novelists such as Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot and Margaret Oliphant began to write about the culture of Victorian investment. Gaskell describes female investors in *Cranford* (1853), *Ruth* (1853) and *North and South* (1854). In *Cranford*, for example, a single woman, Matilda Jenkyns (Miss Matty), invests in the Town and County Bank, but this goes bankrupt. The narrator, Mary Smith, explains that Miss Matty's investment in the bank is "the only unwise step that clever woman had ever taken" because she ignored Mary's father Mr Smith's financial advice that Miss Matty should not invest in it (Gaskell, *Cranford* 141). She can no longer receive income from the investment anymore, and unexpectedly turns into a poor woman. She lives with the financial support of the women in the neighbourhood. In Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Tom Tulliver's aunt, Mrs Glegg, invests in mortgages and speculates on his prospective venture. In Oliphant's *Hester* (1883), Catherine Vernon is a sagacious female investor and co-owner of a bank. In late

Victorian novels, female characters are often involved in the economy as investors or bankers.

Women's economic activity through investment became more prominent in the twentieth century. For example, in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910), the Schlegel sisters earn hundreds of pounds as annual income from their investment. One of them, Margaret, takes "her money out of the old safe investments" and puts "it into Foreign Things, which always smash." She also invests in "the Nottingham and Derby Railway" because her aunt, Mrs Munt, who worries about the dangerous "Foreign Things," advises her to put some money into a safe investment; contrary to Mrs Munt's advice, Margaret succeeds with "Foreign Things." Another sister, Helen, takes her money out "Consols," which is "British government securities without redemption date and with fixed annual interest" (*OED*). Instead, she invests in "the Nottingham and Derby Railway" along with Margaret (Forster 11–12). Historically, investment activities clearly expanded not only among social classes but also across genders (Sakamoto, *The Rise of the Investors Society* 171). As *Howards End* shows, women gave useful advice or information on investments to each other, and investment became more indispensable as their income source.

Investment greatly developed between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century as one of the ways for women to increase or keep their property safely and permanently. Brontë herself invested in stocks. She wrote about her investment in a letter to her publisher, George Smith, on 14 September 1849.

> The Bank-Bill reached me safely: I assure you I felt rather proud of its amount; I am pleased to be able to earn so much, for Papa will be pleased too when I tell him. I should like to take care of this money: it is Papa's great wish

> that *I should realize a small independency* if you could give me a word of advice respecting *the wisest and safest manner of investing this £500*, I should be very much obliged to you. *I have already a few shares in a Railway, but these are so much fallen in value of late that I hardly like to venture on so uncertain an investment a second time*. A hint on the subject – provided it costs you no trouble—would be very acceptable to me. (Smith, vol.2, 253, italics mine)

Brontë asked Smith about "the wisest and safest manner" to invest £500 because she did not want to invest in "uncertain" stocks such as the "shares in a Railway" she already had. In the 1840s, railway stocks boomed, but then plunged shortly thereafter (Poovey, "Writing about Finance" 44). In fact, Brontë experienced large losses of her money by investing in the York and North Midland Railways (*Villette* 570, n.3).

For Brontë, it was important to know how to accumulate a fortune. She had a visually impaired father, sickly sisters and an alcoholic brother; thus, she had to seek a way to keep or increase her property safely and permanently instead of keeping high-risk shares in the railway. Jane Austen's mother also bought stocks, as she wrote in her letter to her elder sister Cassandra on 7 January 1807: "My mother is afraid I have not been explicit enough on the subject on her wealth; she began 1806 with 68*l.*, she begins 1807 with 99*l.*, and this after 32*l.* purchase of stock" (Austen 79–80). Beside Brontë and Austen, other Victorian writers such as Gaskell, Eliot and Oliphant connected local and global economies through their investments (Henry 85–87, 139, 226). Victorian female writers and their family actively participated in the financial market.

In the twentieth century, when women are legally allowed to have their own property, Virginia Woolf poses the question, "how does poverty affect literature [?]," focusing on women and poverty in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Mentioning Jane

Austen, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot, she writes about a problem that Victorian middle-class female writers faced in "the common sitting-room":

> Had it something to do with being born of the middle class, I asked: and with the fact . . . that the middle-class family in the early nineteenth century was possessed only of a single sitting-room between them? *If a woman wrote, she would have to write in the common sitting-room*. And, as Miss Nightingale was so vehemently to complain, – 'women never have an half hour . . . that they can call their own' – *she was always interrupted*. (Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* 50, italics mine)

Victorian female writers had no rooms of their own; therefore, they had no choice but to write in "the common sitting-room" under restrictions and interruptions. In addition, Woolf notes, about the Brontë sisters, that they were "so poor that they could not afford to buy more than a few quires of paper at a time upon which to write *Wuthering Heights* or *Jane Eyre*" (Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* 53).

While Woolf praises these female writers who created great works even under such circumstances, she repeatedly emphasises that it is important for women to have "five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door" (Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* 79). These two elements will support the intellectual activities of women, give them "the habit of freedom" (Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* 86) and enable them to sufficiently utilise their talents. Earning their own income gives women freedom of intellectual and creative activity as well as financial independence.

Brontë herself might not have obtained much income from investment, though she would have earned a small, solid income from the funds as a safe investment. Brontë used the words, "the Funds," in a letter she wrote to George Smith on 20 September

1849.

> I thank you very much for your letter, it gives me just the sort of information I wish to obtain. From all you say, I come to the conclusion that *the Funds* would suit my purpose best, *a safe permanent investment* being my object rather than large interest. (Smith, vol.2, 258, italics mine)

The funds, according to Poovey, generally signifies "consols": "[t]he quarterly interest that investors received for their investments was . . . said to come from the 'consols,' or consolidated annuities" (Poovey, *The Financial System* 13). Brontë does not clarify what kind of fund "the English fund" is in *Jane Eyre*, but we can guess it may be the "consols." As one of the ways to inherit property, unlike real estate, the funds enabled English people to earn interest even with a small investment. Similar to the relationship between John Eyre and Jane, heirs obtained valuable periodic income from the funds after the bondholders' death. Many English people invested in the funds at that time to receive income safely at fixed intervals (Sakamoto, *The Rise of the Investors Society* 186–87).

In the Victorian period, the British government mainly spent the invested capital in funds for war expenditures. On the other hand, to improve domestic infrastructure, such as roads, water and sewage, bridges and railways, local public bodies issued bonds. Moreover, joint-stock companies sold shares to raise funds for their local public projects (Sakamoto, *The Rise of the Investors Society* 13). Davidoff and Hall note that, for female investors in the Victorian age, "their investments were important in supplying mortgages for town expansion," and that "[f]emale capital supported the joint stock companies behind municipal utilities and railways." Economic activities in the Victorian era, such as investment and speculation, are often considered to have been conducted by men. Yet,

in fact, Victorian women – especially unmarried women and widows – were involved in domestic and international economic development through investment as "the core of those investors" (Davidoff and Hall, 3rd ed., 211). Although women were confined to a domestic and private space, investments provided them with an opportunity to enter into the public sphere and the economy to contribute to their country's development.

At the end of *Jane Eyre*, Jane's famous words, "Reader, I married him" (517), suggest that Jane is to belong to a domestic space in accordance with Victorian domestic norms. Yet, we should remember that Brontë suggests an alternative gender relationship to protect Jane's property before her marriage. Just as Jane devotes herself to support Rochester, women, as investors, firmly supported the Victorian male-dominant economic society. *Jane Eyre* contextualises the culture of female investors – including Brontë herself – in the Victorian period. Critics have discussed Jane's independence which brings gender equality in her personal relationship with Rochester. However, considering the culture of women's investment, *Jane Eyre* represents a new position for Victorian women in the socio-economic structure.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the relationship between what Jane inherits and her independence by examining the background of her uncle's wealth. His business and the history of Madeira reveal the global network of Madeira wine trade. At the same time, through her uncle, a wine merchant, we can take note of the existence of a new middle class that was emerging in the nineteenth century. In other words, John Eyre, who was ridiculed as "a sneaking tradesman" by Mrs Reed, represents the new middle-class upstart engaging in international trade.

Moreover, John Eyre invests his wealth built by the wine trade in "the English

funds." The money not only circulates in the trade network but also flows from overseas into England via "the English funds." It must be emphasised that Jane's economic independence is underpinned by two global networks behind her inheritance: the Madeira wine trade and finance transactions.

The uncle's existence, who was involved in the two networks, symbolises the change of England's economic structure in the Victorian era, namely the shift from landed-class property based on plantation management in the West Indies to the new middle-class wealth built by commerce. The gender balance reversal between Jane and Rochester at the end of the story implies not only the downfall of the landed gentry, but it also simultaneously shows the economic circulation by the new middle class that supports Jane's class mobility and her egalitarian marriage to Rochester.

Jane achieves an equal marriage at the expense of Bertha who commits suicide by jumping off the roof of Thornfield Hall. Brontë poses two kinds of the disadvantages for women in marriage: the union implies gentlemanly capitalism that symbolises landed-class Rochester's economic recovery by absorbing the wealth of new middle-class John, which Jane inherits; moreover, the union imposes the legal limits to Jane, who would lose her own property as *coverture*. As a countermeasure for the limitation, Brontë proposes a way to protect women's property by offering an alternative to marriage: Jane suggests that, instead of getting married, she will build her own home next to Rochester's as an independent woman and live as his friend and neighbour.

Brontë introduces the innovative theme of women and finance into this novel through Jane's indirect involvement in investment. Literary scholars tend to argue that Victorian women had been excluded from the economy because they were confined in the domestic sphere. Certainly, these women were historically ruled by the Victorian domestic ideology, which dictated that they should be excluded from social activities

and should only engage in female accomplishments at home such as sewing, painting and reading. Brontë's heroines also suffer from and resist such oppression. Yet, considering the history of investment, women were not entirely restrained in the domestic space, nor completely excluded from socio-economic activities. By investing their own assets, they joined the economic society and supported the development of the Empire.

The Victorian investment culture behind Jane's independence leads to women's vigorous economic activities in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature – from Matilda Jenkyns in *Cranford* to the Schlegel sisters in *Howards End*, who earn income from their investments. Beyond Jane's personal independence, *Jane Eyre* leads to later novels that include the theme of women and finance.

Chapter 2

"Where is my place in the world?":

The Uses of Literature and Women's Culture in *Shirley*

1. Introduction

Charlotte Brontë's third novel, *Shirley* (1849), adopts the format of the industrial novel, describing the class conflict between labourers and an Anglo-Belgian mill owner, Robert Moore. Deborah Epstein Nord states that the industrial novel "emerged out of the experience of northern industrial cities in the 1840s and 1850s" and "shifted the focus of urban representation to factory labour, machinery, class conflict, and the dynamics of a new economy" (Nord 516). Industrial novels are also known as "Condition-of-England novels" and include, for instance, Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855) as well as George Eliot's *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866) and *Middlemarch* (1871). Unlike Dickens and Gaskell, in *Shirley* Brontë writes not about contemporary social issues since the 1840s but about the beginning of the Luddite Movement. Luddism found its origin in the middle and north of England, where the textile industry flourished. From 1811 to 1817, handicraftsmen and factory workers destroyed the machinery that took away their jobs.

As I will examine in Section 2, Brontë describes the disruption of labour-management relations in Yorkshire, in the north of England, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many critics have discussed these industrial relations. Terry Eagleton analyses Brontë's works from a Marxist viewpoint in *Myths of Power: Marxist Study of the Brontës* (1975); he criticises the bourgeois unity of the landlord Shirley Keeldar and the industrial capitalist Robert Moore, though *Shirley* seems to show

sympathetic consideration for the labourers' agony in the class struggle. Sally Shuttleworth points out the analogy between the "surplus" unemployed in the economic market and the "surplus" unmarried women in the matrimonial market (Shuttleworth 183). She indicates that *Shirley* describes oppression in both class and gender, which organises the novel's structure.

Before Shuttleworth's feminist analysis in 1996, in 1979, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar had already discussed the dependent Caroline Helstone's stifling social position. Concerning *Shirley*'s end, they conclude that the future would be conquered by their male-dominant industrial society. Brontë implicitly suggests that women cannot easily obtain a happy ending in the corrupt world of *Shirley* (Gilbert and Gubar 398). Susan Zlotnick also argues that this novel attempts to "rewrite" a history from the female viewpoints of Shirley and Caroline and explains that Brontë "rewrite[s]" women who are excluded or marginalised from public events such as the Luddite Movement (Zlotnick 284). Even the female landowner, Shirley, despite her male-like leadership and energies, is not allowed to interfere in the public sphere where men clash together politically and economically. In this sense, *Shirley* eventually fails to empower female characters to intervene in the political economy.

As mentioned above, scholars tend to discuss how *Shirley* cannot solve issues of class and gender, though they have not ignored the connections between the women in the novel. For instance, Eagleton reveals "the latently sexual relationship" between Shirley and Caroline (Eagleton 58) and Gilbert and Gubar state that Shirley symbolises Caroline's double, who embodies her hidden and suppressed desire – in a similar way to Bertha Mason, who is the double of Jane Eyre. However, I will analyse women's intimacy from a different viewpoint in this chapter by demonstrating how they support each other psychologically and financially; in particular, I will focus on the female

bonds that they create by discussing literature.

Brontë's close friend, businesswoman and model for Shirley Keeldar, Mary Taylor, criticised the novel scathingly. In a letter to Brontë, she criticised of *Shirley*'s stance on women and work.

> I have seen some extracts from Shirley in which you talk of women working. And this first duty, this great necessity you seem to think that <u>some</u> [sic] women may indulge in – if you give up marriage & don't make themselves too disagreeable to other sex. You are a coward and a traitor. A woman who works is by that alone better than one who does not & a woman who does not happen to be rich & who still earns no money and does not wish to do so, is guilty of a great fault – almost a crime – A dereliction of duty which leads rapidly and almost certainly to all manner of degradation. . . . Work or degradation is the lot of all except the very small number born to wealth. (Smith, vol.2, 392)

Taylor asserted that the women who did not work were "guilty of a great fault," and that they were corrupted. Perhaps, "a woman who does not happen to be rich & who still earns no money, and does not wish to do so" refers to female characters such as Caroline, Miss Mann and Miss Ainley, who do not engage in business. Yet, what is more significant in this novel is that they would engage in business while supporting one another mentally and financially in sisterhood rather than work to earn money individually, as Taylor pointed out. I will examine how socially vulnerable women support and enlighten each other to create a female bond, while discussing how Brontë transform egoistic Robert Moore, who values "brotherhood in error" (89), for establishing women's economic base.

2. Robert Moore's "brotherhood in error" in Luddism

Brontë used the historical event of the Luddite Movement as the context for *Shirley*. The story revolves around the labour relations between the workers and Robert Moore, a Belgian factory owner. He immigrated to Yorkshire about two years earlier and started operating his factory for the purpose of repaying the debt that his grandfather had incurred by speculation failure in Belgium. The omniscient narrator explains the two reasons why the labourers hate Robert: he is a "semi-foreigner" who has both French and English lineages and he is a "thorough-going progressist" (30). The workers detest three newly introduced industrial elements: machinery which deprives them of "daily bread" (29), factories which contain the machinery, and manufacturers who own the factories.

> Misery generates hate: these sufferers [labourers] hated the machines which they believed took their bread from them; they hated the buildings which contained those machines; they hated the manufacturers who owned those buildings. In the parish of Briarfield, with which we have at present to do, Hollow's mill was the place held most abominable; [Robert] Gérard Moore, in his double character of semi-foreigner and thorough-going progressist, the man most abominated. (30)

The narrator says that Hollow's mill is a "most abominable" place. Robert is a "semi-foreigner" who is not "a native, nor for any length of time a resident of the neighbourhood." At the same time, he is a "thorough-going progressist" who never asks

himself “where those to whom he no longer paid weekly wages found daily bread” to prioritize work efficiency by introducing machinery (29–30).

The labourers try to compel Robert to leave England, criticising his “foreignness.” One of the workers, Noah o’ Tim’s, visits Robert to tell him that he is “a perfect outcast” from his homeland, Belgium, and that he should go “straight home to where [Robert] belong[s]” (130). Noah o’ Tim’s also asperses Robert, saying, in the strong Yorkshire dialect, that he is “a perfect outcast” who drifted to “the cliffs of Albion” from “a distant coast.”

> . . . sir, I would beg to allude that as a furriner, coming from a distant coast, another quarter and hemisphere of this globe, thrown, as I may say, a perfect outcast on these shores – the cliffs of Albion – you have not that understanding of huz and wer ways which might conduce to the benefit of the working-classes. If, to come at once to partic’lars, you’d consider to give up this here miln, and go without further protractions straight home to where you belong, it ‘ud happen be as well. (130)

“Albion” is derived from the Latin *albus*, meaning “white” (*OED*), and here it refers to the white cliffs of Kent facing the strait of Dover. At the same time, it means “the nation of Britain or England, often with reference to past times.” By using this word, Noah o’ Tim’s emphasises that Robert does not share the long history of England; therefore, he blames Robert: “[Y]ou have not that understanding of huz and wer ways which might conduce to the benefit of the working-classes.” Another labourer, Moses Barraclough, says that they “lived i’ peace and quietness” until Robert immigrated to Yorkshire (130).

The plot of the Luddite Movement in *Shirley* suggests that the industrial change, with the introduction of machinery, was brought by this outsider.

Eagleton points out that half-Belgian Robert's "foreignness" functions to emphasise his individualism. Robert is indifferent to "patriotism and local custom" but conducts his business, "relying purely on his own abilities" and prioritizing "profit" over "social piety" (Eagleton 55).

> In one way that foreignness serves to emphasise his individualism: he is alien in England, indifferent to patriotism and local custom, relying purely on his own abilities as Crimsworth [in Brontë's first novel *The Professor*] did in Europe. As the novel's primary type of industrial capitalism Moore is suitably stateless, owing allegiance to profit rather than social piety. (Eagleton 55)

His "individualism" is regarded as a non-English characteristic which is unacceptable in Yorkshire. Brontë also describes another local mill owner, Hiram Yorke, who, unlike Robert, values "social piety" over "profit"; Yorke is "[a] Yorkshire gentleman" (44) and attends to the poor "very fatherly" (47). According to Eagleton, distinguished families in Yorkshire had "traditions of paternalist care for the poor" (Eagleton 50). In contrast, individualistic and meritocratic Robert is hated by the labourers as a non-English man who undermines the order of the Yorkshire community. Thus, Brontë underlines Robert's reprehensible foreignness in the domestic class struggle by effectively describing a binary opposition between the altruistic English industrialist, Mr Yorke, and the egoistic non-English mill owner, Robert.

Un-English Robert needs to learn English customs to alleviate the conflict between himself and his labourers. His cousin, Caroline Helstone, proposes that he

learns Englishness by reading one of Shakespeare's plays to make him realise his French "vicious, perverse points" (87). Caroline explains the differences between his "French forefathers" and his "English ancestors."

> 'Your French forefathers don't speak so sweetly, nor so solemnly, nor so impressively as your English ancestors, Robert. To-night you shall be entirely English: you shall read an English book.' . . .
>
> 'I must read Shakespeare?'
>
> 'You must have his spirit before you; you must hear his voice with your mind's ear; you must take some his soul into yours.'
>
> 'With a view to making me better; is it to operate like a sermon?'
>
> 'It is to stir you; to give you new sensations. It is to make you feel your life strongly, not only your virtues, but your vicious, perverse points.' (86–87)

Caroline attempts to remove Robert's foreign defects, using Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Eagleton notes that ". . . the fact of being foreign is also exploited to excuse [Robert's] brutality" (Eagleton 55). Because Robert has not only French but also English lineage, Caroline tries to arouse and reinforce his English spirit by reading the Shakespeare play. As Paul Edmondson indicates, "Shakespeare makes one feel like more strongly and draws a distinctly English power out of a person's heart" (Edmondson 189).

Before elucidating the reason why Brontë chooses *Coriolanus*, I will briefly summarise its plot of *Coriolanus*. The play starts with a scene in which a Roman aristocrat and warrior, Caius Marcius (later Coriolanus), neglecting the demands of poor citizens who are "in hunger for bread" (Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 1.1.22–23). His arrogance causes the citizens' hatred towards him. Meanwhile, as a brave general, he

conquers the Volscian city of Corioli. Due to the victory, he secures the honourable cognomen of Coriolanus and is recommended to become a consul by Roman nobility. Yet, the citizens eventually do not allow him to be a consul; on the contrary, they banish him "[a]s enemy to the people and his country" (Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, 3.3.118). Coriolanus is expelled from Rome, and he decides to invade the city with his enemy Aufidius. However, Aufidius regards Coriolanus as a betrayer because Coriolanus stops the invasion upon Rome by accepting women's entreaty and therefore kills Coriolanus. In order for this tragedy not to repeat itself, Caroline hopes that Robert will learn Coriolanus' reprehensible elements from the play. She believes that he can learn the right way to handle the working classes by reading the play (Poole 106).

However, contrary to Caroline's intentions, Robert "sympathize[s]" with imperious Coriolanus. Robert justifies his own arrogance by sympathizing with Coriolanus' hauteur. Gail Marshall indicates that "Robert finds a self-justificatory power in Coriolanus' speech, whereas Caroline seeks to impress upon him the personal dangers of inflexibility and austerity" (Marshall 106).

> The very first scene in 'Coriolanus' came with smart relish to his intellectual palate, and still as he read he warmed. He delivered the haughty speech of Caius Marcius to the starving citizens with unction; he did not say he thought his irrational pride right, but he seemed to feel it so. Caroline looked up at him with a singular smile.
>
> 'There's a vicious point hit already,' she said; 'you sympathize with that proud patrician who does not sympathize with his famished fellow-men, and insults them: . . .'

> . . . *With the revenge of Caius Marcius, Moore perfectly sympathized*; he was not scandalized by it; and again Caroline whispered, '*There I see another glimpse of brotherhood in error.*' (88–89, italics mine)

Robert feels that Coriolanus' arrogant attitude towards the hungry citizens is "right." Observing his reaction, Caroline says, "There's a vicious point hit already." Robert's "vicious point" is that he "does not sympathize with his famished fellow-men" and that he "sympathize[s]" with the "proud patrician," Coriolanus (88). Margaret J. Arnold points out that "[h]aving established a modern industrialist as a worthy subject for echoing the world of *Coriolanus*, Brontë draws remarkable parallels in setting and character" (Arnold 77). Caroline compares Robert to haughty Coriolanus, and compares labourers in Yorkshire to the Roman poor who get angry because Coriolanus opposes grain supply.

Moreover, as Robert also "perfectly sympathized" with Coriolanus in his revenge on Rome, Caroline says, "I see another glimpse of brotherhood in error" (89). In other words, in this scene, Robert "sympathize[s]" with Coriolanus twice: first, with Coriolanus who is arrogant against the poor in Rome; then, with Coriolanus who revenges on Rome after his deportation. As Caroline points out, this is the "brotherhood in error." After reading *Coriolanus*, Caroline asks Robert, ". . . have you felt anything in Coriolanus like you?" (89). She attempts to warn him that the "brotherhood" generated by Robert's sympathy towards Coriolanus is erroneous.

As I mentioned above, Caroline makes Robert read *Coriolanus* to reform his attitude towards labourers, but she fails to do so. Edmondson notes that in this scene "Caroline Helstone tries to persuade her distant cousin the mill owner, Robert Moore, to be kinder to his workers" (Edmondson 189). However, strictly speaking, she reads

Coriolanus to tell him that he should learn how Coriolanus handles his "pride" (90). Gail Marshall states that Caroline "uses the play to attempt to instruct her Coriolanian cousin Robert Moore about his responsibility to his workers, his own pride, and a form of Englishness" (Marshall 106). Caroline explains what is wrong with him, quoting Aufidius' lines from the play.

> "Whether was it pride,
> Which out of daily fortune ever taints
> The happy man? whether defect of judgement,
> To fail in the disposing of those chances
> Which he was lord of? or whether nature,
> Not to be other than one thing; not moving
> From the casque to the cushion, but commanding peace
> Even with the same austerity and garb
> As he controlled the war?" (*Shirley* 90)

Caroline links Coriolanus, who was hated by Roman citizens because of his "pride," with Robert, who is in a conflict with his workers. As Jacob Korg asserts, "Caroline uses *Coriolanus* as a text for reading him a sermon on pride" (Korg 128), and she persuades him to swallow his "pride" to change his attitude towards labourers not to transform the tragedy of *Coriolanus* into reality.

Abandoning his "pride" would lead to Robert improving his relationship with his workers. Caroline asks Robert about Coriolanus: "[W]hat was [Coriolanus'] fault? What made him hated by citizens? What caused him to be banished by his countrymen?" (89). She also advises, "[Y]ou must not be proud to your workpeople; you must not neglect

chances of soothing them, and you must not be of an inflexible nature, uttering a request as austerely as if it were command" (90). Caroline adopts *Coriolanus* not only to stimulate Robert's inherent Englishness but also to point out his wrong pride. By referring to Coriolanus' "pride," Brontë suggests that those who are privileged need to swallow their "pride" to resolve class struggle.

3. Crossing Public and Domestic Spheres

In Section 2, we determined that Caroline uses *Coriolanus* to try to make Robert aware of his imperious attitudes towards his labourers. Her use of Shakespeare's play in moral education for Robert is related to the historical background of Victorian girls' education. Marshall notes that "girls first come to know about Shakespeare either through the home or, particularly later in the century, through formal education" (Marshall 13). Yet, his plays contain many sexual implications that the Victorians did not consider suitable and therefore needed to edit them for moral education.

Many Victorian writers "cleaned up" inappropriate parts for girls and then published their versions of Shakespeare's plays. One of the well-known edited versions is Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), published for children, especially for girls. It was reprinted 74 times during the nineteenth century. Thomas and Henrietta Bowdler also published *Family Shakespeare* (1807), in which they expurgated "immoral" parts of Shakespeare's plays. It is well-known that their first name, Bowdler, is used as a verb: "to expurgate (a book or writing), by omitting or modifying words or passages considered indelicate or offensive; to castrate" (*OED*). In addition, Caroline Maxwell published a curtailed version of Shakespeare, *The Juvenile Edition of Shakespeare: Adapted to the Capacities of Youth* (1828). She edited "prose versions" of Shakespeare's plays to educate young girls, so that mothers could use the book "without

being morally compromising" (Marshall 19). Mary Cowden Clarke, who compiled a Shakespeare concordance in 1844–1845, published *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1850–1852), which described the story of female characters' childhood in Shakespeare's dramas. Besides these works, many Victorian writers reproduced Shakespeare's plays for girls' moral education by editing, mediating and expurgating the sexual implications.

With Shakespeare's texts, the girls learned "appropriate femininity" (Marshall 18) as well as general morality. Not only Victorian writers but also mothers omitted the salacious parts when they read the plays out loud to their daughters. They were "constrained by feminine delicacy from discussing from sexual matters" with their children (Davidoff and Hall, 3rd ed., 341). Through Shakespeare's plays, Victorian girls were socially required to become "the Angel in the House" to be better wives and mothers while acquiring literary knowledge from their mothers. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall note that "[b]owdlerized reading matter and lack of experience combined to create a real need for male protection" (Davidoff and Hall, 3rd ed., 292). In other words, the girls' education or implantation of the domestic ideology helped to suppress active and rebellious women and to foster subordinate "Angel[s] in the House" who were confined to the home to support their husbands.

In addition, this prescriptive literature partly reinforced women's dependence in terms of property ownership while forming the norm of morality and femininity as the subordinate "Angel in the House" (Davidoff and Hall, 3rd ed., 293). This exemplary literature promoted implanting domestic ideology into women's mind; as a result, it partly played a role in forming a social system in which the husband protected not only his wife but also his wife's property. In the latter part of this chapter, I will also discuss Brontë's resistance in *Shirley* to the unequal social system under which, after marriage,

a woman's property was absorbed into her husband's after marriage.

With Robert, Caroline reads Shakespeare's text, which was historically used in girls' moral education, to instruct him in a moral sense. Caroline attempts to make obstinate Robert into a dedicated and flexible man for herself by reading Shakespeare's play with him. With *Coriolanus*, she educates Robert's arrogant attitudes towards the public, namely his labourers, while simultaneously attempting to transform him to suit a "domestic setting" (Arnold 77). Soon after reading *Coriolanus*, Caroline indirectly conveys her private feelings that she wants Robert to be kind to herself, while she advises him not to deal with his workers in an arrogant way. She explains the reason why she makes him read the play as follows: "A wish for your good, a care for your safety, dear Robert, and a fear caused by many things which I have heard lately, that you will come to harm" (90). Although she does not comprehend the context of the Luddite Movement in politics and economy, she is confident that she understands the situation in which Robert is about to be attacked by the furious workers. She says to Robert:

> '. . . he [Mr Helstone] thinks everything but sewing and cooking above women's comprehension, and out of their line.'
>
> 'And do you fancy you comprehend the subjects on which you advise me?'
>
> 'As far as they concern you, I comprehend them. I know it would be better for you to be loved by your workpeople than to be hated by them, and I am sure that kindness is more likely to win their regard than pride. If you were proud and cold to me and Hortense [Robert's elder sister], should love you? When you are cold to me, as you *are* sometimes, can I venture to be affectionate in return?' (90–91)

She ostensibly insists that mutual respect between Robert and his labourers is an essential element to develop a smooth relationship between them. Yet, at the same time, she indirectly tells him to be "affectionate" to her, uttering, "When you are cold to me, as you *are* [sic] sometimes, can I venture to be affectionate in return?" (91).

Focusing on the above scene of reading *Coriolanus*, Nancy Armstrong indicates that the literary text enables Caroline and Robert to form a heterosexual relationship. This scene produces "the only moment of intimacy" between them (Armstrong 215). By reading *Coriolanus*, Caroline admonishes him not only for his haughty attitudes towards the public but also for his occasional coldness towards Caroline in the domestic sphere. Here, Caroline shifts their topic from Robert's public Coriolanus-like pride to their private, heterosexual romance.

However, far from giving attention to the domesticity, Robert tries to exclude the possibility of a romantic relationship with Caroline. After they read *Coriolanus* at his house, he takes her home; though she feels joy and excitement in being with him because she loves him, he tries to shake off his affection towards her. On his way home, he becomes "grave, almost morose" (93) because he knows that he should not enjoy the time spent with her: "'This won't do! *There's weakness* – there's downright ruin in all this. However,' he added, dropping his voice, 'the frenzy is quite temporary. I know it very well: I have had it before. It will be gone to-morrow'" (93, italics mine). Robert thinks that "[t]here's weakness" in a romance with Caroline. As Coriolanus once tries to abandon his affection for women when he marches into Rome, Robert also attempts to stop loving her and to devote himself to his business. Regarding marriage, he talks to Mr Yorke, "Marriage! I cannot bear the word: it sounds silly and utopian" (158). Robert pursues more and more "the furtherance of his individual interest" in the male-

dominated economic world more than before, excluding any romance with Caroline.

One possible reason why Robert avoids a close relationship with Caroline is that he is afraid of deviating from the gender norm of "manliness" in brotherhood. Here, I refer to Alan Sinfield's interpretation of "effeminacy" and "masculinity" in Shakespeare's plays. Before analysing the deviation from "manliness" in *Coriolanus*, we must pay attention to Sinfield's interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* to understand his argument. In his reading of the scene in which Romeo laments that his best friend, Mercutio, was killed, Sinfield argues that "Shakespeare's Romeo says he is effeminate – not in respect of his love for Mercutio, but when he is distressed at his failure to prevent the death of Mercutio" (Sinfield 15). Romeo blames himself because he could not prevent Mercutio from being killed in a duel, and he says that Juliet's beauty made him "effeminate." Sinfield then points out that it is love for women that raises a problem of "masculinity": if Romeo had been more strongly dominated by friendship with or love for Mercutio than for Juliet, he could have saved him without worrying about the conflict between the two houses. However, he could not help Mercutio because he was fascinated by Juliet's beauty and became "effeminate." In other words, Romeo's heterosexual desire for Juliet unintentionally causes Mercutio's death, destroying the male bonding between them. Romeo's "effeminacy" signifies the deviation from the norm of "manliness" and leads to a break in the ties between men.

Regarding *Coriolanus*, Sinfield explains that each male relationship between Coriolanus and Cominius, and between Coriolanus and his enemy, Aufidius, conforms to the norm of "manliness": "two warriors may proclaim mutual affection comparable to that between man and woman. So long as they are being very warrior-like, there is no embarrassment in carrying over the paradigm of cross-sexual relations" (Sinfield 17).

In other words, even if two soldiers express mutual affection, it does not cause any humiliation as long as they are warriors.

This kind of relationship, especially between Coriolanus and Aufidius, suggests cross-sexual relations. Coriolanus is exiled from Rome because of his imperious attitude towards citizens, though he is a brave general who conquered Corioli. Coriolanus, who is furious at this deportation, heads to the Volsci and cooperates with his arch-rival, Aufidius, to take his revenge on Rome. When Aufidius meets Coriolanus, he says,

> AUFIDIUS. Here I clip
> The anvil of my sword, and do contest
> As hotly and nobly with thy love
> As ever in ambitious strength I did
> Contend against thy valour. Know thou first,
> I loved the maid I married; never man
> Sighed truer breath. But that I see thee here,
> Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart
> Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
> Bestride my threshold. (Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* 4.5.110–19)

In this scene, Coriolanus does not become feminine even though he takes “the place of the maid Aufidius married” (Sinfield 18). Because they share the strong feelings based on a common purpose to defeat Rome, their mutual affection is not considered a deviation from manliness.

However, Coriolanus, like Romeo, becomes “effeminate” because he submits to women (Sinfield 19). Just before Coriolanus invades Rome, his mother, wife and son

implore him not to march into Rome to take revenge. He once refuses their entreaty, saying, “Not of a woman’s tenderness to be / Requires nor child nor woman’s face to see” (Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* 5.3.130–31). These lines mean that “[i]f I am not to be effeminately tender, I must avoid the sight of children and women” (*Coriolanus* 340). Yet, he eventually submits himself to their petition. Aufidius considers Coriolanus’ surrender to women as treacherous behavior; thus, he appeals to the nobility in Volsci to condemn Coriolanus.

> AUFIDIUS. He has betrayed your business and given up,
> For certain drops of salt, your city Rome –
> I say ‘your city’ – to his wife and mother,
> Breaking his oath and resolution like
> A twist of rotten silk, never admitting
> Counsel o’th’war. But at his nurse’s tears
> He whined and roared away your victory, . . . (Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* 5.6.94–100)

The problem for Aufidius is that Coriolanus decides based on passive subordination to female entreaty. In other words, even though he decides to stop marching into Rome, he deviates from manliness because he listens to women. Coriolanus, who then concludes a peace treaty with Rome, has spent time with women, which has caused his effeminacy.

From the first, the male connection between Coriolanus and Aufidius to attack Rome is a part of Aufidius’ stratagem to deceive Coriolanus – that is, “brotherhood in error” in Caroline’s language. Yet, Coriolanus’ deviation from “manliness” signifies a betrayal of the male bonding between warriors, and he is therefore killed by Aufidius

and the Volscian people as retaliation for his treachery. Soon after reading *Coriolanus*, Robert tries to exclude the "cross-sexual attachment" to Caroline, as I have already discussed. He is afraid that spending a lot of time with women may diminish his manliness and cause his effeminacy.

As Robert avoids Caroline to keep his "manliness" intact, Caroline is greatly shocked because "her dear, good, great Robert – her Coriolanus" begins to take a cold attitude towards her. The omniscient narrator describes Robert having a "mischievous sardonic visage" that Caroline has not known (127):

> Would she have acknowledged in that mischievous sardonic visage the same face to which she had looked up with such love, which had bent over her with such gentleness last night? Was that the man who had spent so quiet an evening with his sister and his cousin – so suave to one, so tender to the other – reading Shakespeare and listening to Chénier?
>
> Yes, it was the same man, only seen on a different side; a side Caroline had not yet fairly beheld, though perhaps she had enough sagacity faintly to suspect its existence. . . . Love can excuse anything except Meanness; but Meanness kills Love, cripples even Natural Affection: without Esteem, True Love cannot exist. (127)

Robert's "Meanness" to his workers and Caroline is indispensable for him to make rapid progress in the business world, in other words, in the public sphere. "Meanness" would enervate any "Natural Affection" that Caroline might have towards him. This reminds us of Coriolanus, who refuses to show his "Natural Affection" towards his mother, wife and son. Without "pride" and "Meanness," Robert and Coriolanus cannot achieve social

success in the public male-dominated sphere as these elements are incompatible with "Natural Affection" which is generated in the domestic sphere.

To maintain his own bourgeois status, Robert thinks he should not be infatuated with Caroline because "weakness" would lead him to the "downright ruin" of his life and business. The "weakness," which Robert feels in a romantic relationship with her, is associated with Coriolanus' effeminacy caused by his attachment to women. Robert's effort to keep his social status as an industrial capitalist is closely related to the gender problem.

Caroline decides to live alone as a spinster because Robert shows her no love. After becoming aware that she cannot have a romance with Robert, she starts to ponder her hopeless future without him.

> 'I have to live, perhaps, till seventy years. As far as I know, I have good health: half a century of existence may lie before me. How am I to occupy it? What am I to do to fill the interval of time which spreads between me and the grave?'
>
> She reflected.
>
> 'I shall not be married, it appears,' she continued. 'I suppose, as Robert does not care for me, I shall never have a husband to love, nor little children to take care of. . . . Probably I shall be an old maid. . . . I shall never marry. What was I created for, I wonder? Where is my place in the world?' (168–69)

Caroline thinks that "marriage" is no longer an option in her life; therefore, she wonders how she will live for "seventy years" as "an old maid" in the future. Her agony as a spinster is generated by Robert's obstinate refusal of a cross-sexual attachment.

Effeminacy can undermine his status as a bourgeois factory owner in the plot of an industrial novel. However, at the same time, it is also coupled with Caroline's disappointment and disillusionment with him in the plot of a romance.

4. Intimacy between Women through Literature

Female friendship, which is created by reading some literary texts with Shirley, saves Caroline from the grief of her unrequited love for Robert. Shirley and Caroline do not take long time to recognise each other as a pleasant friend after meeting for the first time. Although their social statuses are different, Caroline can feel "a safe sense of equality" in her association with Shirley which she has "never known in that of the ordinary Briarfield and Whinbury gentry" (211). For Caroline who has no close friends and seeks "a change" (183) in her life, friendship with Shirley gives her a "happy change" (210). Shirley is surprised at and becomes interested in Caroline because she has a unique way "in mind and attainments," while she looks "quiet, retiring" and "delicate" (211).

> . . . [Shirley] very much wondered to see the gentle features light up archly to the reveillé of a dry sally or two risked by herself; and more did she wonder to discover the self-won knowledge treasured, and the untaught speculations working in that girlish, curl-veiled head. Caroline's instinct of taste, too, was like her own: such books as Miss Keeldar had read with the most pleasure, were Miss Helstone's delight also. They held many aversions too in common, and could have the comfort of laughing together over works of false sentimentality and pompous pretension.
>
> Few, Shirley conceived, men or women have the right taste in poetry: the

right sense for discriminating what is real and what is false. (211–12)

Shirley and Caroline gradually learn more about each other through their common literary preference. Shortly after the narrator explains above, Caroline recites an elegiac poem, “The Castaway” (1799) written by William Cowper (1731–1800). They discuss the ballad, imagining his feelings when he wrote it. Furthermore, their topic of discussion ranges from Cowper to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). By hearing each other on the two men’s lives and personalities, Caroline and Shirley understand each other and deepen their friendship.

Readers may observe their interaction between Caroline and Shirley through literary sources in other scenes as well. On another day, Caroline, Shirley and her governess Mrs Pryor plan to visit the Faroe Isles, an autonomous territory of Denmark, imagining ocean waves and whales in the poem, “A Song to David” (1763) written by Christopher Smart (1722–1771). The word “ocean” reminds Shirley of mermaids who seduce sailors, and she talks enthusiastically about the female monsters (232–33). The mermaids echo the Sirens in Greek mythology and *The Odyssey*, who lure seamen to wreck their ships with their enchanting singing voices. The plan for the trip with Shirley and the fantasy of the mermaids revitalise Caroline, although she has an “inexpressible weight” on her mind (231) because of her pessimistic view of her future in which she would be an old maid. Caroline and Shirley, sometimes also with Mrs Pryor, gradually develop intimacy and trust in their relationship through these literary sources.

Caroline and Shirley also chat about John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) and consider the theme of the “mother” after escaping the Sunday-school feast. Shirley doubts that “Milton was great; but was he good?” (303); with “a hash of Scripture and mythology” (304), she explains that Eve is the mother of all, even including Saturn,

Hyperion and Oceanus. She says that Eve is now called "Nature" and that she wants to feel her and stay with her "mother Eve" in the open air (304). Sandra Gilbert and Nancy Quick Langer focus on Shirley's mention of Milton's Eve. This scene evokes maternal Nature, which produces men's greatness; Shirley's Eve is "strong, assertive, vital" and "daring," though Milton's Eve is "submissive" and "domestic" (Gilbert 371). Brontë implies Shirley's resistance to the social stereotype that women should be "submissive" in domestic spaces. Shirley considers Eve "the (maternal) representative of women's collective struggle against systems that marginalize and contain them" (Langer 286). Shirley challenges Victorian patriarchy in which women should be under men's protection, suggesting that it is women who confer greatness to men.

While Shirley enthusiastically talks about "my mother Eve," the word "mother" clings to Caroline's mind: she does not know her own mother because of her parents' divorce in her childhood.

> Shirley had mentioned the word 'mother:' that word suggested to Caroline's imagination not the mighty and mystical parent of Shirley's visions, but a gentle human form – the form she ascribed to her own mother; unknown, unloved, but not unlonged-for.
>
> 'Oh, that the day would come when she would remember her child! Oh, that I might know her, and knowing, love her!'
>
> Such was her aspiration. (304–05)

The word "mother" reminds Caroline of "[t]he longing of her childhood" (305). This passage foreshadows Mrs Pryor's revealing that she is Caroline's mother in the latter part of the story. This scene in which Caroline and Shirley talk about *Paradise Lost*

leads to the scenes in which the readers witness an intimate reunion of a mother, Mrs Pryor, and a daughter, Caroline.

After deciding to live as an old maid, Caroline has been seeking "a change" in her life by associating with single women in her neighbourhood, Miss Mann and Miss Ainley, who would be good examples for her. However, she becomes deathly ill because of a serious fever. When Mrs Pryor visits to nurse her, Caroline asks Mrs Pryor to sing a hymn written by English hymn writer and port Isaac Watts (1674–1748): "You know I always delight to hear you sing: sing me a hymn just now" (401). After Mrs Pryor finishes singing it, Caroline asks her to sing Robert Burn's Scottish song: "Now sing a song – a Scottish song, . . . 'Ye banks and braes o' bonny Doonn'" (402). Here, her singing for the sick and emaciated Caroline is a sign of their mother-daughter relationship. Mrs Pryor cannot finish singing the song in front of weakened Caroline, who sees Mrs Pryor's tears, and says, "You are weeping at the pathos of the air: . . . it is not for me you weep?" (402). Shortly after her question, Mrs Pryor reveals that she is Caroline's mother.

> '. . . you are *mine* – my daughter – my own child.'
>
> 'Mrs Pryor – !'
>
> 'My own child!'
>
> 'That is – that means – you have adopted me?'
>
> 'It means that, if I have given you nothing else, I at least gave you life; that I bore you – nursed you; that I am your true mother: no other woman can claim the title – it is *mine*.' (403)

Mrs Pryor's exposure of their relationship encourages Caroline, and she gradually

recovers her health. From this scene, Caroline begins to build an intimate relationship with her mother that she could not build in her childhood, though she has deepened her friendship with Mrs Pryor when she thought she was simply Shirley's governess. The revealed fact reinforces the intimacy between the two women.

In *Shirley*, literary works are utilised not only to develop the women's intimacy but also to suggest the issue of women's contained lives – something that Brontë always tackles in her works. Caroline visits Mr Yorke and reads *The Italian* (1797) written by Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), an English author of Gothic novels, with one of his daughters, Rose. The little girl is inspired by this book and desires to travel "this hemisphere where [they] live; then the other" in her future (377). She insists that she does not want to live a life like Caroline's: "I am resolved that my life shall be a life: not a black trance like the toad's, buried in marble; nor a long, slow death like yours [Caroline's] in Briarfield Rectory." Surprised by Rose's words, Caroline asks her, "Like mine! What can you mean, child?" (377).

> 'Might you not as well be tediously dying, as for ever shut up in that glebe-house – a place that, when I pass it, always reminds me of a windowed grave? . . . What do you do there?'
>
> 'I sew, I read, I learn lessons.'
>
> 'Are you happy?'
>
> 'Should I happier wandering alone in strange countries, as you wish to do?'
>
> 'Much happier, even if you did nothing but wander. . . .'
>
> 'Is change necessary to happiness?'
>
> 'Yes.'

> ‘Is it anonymous with it?’
>
> ‘I don’t know; but I feel monotony and death to be almost the same.’ (377)

Rose points out that Caroline merely lives waiting for death in the rectory, and rejects her way of life as a woman confined to her domestic space. She declares that, unlike Caroline, she wants to venture off in an outside world that she does not know similar to the one Jane Eyre hopes to see beyond the horizon: “I . . . looked out afar over sequestered field and hill, and along dim sky-line – that then I longed for a power of vision which might overpass that limit; which might reach the busy world, towns, regions full of life I had heard of but never seen; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character, than was here within my reach” (*Jane Eyre* 129).

In this monologue, Jane shares a constrained woman’s wish to go forth into the outside world with Brontë’s female readers. Raymond Williams discusses the distinguishing characteristics of Jane’s narration: “there are *secrets*, to put it at its plainest, that you and Charlotte Brontë are meant to share, as if you were on your own” (Williams 156). Brontë tries to make Jane create an intimate relationship with the readers through her dialogue in which she often talks to them (Kaplan 93). However, in *Shirley*, instead of addressing readers, Brontë uses the conversation to share women’s wishes and “secrets” between the female characters.

Furthermore, Rose implicitly tells Caroline that women should work and be financially independent: “[I]f my Master [the Lord] has given me ten talents, my duty is to trade with them, and make them ten talents more” (378). Rose’s critical attitude towards Caroline suggests “the connection between the financial dependence of women and the destruction of their creative potential” (Gilbert and Gubar 390). Rose’s word

"talents" means both money and aptitude, and she indirectly criticises Caroline for burying her own talents. In this scene, Brontë challenges the way of life of a confined woman; and at the same time, she argues that women should aim for a way of life that makes use of their own "talents."

Just before Rose pointed outs Caroline's confined life, Caroline monologises that "[f]athers" should develop their daughters' talents by cultivating them. She thinks of two women who are regarded as representing ideal womanhood: "Lucretia" is a chaste wife of Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus in Roman legend, and "Solomon's virtuous woman" in Proverbs 31. Lucretia reminds Caroline of Robert's sister, Hortense Moore, who often makes her maid work because Lucretia "kept her servants up very late" to spin together (370). Although both "Lucretia" and "Solomon's virtuous woman" engaged in spinning, Caroline narrates the crucial difference between the two:

> . . . *she* [Solomon's virtuous woman] had something more to do than spin and give out portions: she was a manufacturer – she made fine linen and sold it: she was an agriculturist – she bought estates and planted vineyards. *That* woman was a manager: she was what the matrons hereabouts call "a clever woman." On the whole, I like her a good deal better than Lucretia . . . (371)

"Solomon's virtuous woman" is a practical female model, and she represents Shirley who is involved in Robert's business as the landlord of his factory. Caroline desires not to spin as an old maid, that is a spinster, with hidden talents but to participate in economic activities, as "Solomon's virtuous woman" and Shirley do. However, she is a spinster who has no money, no education and no chance to realise her wish to become a woman of talent.

In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë also shows that women need a place to "exercise for their faculties" through Jane's monologue at Thornfield Hall:

> 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. . . . Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (*Jane Eyre* 129–30)

In *Shirley* too, Brontë underscores the necessity of fields and opportunities for women to thrive. Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), focuses on the above passage of *Jane Eyre*, and imagines what Brontë would experience if she had "three hundred [pounds] a year": if she "had possessed say three hundred a year," she "had somehow possessed more knowledge of the busy world, and towns and regions full of life; . . . She knew, no one better, how enormously her genius would have profited if it had not spent itself in solitary visions over distant fields; if experience and intercourse and travel had been granted her" (Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* 53).

Yet, Brontë attempts to describe the "intercourse" between women in *Shirley*, while this intimacy tends to be broken off in *Jane Eyre* as I discussed in Chapter 1. Female characters in *Shirley* enlighten each other through literary texts. These works

not only strengthen the connection between women but also give them the opportunity to think and discuss ways of achieving their independence.

5. Shirley's Inheritance and Female Bonding

Despite their "intercourse" between women in *Shirley*, they face the danger of fragmentation of their bonds because of Robert's egoism; in particular, Robert's proposal of marriage to Shirley Keeldar leads to an interruption of women's solidarity. Shirley is an independent female landowner and participates in a business by renting a land to Robert. In Chapter 30, Robert talks about her with Mr Yorke. Robert explains that he proposed marriage to her, saying "I offered myself – my fine person – with my debts, of course, as a settlement" (499–500). In other words, he told her that he wanted her to marry him. Shirley rebukes Robert's courtship: "You spoke like a brigand who demanded my purse, rather than like a lover who asked my heart" (500). She realises that Robert does not love her and that he is planning to marry her for money.

Moreover, Shirley asserts that receiving Robert's proposal means betraying other women. As she feels he denies her "possession of all [she] value[s] most" (502), she blames him with intense resentment:

> "That is to say, that you have the worst opinion of me: that you deny me the possession of all I value most. That is to say, that *I am a traitor to all my sisters*: that I have acted as no woman can act, without degrading herself and her sex: that I have sought where the incorrupt of my kind naturally scorn and abhor to seek. . . . You – once high in my esteem – are hurled down: you – once intimate in my friendship – are cast out. Go!" (502, italics mine)

Shirley is proud to have done what other women cannot do and is a self-supporting woman – an ideal model for "all [her] sisters," including Caroline. Yet, marriage to Robert implies that she would be possessed by him because wives were regarded as their husband's property in the nineteenth century. For Shirley, then, marriage signifies "degrading herself and her sex."

When women married, the property rights law in the mid-Victorian period forced their fortunes to be transferred to their husbands. If Shirley accepted Robert's proposal, her property would become his. Losing her position as an independent woman signifies betraying "all [her] sisters." Therefore, she banishes Robert who makes her "a traitor" to the sisterhood. Robert functions, intentionally or unintentionally, as a menace who not only excludes his workers but also threatens to sever female bonds.

One day, "eyes of gossips" (466) in her neighbourhood witness Shirley visit a solicitor, Mr Pearson Hall. The neighbours misunderstand and think that she goes to see Mr Hall to keep her property from her future husband, Robert: "some people affirmed that Miss Keeldar was become involved in business speculations connected with Hollow's Mill; that she had lost money, and was constrained to mortgage her land: others conjectured that she was going to be married, and that the settlements were preparing" (466).

The settlements here signify a marriage settlement that a woman or her family arrange a deed to keep her money "for her sole use" (650, n.1). In the Victorian era, when a woman married, her property was under her husband's control by the English Common Law. Though, before 1833, widows were allowed to be dowered after their husband's death, even the rights of dower were deprived by law in 1833 (Davidoff and Hall, 3rd ed., 276; Laurence et al. 8). Because of the property law, the neighbours speculate that Shirley visited a solicitor to negotiate "the settlements" before marrying

Robert.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë also refers to the marriage settlement. Just before his death, Edgar Linton, the master of Thrushcross Grange, tries to arrange the settlement for his daughter, Catherine Linton, in order for his property not to become part of Heathcliff's.

> . . . [H]e [Edgar Linton] felt his will had better be altered – instead of leaving Catherine's fortune at her own disposal, he determined to put it in the hands of trustees, for her use during life; and for her children, if she had any, after her. By that means, it could not fall to Mr Heathcliff should Linton die. (*Wuthering Heights* 282)

Edgar sends for a lawyer, Mr Green, to draw up the marriage settlement for Catherine because Heathcliff will seize his property if she marries Heathcliff's son, Linton. To avoid this, Edgar attempts to establish legal procedures to allow Catherine to maintain the property. However, Mr Green has already "sold himself to Mr Heathcliff" (*Wuthering Heights* 284), and Edgar dies without arranging the settlement. Both Charlotte and Emily deal with Victorian women's property ownership in their works, and they suggest that the marriage settlement was the only way to legally protect women's property legally.

Lee Holcombe, historian, explains how women keep their property in Victorian period:

> Separate property could be created in several ways. The usual way was the drawing up of a written instrument setting forth the terms of the trust, either a

> deed or will disposing of property or a marriage settlement, a contract negotiated between the parties to a marriage or their families before the marriage took place. (Holcombe, *Wives and Property* 40)

Basically, a husband controlled his wife's property, but a marriage settlement legally enabled married women to have some of their own money after their marriage. In other words, the marriage settlement gave married women legal validity to maintain their property without their husband's support.

In fact, Shirley has not failed in business, speculations, and is not arranging a marriage settlement despite the neighbours' rumour. Soon after this rumour, Henry Sympson, Shirley's young relative, explains the reason she visited the solicitor to his tutor, Robert Moore's brother Louis. He reveals to him that Shirley made a will about the inheritance of her property.

> '"Because," she [Shirley] said, "if I made no *will*, and died before you Harry, all my property would go to you; and I do not intend that it should be so, though your father would like it. But you," she said, "will have his whole estate, which is large – larger than Fieldhead; y*our sisters will have nothing, so I have left them some money*: . . ." She said these words, and she called me her "darling," and let me kiss her. She went on to tell me that *she had left Caroline Helstone some money too*; . . ."' (468, italics mine)

Shirley has visited the solicitor to make a will to leave her money to women such as her female cousins and Caroline. Historically, Victorian women often assigned their property – including "personal effects and small parcels of money" – to their relatives

and friends, as Shirley does in the novel (Davidoff and Hall, 3rd ed., 276).

Shirley prepares a will to establish an economic foundation for women in need of financial support rather than securing her own property from a husband, as the neighbours' gossip says. Her will promises to distribute her property among Caroline and her female relatives; as she values sisterhood, she decides to leave her property to her female friends to support their life. Shirley's will reflect another method of women's mutual support, and it saves Caroline financially in a practical way, while the women tighten their spiritual bond through literature.

Brontë seeks to provide an economic base for women with no property by the inheritance. Yet, it is virtually impossible for these dependent women to become independent soon because they can inherit her property only after Shirley dies. Brontë suggests the limitations of both this strategy as well as the lives of dependent Victorian women: as in *Jane Eyre*, they must rely on inheritance. However, Brontë prepares another way for women to achieve economic independence. In the next section, I will analyse Brontë's suggestion for the financial foundation for these women.

6. Robert's Effeminacy and Atonement to Support Female Bonding

Robert's "effeminacy," which I discussed in Section 3, is the departure point for examining another way in which Brontë proposes that women participate in economic activities. At the end of *Shirley*, Brontë makes Coriolanus-like Robert deviate from his "manliness" and repent his arrogance after he is shot by rebels. He hovers between life and death because he ignored warnings from the workers and Caroline. Before this tragedy happens, the narrator implies it with an allusion to *Coriolanus* (4.7.40–41) in Chapter 8, in which Robert refuses the labourers' cautions: Robert "at least had 'failed in the disposing of a chance he was lord of'" (133). Brontë starts to revise the plot of

Coriolanus starting from the scene in which Robert is wounded and carried to Mr Yorke's house to be nursed by women. The first nurse is Mrs Yorke. The narrator explains her feelings towards Robert: "[Mrs Yorke] almost loved Moore: her tough heart almost yearned towards him, when she found him committed to her charge, – left in her arms, as dependent on her as her youngest-born in the cradle" (527). Mrs Yorke treats Robert like a baby, and he depends on her. By being shot, Robert is transformed from an "independent" man into a "dependent" baby in female hands. His change reminds us of Edward Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, who was injured when his wife Bertha Mason burned down Thornfield and became weak as a child. At the end of the story, Rochester says to Jane, "You know I was proud of my strength: but what is it now, when I must give it over to foreign guidance, as a child does its weakness?" (*Jane Eyre* 514).

Mrs Yorke and Robert's sister, Hortense Moore, are incompetent nurses because of their meddling: "the bandages were displaced, or tampered with; great loss of blood followed" (528). Instead, a masculine nurse, Mrs Horsfall, subsequently undertakes nursing him, "the great baby" (535). Her body has "the breadth, the height, the bone, and the brawn" of a man (529). Brontë reverses the gender power balance between injured Robert and Mrs Horsfall, as the following passage shows.

> In the commencement of his captivity, Moore used feebly to resist Mrs Horsfall: he hated the sight of her rough bulk, and dreaded the contact of her hard hands; but *she taught him docility in a trice*. She made no account whatever of his six feet – his manly thews and sinews: she turned him in his bed as another woman would have turned a babe in its cradle. When he was good, she addressed him as 'my dear,' and 'honey;' and when he was bad, she sometimes shook him. (530, italics mine)

Mrs Horsefall's masculine physique easily suppresses Robert, though he tries to resist her. Moreover, she teaches him "docility" (530). His large body and "manly thews and sinews" make no difference to her, and she treats him as "a babe," as Mrs Yorke did before. In *Jane Eyre*, Gilbert and Gubar regard Rochester's injury as "a symbolic castration" (Gilbert and Gubar 368). Robert's masculine power is weakened in this scene; thus, his serious wound suggests "a symbolic castration" similar to Rochester's.

Robert gradually begins to reform himself by abandoning his "pride," reflecting on himself in the isolated space and lonely time; he swallows his inelastic, arrogant, Coriolanus-like pride (Arnold 86). When Robert, who is symbolically castrated, states, "I am hopelessly weak, and the state of my mind is inexpressible" (547), Caroline visits him, led by Mrs Yorke's conceited son, Martin. Robert is depressed.

> Moore sighed – a sigh so deep, it was nearly a groan: he covered his eyes with his hand.
>
> '*May I be spared to make some atonement!*'
>
> Such was his prayer.
>
> 'And for what?'
>
> 'We will not touch on it now, Cary: unmanned as I am, I have not the power to cope with such a topic. . . .' (547, italics mine)

He tells Caroline that he wants to make "atonement." Caroline asks him the details of the compensation, but he does not answer it at this time. Yet, at the end of the novel, he reveals the details of such "atonement" after the world economy begins to recover because of the repeal of "Orders in Council" (29) which is Britain's "economic blockade

on France and her allies" in 1807 against Napoleon's Berlin Decrees of November 1806 to "exclude British exporters from the whole of Europe" (623, n.3). With the economic recirculation in Europe, he first attempts to make "atonement" for his labourers, and explains to Caroline, "I can take more workmen; give better wages; lay wiser and more liberal plans; do some good; be less selfish . . . ." Robert, who once sympathised with arrogant Coriolanus, says that he will "be less selfish" and reveals his reformation (602).

Another "atonement" is made for women, especially for Caroline. He recommends that she open "a Sunday-school" and declares that he will support the necessary expense for it. In addition, he proposes that she run the school with Shirley and another single woman.

> 'Such a Sunday-school as you will have, Cary! such collections as you will get! such a day-school as you and, Shirley and Miss Ainley, will have to manage between you! The mill shall find salaries for a master and mistress, and the Squire [Louis] or the Clothier [Robert] shall give a treat once a-quarter.' (606)

Caroline, who has longed for "a change" in her life (183–84), has an opportunity to become active in the public sphere. By "the extension of women's domestic activities," Victorian women historically contributed to society: they visit the poor and the sick, teaches in Sunday schools and raise funds (Davidoff and Hall, 2nd ed., xxiv; Steinbach 45–46). Shortly after Robert once gave her the cold shoulder, she participated in philanthropy visiting the poor with Miss Ainley to find a way to live as an old maid. Yet, charitable work did not give her "a change" in her life. What is important for her is "managing" a Sunday school and earning money for her property while contributing to society. Robert also facilitates Caroline maintaining her sisterhood by telling her to

manage the school with other women. At the end of the story, he comes to support the workers and women by swallowing his "pride" and being altruistic, as Caroline has hoped he would do.

Moreover, Robert also offers a way to keep the female bond between mother and daughter intact when he makes a marriage proposal to Caroline. She asks him whether she should leave her mother, Mrs Pryor, upon marriage (603).

> 'Poor mamma! I am all mamma has: must I leave her [Mrs Pryor]?'
>
> 'Do you know, I thought of that difficulty: I and "mamma" have discussed it.'
>
> 'Tell me what you wish – what you would like – and I will consider if it is possible to consent; but I cannot desert her, even for you: I cannot break her heart, even for your sake.' (603)

To her question, Robert answers, "You never shall leave her" (603) and does not force a separation. His amendment improves not only his relationship with his workers but also that with the women; in other words, he functions as a catalyst for women to nurture their bonds and provide them with opportunities to participate in the public sphere.

At the end of *Shirley*, the issues of class and gender seem to be solved by Robert's atonement. Brontë seemingly describes the community as having a happy ending because he saves the unemployed. Yet, on a more social level, she suggests a new turmoil caused by Britain's economic recovery after the removal of the Orders in Council: ". . . all, like wise men, at this first moment of prosperity, prepared to rush into the bowels of speculation, and to delve new difficulties, in whose depths they might lose themselves at some future day" (598–99). The narrator tells the readers the

subsequent social predicament that the Victorians would experience with the rise of investment and speculation. Although the narrator does not clarify the "new difficulties," these may signify the financial crisis of 1825 and 1826: the securities market expanded rapidly in 1825, but it suddenly halted "with the collapse of the speculative bubble in foreign shares" (Poovey, *The Financial System* 15). Brontë does not praise the economic recovery without reservation; rather, she suggests a following financial problem, and it casts shadow on the happy ending.

As critics have discussed, Brontë does not entirely solve the gender problem. Although Shirley and Caroline get their happy endings with marriage, we can easily guess that they will be domesticated by their husbands in their future. This ending means that the future would be won by men in their industrial patriarchy (Gilbert and Gubar 398). Zlotnick also criticises how *Shirley* fails to empower women to take part in the public sphere and imposes the "traditional social role" as domestic dutiful figures on them (Zlotnick 293). However, to resist the industrial patriarchy, Brontë implies that women need to strengthen their ties and support themselves as well as one another practically and economically – and not only by a conceptual bonding to challenge the Victorian domestic ideology. She shows how women may become independent more practically by subsidising other women, such as in the case of Shirley's inheritance being bequeathed to Caroline. Symbolically castrated Robert functions as a catalyst to fulfil both women's each romance and their independent life while keeping their sisterhood.

7. Conclusion

Many critics have already discussed Brontë's use of *Coriolanus* in *Shirley*, focusing on Robert's foreignness and Coriolanus-like pride. They have pointed out that

his foreignness and pride affect the relationship between him and his workers. However, more significantly, the double plots of the Luddite Movement and romance intersect in the scene of reading *Coriolanus*. While Caroline makes Robert read the play to warn him of his self-serving attitudes towards the public, she utilises it to draw his attention to her own private feelings towards him and fulfil her romantic love. Re-reading Shakespeare's text in *Shirley* enables us to notice three types of gender politics: patriarchy during the period of the Renaissance, the image of "the Angel in the House" in the Victorian period, and Brontë's resistance to the image of the suppressed women. Robert escapes the "effeminacy" caused by a romantic relationship with Caroline, reminding us of Coriolanus, who fears becoming "effeminate" by the "cross-sexual attachment" to his mother and wife.

To remain manly, Robert stabilises his dominance in his class and gender politics: that is, the power balance between him and his workers, and between him and women. If Robert, who is in financial hardship, should marry Shirley, it would solve both class and gender problems. Yet, simultaneously, his proposal signifies breaking female bonds. Shirley does not want to betray "all [her] sisters" for this mercenary marriage. To avoid severing female bonds, Brontë needs Robert to change from a manly egoist to an effeminate man to support women. She revises gender politics: not only do female characters get into a domestic life in compliance with the Victorian domestic ideology, but they also participate in economic activities with Robert's financial support. In other words, though the "effeminacy" had a negative effect on Coriolanus and led him to tragedy, Robert's feminisation functions as an essential moment to provide the economic base for the female characters in *Shirley*. Brontë values men's "effeminacy" in terms of promoting female financial independence, even though it violates Victorian gender norms.

In her posthumous essay, “Professions for Women” (1942), Virginia Woolf notes that “Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer” (Woolf, “Professions for Women” 142). However, Brontë’s attempt is not to kill “the Angel in the House” but to deconstruct the Victorian domestic ideology using the framework of an industrial novel. *Shirley* neither denies the domestic life of an “Angel in the House” who takes care of her family, nor completely affirms that women should be confined in the home. Then, in this novel, Brontë suggests a female culture that does not necessarily contradict marriage and does not completely deviate from the Victorian’s ideal domestic norm. Female characters strengthen their connection while enlightening one another through literary texts. In short, in *Shirley*, literature reinforces their bonds and forms a female culture to resist the Victorian patriarchal domestic ideology.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë describes Jane’s personal financial independence by the inheritance from her uncle in Madeira; however, female friendships are apt to be interrupted each time that Jane moves to the next place. However, in *Shirley*, Brontë highlights mutual support in spirituality and finance between women, valuing female bonds more than in *Jane Eyre*. While she meets the demand of Victorian female readers – namely the achievement of romance – she also offers a possibility for women to build their bonds spiritually and financially. Robert’s effeminacy enables female characters to tighten their bonds more practically than in *Jane Eyre*.

Chapter 3

"Come to England . . . and get a practical notion of how our system works.": A Self-Made Man's Idealised Englishness in *The Professor*

1. Introduction

After *Shirley* was published in 1849, Charlotte Brontë set about writing *Villette* (1853). The novel mostly develops the story not in England like *Jane Eyre* but in "a cosmopolitan city" named Villette based on Brussels, the capital of Belgium, where Brontë stayed twice from 1842 to 1843 with her sister Emily to improve their ability of French language skills for their future plan of opening a school. *Villette* is not, however, Brontë's first novel loosely based on her Brussels experience; this is *The Professor*, written in 1845–1846 before *Jane Eyre* and published posthumously in 1857, though the protagonist who goes to Brussels is not a woman but a man named William Crimsworth. Before analysing how Brontë describes the female character's experience abroad in *Villette*, we will focus on its male counterpart in *The Professor*.

Among her works, Brontë employs the male first-person narrator only in *The Professor*. William Crimsworth, the protagonist and narrator, is the second son of a once wealthy tradesman who became bankrupt before his death. William's mother comes from an aristocratic family and dies shortly after giving birth to William six months after her husband's death. After studying at Eton college with financial help of his maternal relatives, William refuses their offer to give him a chance to become a rector; instead, he decides to be a tradesman like his father. To find a job, he heads to his brother Edward, a successful mill owner, and is given clerical work there; however, he soon quits due to fraternal discord and bad working conditions. He listens to a helpful advice from his acquaintance Hunsden Yorke Hunsden, a businessperson of ability, which

brings him to Brussels. In the foreign city, William finds a job as an English teacher (called "professor" in Belgium), his future wife (an Anglo-Swiss woman named Frances Evans Henri) and eventually earns a fortune enough to retire from the teaching profession by managing his own school and investing. After returning to England, he establishes his residence with his wife and a son in Daisy Lane in his home county of England, like the landed gentry. In the nice study of his country house, he tells the readers about his successful experience abroad, looking back on the past. *The Professor* is in the story of a self-made man.

This chapter addresses the extent to which Brontë, as a female novelist, critically appropriates the "masculine" narrative format of the self-made man in writing *The Professor*. Such a narrative format represents, as Heather Glen shows, middle-class respectability, which evaluates "industry and perseverance, self-reliance and independence, self-respect and self-control" in the Victorian era (Glen 11). It had become highly popular by the mid-1840s, and the genre reached its peak in 1859 when the "phenomenally best-selling" *Self-Help* (1859) by Samuel Smiles was published (Glen 10). Surely, although Brontë stands on the side of the middle-class values, she does not fully appreciate her protagonist's male success story. Her critical distance from the popular narrative format of the self-made "man" in *The Professor* serves as her reproach men for "how our system works" (260) in England in terms of gender. This chapter will gauge the author's ambivalent and critical distance by focusing on the issue of gender as well as Englishness – the national identity that becomes problematic in the foreign city.

2. To Be a Member of the Bourgeoisie, or Not to Be

The Professor begins with a scene in which William Crimsworth finds a copy of

a letter he had written a year ago to Charles, one of his friends from Eton college: “The other day, in looking over my papers, I found in my desk the following copy of a letter, sent by me a year since to an old school acquaintance” (39). Brontë employs an epistolary style in the first chapter. The letter says that they have not kept in touch with each other since leaving school, but William recalled Charles upon finding his friend’s name in a country newspaper. He decided to write a letter to tell Charles what had happened to him (“how the world has wagged with me”) since their last contact (39).

William’s letter to Charles describes his experience in the days from leaving Eton to getting clerical work. Because the addressee has gone abroad for “a Government appointment in one of the colonies” before receiving it, William never gets a reply from Charles and does not know what has become of him since then (47). After quoting the whole letter, Chapter 1 ends with William narrating the following:

> The leisure time I have at command, and which I intended to employ for his private benefit, I shall now dedicate to that of the public at large. My narrative is not exciting, and above all, not marvellous; but it may interest some individuals, who, having toiled in the same vocation as myself, will find in my experience frequent reflections of their own. The above letter will serve as an introduction. I now proceed. (47)

William tells us that he uses his “leisure time” to narrate his experience – not for the “benefit” of his friend in the form of a private letter but for that of “the public at large.” The “benefit” he mentions here refers to some of the readers, “having toiled in the same vocation as myself,” may find that William’s experience reflects their own; therefore, those who are interested in his narrative will discover that they share the same values

as William. “My narrative,” that is *The Professor* itself, would then represent middle-class value, which advocates for those who wishing to make their own way in the world without the privileges of birth and connection, from an inferior position to that of a successful member of the bourgeois society. At the end of the introductory part of the novel, William reveals his intention to share his experience with the readers and serve as a model for becoming independent by their own effort.

Brontë originally intended to show the middle-class values in *The Professor* when she started writing it. In the “Preface,” written after the publication of *Shirley*, she states;

> I said to myself that my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs – that he should never get a shilling he had not earned – that no sudden turns should lift him in a moment to wealth and high station; that whatever small competency he might gain, should be won by the sweat of his brow . . . (37)

This preface shows her critical opinion to the publishers who rejected the manuscript of this novel. While she comprehends that the publishers demand “something more imaginative and poetical” in fiction, she declares that her hero had to earn money “with the sweat of his brow” (37). What she implies here is a middle-class work ethic which values hard work and diligence. In this novel, she writes that efforts and industry make a man independent, just as Samuel Smiles’ *Self-Help* suggests the importance of endeavour and diligence.

The preface also indicates that the middle-class values of hard work is tied to Protestantism. After the above passage, Brontë goes on:

> . . . that, before he could find so much as an arbour to sit down in, he should master at least half the ascent of *'the Hill of Difficulty'*; that he should not even marry a beautiful girl or a lady of rank. As Adam's son he should share Adam's doom, and drain throughout life a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment. (37, italics mine)

"[T]he Hill of Difficulty" signifies a hill which Christian climbs in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (Part I, 1678; Part II, 1684), a religious allegory favoured by Protestants. With her religious beliefs, Brontë emphasises that her hero, who holds Protestant values, must overcome the difficulties that he is certain to experience in the mercantile world.

The Professor assigns importance to this middle-class work ethic and Protestant doctrine which values hard work. However, publishers and readers tended to want unrealistic stories; thus, Brontë tried to incorporate "imaginative and poetical" exoticism and romance into the novel. At the beginning of the story, she also contextualises imperialism through an invisible character, Charles, who holds a governmental job in a colony. Moreover, by identifying the exploitation of the lower-classes working people in England with that of colonial slaves, she problematises the domestic and imperial economic structure in which such "slaves" support the prosperity of the industrial bourgeoisie in England, as I will explain later.

In the letter quoted at the beginning of the novel, William writes about his family background. His mother, who was originally a member of the aristocracy, married a manufacturer, despite the difference in their social positions. His father, Mr. Crimsworth, died after the bankruptcy of his factory, and Mrs Crimsworth also died soon after giving

birth to William. He studied at Eton with the help of his maternal relatives. After graduation, they offered to give him a priesthood, but he declined because he was quick to perceive their contempt for his father having engaged in "trade":

> 'When I had declined my uncles' offers they asked me "what I intended to do?" . . . They reminded me that I had no fortune, and no expectation of any, and after a considerable pause, Lord Tynedale demanded sternly, "Whether I had thoughts of following my father's steps and engaging in trade?" . . . such was the scorn expressed in Lord Tynedale's countenance as he pronounced the word *trade* [sic] – such the contemptuous sarcasm of his tone – that I was instantly decided. . . . "I cannot do better than follow in my father's steps; yes, *I will be a tradesman*."' (40, italics mine)

Lord Tynedale's disdain towards tradesmen reminds us of Mrs Reed's offensive attitudes when she calls John Eyre "a sneaking tradesman" in *Jane Eyre*. With a rebellious spirit, William impulsively decides to be a tradesman to express his disagreement with his relatives' prejudice against people belonging to a lower social class. As Terry Eagleton indicates, William's attitude signifies "at least a free choice" – unlike that of Jane and Lucy, who are forced to find a way of living by themselves (Eagleton 34). William's "free choice" highlights his bourgeois nature, which denies the aristocratic values that respect the hereditary system. Brontë implies that having "a free choice" is required to become a self-made man.

To be a tradesman, William relies on his elder brother, Edward, a manufacturer, and writes him a letter asking Edward to give him a job. Edward was raised by his paternal relatives and took over his father's factory. His success in business enabled him

to build a massive fortune. As a symbol of the bourgeois wealth and a sign of middle-class respectability, Edward owns a home separate from his mill: "I arrived, one wet October afternoon, in the town of X – . . . . I found that it was only Mr Crimsworth's Mill and warehouse which were situated in the smoky atmosphere of Bigben Close; his *residence* [sic] lay four miles out, in the country" (42). In this scene, Edward is represented as a successful self-made member of the industrial bourgeoisie. Here, his prosperity as a tradesman indirectly gives William a vision that he will also become a wealthy tradesman: "Edward is rich . . . I did not know he was master of a mansion like this" (42–43).

Edward has repeatedly expressed "determined enmity" against his aristocratic maternal relatives in his letters to William since they parted after their parents' death. At the same time, the enmity also includes a critical attitude towards William who grew up under the protection of the aristocracy. Edward despises William's aristocratic nature as exemplified in his "aristocratic grace" and "enough upper-middle trust in his own spiritual superiority" (Eagleton 35). When William visits, Edward asks, "Have you quite broken with Tynedale and Seacombe [maternal noble relatives]?" He forces William to choose support from either his maternal aristocratic relatives or his industrial bourgeois brother, warning him that "no man can serve two masters" (44). William explains that he was cut off from the noble relations because he refused their offer of a priesthood. Edward decides to hire him, and they build a labour-management relationship.

William starts working as a "second clerk to manage the foreign correspondence" at Edward's mill (51). It is his French and German language ability that enables him to obtain the job. Edward criticises Latin and Greek as "useless trash of college learning" (51). Unlike the classical languages, French and German were modern and practical, and the Victorians could utilise them in business. Edward's disdain towards the classical

language implies his industrial bourgeois values. Learning Latin and Greek is part of the aristocratic culture for self-cultivation which Edward regards as useless in business. Brought up by paternal merchant relatives, it is unlikely that Edward studied the classics at a public school like William; however, he considers French and German to be indispensable for commercial transactions with Europe, and he himself can read both languages.

Historically, Englishmen began learning modern languages around the end of the eighteenth century. Classical languages such as Latin and Greek had been major subjects, especially until the late eighteenth century. It was not important for boys to study modern languages like French, German and Italian as, in boys' schools such as public schools and grammar schools, teaching classic languages was the main purpose. The government placed much importance on Greek and Latin, and the classical inspiration of eighteenth-century culture made them a necessary part of any education (Shrosbree 53). In *The Professor*, William learns not only French but also Latin and Greek at Eton. When he works at a boys' school in Brussels, he corrects "a huge pile of English and Latin exercises" (101). Classic languages were still significant subjects in boys' education even in the mid-nineteenth-century Europe.

However, after the French Revolution of 1789, European governments gradually reconsidered language instruction. Shrosbree states that "[t]he French Revolution of 1789 perhaps marked a symbolic point at which classics ceased to be a uniform and underlying basis of European culture." The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars reinforced the importance of national languages as an expression of patriotism. Accordingly, in Europe, the knowledge of classics was no longer a prerequisite for scholarly distinction or intellectual advance (Shrosbree 53–54). Even in England, the government changed the curriculum of the language education. With less emphasis on

the classics, the reforming schoolmasters called for the introduction of new subjects such as English grammar and literature, modern languages, mathematics and practical studies (Tompson 41). From the end of the eighteenth century, boys started to learn modern languages – as well as classic languages – as important subjects in the public or grammar schools.

In order to succeed as a tradesman and then become a member of the industrial bourgeoisie like his father and brother, William has to start working as a low-ranking clerk using his knowledge of modern languages. His first "Hill of Difficulty" is the labour at Edward's factory, where William must work hard here to ascend "the Hill"; in the "Preface" to the novel, Brontë said that "he should master at least half the ascent of 'the Hill of Difficulty.'" He is, however, unlikely to do so because he begins to be dissatisfied with his job after four months. He tries to resist his inward voice which says, "Eight o'clock strikes! your hands are thawed, get to work!" (72).

> 'Work? why should I work?' said I sullenly: 'I cannot please though I toil like a slave.' 'Work, work!' reiterated the inward voice. 'I may work, it will do no good,' I growled: but nevertheless I drew out a packet of letters and commenced my task – the sun-baked fields of Egypt in search of straw and stubble wherewith to accomplish his tale of bricks. (72)

Although he has declared, in front of his aristocratic relatives, that he would be a tradesman, in fact, he resists working as a wage "slave" at Edward's mill. For Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe, the inward voice always acts to inspire and urge them, though here it functions to impose slave-like labour on William. He repels the inner voice and then quits the job impulsively in a fraternal quarrel.

Terry Eagleton notes that "[f]rom Edward's conservative standpoint, his brother [William] is a congenital misfit who throws up a secure job in the name of freedom" (Eagleton 36). However, for our discussion on how critically Brontë appropriates the narrative format of a self-made man, it is important to note that William uses the metaphor, "slave," to tell the readers that the poor working conditions in the factory sustain the fortunes of the industrial bourgeoise. Considering that William mentioned a colony for which Charles, the addressee of his letter, headed at the beginning of the novel, we should notice the author's implication of the analogical structure between the domestic and the imperial prosperity in terms of slavery. Just as Susan Meyer analyses the wealth of Jane's uncle which may have been supported by the slave trade as I discussed in Chapter 1, in *The Professor*, we can also observe the Victorian economic structure in which the prosperity of the industrial bourgeoisie was brought by exploiting the working people like slaves.

William, who is reluctant to work as a wage "slave," must seek an alternative way to become independent. As he ends the relationships with his aristocratic relatives and his brother, he tries to get industrialist Hunsden York Hunsden's help to find his next job. Hunsden points out that William is not geared towards being a tradesman, and advises him to move to the European continent to make use of his knowledge of the French language.

> 'You'll not meddle with trade again? . . . You would be a fool if you did. Probably, after all, you'll think better of your uncles' proposal and go into the Church.'
>
> 'A singular regeneration must take place in my whole inner and outer man before I do that. A good clergyman is one of the best of men.'
>
> 'Indeed! Do you think so?' interrupted Hunsden, scoffingly. . . . 'You're a

> mighty difficult customer to suit. You won't be a tradesman or a parson; you can't be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a gentleman, because you've no money. I'd recommend you to travel.' (83)

As Hunsden jeers, William will not be a tradesman because he does not want to work as a clerk like a "slave," nor a parson because he does not want to be under the aristocrats' protection. Moreover, William cannot be an upper-middle-class gentleman who engages in professional work such as a lawyer and a doctor because he has no money. Hunsden then recommends that he travels Europe to explore a chance for independence: "You must travel in search of money, man. You can speak French . . . . Go on to the Continent, and see what will turn up for you there" (83). While William does not have any potential for independence in England, going abroad would give him the opportunity to be a self-made man by taking advantage of his ability to speak French.

The metaphor of the "slave" suggests two noteworthy points. First, while Brontë adopts the narrative format of the self-made man representing bourgeois values, she does not necessarily praise those values. She implicitly criticises the English socio-economic structure which realises the values and creates wealth at the expense of the socially oppressed wage "slaves"; in other words, *The Professor* criticises not only the aristocratic class but also the industrial bourgeoisie. Second, William seeks rather a way to be a hard-working self-made man without being a "slave" rather than a way to be a member of the industrial bourgeois. It is not England but a foreign country, Belgium, that gives him an opportunity to realise his self-help.

3. Being an English "Professor" in Cosmopolitan Brussels

When William sees Belgium for his first time, he feels hopeful about his future in

the dull Belgian landscape. He narrates with excitement:

> This is Belgium, reader. Look! don't call the picture a flat and a dull one – it was neither flat nor dull to me when I first beheld it. . . . I felt like a morning traveller who doubts not that from the hill he is ascending he shall behold a glorious sunrise; . . . to me all was beautiful, all was more than picturesque. (87)

On the way to Brussels, the beautiful Belgian scenery fascinates him. He expects his future will become splendid in this foreign country, using the figurative expression, "a glorious sunrise." William's Belgian description is adorned with "a more emotive tone" than when he describes England (Duthie 80). The foreign landscape stimulates his mind, and he cannot restrain his excitement towards foreignness, which gives him a "revived and reviving consciousness of freedom" (88) as he escapes from his cheerless life in England.

William notices the diversity of people and languages at his hotel in Brussels. For instance, when he talks to a Flemish housemaid, he recalls his ambivalent impression of her in terms of "physiognomy" and "paintings":

> [S]he had wooden shoes, a short red petticoat, a printed bedgown, her face was broad, her physiognomy eminently stupid; when I spoke to her in French, she answered me in Flemish, with an air the reverse of civil; yet I thought her charming; if she was not pretty or polite, she was, I conceived, very picturesque; she reminded me of the female figures in certain Dutch paintings I had seen in other years at Seacombe [William's uncle] Hall. (89)

He explains how boorish and unrefined the Flemish housemaid is, and how ugly her physiognomy is. In her works, Brontë often uses physiognomy, which examines inherent nature from physical characteristics; in *Villette*, she adopts it to make characters penetrate foreign others' hidden nature. For example, a male literature teacher in a girls' boarding school, Paul Emmanuel, judges whether Lucy is a reliable English woman or not by scrutinising her physiognomy. Brontë discloses characters' innate nature in a foreign country, intertwining physiognomy and race. The purpose of her use of physiognomy is to display English superiority as well as foreign others' inferiority. (Cooper, *Villette* "Introduction" xxxiv–xxxvi)

William states that, despite of her stupidity in terms of physiognomy, the Flemish woman is charming because she is very picturesque. He regards her as "the female figures in certain Dutch paintings" which he used to see in England: the foreign woman is a part of art and therefore is not a threatening other. Her dress and figure remind us of an Anglo-Belgian woman, Hortence Moore in *Shirley*, whose face is unbalanced and dress is out-of-date and with the rustic sabots made from wood. Elizabeth Gaskell notes that "[t]he grace of the one or two scenes and characters . . . call to mind some of portraits of Rembrandt" (Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* 232).

Besides Rembrandt's pictures, Dutch genre paintings William mentions in the above passage remind us of some famous pictures of realism: Johannes Vermeer's *The Milkmaid* (1650–1660), *Young Woman with a Water Pitcher* (1662–1665) and *The Lacemaker* (1665–1668); or Pieter de Hooch's *The Mother* (1660), *Courtyard of a House in Delft* (1658), and *A Woman Nursing an Infant with a Child and a Dog* (1658–1660). William may have observed the Flemish housemaids in Vermeer's and De Hooch's paintings, and such comparison is a way of trying to make her foreignness comprehensible and acceptable to him. With respect to languages, he uses French to talk

with the housemaid, but she replies to him in Flemish. He watches the country and people as a foreign traveller with the "enjoyment of their novelty" (Duthie 81). Even in the short conversation with the Flemish woman, he feels strongly that he is in a foreign country and remains excited to discover otherness after having watched the foreign landscape.

William notices another cosmopolitan aspect when he has breakfast in the hotel. Listening to two French or Belgian gentlemen speak French, he feels as if the language is music. One of the gentlemen recognises William as an Englishman because of his French with "South-of-England style," and the gentleman accosts William "in very good English" (89).

> One of these gentlemen . . . after looking towards me once or twice, politely accosted me in very good English; I remember I wished to God that I could speak French as well; his fluency and correct pronunciation impressed me for the first time with a due notion of the cosmopolitan character of the capital I was in; I afterwards found to be so general in Brussels. (89)

This indicates the gentleman's rich knowledge of languages because he can be sure that William is English just from his accent. In addition, the gentleman can handle not only French but also English without stammering and is accustomed to hearing and speaking various languages. The diversity of languages he hears gives William "a due notion of the cosmopolitan character of the capital" (89). William has not used other languages in his daily life in England; therefore, he is surprised and excited at the variety that can be heard in the cosmopolitan city. Flemish, French and English are spoken fluently by natives and foreigners.

Meanwhile, William's acquaintance, Hunsden, shows a cosmopolitan element in himself. William feels that Hunsden is like a foreigner: "I know not what it was in Mr Hunsden that . . . suggested to me, every now and then, the idea of a foreigner" (61). He discovers "a dash of something Gallic" even in his English physical features; moreover, besides his physical characteristics, he can speak French fluently and is familiar with the international business world because he has many connections with foreigners. His extensive business knowledge leads William to success.

William's ideal image of Belgium as a cosmopolitan place is, however, broken by students in a Belgian boys' school in Brussels when he starts teaching English as a "professor." He points out their inferior nature:

> Their intellectual faculties were generally weak, their animal propensities strong; thus there was at once an impotence and a kind of inert force in their natures; they were dull, but they were also singularly stubborn, heavy as lead and, like lead, most difficult to move. (97)

Sally Shuttleworth discusses this passage from a phrenological viewpoint. While she states that "phrenology" and "physiognomy" are widely used as synonyms, she highlights a clear difference between the two: physiognomy is "the extension of theology," whereas phrenology is "a materialist system of the mind and was linked to a specific political and social platform" (Shuttleworth 59). She reveals "political" implications in the above passage, arguing from a phrenological viewpoint:

> Judging by the evolutionary scale laid down by [George] Comb, where ascendancy was conferred according to the degree to which 'animal prosperities'

> were held in check by the intellectual faculties, these schoolboys are clearly near the very bottom of the ladder" (Shuttleworth 132).

William's emphasis of the Belgian boys' subordinate position in phrenology implicitly represents the superiority of Englishness in the international politics.

In addition, William is surprised at the pupils' rude way of speaking English. Regarding one pupil, he narrates, "My God! how he did snuffle, snort, and wheeze! All he said was said in his throat and nose, for it is thus the Flamands speak." He feels disgusted by their awful English, informing readers of its harshness. The aforementioned pupil shows that Belgians are thoroughly different from the English, though he "acquit[s] himself like a real born and bred 'Anglais'" (94); as opposed to his experience in the hotel, William is disappointed with such poor English. The comparison to his excitement on the linguistic diversity in the hotel emphasises his negative feeling towards the Belgian boys. He thus becomes conscious of the difference between himself and foreigners by facing the Belgian boys and observing their phrenology, nature and English language abilities.

William examines the nature of the Belgian students when referring to the history of Belgium and at the end of Chapter 7. He narrates that François "Pelet's school [i]s merely an epitome of the Belgian Nation" as he looks at his students and recalls "the political history of their ancestors." Belgium had been under foreign rulers for a long time, until its achievement of independence in 1830. William alludes to its complex history of invasions and controls by Great Power such as France, Spain, Austria and Prussia. He believes that his students are resistant to English teachers as their forefathers disobeyed the suzerain powers. William narrates that the schoolboys show collective resistance to this situation in which they are forced to obey a foreign master: "[T]hey

would have resisted as obstinately as clamorously, as desperate swine; and though not brave singly, they were relentless acting *en masse.*" However, he changes into "a despot" when they show disobedient attitudes towards him (98). He succeeds in controlling their insubordinate temperaments which are based on the history in which the Belgians were suppressed by Great Powers. William's predominant attitude reminds us of that of a master towards colonial slaves. He teaches discipline to the boys dictatorially, as if he were a slave driver disciplining his slaves.

As for foreign girls, William is obsessed with an idealised image of them before starting his work in a girls' school. While working at the boys' school, he becomes strongly interested in the adjacent girls' school. A window in his room facing the school is boarded up and being unable to see the garden stimulates his curiosity to look at the girls. He idealises the unseen girls in his mind, calling them "the angels" and the school "their Eden" (105). Moreover, he narrates "the idea by which I had been awed was that the youthful beings before me, with their dark nun-like robes and softly braided hair, were a kind of half-angels" (114). At this point, he dreams of the girls and respects them as pure creatures.

However, when William starts to work at the school, his ideal image is undermined by girls' real nature. After the first class in their school, during a conversation with Pelet (the headmaster of the boys' school), he explains how they are far from the image of angels:

> '. . . At first I thought them angels, but they did not leave me long under that delusion; three of the eldest and handsomest undertook the task of setting me right, and they managed so cleverly that in five minutes I knew *them*, at least, for what they were – three arrant coquettes.' (124)

The communication with the girls reveals their true characters as coquettish. His ideal image continues to collapse: “Daily, as I continued my attendance at the seminary of Mdlle Reuter, did I find fresh occasions to compare the ideal with the real” (126). He gives up his ideal image of the foreign girls and comes to scrutinise them carefully.

The girls’ school is cosmopolitan because pupils come from all over Europe, being French, English, Belgians, Austrians, and Prussians. William focuses on four students and observes them closely. Brontë employs the phrenological framework in William’s narration to disclose girls’ inferiority, similar to the way she explains the boys’ imbecility. In the cosmopolitan class, William especially focuses on three girls: German-Russian Aurelia Koslow, Belgian Adèle Dronsart and Belgian-Spanish Juanna Trista. For example, he tells the readers how vulgar Koslow’s phrenology and nature are:

> [S]he is of middle size, stiffly made, body long, legs short, bust much developed but not compactly moulded, waist disproportionately compressed by an inhumanly braced corset, . . . large feet tortured into small bottines, head small . . . ; very low forehead, very diminutive and vindictive grey eyes, somewhat Tartar features, rather flat nose, rather high cheek-bones, . . . As to mind, deplorably ignorant and ill-formed . . . (127–28)

William critically explains her phrenological inferiority: her small head, low forehead and malicious eyes. He combines these features with her “ignorant and ill-formed” mind. According to his narration, she cannot write and speak even her mother-tongue accurately – much less French and English. Moreover, William reads racial otherness as a “Tartar” in her phrenological features; this is an ambiguous word because it refers

to various tribes such as Mongolian, Turkish or Asian Russia who inhabit the area from Asia to Eastern Europe. In this passage, from her Russian lineage, we can guess that he implies the Volga Tatars in Russia.

Patricia Ingham points out that "Charlotte did use the [phrenological] technique to justify her own xenophobia towards Belgians by representing Crimsworth as noticing signs of vicious capability in the skulls of his pupils" (Ingham 161). She argues that phrenology is one of the important ways of seeing the pupils' true nature, and William certainly uses it to justify their negative attitude towards foreigners. William judges the stupid nature of foreign girls by observing their ugly appearance, which differs from his ideal image of them – namely that of "the angels" (105). However, what is more important here is not, as Ingham says, whether Brontë herself is a xenophobe or not, but that she adopts a way of narration in which William implicitly values Englishness by relying on the phrenological framework to judge the inferiority of foreigners as their innate characteristics.

William recognises that these foreign girls, who have dishonourable phrenological characteristics, deviate from the ideal Victorian gender norm with regard to their appearance and morality. He suppresses them with his English authority and dominant attitude as he did in the boys' school. He behaves like a tyrant – not only towards boys but also towards girls – to make them obey him. In the girls' school, he disciplines them showing his male superiority in gender as well as the predominance of England.

4. Englishness Idealised through the Other's Voice

William indicates that there are two types of English pupils in the Pensionnat de Demoiselles in terms of their personal history: the "Continental English" and the

"British English" (131–32). He explains the Continental English girls as follows:

> . . . the daughters chiefly of broken adventurers, whom debt or dishonour had driven from their country. These poor girls had never known the advantages of settled homes, decorous example, or honest Protestant education; resident a few months now in one Catholic school, now in another, as their parents wandered from land to land – from France to Germany, from Germany to Belgium – they had picked up some scanty instruction, many bad habits, losing every notion even of the first elements of religion and morals, and acquiring an imbecile indifference to every sentiment that can elevate humanity; they were distinguishable by an habitual look of sullen dejection, the result of crushed self-respect and constant browbeating from their popish fellow-pupils, who hated them as English, and scorned them as heretics. (131–32)

He points out their immorality and inhumanity. In the Victorian age, women were expected to be moral figures (Steinbach 5), but these girls contrast such image. Because of their parents' debt or dishonour, they have been unable to live in England and recognise "the advantages of settled homes" and of an "honest Protestant education." They move around Europe without good education. Although they are free from national limitations, William criticises them because they have learned bad habits in morality and religion due to the foreign countries' scanty education.

Compared with the Continental English, he praises the British English in terms of their mental and physical characteristics. He regards them as genuinely English at first sight because of their appearance.

> [T]heir characteristics were, clean but careless dress, ill-arranged hair (compared with the tight and trim foreigners) erect carriage, flexible figures, white and taper hands, features more irregular but also more intellectual than those of the Belgians, grave and modest countenance, a general air of native propriety and decency; by this last circumstance alone I could at a glance distinguish the daughter of Albion and nursling of Protestantism from the foster-child of Rome, the protégée of Jesuitry: proud too was the aspect of these British girls – at once envied and ridiculed by their continental associates, they warded off insult with austere civility and met hate with mute disdain; they eschewed company-keeping and in the midst of numbers seemed to dwell isolated. (132)

He praises such British English students as "the daughter of Albion," and distinguishes them clearly them from the Continental English. Paul Langford explains that "[p]ropriety and decorum were preeminently English characteristics, to be witnessed in many settings." As Langford says, William also turns his attention to the British English's propriety. Their propriety permeates into "the religion, morals, politics, the dwelling, the dress, the equipages, the habits, and one may say, all the opinions of the nation" (Langford 157). For William, it is the British English girls' propriety that represents the intrinsic element of Englishness.

Here I remark the French education for English girls in the Victorian period to understand why British English girls study in Brussels. In girls' boarding schools, the knowledge of French was essentially a female achievement with accomplishments of music, drawing and dance during the Victorian era (Tomalin 454). Especially, in training schools for governness, students had to learn practical subjects because their goals were not marriage but financial independence through their role. The ratios of the time

dedicated to each subject is as follows; 25% for music, 23% for miscellaneous information (mythology, astronomy, botany, literature, history), 16.5% for French and German, 6.5% for drawing and so on (Holcombe, *The Victorian Governess* 24). Such distribution suggests that modern languages like French and German are the essential subjects in the girls' education.

Before Brontë became a novelist, she went to two boarding schools and learned the basics of French. She studied modern languages and drawing to become a governess to help support her family. In the nineteenth century, knowing French was a requisite ability for governesses; for example, Mary Smith, who wanted to be a governess, regretted that she did not know modern languages and could not play the piano or dance. Even a farmer would request the ability to play music and the knowledge of French when employing a governess (Hughes 39). Brontë learned French language eagerly and she obtained satisfactory results at boarding school. The knowledge of French is necessary to become a governess played a key role in her first novel.

In addition to the girls' physical characteristics and learning, William often mentions religion to judge whether they are genuinely English or not. In her novels, Brontë frequently writes about the difference between Protestantism and Catholicism. Her religious feeling was formed by her family as her father, Patrick Brontë, was a clergyman, and the Btontës lived in a parsonage. Her Protestantism often influenced her fiction.

William praises the English Protestant girls as genuinely English. Raymond D. Tumbleson explains that "Protestantism became identified with the English nation, [and] Catholicism became doubly stigmatised as both alien, what the vain French and wicked Italians practiced, and frighteningly familiar as the accompaniment of absolutism" (Tumbleson 1). The prejudice against Catholicism was prevalent in England,

especially in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Considering Brontë's religious feeling and the English prejudice against Catholicism, it is not unexpected that William discriminates against the Catholic girls in favour of the Protestant ones, whom he deems genuine English girls. Religion is one of the important factors for him as a self-made man, allowing him to understand and judge other people. The inferiority of foreign girls who receive Catholic harmful effects reinforces his conviction in Protestantism; unlike Lucy in *Villette*, William stubbornly often emphasises the superiority of Protestantism as a characteristic of Englishness. The British English girls embody Englishness in their behaviour, morals and in their Protestantism.

Though she is not a "British English" girl, an Anglo-Swiss teacher Frances Evans Henri, is the most ideal and admirable woman for William in the girls' boarding school. She teaches her pupils needlework, knitting and lace-mending. However, one day, she joins his class to learn English. He is amazed at her "voice of Albion" when she reads out a passage from Sir Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather* (1828–1830), which is a serial book on the history of Scotland.

> I looked up in amazement; the voice was a voice of Albion; the accent was pure and silvery; it only wanted firmness, and assurance, to be the counterpart of what any well-educated lady in Essex or Middlesex might have enounced, yet the speaker or reader was no other than Mdlle Henri, in whose grave, joyless face I saw no mark of consciousness that she had performed any extraordinary feat. (154–55)

William guesses that, if Frances acquired "firmness" and "assurance" in her English, she could become a good English speaker like the ladies of Essex or Middlesex. He

begins to develop an interest in her after witnessing her good command of the English language. He asks her questions such as “You have had lesson in English before?,” “you have been in England?” and “You have been in English families?” (155). Although her answers are negative, he discovers that her good English proficiency is related to her background: she has an innate sense of Englishness.

Frances has a Swiss father and an English mother. Anne Longmuir remarks that her surname, “Evans,” is Welsh, highlighting Brontë’s ambiguous use of English ethnicity and culture (Longmuir, “Negotiating British Identity” 172). Certainly, the origin of “Evans” is Welsh, but it is generally used also in England and Ireland (Seary 170). Given that it is a common name in England, it is uncertain whether her mother is Welsh or not. Frances, who is parentless, moved from Switzerland to Belgium to get socially higher position; yet, she realises that she cannot improve her life in either place and decides to go to England as her ultimate destination: “I will go and live in England; I will teach French there” (170). She is a French native speaker because she comes from Geneva, in the French-speaking canton of Switzerland. Just as William left his homeland to become a self-made man, she also crossed the national border for the same reason. By using their “mother” tongue, they seek a way to become independent in other countries.

Geneva was culturally influenced by France, but it was considered a Protestant city since it became a stronghold of Calvinism in the sixteenth century. During the French Revolution, Geneva was absorbed into France. However, at the end of the Napoleonic war, the Vienna Protocol ordains that Geneva be admitted to the Swiss Confederation (Im Hof 92–94; Guichonnet 2–9). Considering the historical background, it is no wonder that in *The Professor*, Frances is critical about France, and has an aversion to Catholicism. In terms of religion, she empathises with England; therefore,

religion also affects her decision to go to England.

> I long to live once more among Protestants; they are more honest than Catholics; a Romish school is a building with porous walls, a hollow floor, a false ceiling; every room in this house, Monsieur, has eye-holes and ear-holes, and what the house is, the inhabitants are – very treacherous; they all think it lawful to tell lies; they all call it politeness to profess friendship where they feel hatred. (173)

Brontë often employs the act of espionage in her fiction as a symbol of Catholic society. In *Villette* too, the protagonist Lucy Snowe is always scrutinised by the headmistress, Madame Beck, in the Catholic girls' school. As foreigners and Protestants, Frances and Lucy are monitored by Catholic control. Lucy experiences Madame Beck's surveillance and interference in her romance with Emanuel Paul. Frances, too, is always watched by the headmistress, Mlle Reuter, who impedes her romance with William.

While Frances functions as the embodiment of Protestantism, she speaks of idealised Englishness on behalf of William with the voice of a foreigner. Frances ardently express to William her yearning for her mother's home country: "England is something unique, as I have heard and read; my idea of it is vague, and I want to go there to render my idea clear, definite" (171). William answers realistically, "[I]n England you would be a foreigner; that too would deprive you of influence, and would effectually separate you from all around you; in England you would have as few connections, as little importance as you have here" (172–73). Despite his incisive words, Frances replies that she would accept the difficult situation to have nothing. She says to William, "[I]f I must contend, and perhaps be conquered, I would *rather submit to*

English pride to Flemish coarseness" (173, italics mine). She thus idealises England and shows her devotion to it.

William tries to anglicise her by teaching her English through literary texts: "I made instruction in English a channel for instruction in literature" (174). Although she owns "a little selection of English classics" that her mother left for her, William feels that these books are not sufficient for English education, and he makes her read "modern works" (174). After reading them, she summarises them in English.

William's instruction not only improves Frances' English, but also influences her mentally and physically. Reading English literature transforms her into the ideal woman for William.

> Frances did not become pale or feeble in consequence of her sedentary employment [for her reading time]; . . . . She changed, indeed, changed obviously and rapidly; but it was for the better. When I first saw her, her countenance was sunless, her complexion colourless; she looked like one who had no source of enjoyment, no store of bliss anywhere in the world; now the cloud had passed from her mien, leaving space for the dawn of hope and interest . . . . Her figure shared in this beneficial change . . . one did not regret (or at least *I* [sic] did not regret) the absence of confirmed fullness, in contours, still slight, though compact, elegant, flexible – the exquisite turning of waist, wrist, hand, foot, and ankle satisfied completely my notions of symmetry, and allowed a lightness and freedom of movement which corresponded with my ideas of grace. (175–76)

William feels satisfied with the "beneficial change" of her "figure," which signifies that he has succeeded in anglicising her. His observation on her appearance – "the exquisite

turning of waist, wrist, hand, foot, and ankle satisfied completely my notions of symmetry" – reminds us of the phrenological frame of reference by which he has disdained his pupils. Her improvement is compared to plants' growth: "I watched this change much as a gardener watches the growth of a precious plant, and I contributed to it too, even as the said gardener contributes to the development of his favourite" (176). William appreciates and enjoys Frances' mental and physical "development" and in due course becomes romantically interested in her.

The relationship between reading literary texts and romance reminds us of the scene in which Caroline and Robert read Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* in *Shirley*, as I have discussed in Chapter 2: by reading Shakespeare's text together, Caroline seeks to stir Anglo-Belgium Robert's potential Englishness in order to change his egoistic attitudes towards his workers; at the same time, she also indirectly tells him to pay attention to her affection for him. Though Caroline fails to fully anglicise Robert, William succeeds in anglicising Frances enough to transforms her into an ideal English woman. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out that he shows "his disgust . . . with the stereotypical doll-woman" (319). Yet, he praises her as a woman who embodies the Victorian ideal and decides to "get that Genevese girl" as his wife (203). His hard work as an English "professor" proves his own Englishness. He is industrious in his job of teaching English, and his instruction completely anglicises her. As a result, he can finally possess her as his ideal wife.

The public and the private sphere in *The Professor* intersect each other in the scenes of reading: while romance means a private relationship, English teaching should be a public activity for a self-made man who practices the middle-class work ethics as an English "professor." However, William privately creates an intimate relationship with Frances in the scenes of reading literary texts together: he teaches her English by

taking advantage of his public position as a "professor." When he visits Frances privately, he requires her to read an English book aloud. Hearing her voice reading out Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), he narrates: "I enjoyed, undisturbed, the treble pleasure of having her near me, hearing the sound of her voice . . . and looking, by intervals, at her face" (202). The reward for working hard, or being industrious, is an ideal foreign woman yearning for Englishness rather than merely an improved social position.

5. Behind the Self-Made Man Narrative

Brontë's appropriation of the narrative format of the self-made man encourages us to interpret William's romantic relationship with Frances in terms of gender. Hunsden addresses William's alleged lack of masculinity when he visits Brussels:

> '. . . you had and have no pleasant address; there is nothing in you to induce a woman to be affable. . . . you see beauty always turning its back on you; you are mortified and then you sneer. I verily believe all that is desirable on earth – wealth, reputation, love – will for ever to you be the ripe grapes on the high trellis: you'll look up at them; they will tantalize in you the lust of the eye; but they are out of reach: you have not the address to fetch a ladder, and you'll go away calling them sour.' (230)

Comparing "wealth, reputation, love" to "the ripe grapes," Hunsden berates William for his unwillingness to try to win them. In Victorian England, masculinity was indispensable for a self-made man not only in "wealth, reputation" in the public sphere but also in romance in the domestic one: "[B]ourgeois masculinity is also defined in relation to the domestic sphere within criteria that value the role of breadwinner for a

domestic establishment and that situate affectionate as well as sexual life within marriage" (Sussman 4–5). From the viewpoint of Hunsden, William does not have enough masculinity to be regarded as self-made, and therefore deviates from the Victorian gender norm.

However, it is Frances who invests William with the requisite of Victorian masculinity for the self-made man. During his second visit to her room, their romance is fulfilled as literature stimulates it again. When he stands in front of her room, he hears her reciting the opening lines of Sir Walter Scott's "The Covenanter's Fate" from the inside. She also reads a poem in French, which Brontë wrote in Brussels in 1843 and interpolated in this novel (310, n.2). Entering the room, he finds a draft of a poem she wrote, in which a teacher loves a student named Jane. It suggests that Frances also expects a romantic relationship with William. Literature stirs his romantic feeling towards her: ". . . whereas one moment I was sitting solus on the chair near the table, the next, I held Frances on my knee, placed there with sharpness and decision, and retained with exceeding tenacity" (247).

William "with exceeding tenacity" transforms himself to behave in a masculine way towards Frances. While anglicising her with English literature as her teacher, he makes her the perfect partner for him in romance. To succeed as a self-made man in a foreign country, William must display his English superiority, which enables him to show his high ability in discipline and control. Even after their marriage, he continues to further anglicise her and cultivate her insufficient Englishness. He forces her to speak in English, and, if she disobeys his request, he punishes her: "I made her get a book, and read English to me for an hour by way of penance. I frequently dosed her with Wordsworth in this way, and Wordsworth steadied her soon" (277). His ability to educate and anglicise her perfectly changes her from a poor Anglo-Swiss French speaker into a

genteel young Englishwoman who embodies the ideal Victorian womanhood. Frances intensifies the values of Englishness by admiring it as a foreigner.

Simultaneously, William's act of anglicising her enhances his own value as a self-made man. Seeing the couple, Hunsden feels that she regards William as "something superior" (267). In fact, she shows her respect for William, saying: "You have always made me happy; I like to hear you speak; I like to see you; I like to be near you; I believe you are very good, and very superior . . . . Master, I should be *glad* to live with you always" (249). She undertakes the role of his obedient and suitable partner in romance, and, as an idealised foreign woman, she justifies and tolerates his masculine superintendence with his English superiority.

To marry Frances, William needs to solve his financial problems. Although he has not achieved his economic independence as a self-made man because of his low salary, fortunately, the changes in their working situations solve such problems. In a letter, Frances tells him that she will earn 1,200 francs per annum because she has been hired as a French teacher in an English school at Brussels: "You see . . . that I am now rich; richer almost than I ever hoped to be" (217). Her words echo Jane's declaration of her independence towards Rochester: "I told you I am independent, sir, as well as rich: I am my own mistress" (*Jane Eyre* 501). Following Frances' independence, William starts work as an English "professor" at a college in Brussels with a high salary of 3,000 francs per annum, after quitting the boys' and girls' schools due to discords with the headmasters, Pelet and Reuter. The high salaries of William and Frances enable them to marry.

They become more prosperous by opening their own school in Brussels after marriage. Although William could not succeed in life as a tradesman in England, he amasses a fortune utilising his native language as a business tool in a foreign country.

Ten years after marriage, they gain prosperity by managing their own school – now a prominent educational institution in Brussels.

> Ten years rushed now upon me with dusty, vibrating, unresting wings; years of bustle, action, unslacked endeavour; years in which I and my wife, having launched ourselves in the full career of progress, as progress whirls on in European capitals, scarcely knew repose, were strangers to amusement, never thought of indulgence, and yet, as our course ran side by side, as we marched hand in hand, we neither murmured, repented, nor faltered. (273)

Their hard working represents the middle-class values evaluating self-help by efforts and industry. William incarnates Brontë's ideal about which she writes, in the "Preface," namely that her hero should work with "the sweat of his brow." Frances also works with "industry," in managing the school: she devotedly teaches her pupils, takes care of them and sometimes disciplines them. This work gives her pleasure: "When communicating instruction, her aspect was more animated; she seemed to feel a certain enjoyment in the occupation" (274). Brontë makes not only William but also Frances represent the middle-class ideology of self-help. William's narration, which focuses on her hard work, highlights her function as ideal model for the "self-made woman."

Yet, while Frances embodies ideal middle-class work ethic, she also personifies the Victorian ideal of the domestic helpmate, devotedly supporting William. After working as the headmistress in the daytime, she devotes herself to William at night.

> . . . I seemed to possess two wives. The faculties of her nature, already disclosed when I married her, remained fresh and fair; but other faculties shot up strong,

> branched out broad, and quite altered the external character of the plant. Firmness, activity, and enterprise, covered with grave foliage, poetic feeling, and fervour; but these flowers were still there, preserved pure and dewy under the umbrage of later growth and hardier nature: perhaps I only in the world knew the secret of their existence, but to me they were ever ready to yield an exquisite fragrance and present a beauty as chaste as radiant. (273–74)

William employs a botanical metaphor, which he previously used it to describe her mental and physical improvement, to emphasises Frances' growth and purity. Highlighting her purity, he narrates "the secret" that only he as her husband knows: "the secret" clearly has sexual implications because he reveals that they have a son, Victor, shortly after the scene. William succeeds in creating an ideal home, stating, "my home was my heaven" (276). Through the figure of Frances, Brontë seems to have solved the contradiction between women's financial independence and dedication to her family. Just as Jane, who has attained financial independence and supports her injured husband Rochester, Frances also devotes herself to her husband and son while working as an independent woman.

Ironically, however, Brontë creates a female figure who fits into men's ideal domestic ideology by portraying Frances as an obedient woman who dedicates herself for her family. Behind the narrative format of the self-made man, the domestication of Frances unfolds; ironically again, it is what Frances has hoped, because she is the person who most worships Englishness. However, by doing so, Brontë critically exposes the masculine narrative logic of the self-made man which forces a woman to be domestic and which is sustained by her domestication.

Towards the end of the novel, Frances' image of domesticity intensifies. After

their marriage, William enjoys leisure for a week, teaching Frances how to make good English tea: "after I had distinctly in instructed her how to make a cup of tea in rational English style, . . . she administered to me a proper British repast, at which there wanted neither candles nor urn, firelight nor comfort" (270). He seems to make her a Victorian ideal wife by anglicising her not only in language but in lifestyle. They feel "sweet rest," after "exertion" and "the turmoil of each busy day" (270).

On a holiday, William and Frances go for a walk away from Brussels. The fields and lanes lead them to "a spot in some pastoral English province" (272). They enjoy the leisure, but she also begins to talk about her plan of opening her own school at the same time. It is not unfeasible as they already have enough funds for it. Although the plan may make Frances economically independent, according to her scheme, they will eventually retire if they can build more fortune through the school management. What is significant in this scene is that they talk about their business plan in the pastoral landscape of an England-like countryside:

> We were soon clear of Brussels, the fields received us, and then the lanes, remote from carriage-resounding chaussées. Ere long we came upon a nook, so rural, green, and secluded, it might have been a spot in some pastoral English province; a bank of short and mossy grass, under a hawthorn, offered a seat too tempting to be declined; we took it, and when we admired and examined some English-looking wild-flowers growing at our feet, I recalled Frances' attention and my own to the topic touched on at the breakfast. (272)

This scene implicitly suggests the unity of the bourgeoisie and the landed gentry by contextualising their business project in the description of the pseudo-English rural

scenery. Frances' proposal for managing a school is subsumed under the domestic imagery of an English country house, as the real situation of Brussels dissolves into an imaginary English landscape.

However, it is Hunsden who demystifies the ideal image of England that Frances cherishes. He discloses her ignorance of England when she discusses national image with him. He visits her apartment with William, and he begins to talk about England in response to her ideal image for the country. He does not empathise with Frances' enthusiastic worship of England:

> '. . . I see you've not much more sense than some others of my acquaintance' (indicating me with his thumb), 'or else you'd never turn rapid about that dirty little country called England; . . . Why, mademoiselle, is it possible that anybody with a grain of rationality should feel enthusiasm about a mere name, and that name England? . . .'
>
> 'England is your country?' asked Frances.
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> 'And you don't like it?'
>
> 'I'd be sorry to like it! A little corrupt, venal, lord-and-king-cursed nation, full of mucky pride (as they say in —shire), and helpless pauperism; rotten with abuses, worm-eaten with prejudices!' (260)

Showing a blameworthy aspect of England, he criticises the monarchy, the aristocrats' "mucky pride" and the working-class "helpless pauperism" in detail and continues as follows:

> ‘Come to England and see. Come to Birmingham and Manchester; come to St. Giles in London, and get a practical notion of how our system works. Examine the foot-prints of our august aristocracy; see how they walk in blood, crushing hearts as they go. Just put your head in at English cottage doors; get a glimpse of Famine crouched torpid on black hearth-stones; of Disease lying bare on beds without coverlets, of Infamy wantoning viciously with Ignorance, though indeed Luxury is her favourite paramour, and princely halls are dearer to her than thatched hovels – ’ (260)

He mentions the place names to inform her of the actual situation in England. Birmingham and Manchester are known as industrial cities. As Simon Szreter explains, “Rapid economic growth entails the disruption of established social relations, ideologies, and structures of authority; this created political and administrative paralysis in Britain’s industrial cities” (Szreter 148). In Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, labour issues arose behind the industrial development: long working hours, low wages, overdemanding work of women and children, and unstable employment. The labourers suffered from insanitation and illness. Therefore, they often started uprisings – for example, in the Luddite and the Chartist Movement – to protect their lives and rights. The parish of St. Giles was an infamous slum at that time.

After the end of the Napoleonic war, famine was a matter of grave concern. Food prices rose with the poor harvest between 1816 and 1817 in England. Moreover, British industrial demand fell, and unemployment rose because of the war, as Brontë describes in *Shirley*. As the result, unemployed workers and soldiers of the war crowded the labour market, and British workers could not buy food (Tilly 339). “Disease” was another serious social problem in the mid-nineteenth century, as Hunsden explains. Many people

suffered from infectious diseases such as typhus, typhoid, cholera and smallpox. The influence of these epidemic diseases devastated administration and health services (Szreter 147).

What is important as regards to the conversation between Hunsden and Frances is the question of who is to be blamed for the "dirty little country called England." Hunsden criticises both the aristocracy and the working classes, rather than the industrial bourgeoisie. With evident sarcasm, he says, "Examine the foot-prints of our august aristocracy," and declares that they are prosperous at the expense of the lower classes. Regarding working-class people, he abuses not only the hopeless situation caused by "Disease" and "Famine" but also their own unimproved lives, in which they prefer "Infamy" and "Ignorance" over diligence. Moreover, using the pronoun "her," Hunsden regards working-class "Infamy" as a woman who pursues "Luxury." According to "a practical notion of how our system works," which Hunsden describes to Frances, the industrial bourgeoisie – to whom Hunsden belongs – is not to blame for the "dirty little country called England."

Hunsden suggests that "knowledge" is necessary to get "a proper notion" of de-mystified England, which has been developed by the middle classes. Frances says to Hunsden, "I was not thinking of the wretchedness and vice in England; I was thinking of the good side – of what is elevated in your character as a nation" (260–61). Contrary to his scornful attitudes towards the other classes, Hunsden implicitly praises the middle class while pointing out her poor knowledge:

> 'There is no good side – none at least of which you can have any knowledge; for you cannot appreciate the efforts of industry, the achievements of enterprise, or the discoveries of science. narrowness of education and

> obscurity of position quite incapacitate you from understanding those points . . . .' (261)

His words triply criticise Frances' superficial knowledge: as a woman, as a foreign other and as a person of the lower class. He advises her to acquire "a practical notion" of the English social system, namely that it was the middle classes who had developed industry, enterprise and science through diligence and hard work. Brontë impresses the middle-class efforts on the readers through the voice of Hunsden, an industrialist.

6. Conclusion

With William's economic prosperity, the fusion of the images of the bourgeoisie and the landed gentry becomes more prominent towards the end of the novel. Ten years later, William and Frances build these assets – not only by his school management, but also by their investment. They accumulated enough "capital to invest" by managing the school and start investing with the advice of entrepreneurs: "Vandenhuten and Hunsden, gave us each a word of advice as to the sort of investment to be chosen. The suggestion made was judicious; and, being promptly acted on, the result proved gainful" (280). It is not only William who builds a massive fortune by investment. His brother Edward's factory goes bankrupt, but he revives and becomes rich "by railway speculations" (290), which boomed in the 1840s but plunged shortly after. In *The Professor*, while the prosperity of businesspeople is brought by the management of manufacturing, investment also underpins their social status as gentlemen.

Having enough property enables William to go back to England as a gentleman with Frances and their son. After his return, he purchases a country house, Daisy Lane, in his hometown. His prosperity embodies gentlemanly capitalism: he builds a massive

fortune by financial transactions, while owning a large estate as a landed gentry. In *Jane Eyre*, the union of Rochester and Jane represents gentlemanly capitalism by the fusion of aristocratic fortune and middle-class property which is the result of her uncle's investment. In contrast, in *The Professor*, William himself embodies gentlemanly capitalism by his land ownership and investment in the service sector.

Hunsden's country house, Hunsden Wood, is near William's. In this aristocratic hall, Hunsden often talks about topics related to economics or politics not only with English businessmen but with guests from various countries.

> What English guests Hunsden invites, are all either men of Birmingham or Manchester – hard men, seemingly knit up in one thought, whose talk is of *free trade*. The foreign visitors, too, are politicians; they talk a wider theme – European progress – the spread of *liberal sentiments* over the Continent; on their mental tablets, the names of Russia, Austria, and the Pope are inscribed in red ink. (282, italics mine)

In Hunsden Wood, he and the visitors from various countries fervently address industrial or political topics. "[M]en of Birmingham or Manchester," capitalists in the industrial areas, discuss "free trade." The Corn Laws and The Navigation Acts, which supported protectionism for a long time, were abolished in 1846 and 1849. Hunsden discusses free trade, which implies opposition to conservatism, with the progressives in his country house, which is the symbol of a landed gentry.

Hunsden also discusses "the spread of liberal sentiments over the Continent" with the foreign visitors, referring to liberalism against the absolute monarchism in Europe. In France, the *ancien régime* collapsed in the 1830s, but Russia had maintained the

absolute monarchy through Czarism. In Austria, liberalism and nationalism were suppressed under the Vienna system after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. In Italy, Pope Gregory XVI, who represented "inflexible conservatism" and proclaimed "the dogma of papal infallibility," strongly denounced liberalism. Through the discussion of these political issues, Hunsden and his foreign visitors create "a world of international brotherhood" in his country house (315, n.15).

It is worth noting that William sometimes attends the meetings held in Hunsden's country house. He, who was just a clerk at his brother's mill, now talks about economics or politics with foreign politicians as a gentleman and he also enters into "a world of international brotherhood." Where is Frances, however, in this "world of international brotherhood" which is created in the "English" circumstance for which she has passionately yearned in Brussels? At the end of the novel, Brontë reveals that the systems in Hunsden's phrases "our system" and "how our system works" refer to the measures for achieving the prosperity brought by the industrial bourgeoisie's business and their investment to the international financial networks. There is no room for Frances there.

William says that the discussions in Hunsden's country house represent "almost a cosmopolitan freedom and largeness" (283). Investment is cosmopolitan as it has international financial networks: England, France and Holland, in particular, shared the same culture of investment (Sakamoto, *The Rise of the Investors Society* 85). Considering Hunsden's useful advice on investment to William, he undoubtedly exchanges financial information with Hunsden's foreign visitors.

Brontë does not end the novel at the point in which her hero achieves his self-made status only by hard work. As an English "professor," he acquires competence; at the end, however, he amasses a fortune by investments – ironically without "the sweat

of his brow." His fortune, which he earns abroad, enables him to purchase a country house in his hometown and to join the gentlemen's society. *The Professor* is surely a narrative based on the self-made man; however, it is the anglicised foreign woman, Frances, who supports his self-help. He exploits her to fulfil an English man's ideal life in the self-made man's narrative format. After returning to England, he no longer pays much attention to Frances, who continues to support him as a perfect wife. Rather, his narration primarily focuses on the gentlemen's society to emphasise his high social status. *The Professor* represents Brontë's critical gaze on the middle-class men's ideal self-help. It is achieved by the external factors such as the financial network of foreign countries, that is "a world of international brotherhood," but also by the women like Frances, who are excluded from the male circle and become domesticated in the narrative of a self-made "man."

Chapter 4

"Whence did I come? Whither should I go? What should I do?": Rewriting the "Emigrant Spinster" Narrative in *Villette*

1. Introduction

Villette is the story of a young, helpless middle-class English woman who goes to a foreign country to try to find a job and have an independent life. While working as an English teacher at a Catholic girls' boarding school in a fictional continental city named Villette, Lucy, the narrator and heroine, wonders how she may gain "an independent position" by herself. In Chapter 31, she wonders, "how I should make some advance in life, take another step towards an independent position" (400). For Lucy, the headmistress and her employer, Madame Beck, represents a model for becoming a successful independent woman. Lucy plans her upward mobility by managing her own school in the future like Madame Beck, who started running a small school and gradually expanded it.

Lucy inspires herself not to flinch from the realisation of the plan: "Courage, Lucy Snowe! With self-denial and economy now, and steady exertion by-and-by, an object in life need not fail you" (400). At the same time, however, another purpose of life comes into her mind other than independence.

> . . . be content to labour for independence until you have proved, by winning that prize, your right to look higher. But afterwards, is there nothing more for me in life – no true home – nothing to be dearer to me than myself, and by its paramount preciousness, to draw from me better things than I care to culture for myself only? Nothing, at whose feet I can willingly lay down the whole burden of human

> egotism, and gloriously take up the nobler charge of labouring and living for others? (400–01)

Lucy thinks that even if she achieves independence, she would not be entirely satisfied with her life. Another goal other than independence comes into her mind: it is "the nobler charge of labouring and living for others" in a "true home." If both "true home" and "living for others" refer to married life that Jane Eyre in *Jane Eyre*, Shirley Keeldar and Caroline Helstone in *Shirley* embark upon after their romances, and also refer to a husband and children for whom to care, it needs to be asked whether the domestic life allows women to keep economic independence after marriage. In this chapter, I emphasise that a "true home" here has another potential meaning for Lucy. *Villette* suggests the possibility of obtaining both a "true home," in terms of labouring and living for others, and independence for women.

This chapter focuses on Lucy's inner tension between being independent and living for others in her experiences in a foreign city, which is based on Brussels. By depicting a female protagonist who goes to Villette, Charlotte Brontë not only reflects her own experiences in Brussels in the novel but also suggests a Victorian social problem: the "surplus" of unmarried women whose numbers had been increasing throughout the nineteenth century. To solve this serious problem, Victorian society promoted female emigration so that single women, who could not support themselves in England, could find a job or find a husband in a British colony. As Anne Longmuir discusses, Brontë adopts a narrative format of "emigrant spinsters" in this novel. Yet, Lucy, one of the spinsters, moves not to a colony but to "a continental 'Elsewhere'" (Longmuir "Emigrant Spinsters"). I analyse how Brontë, in *Villette*, adopts and rewrites the social discourse about English spinsters to give Lucy a way to create her own space

as her “true home.”

2. No True Home in England

Villette begins with a scene in which Lucy Snowe spends her days in her godmother Mrs Bretton’s house. This parallels how *Jane Eyre* describes Jane in her maternal uncle’s house at the beginning if that novel. Lucy spends several months at a time, twice a year in the ancient town of Bretton. She impassively observes other characters there: Mrs Bretton, her son Graham (later Dr. John) and his paternal relative Paulina Mary. Lucy carefully watches and narrates their behaviours and conversations with a certain distance (Lawrence 460). The Brettons belong to the upper middle class: Mrs Bretton is a “middle-class gentlewoman” (243), and her late husband was “a physician” (7). Since Lucy tells the readers, “her [Mrs Bretton’s] degree was mine” (193), she may originally belong to the upper middle class. She receives Mrs Bretton’s affectionate care: “One child in a household of grown people is usually made very much of, and in a quiet way I was a good deal taken notice of by Mrs Bretton” (7). Lucy feels that“[t]ime always flowed smoothly . . . like the gliding of a full river through a plain” (8).

The importance difference between *Villette* and *Jane Eyre* is that Lucy spends her days peacefully with the Brettons, though Jane is despised and treated harshly by the Reeds. Brontë describes Victorian ideal upper-class homeliness at the beginning of the story, unlike in *Jane Eyre*. However, Chapter 4 tells us that Lucy’s destiny has suddenly taken a turn for the worse. Eight years have passed since the last time she stayed with Mrs Bretton, and she has become completely homeless because of her parents’ and relatives’ death. Her hopeless situation reminds us of Jane as an orphan. Her narration exposes her family’s tragedy using the metaphor of a shipwreck.

> However, it cannot be concealed that, in that case, I must somehow have fallen over-board, or that there must have been wreck at last. I too well remember a time – a long time, of cold, of danger, of contention. . . . For many days and nights neither sun nor stars appeared; we cast with our own hands the tackling out of the ship; a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, *the ship was lost, the crew perished*. (39, italics mine)

Lucy never describes details about her family. While Jane often shares her secrets with the readers as I explained in Chapter 1, Lucy's narration tends to hide important information on herself from them. Margaret L. Shaw explains that "in *Villette* she [Brontë] has Lucy allude to a family tragedy the details of which she immediately suppresses; rather than explain what happened, Lucy 'permits' the reader to imagine, instead, the conventional narrative of a young woman's homelife" (Shaw 817). Indeed, just before the passage above, Lucy allows the readers to imagine she has been as happy as many other women and girls after leaving the Brettons. Yet, Brontë makes Lucy deviate from "the conventional narrative of young woman's homelife." This scene highlights the contrast between the homeliness in the Brettons at the beginning of the story and Lucy's homelessness.

After Lucy loses her family, her homeless life starts in Chapter 4. She is content with nursing a rheumatic patient, Miss Marchmont, in the woman's house. The closed spaces Lucy inhabits with the old lady become the whole world for her, and she is content to be confined to "[t]wo hot, close rooms" with Miss Marchmont.

> Two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman,

> my mistress, my friend, my all. . . . I forgot that there were fields, woods, rivers, seas, an ever-changing sky outside the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick-chamber; I was almost content to forget it. All within me became narrowed to my lot. . . . In addition, she [Miss Marchmont] gave me the originality of her character to study: the steadiness of her virtues, I will add, the power of her passions, to admire, the truth of her feelings to trust. All these things she had, and for these things I clung to her. (42)

Lucy functions as Miss Marchmont's companion and nurse in the manner that Victorian spinsters were expected to: devoting themselves to their parents as companions, nurses and housekeepers (Hill 69). Yet, Miss Marchmont's death throws Lucy out of the world again, and she wanders like an exile: "My mistress [Miss Marchmont] being dead, and I once more alone, I had to look out for a new place" (48). About her isolated situation, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note that "Lucy will have to seek her identity on foreign soil because she is metaphorically a foreigner even in England" (Gilbert and Gubar 405). Despite being an English woman, she has no place to which she belongs and moves from place to place in the country. Lucy's situation of "metaphorically a foreigner even in England" is related not only to her ambiguous identity as Gilbert and Gubar say, but to her homelessness as one of the "surplus" women, an issue to be discussed in the next section.

Lucy loses composure in her mental state, shown to the readers when she is at the Brettons. She becomes more unstable after leaving Miss Marchmont's house. In Chapter 5, she is pessimistic about her hopeless future, spending her time alone at a hotel in London.

> All at once my position rose on me like a ghost. Anomalous, desolate, almost blank of hope, it stood. What was I doing here alone in great London? What should I do on the morrow? What prospects had I in life? What friends had I on earth? *Whence did I come? Whither should I go? What should I do?*
>
> I wet the pillow, my arms, and my hair, with rushing tears. A dark interval of most bitter thought followed this burst . . . (52, italics mine)

This passage discloses Lucy's intense grief in her miserable state. Her situation of homelessness drives her to despair; even the next day is unclear for her. Yet, after this effusion of her disappointment, she tries to encourage herself: "Who but a coward would pass his whole life in hamlets, and for ever abandon his faculties to the eating rust of obscurity?" (53). Her mentality often oscillates back and forth between a manic state of encouraging herself to act boldly and melancholic anxiety about her bleak future.

Lucy's loneliness generated from her homelessness is further emphasised by the lack of female bonds. Lucy's bonds with other women are broken in England, just as Jane Eyre also experiences. Jane cannot maintain female bonds with her mother nor can she with Bessie, Helen Burns and Miss Temple as I explained in Chapter 1. In *Villette*, firstly, Lucy loses her friendship with a precocious little girl, Paulina Mary. Foreshadowing her own wandering life in the future, Lucy wonders about Paulina who is crying when leaving the Brettons: "How will she get through this world, or battle with this life?" (38). She also loses her relationship with Mrs Bretton who functions like Lucy's mother in the beginning, and who represents "conventional motherhood" (Millette 652). Lucy is unable to contact Mrs Bretton because the latter leaves town after investments failed in "some joint-stock" (40). Moreover, Lucy's friendship with Miss Marchmont is terminated by the latter's death. Although, later, Lucy happens to

meet Paulina and Mrs Bretton again in Villette, their female bonds are severed in England.

Lucy, who is an orphan and loses connections with other women, reminds us of motherless and friendless Jane Eyre. Lucy cannot build intimacy and mutual support with other women. This is unlike the female characters in another of Brontë's novels, *Shirley*: the mother-daughter relationship between Caroline and Mrs Pryor, and the familiarity between Shirley and Caroline, as I discussed in Chapter 2. Eagleton explains the relationship between Caroline and Mrs Pryor as one in which "Caroline is supplied with palliatives [for instance, her mother Mrs Pryor] to keep her where she is," unlike Jane, William Crimsworth in *The Professor* and Lucy who are excluded from domestic space (Eagleton 81). In *Villette*, Brontë once again describes a motherless and friendless woman like Jane, and Lucy's isolation makes her wander around England.

3. Lucy Snowe as an "Emigrant Spinster"

Lucy's homelessness highlights the predicament of her unmarried situation. Brontë's unmarried characters such as Lucy, Jane Eyre and Caroline Helstone struggle to find their own places in English society where they are ridiculed and problematised as "surplus women." In *Villette*, at the beginning of Chapter 4, before the disclosure of her family's death, Lucy allows us to imagine her peaceful days after leaving the Brettons: "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 . . . . A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; *why not I with the rest?*" (39). "A great many women and girls" may refer to (future) wives and mothers who spend their time calmly in domestic spaces. Like these women, she may be able to live tranquilly, but her situation is dire: "I know not that I was of a self-reliant

or active nature; but self-reliance and exertion were forced upon me by circumstances, as they are upon *thousands besides*" (40, italics mine). The "thousands besides" here allude to unmarried women who have no one to depend on except themselves. Many single women were marginalised both from the matrimonial market and from the labour market, as Brontë poses the same woman question in *Shirley*. Brontë makes Lucy share the anguish of unmarried women with female characters in her other works.

Scholars tend to pay attention to Lucy's homeless situation itself. They rarely consider the Victorian social and political context behind it. Yet, Anne Longmuir points out that there is a decisive difference in emigration between William in *The Professor* and Lucy in *Villette* in terms of gender: William moves to Brussels to pave his way as self-made man; yet, Lucy is forced to leave England by a socio-political discourse that dictated that unmarried women needed to go abroad to find a husband (Longmuir "Emigrant Spinster"). In 1869, though more than ten years after *Villette*, W. R. Greg problematised the "condition of women" – namely the increasing number of unmarried women – in *Why Are Women Redundant?* (Greg 5):

> There are hundreds of thousands of women not to speak more largely still – scattered through all ranks, but proportionally most numerous in *the middle and upper classes, – who have to earn their own living*, instead of spending and husbanding the earning of men; who, not having the natural duties and labours of wives and mothers, *have to carve out artificial and painfully-thought occupations for themselves*. (Greg 5, italics mine)

Greg states that quite a few women, who cannot be wives and mothers, especially in the middle and the upper classes, must make their own living. In the mid-Victorian era, the

enormous number of single women, namely "surplus women," was a serious social problem: "By the 1850s and with the publication of statistical details available for the first time in the 1851 census, public debate centred on what came to be defined as 'surplus' or redundant women" (Davidoff and Hall, 3rd ed., 453). Unmarried and unemployed women could no longer seek their own place in England.

What is worse, Victorian society considered single women as dangerous and harmful, especially governesses who earned wages equivalent to those of working-class men in exchange for providing feminine care in middle-class families as substitute mothers. They were socially identified with prostitutes because they sold their own femininity (Poovey, *Uneven Developments* 145; Longmuir "Emigrant Spinster"). They were so abnormal and unhealthy that they need to be normalised by finding husbands in a foreign country. These social prejudices created the socio-political discourse of emigrant spinsters.

After the death of Miss Marchmont, Lucy heads to London in search of new possibilities that would enable her to live by herself, following her inner voice that says, "Leave this wilderness": "gazing from this country parish in the flat, rich middle of England – I mentally saw within reach what I had never yet beheld with my bodily eyes; I saw London" (49). When Lucy arrives in London, she feels that there she has nothing to do and nobody to depend on. She decides to go to continental Europe. As she has no "home," she knows that no one is interested in what she does, and no one will mourn if she died far from England.

> My state of mind, and all accompanying circumstances, were just now such as most to favour the adoption of a new, resolute, and daring – perhaps desperate – line of action. I had nothing to lose. Unutterable loathing of a desolate existence

> past forbade return. If I failed in what I now designed to undertake, who, save myself, would suffer? If I died far away from – home, I was going to say, but I had no home – from England, then, who would weep? (55)

This passage demonstrates Lucy's negative reaction to her marginalised situation. Lucy's "homeless, anchorless, unsupported" mind (57) drives her to cross the English Channel. She moves around England: from Bretton to another rural area, where Miss Marchmont's house is, and from there to London. In addition, her "homelessness and estrangement" (Anderson 47) eventually forces her to cross a national border.

Lucy's trajectory of her life in England reminds us of Williams' in *The Professor*. Both of them lose the place in which they live safely, and they seek another one. In William's case, he abandons his aristocratic status and rejects an offer of priesthood by his noble relatives of his own will. He moves to Brussels, following the advice of his acquaintance Hunsden Yorke Hunsden, who is familiar to the world. In contrast, Lucy is so passive that she is swayed by the situation and has no will. She decides to go to the continent because of information she obtains from the people around her. Mrs Barrett, who was once a housekeeper for the Snowes, tells her about Europe: "there are many Englishwomen in foreign families" (50). Lucy keeps Mrs Barrett's words in mind. In addition, a waiter at a hotel in London also tells her about ships to a European continental port, "Boue-Marine" (55). Brontë adopts an arbitrary narrative development in which the information Lucy happened to obtain from Mrs Barrett and the waiter makes her cross the English Channel.

In *Villette*, it is significant that Lucy is an unmarried woman. Longmuir points out that the social and political discourse on Victorian spinsters lies between Lucy's homelessness and emigration:

> Lucy Snowe's decision to travel abroad should therefore be read within *the broader context of calls for female emigration*: Lucy is not only unwelcome in England, she is literally considered *a "social problem"* there. *Understanding this context alters our analysis of the motivation behind Lucy's journey* across the English Channel. . . . understanding Lucy's decision in the context of contemporary calls for female emigration suggests that "the bold thought . . . sent to [Lucy's] mind" may not be a manifestation of Lucy's "inner imperativeness" so much as a manifestation of *an external imperative*: *the collective social and political will* inviting Lucy and women like her to go overseas. (Longmuir "Emigrant Spinsters," italics mine)

Considering the social and political pressure on Victorian spinsters, "an external imperative" rather than "inner imperativeness" drives Lucy to go abroad. Lucy is one of the single women considered to cause a "social problem," and "the collective social and political will" pushes her abroad. Just before her determination to leave England, Lucy narrates, "My state of mind, and all accompanying circumstances, were just now such as most to favour the adoption of a new, resolute, and daring – perhaps – desperate line of action" (55). We can guess here that "all accompanying circumstances" include the social "emigrant discourse": single women should leave England to find a husband in the British colonies.

Terry Eagleton states that the "miraculous propulsion [an involuntary power / Lucy's inner voice] from point to point, in a process which will turn out to be one of social advancement, is enough to absolve Lucy from a charge of self-interested calculation" (Eagleton 62–63). In other words, Brontë uses the "miraculous propulsion"

to excuse Lucy's "self-interested calculation." However, rather, we should interpret the "miraculous propulsion" as "the collective social and political will" which expelled single women from England. Society justified the expulsion of the "surplus women" from England to solve the "social problem." Davidoff and Hall explain that "[t]he simple expedient of shipping middle-class women to the colonies in proportion to men as a solution was countered by feminists who argued that if women were allowed to freely enter all occupations 'suited to their strength', they would cease to be superfluous" (Davidoff and Hall, 3rd ed., 453).

Spinsters as the "surplus" women were doubly homeless: neither had they place to call home nor a home country. Brontë employs the narrative format of spinsters who seek their own home in a British colony or a foreign country. Victorian readers might regard Lucy's journey to the continent as a natural action as a spinster in this social context. In other words, Brontë adopted the emigrant-spinster discourse to describe Lucy as a victim who could not find a job in England, and as an outcast who was expelled by society so had to go abroad.

4. Villette as "a cosmopolitan city"

After boarding a vessel to the continent, Lucy narrates that "[i]n my reverie, methought I saw the continent of Europe, like a wide dreamland, far away" (62). For her, Europe looks like a "dreamland" full of hope, unlike Britain, where she could not have her own home. On the same ship, she meets Ginevra Fanshawe, an English girl who goes to a girls' boarding school in Villette. Lucy attempts to find a job there, and in fact, succeeds in getting hired as an English teacher there. At this time, Lucy recognises Villette as "a cosmopolitan city" (90).

> *Villette is a cosmopolitan city*, and in this school were girls of almost every European nation, and likewise of very varied rank in life. *Equality is much practiced in Labassecour*; though not republican in form, it is nearly so in substance, and at the desks of Madame Beck's establishment the young countess and the young bourgeois sat side by side: nor could you always by outward indications decide which was noble and which plebeian; . . . (90, italics mine)

Here we can interpret the Brontë's use of "cosmopolitan" with the definition by Zlatko Skrbiš and Ian Woodward: "the cosmopolitan being is defined by an openness and willingness to change and indeed is open to being changed by encounters with difference" (Skrbiš and Woodward 10). In the above passage, Lucy considers Villette positively as "a cosmopolitan city" which based on the country's "equality." According to her narration, students of different statuses "s[i]t side by side." She realises people in the city share the same space with equality, regardless of their nationalities or social ranks. Villette embodies "equality," as opposed to the English class system.

However, in reality, the city is under the Catholic control. It is not a class system like Britain, but it is a society monitored by the Catholic church due to its complicated historical developments. The fictional kingdom of Labassecour where the cosmopolitan city, Villette is, was based on Belgium, a country located in the centre of Western Europe and, before its independence in 1830, it was divided mainly into two regions called Vlaanderen (the north) and Wallonia (the south). France, Spain, Austria and Prussia had contended to occupy them. Especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Great Powers fought for hegemony over Belgium because the country had experienced rapid industrialisation following Britain and flourished economically (François 664). Thus, Belgium often experienced turmoil in language, education and politics under the

changing controlling countries.

In particular, the language issue has been controversial in Belgium, an issue that remains to this day. Until the eighteenth century, in Vlaanderen, people had spoken Dutch except for bourgeois elites who spoke French. On the other hand, in Wallonia, people mainly used French. Yet, from 1797 to 1814, French became popular as the official language in Vlaanderen because Napoleon Bonaparte absorbed and controlled the territory (Deschouwer 18–28; Mnookin and Verbeke 154–160).

After the fall of Napoleon, the Great Powers decided, at the Vienna Congress of 1814–1815, that Belgium should be annexed to the United Kingdom of the Netherland. Therefore, King William of the House of Orange ruled Belgium. He abolished the obligation to use French in Vlaanderen, and he issued the policy to use Dutch as the official language. However, the number of Dutch-speaking elites in Brussels was considerably reduced due to the influence of French language policy under Napoleon's rule. Two major leading forces – Catholics and liberals – formed "unionism" to resist King William's policy together, though they originally were in an adversarial relationship. This resistance movement led to the subsequent Belgian Revolution in 1830 (Deschouwer 18–28; Mnookin and Verbeke 154–160).

The policy of the official language in Vlaanderen being Dutch was revoked after the independence of Belgium in 1830. Instead, the Belgian constitution, which was "quite progressive and liberal" (Deschouwer 23), was established in 1831. It recognised freedom of language, religion, education and so on. Yet, most of the elites at that time grew up under French control, so the main language of the new nation was French (Deschouwer 18–28; Mnookin and Verbeke 154–160).

The Belgian government not only prioritised the use of French language in the administration and the judiciary, but also forced people to learn French in education. As

a result, by 1840, many public institutions came to use French as their only language. Although Belgium achieved independence by the joint struggle of "unionism," the Catholics and the liberals were conflicted in terms of education: the Catholics emphasised education based on their disciplines, but the liberals advocated educational freedom. The liberals argued that religious belief was in the personal domain. They promoted public schools because they thought that if there were more private Catholic schools, more children in poverty would lose access to education. Yet, for the Catholics, their private schools were essential for missionary work and the income of the clergy. Therefore, the liberals' policy of expanding public schools was an impediment to the Catholic church and the conservatives in respect to their mission and finances. In the late nineteenth century, the liberals formed the liberal party, and the confrontation between these two major powers became more intense (Deschouwer 18–28; Mnookin and Verbeke 154–160).

Villette contains an episode about the infringement on freedom of education, detailing how Paul expels a female teacher of history, Madame Panache, from the school. Mentioning his "resemblance to Napoleon Bonaparte" (386), Lucy implies that he does not recognise freedom of education. Madame Panache is so "clever" that she is capable of utilising her own knowledge (386–87). Paul investigates "her method of instruction," and points out "her errors" because her method differs from his own. Paul intensely scrutinises her "till she [i]s fairly rooted out of the establishment" (387). Lucy does not tell the reader how Madame Panache's method is wrong. But, considering the history of Belgium and her broad knowledge of it, Madame Panache may teach students history that goes against a Catholic education. Her liberal teaching is unacceptable for Paul who controls both teachers and students in the Catholic school.

Lucy herself also experiences religious and language issues in Villette. The school,

which once impressed Lucy as “cosmopolitan,” is a world full of Catholic discipline, far from “equality.” To distract the schoolgirls from Catholic repression, the Church allows them “large sensual indulgence.”

> A strange, frolicsome, noisy little world was this school: great pains were taken to hide *chains* with flowers: a subtle essence of Romanism pervaded every arrangement: large sensual indulgence (so to speak) was permitted by way of counterpoise to jealous spiritual restraint. Each mind was being reared in slavery; but, to prevent reflection from dwelling on this fact, every pretext for physical recreation was seized and made the most of. There, as elsewhere, the CHURCH strove to bring up her children robust in body, feeble in soul, fat, ruby, hale, joyous, ignorant, unthinking, unquestioning. (140–41)

According to Lucy’s narration, Catholicism allows pupils’ “large sensual indulgence” and harms them physically and mentally. Even though their bodies are sturdy and plump, their minds are weak and they lack intellect. Lucy observes both her Catholic students and colleagues, evoking Victorian prejudices of anti-Catholicism (Micael Clarke 968). The Catholic church deprives the girls of power to resist “spiritual restraint” by binding them through “large sensual indulgence.” In this cosmopolitan city, equality is only a façade, and in fact, the school suppresses the girls with invisible “chains” to maintain the Catholic hierarchy. Lucy’s observant narration reveals that the seemingly equal world is a place of Catholic conspiracy and domination.

In order to acclimate herself to this “cosmopolitan” boarding school, Lucy must prove that she is not an unreliable woman under the mistress Madame Beck’s severe Catholic eyes (80). Madame Beck scrutinises not only the conversation about

Protestantism between Lucy and students as I mentioned above, but also Lucy and other girls' suspicious behaviours.

> . . . after discoursing, often with dignity and delicacy, to me, she would move away on her 'soulier de silence,' and glide ghost-like through the house, *watching* and *spying* everywhere, *peering* through every key-hole, *listening* behind every door. (81, italics mine)

Under this surveillance, Lucy feels that "[a]ll this was very un-English: truly I was in a foreign land" (77). The act of "surveillance" here includes the religious implication of Catholicism (Jung 164; Micael Clarke 977). Lucy must live under the control of the Catholic society of Villette, which she once felt to be an equitable society without a hierarchy.

Despite Madame Beck's espionage, Lucy proves that she has no secrets or reasons to be suspected. Since the school has a "cosmopolitan" character with many foreigners including teachers, Madame Beck spies on them to root out lies and secrets of the foreigners who disturb the Catholic discipline. In response to Mademe Beck's surveillance, Lucy understands it as her "duty" (77).

> I was nor angry, and had no wish in the world to leave her. I could hardly get another employer whose yoke would be so light and so easy of carriage; and truly, I liked madame for her capital sense, whatever I might think of her principles: as to her system, it did me no harm; . . . I was as safe from spies in my heart-poverty, as beggar from thieves in his destitution of purse. (131)

Lucy neither gets angry at Madame Beck's espionage nor wants to leave the school. She deliberately allows herself to be an observed object so as not to lose the work she has finally gained there. She narrates that she has no secrets because of her "heart-poverty." The act of surveillance, which is seemingly a negative behaviour, has a positive outcome for Lucy. It makes Madame Beck trust her. In this way, Lucy gradually earns Madame Beck's confidence and secures a place to live safely in the school.

Brontë uses surveillance as a "vehicle for power" in both *Villette* and *The Professor* (Peschier 105). Lucy's submissiveness to Madame Beck apparently signifies Lucy's socially inferior position. Yet, she dares to utilise her controlled situation. She implicitly reverses, or at least, equalises the relationship with her superior, Madame Beck. Indeed, Lucy narrates in the latter part of the novel, "I had slowly learned, that, unless with an inferior, she [Madame Beck] must ever be a rival. She was *my* [sic] rival . . . Two minutes I stood over Madame, feeling that the whole woman was in my power" (494). It suggests the equality or even Lucy's superiority in their relationship. Her homelessness or rootlessness is an advantage in this "cosmopolitan" city. By taking advantage of Madame Beck's espionage, Lucy skillfully transitions from an outsider to an insider in the cosmopolitan school.

By criticizing Catholicism and praising Protestantism, William in *The Professor* revalues and reaffirms his own Englishness in the narrative format of an English self-made man who goes back to his country in triumph; but Lucy as a spinster cannot reaffirm her own Englishness because she is an outcast from her homeland and never returns there. The difference in the perception of Englishness or foreignness between the two suggests a gender problem. It is especially noticeable when Lucy gets hired at Madame Beck's school. It is not Madame Beck but Paul who judges whether Lucy is eligible for working there. He uses physiognomy to evaluate her, as William did, to

discern the foreign girls' hidden characters.

> The little man [Paul] fixed on me his spectacles. A resolute compression of the lips, and gathering of the brow, seemed to say that he meant to see through me, and that a veil would be no veil for him.
>
> 'I read it,' he pronounced. . . .
>
> Still he scrutinized. The judgement, when it at last came, was indefinite as what had gone before it.
>
> 'Engage her. If good predominates in that nature, the action will bring its own reward . . .' (73–75)

This passage represents Lucy's objectification as a woman, and she is in a position to be chosen by a man through his observation and scrutiny. In contrast to William who functions as "a subject" to retain his masculinity and superiority, Lucy as "an object" must behave well in order to be hired at the school. If she fails to do this, she will be pushed onto "the lonesome, dreary, hostile street" again (74). This hypothetical situation reminds us of the predicament of a prostitute. To avoid being "on the street," Lucy is required to accept the powerful and omnipresent "gaze" of the Catholic society.

5. Lucy's Romance and the Nun in the Attic

Not only Madame beck but also Paul deepens his interest in Lucy. He explains to her that he uses a room he rents in the building next to the girls' boarding school to watch female students closely including her: "That . . . is my room I have hired, normally for a study – virtually for a post of observation. There I sit and read for hours together . . . . My book is this garden; its contents are human nature – female human

nature. I know you all by heart" (403). He observes her as Madame Beck does, but in his case, he scrutineses Lucy with romantic feelings.

Not knowing how Paul feels, Lucy is enamoured of Dr John. When Lucy is down with "a nervous fever" (202) after her confession in a Catholic church, she finds herself in an unfamiliar house, with Mrs Bretton and Dr John taking care of her. Spending her vacation with them, Lucy gradually becomes attracted to Dr John, though he likes Ginevra Fanshawe. After returning to Madame Becks' school, Lucy receives a letter which is "hope" for her (266). Paul tries to learn the contents of the letter because he is jealous, but Lucy does not notice his love for her. At this point, each of them has unrequited romantic feelings: from Paul to Lucy, from Lucy to Dr John, and from Dr John to Ginevra.

The attic is the only place in the boarding school where Lucy can read the letter from Dr John safely because Madame Beck and Paul always watch her carefully. She enters the "deep, black, cold" room to read it. At the moment, a "shape" appears in front of her (272):

> Something in that vast solitary garret sounded strangely. . . . I turned: my light was dim; the room was long – but, as I live! I saw in the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black or white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white. . . . this I vow – I saw there – in that room – on that night – an image like – a NUN. (273)

Madame Beck's school was a convent in the past, and people gossip about a ghost of a nun who died in an incident. Lucy also learns about the rumor when she starts working at the school, though she does not believe it. In Brontë's fiction, there is hidden secret

in the attic: Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*, and now Lucy's secret letter from Dr John, and the nun in *Villette*.

The shadow of the nun always comes to Lucy every time she takes action related to her romance. It appears not only when she reads a letter from Dr John. The nun appears again immediately after she buried letters from Dr John because of her disappointed love. The shadow emerges when Lucy ponders her future life after giving up a romance with Dr John: "whiter and blacker it on my eye: it took shape with instantaneous transformation. I stood about three yards from a tall, sable-robed, snowy-veiled woman" (329). The image of the nun buried in the garden symbolises the letters from Dr John buried with her romantic feelings. The ghost stares at Lucy's eyes as if it predicts Lucy's future as a spinster who abandons a romance. She must find her own answer to a question about her future, as Gilbert and Gubar notes, "as a single woman, how can she escape the nun's fate?" (Gilbert and Gubar 426).

Lucy begins to be attracted to Paul after hearing his patriotic speech. Napoleon-like Paul gives an enthusiastic speech in front of "[t]he collegians" to fuel their patriotism. Paul addresses "future citizens and embryo patriots" rather than "school-boys." Lucy wonders, "Who would have thought the flat and fat soil of Labassecour could yield political convictions and national feelings, such as were now strongly expressed?" (344). Some of the audience "c[atch] fire as he [Paul] eloquently t[ells] them what should be their path and endeavour in their country's and in Europe's future." Brontë constructs a romance plot in this political context: she incorporates Belgian complex political problems to develop Lucy's romance with Paul in this scene. Lucy narrates, "I liked his *naïvete*. I would have praised him: I had plenty of praise in my heart: but, alas! no words on my lips" (345). Her feelings towards Paul become clearer in Chapter 31. She feels "a curious sensation" and "a disagreeable anticipatory

sensation," observing Paul's intimate relationship with his goddaughter, Sauveur (399). This "disagreeable sensation" leads Lucy's later misunderstanding that Sauveur will be Paul's future wife.

In Chapter 31, the plot of Lucy's romance intersects with that of her seeking an independent life. When Lucy is taking a nap in a classroom, she does not notice that Paul puts a shawl on her: "Who had done this? Who was my friend? Which of the teachers? Which of the pupils? . . . It is Mademe Beck's doing" (399). Lucy concludes that an attentive woman among her students or colleagues did it. After waking up, she thinks about her future as an independent unmarried woman to avoid a nun-like life, walking around the place where she buried Dr John's letters, that is, the symbolic place of her lost romance.

> I paced up and down, thinking almost the same thoughts I had pondered that night when I buried my grass jar – how I should make some advance in life, take another step towards an independent position; . . . Courage, Lucy Snowe! With self-denial and economy now, and steady exertion by-and-by, an object in life need not fail you. Venture not to complain that such an object is too selfish, too limited, and lacks interest; be content to labour for independence until you have proved, by winning that prize, your right to look higher. But afterwards, is there nothing more for me in life – no true home – nothing to be dearer to me than myself, and by its paramount preciousness, to draw from me better things than I care to culture for myself only? Nothing, at whose feet I can willingly lay down the whole burden of human egotism, and gloriously take up the nobler charge of labouring and living for others? (400–01)

While seeking a way to become independent, she cannot completely give up on her love for Dr John. In this passage, she shows the inner struggle of her actually desiring to be independent and have her own home.

Yet, at the moment she murmurs goodbye to Dr John to shake off her romantic feeling, saying, “Good night, and God bless you!”, Paul appears in the place of Dr John, replying her, “Good night, mademoiselle; or, rather, good evening” (402). Lucy gradually develops her romance with Paul from this scene. But, a phantom disturbs the romance plot of Paul and Lucy, just as it did to that of Lucy and Dr John. It crosses in front of Lucy and Paul: “Instantly into our alley there came, out of the berceau, an apparition, all black and white. With a sort of angry rush – close, close past our faces – swept swiftly the very NUN herself” (408).

Lucy learns Paul’s secret past in Madame Beck’s relative, Madame Walravens’ house: he had a fiancée named Justine Marie; her grandmother, Madame Walravens, was against the marriage because of his father’s debt; and Marie gave up the marriage and entered a convent, and then died there. Lucy begins to link the dead nun, Marie, with the ghost she saw several times. She is further afflicted by “Justine Marie,” as if she is obsessed by the ghost of the nun. On the night of a national festival, she sees a girl, Sauveur whose real name is Justine Marie Sauveur. The girl received the baptismal name from her dead aunt, Justine Marie. Lucy misunderstands here that Sauveur would be Paul’s next fiancée. She leaves there, thinking that “the blooming and charming Present [Sauveur] prevailed over the Past [Justine Marie]; and at length his nun was indeed buried” (515). In this scene, Lucy comprehends that the romance between Lucy and Paul would not be fulfilled because of the obstruction by “Justine Marie,” and that the problem of the ghost is solved as the nun is “indeed buried.”

However, Lucy meets the nun again when she goes back to her bed in the school

after the festival. She narrates, “My head reeled, for by the faint night-lamp, I saw stretched on my bed the old phantom – the NUN” (519). The identity of the ghost becomes clear by Lucy’s violent actions: grabbing, shaking, and breaking up it. The nun is just “a long bolster dressed in a long black stole, and artfully invested with a white veil” (519). Furthermore, Ginevra writes the truth of the nun in the attic in a letter to Lucy. Ginevra’s letter reveals that the nun in the attic was created by her lover, Le Colonel Alfred de Hamal, to play a prank on Lucy. The nun symbolizes her future as an old maid who has no choice but to live like a nun. Lucy’s violence against the nun alludes an “angry assault” against the emigrant-spinster discourse (Longmuir “Emigrant Spinters”). Lucy breaks the illusion, namely, the stereotype that women who cannot get married should become nuns. This scene suggests that Lucy rejects the binary of either becoming a wife or a nun.

In addition, by destroying the nun who embodies self-restraint, Lucy can develop her own romance with Paul because she emancipates herself from self-control. He gives her a school to manage by herself the day before he leaves for Guadeloupe as I discuss in the next section. This present enables her to be independent. At the same time, their romance also progresses. She thanks him for the present, but her appreciation that cannot be expressed in words is replaced by a romantic description: “he gently raised his hand to stroke my hair; it touched my lips in passing; I pressed it close, I paid it tribute” (537). Soon after this romantic scene, Brontë inserts a blank as if making the readers imagine their romantic and sexual implications. This scene revises our image of Lucy as a nun who has nothing to do with romantic and sexual desire.

Lucy becomes jealous when she hears the name “Justine Marie Sauveur” from Paul shortly after the above romantic scene: “What is in a name? – what in three words? Till this moment . . . I had answered with gleeful quickness; a name froze me; three

words struck me mute" (539–40). He asks her the cause of her jealousy when he notices her sudden sullenness. She narrates, "Warm, jealous, and haughty, I knew not till now that my nature had such a mood" (541). The readers may not be able to understand Lucy's abrupt intense jealousy because Lucy had been always self-controlled from the beginning of the story. Yet, her self-emancipation from self-restraint by destroying the nun leads to this burst of passion. With dismantling the illusionary nun which hindered her romance, Lucy can draw mentally closer to a man and prioritise her female romantic narrative.

6. Paul's Death for Lucy's Independence

Lucy's romance is always disturbed by someone or something as if to signify she cannot have a romantic relationship with anyone. Paul must leave Villette because he is appointed land manager in a French colony, Guadeloupe. He goes there to manage the land which Madame Walravens owns, on behalf of her.

> The fact was, she had been rich – very rich; and though for the present, without the command of money, she was likely one day to be rich again. At Basseterre, in Guadaloupe [sic], she possessed a large estate, received in dowry on her marriage sixty years ago, sequestered since her husband's failure; but now, it was supposed, cleared of claim, and, if duly looked after by a competent agent of integrity, considered capable of being made, in a few years, largely productive. (509)

Madame Walravens exploits Paul, a "self-sacrificing man" (435), to secure "her money and her land" (510). Père Silas and Madame Beck collude and insinuate themselves into

Madame Walravens' favour, trying to send Paul to Guadeloupe for their own financial purposes: Père Silas wants money for his "religion and the church," and Madame Beck for her children's future (509). Pretending to worry about the affectionate relationship between Paul and Lucy, Père Silas threatens Paul that "if he remains in Europe, runs risk of apostacy, for he has become entangled with a heretic [Lucy]." He persuades Paul to go to Guadeloupe by utilising the religious difference between Paul and Lucy and by implanting the sense of guilty in Paul's mind. Paul agrees to go to Guadeloupe under the condition that he would be free from them after a few years of "devotion." The altruistic man, Paul, is exploited by the "three self-seekers," Madame Walraves, Père Silas and Madame Beck (510).

Guadeloupe is located in the Caribbean Sea, and its geography is reminiscent of the West Indies where Rochester manages plantations in *Jane Eyre*. In the long history from 1493 when Christopher Columbus found the island and gave it the name "Guadeloupe," the island has experienced plunder and domination by Spain, France and Britain. In 1635, France possessed the island and they started to manage sugar plantations, exploiting African slaves. The British army occupied Guadeloupe in 1759, and the British commenced trade with British North America. However, in 1763, the Treaty of Paris made France regain supremacy in Guadeloupe. France faced a crisis of losing the island again because the British army disembarked on it in 1794 under the chaotic situation of the French Revolution from 1789 to 1799. France repelled the British army and kept its territory. In 1805, when the signs of the collapse of Napoleon's French Empire began to appear, the British army occupied Guadeloupe again. The Treaty of Vienna of 1815 stipulated that France restored sovereignty over the island. Slavery in Guadeloupe was officially abolished in 1848 (Ash 5–8; Dubois 47, 192, 224).

Paul's emigration to Guadeloupe for land management suggests his involvement

in French imperialism, if not by his own will. Also in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë implies British imperialism through the descriptions of Rochester's Jamaican wife, Bertha Mason, and through St John's mission work in India. Jane's escape from Thornfield Hall and her refusal of St John's proposal illustrates her resistance not only to unfair marriage but to British imperialism. She marries Rochester at the ending not only because she becomes rich by the inheritance from her uncle, but because the issue of the imperialism is resolved tentatively by Bertha's arson and suicide which represent the end of the plantation management (Meyer 70–71). As Longmuir says, while the emigrant-spinster discourse was beneficial to spinsters, it also indirectly led to the success of the British Empire – namely male success – because emigrant spinsters supported men in the colonies by marriage (Longmuir "Emigrant Spinsters"). In *Villette*, even if Lucy had married Dr John, the marriage between an English emigrant spinster and an Englishman in a foreign country would embody the imperialistic ideology. In addition, since Lucy's marriage to Paul also could lead to the success of French Empire, Brontë resists masculine discourse by the suggestion of Paul's death on his way from Guadeloupe to Villette.

Brontë incorporates the discourse of the female emigration into this novel describing not male success which supported by a woman's dedication but female success. Paul provides Lucy with a school which enables her to achieve economic independence. His behaviour is very similar to Robert Moore's offer to open a Sunday school for Caroline. When Robert is seriously injured because a labour shoots at him, he is nursed by women as I mentioned in Chapter 2: he humbly reconsiders his egoistic conduct and becomes affectionate to women, while being nursed by female hands in a domestic space. Yet, in Paul's case, he always spends time in a female space as a teacher at the girls' boarding school, so he is more supportive of women from the beginning

than Robert. Moreover, he is so generous that he devotes himself not only to others such as Madame Walravens and Père Silas, but to Lucy so that she may achieve financial independence.

While Lucy appreciates Paul's frequent affectionate letters from Guadeloupe in the last chapter, she also tells us that her school management is going well: "M. Emmanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life. . . . I commenced my school; I worked – I worked hard. . . . Pupils came – burghers at first – a higher class ere long" (543). However, while she is happily anticipating Paul's return, she must face the problem of property ownership if they marry. In the nineteenth century, the French Civil Code of 1804 had a powerful influence on Belgian law. Married women were not allowed to possess their own property like the British counterparts under the Victorian common law: "the wife could not alienate her privately owned immovable assets without her husband's consent" (De ruysscher 136). Although the Civil Code advocated the principle of equality between men and women, it supported patriarchy after marriage. Considering the severe legal restriction for women, Paul's return implies that Lucy's private property would be completely absorbed into his when they marry. In terms of women's disadvantageous property rights, Brontë's allusion to Paul's death is necessary to keep Lucy's status as an independent woman.

In *The Professor*, Brontë used a narrative format of a male success story to criticise how a man marginalises a woman who supports him as a perfect wife in the gentlemen's society. At the end of the story, William focuses mainly on his son, his friend, and other gentlemen, excluding his wife, Frances Evans Henri, from the centre of the male story. In contrast, in *Villette*, Brontë describes a man who dedicates himself to a woman but who finally vanishes from the story. Suggesting the subversion of gender politics, Brontë strategically uses the emigrant-spinster discourse created by men as a

format for a woman's success story, not for a man's.

7. Conclusion

Villette is a Victorian emigrant-spinster narrative in which Lucy heads to a cosmopolitan city, Villette, as if evicted from England by the social discourse of female emigration. In this novel, Brontë seeks a way for a woman to gain both independence and a home without being restricted by the law. Destroying the nun, her alter ego, enables Lucy to emancipate her own passion and fulfil her romance with Paul. He gives a school to run and a home to cherish to Lucy who works as a mere English teacher in Madame Beck's school. By his gifts, she seems to obtain both independence and home. However, as long as she is engaged to him, it is difficult for her to realise compatibility between independence as a self-made woman and domesticity as a wife because the Civil Code does not permit women's property ownership. By alluding to Paul's death, Brontë suggests a new form of domesticity which does not depend on conventional marriage: Lucy, as a manager, makes her own home in a female space of her girls boarding school.

When Lucy starts living in Villette, she feels that she is isolated in the circle of girls at Madame Beck's school: "In beholding this diaphanous and snowy mass, I well remember feeling myself to be a mere shadowy spot on a field of light" (145). Although she gradually interacts with the girls, she cannot be completely familiar with them because Madame Beck's Catholic eyes always monitor her. To secure her own space, Lucy needs to create a new female space as a manager of her own school, not in the existing space in Madame Beck's school. Paul's presents of a school and a home to Lucy symbolise the separate spheres of Lucy's independence and future married life. It is the unexpected gift of money from Mr Marchmont, an heir of Miss Marchmont, that enables

Lucy to expand the day school into a boarding school that also functions as her "true home": "With this hundred pounds [from Miss Marchimont's relative] I ventured to take the house adjoining mine. . . . My externat became a pennsionat; that also prospered" (543–44). This indirect financial support from Miss Marchmont allows her to acquire both home and independence in the female space. Brontë solves the contradiction between women's financial independence and domesticity by describing Lucy's "living for others" as working at her own girls' boarding school which also functions as her "true home."

Villette employs and rewrites the emigrant-spinster discourse as a format of female "self-help" story. Rita S. Krandis, who discusses *Villette* as an emigrant-spinster story, concludes that Lucy achieves "every Victorian middle-class spinster's goal of self-sufficiency and independence" (Krandis 193). Certainly, Brontë's positive use of the discourse brings success as a self-made woman to Lucy. Rather, however, I emphasise that it empowers Lucy to establish her own space as her "true home" to live with girls in a foreign country. Unfortunately, we cannot read Lucy's whole story as a self-made woman in the female space because she closes the narrative after Paul's death. She narrates, "Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. . . . Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life" (546). Contrary to her narration, what Brontë wants the readers to imagine may be not Paul's return after the wreck but Lucy's later life as a successful female owner of the girls' school. Brontë makes us imagine that the final chapter is the very beginning of Lucy's own life in the female space: she lives with other girls by redrawing the boundary between the two spheres, private and public, for her "true home."

Conclusion

Charlotte Brontë closes *Villette* without writing Lucy Snowe's own story of a self-made woman, just as she also did not describe Caroline Helstone as a school manager in *Shirley*. She writes about Lucy's attainment of both economic independence and homemaking in a female space, and she leaves Lucy's later life to the readers' imagination. Although *Villette* is often evaluated as Brontë's last work, we should remember that she would have continued to write if she had lived longer. After completion of writing *Villette* in 1852, Brontë commenced writing *Emma*, her unfinished novel, from 1853. The draft can be read as an extension of *Villette*'s self-made woman narrative in a female space.

Emma is a story about a girls' boarding school in an English countryside, Fuchsia Lodge, managed by women. The narrator, Mrs Chalfont, a middle-aged widow, lives in the neighbourhood. A wealthy girl, Matilda Fitzgibbon, enters the school. One of the female managers of the school takes good care of this girl who is a member of the landed gentry. One day, the manager posts a letter to Matilda's father, but it is returned to her. When Mr Erin, a gentleman living near the school, visits Mr Fitzgibbon's address on behalf of her, there is no mansion and no such a gentleman named Mr Fitzgibbon. The draft ends with the scene in which the manager asks Matilda her real name and background, and Matilda turns pale and collapses.

What is the theme of *Emma*? Who is "Emma"? We cannot discuss these questions because Brontë wrote only two chapters. Yet, we can guess from the two chapters that she might attempt to describe a female space, a girls' boarding school managed by Englishwomen, which seems to take over the ending of *Villette*. In *Emma*, she might try to write a story to widen that female space which she could not do in *Villette*.

Brontë's writing Emma stopped after marriage. She was proposed to by her father's curate, Arthur Bell Nicholls, in 1853, and they married in 1854. In those days, besides *Emma*, she started writing the draft of *Willie Erin* from 1853, but it became difficult to finish these stories because of her marriage. After her death, Nicholls tells her publisher, George Smith, the following episode:

> [A]s we sat by the fire listening to the howling of the wind around the house my poor wife suddenly said, '*If you had not been with me I must have been writing now*' – She then ran upstairs, brought down & read aloud the beginning of her New Tale – When she had finished I remarked, 'The Critics will accuse you of repetition, as you have again introduce a school' – She replied, 'O I shall alter that – I always begin two or three times before I can please myself' – *But, it was not to be* – (Barker, *The Brontës* 768, italics mine)

Her husband was not happy with her writing activities. His negative attitude hindered her work as a female writer. According to her friend, Ellen Nussey, "Charlotte's husband cared nothing for her as an author, 'literally groaning' when she expressed a wish to write and once declaring that 'Currer Bell could fly up to heaven for all he cared'" (Barker, *The Brontës* 790). It is not clear if Brontë was happy in her married life, but we can say that her literary spaces were largely taken away by her husband. In the real world, she had to give up the compatibility of domesticity and independence that she always eagerly pursued in her works.

Although the establishment of her own literary space ended halfway because of her married life, Brontë attempted to solve the contradiction between women's domesticity and independence in *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*. In both *Jane Eyre* and

Shirley, she sought to find a solution by describing both romance and financial independence through participation in social activities, though the Common Law made it difficult for female characters to maintain their economic independence after marriage. Therefore, it was arduous to solve the contradiction between a married life and independence, due to Victorian domestic ideology and the law that underpinned the patriarchal society.

However, Brontë's female characters do not try to deviate clearly from the domestic ideology. She did not aim to acquire women's rights in the male-dominated society like mid-Victorian feminists such as Harriet Martineau, Florence Fenwick-Miller and Elizabeth Lynn Linton. Rather, by adopting and rewriting male narrative forms, Brontë wrote novels in which women take part in social and economic activities while abiding the domestic ideology. By giving her female characters their own spaces, she presented a new form of domesticity through her four novels, overlapping three key spaces that I focused on in this dissertation: domesticity, emigration and markets.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane's marriage to Rochester in an economically equal relationship enables her to obtain her own space in domesticity, something she could not find as an orphan and a governess. Her uncle, John Eyre, is indispensable to her equal marriage to Rochester: he builds assets by engaging in the wine trade in Madeira and transfers them to her. In addition, John's fortune flows into England through a financial network of investment. The invested inheritance enables Jane not only to marry Rochester as an equal but also to participate in the financial economy. Her independence is supported by the two global markets: the trade of Madeira wine and finance. The distribution of her inheritance to St John and his two sisters saves them from poverty. Simultaneously, she builds female bonds with Diana and Mary mentally and economically.

The inheritance from John in Madeira gives Jane some chances: to become an

independent woman, to marry Rochester without economic disparity, to participate in the financial world and to maintain sisterhood after marriage. Investment connects the domestic and the public sphere: it enables a closed domestic space to open to the society. On the other hand, unfortunately, it is difficult for the readers to imagine Jane's future life as an independent woman because she would lose her fortune because of the Common Law and would be confined in a domestic space by devoting herself to caring for Rochester.

In *Shirley*, Caroline who is excluded from the matrimonial market creates women's culture in domesticity with other women by building female bonds with them through literary works. Not only are they mentally connected, but they economically support each other by the future inheritance from Shirley to Caroline. Also, Brontë suggests the necessity of rewriting a male character's masculinity for women's economic activity: for Caroline to get more practical financial support, Brontë changes Robert Moore from an egoistic to a thoughtful man who can empathise with her. His offer to Caroline to help her open a Sunday school with other women gives her an opportunity not only to take part in social activities but to keep sisterhood in both domestic and public spheres. Brontë presents us with new masculinity to make a path between domesticity and society for women by breaking and rewriting Robert's masculine code. Simultaneously, while having the female characters get married, she attempts to create a female space in the society emphasising mutual support between women.

However, Brontë does not describe how Caroline runs her school after her marriage to Robert. A few decades lie between the time of her marriage and the time the narrator appears at the end of the story. The blank period makes us imagine that Caroline would contribute to society as a female manager of the school. Brontë tells us at the end: "The story is told. I think I now see the judicious reader putting on his spectacles

to look for the moral. It would be an insult to his sagacity to offer directions. I only say, God speed him in the quest!" (*Shirley* 608). One possible moral in *Shirley* is that women need to create sisterhood in a domestic space for mutual support and to domesticate men to get their support for the female bonds in a public space.

In *Villette*, Brontë offers a different way to think about the compatibility of home and independence than what the other female characters in her two previous novels experience: she solves the contradiction by describing Lucy Snowe's "living for others" as working at her own girls' boarding school which also functions as "home." In other words, Lucy establishes her own home not by marriage but in the female space of the girls' school. In *The Professor*, a story of a self-made man in a foreign country, Brontë casts a critical gaze on the brotherhood of gentlemen by describing Frances who is marginalised from the male circle and loses her own space. After her emigration to England with her husband, she loses her social position as a female manager of a girls' boarding school in Brussels, and she is restricted to domestic space as a perfect wife. Like Jane, she leaves no room for us to imagine her later life in which she would contribute to society. In *Villette*, however, though she employs the same narrative format as *The Professor*, Brontë does not confine the emigrant spinster Lucy in a domesticity that is based on heterosexuality because she alludes to Paul's death. Brontë makes it possible for Lucy to achieve both homemaking and independence by providing an alternative female space as her true home rather than a true home created by the convention of marriage.

Through the process of writing her four novels, Brontë gradually expanded the female spaces to suggest new ways of life to unmarried women who were forced to live as a miserable spinster. Brontë challenges the Victorian patriarchal ideology of separate spheres by describing women's participation to socio-economic activities, and

simultaneously, questioning the boundary between the two spheres, private and public, and trying to redraw it. Without entirely rejecting the Victorian domestic ideology, she presents a new image of domesticity in which women manage their own school or engage in economic activities. Although critics have focused on female characters' independence itself, this dissertation highlights women's intimate association and socio-economic activities in *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*, which cultivate an emerging Victorian women's culture.

Brontë might have ended her literary life without completing the establishment of her own space as a female writer. Still, through her four novels, she succeeded in illustrating for her female readers the possibilities of achieving independence and developing female bonds in the new domesticity. The creation of spaces for female writers is a task that has been handed down from her to female writers of future generations.

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