

## **Faculty Information Literacy Stipend Final Report**

**Name: Beth Newman**

**Course: English 4341—Writer: The Brontës**

**Semester: Fall 2016**

**Date: January 8, 2017**

**Introduction** (This section is to include why you decided to create the assignment, and how the information literacy learning goals support the course.)

Our 4000-level courses all (I believe) have an information literacy “tag.” The expectation is that students will write one mid-length research paper in which they engage with literary criticism and other relevant sources, and many of us also require that they compile a bibliography, often with some degree of annotation, earlier in the term. I have been unhappy about the quality of work I have seen from too many of my students in the final project as I have assigned it in the past, a literary argument making use of their sources. I wanted to see if I could get a better result.

### **Description of the information literacy assignment or activities**

1. I created a set of linked assignments intended to teach information literacy and its applications. The first major component was an annotated bibliography of fifteen scholarly items relevant to a topic of the student’s choosing, with the only stipulation being that the topic needed to be about one or more of the Brontës. Rather than asking the students to annotate the items by summarizing and assessing them in detail, as I had done for a much smaller number of literary-critical sources in past semesters, I asked them to make brief notes about each of the following: 1) the contents of each item, including (if they could tell from a brief scan) its thesis; 2) where they learned about the item (I wanted them to see that they could find good sources within other sources); and 3) how the item would be useful to the project as they imagined it. As part of the preparation for this assignment, Rebecca Graff conducted a class on search strategies for us in the third floor computer lab in Fondren Library, focusing on strategies and databases most relevant to the kinds of literary topics I had specified with her in advance. Students were invited to visit her for individual consultations.
2. The second main component was a mid-length research paper (10-12 pages, not counting the bibliography) on a Brontë topic chosen by the student and approved by me. Ideally the student would choose a topic for the bibliography project and refine it or build upon it for the final paper, but because the bibliography was mid-semester I also allowed students to change their topics if they so desired. Some of them, including some who wrote the best papers, did so. Students were also required to submit a very brief proposal for their final papers and a partial rough draft of about six pages. I read and commented on the latter about two weeks before the final draft was due. As a way of getting students to understand that their goal was to provide a kind of contextual or conceptual platform from which to “launch” their own projects, I also assigned some contemporary literary-critical articles that we read and discussed in class to show how scholars use *their* sources.

## Method of assessment

### A. Bibliography

I read and commented on each bibliography. I did not create a rubric, but my comments generally addressed the following matters:

- **Appropriateness of sources.** Were all the sources scholarly? If a source was not scholarly, was there a good reason to use it anyway? If a scholarly source came from discipline other than literary study, was it appropriate both to the project and to the student's level of knowledge?
- **Coherence of the bibliography as the beginning of a research project.** Was there a clear logic to why these sources were brought together? (Here, my asking the student what use he or she expected an item to be proved very helpful.) Was there an appropriate *range* of sources: that is, if the topic called for historical contextualization, or an understanding of a literary or literary-critical concept, did the bibliography reflect the need for such sources?
- **Completeness of work.** Did the student fall short of the minimum number of sources specified?
- **Correctness of bibliographical form.** I did not "count off" for deviations from correctness on this assignment (and they were legion!), but used my comments as an occasion to call attention to a failure to use or understand the required bibliographical form, which was in this case the new MLA style.

- B. **Research paper:** I wrote discursive comments on the first draft, generally extensive. The draft itself did not get a letter grade but a number of points contributing to their points on a set of in-class and homework assignments. (On reflection, the point value should have been higher, or the draft should in some other way counted for more of the final grade).

**I assessed the final draft** with the following rubric, assigning letter grades according to the scores (tempered, somewhat, by my wholistic sense of the product). The rubric was distributed in advance.

- 1= Absent or rarely or inadequate
- 2= Developing but not yet adequate; or sometimes; or partially
- 3= Adequately; or usually; or to an appropriate or acceptable degree
- 4= To a high or exemplary degree

A. Essay makes a coherent argument based on a thesis worth arguing.	
B. Essay uses multiple sources to provide a literary-critical argument that is informed about relevant contexts and critical opinion and, ideally, framed by those contexts.	
C. The material drawn from the sources is incorporated into the argument in an appropriate manner. For example: a. Both other people’s arguments about the meaning of the text and factual information about the context are incorporated dynamically into your argument. (This means they are <i>worked in</i> and <i>engaged with</i> in some way, not merely tossed in.) b. Other writers’ interpretations are treated as <i>argument</i> (or informed opinion arrived at through argumentation) rather than as inert <i>fact</i> . See also item D. c. [Paraphrase is used instead of quotation where appropriate.]	
D. Quotations: Whether from novels or from sources—are incorporated logically and smoothly into the text, and the mechanics of quoting are observed. a. Aspects of “incorporation” include properly introducing a quotation and correct placement of the in-text citation to indicate source. b. “Mechanics” refers to the following: matters of punctuation; where the parentheses go vs. where the end punctuation goes; absence of quotation marks around block quotations—and other matters that you should know by now how to do or where to look up.	
E. Citation: Sources are properly cited in text and in the bibliography in correct MLA style. The bibliography corresponds to the in-text citations. <b>NOTE: minor errors are inevitable. But if your errors are consistent, or you do not demonstrate in some other way that you understand MLA style, I will grade your paper down ONE letter grade, regardless of the paper’s other virtues.</b>	
F. The paper expresses its argument in clear, grammatically correct sentences with appropriate diction. These in turn are organized into coherent paragraphs.	

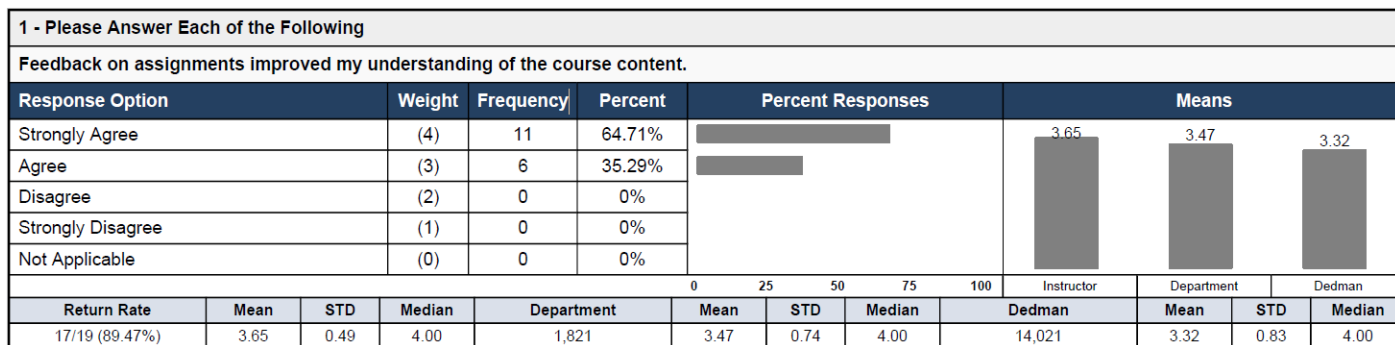
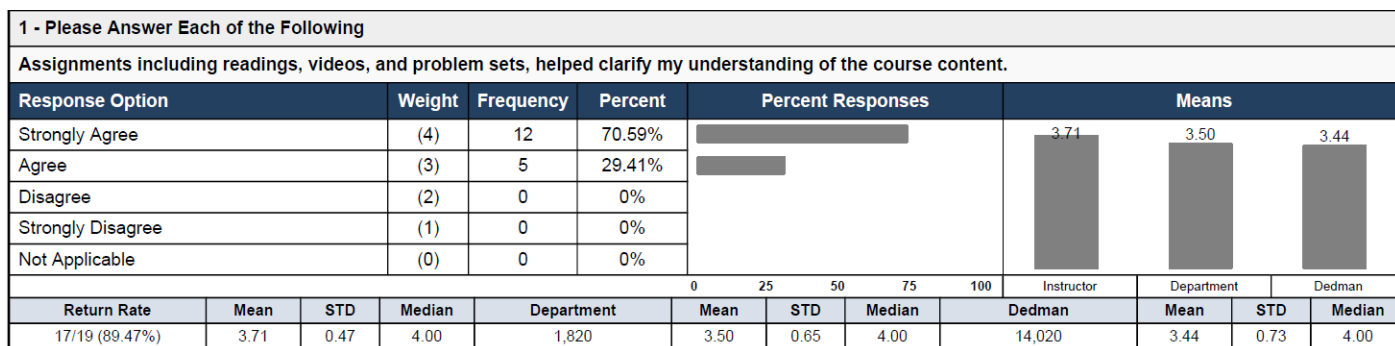
**Results and impact on student learning** (This can include student self-evaluations or feedback, pre- and post-test results, rubric results, and/or impact on other student assignments.)

A. Bibliography:

Judging from the bibliographies produced, most of the students came away with a good understanding of the difference between a scholarly source and a non-scholarly one, and most of them produced more or less coherent bibliographies that had an appropriate range of sources. The project was valuable in exposing for me those few students who were likely to rely—or to try to rely—on inappropriate sources. This enabled me to steer them in a more fruitful direction, to suggest changes to the topics as they conceived them, and so on.

B. Research paper: *En masse*, these were the best I have seen in my 4000-level classes. First drafts permitted me to see which students were merely reporting on criticism, or otherwise engaging with it statically rather than dynamically. Breaking the work down into the several steps (bibliography, short proposal, first draft, and final draft) ensured for most of the students a coherent experience of reading criticism and other scholarly materials and engaging with them in their papers.

I did not ask students to provide self-evaluations, but I am attaching the two portions of my course evaluation that seem relevant. They show that all students agreed—most of them, “strongly”—that the assignments and the feedback they received on them improved their learning.



**Summary and next steps** (This can include your reflections on working with the students on information literacy goals, how you might improve on the assignment or activities, and/or how you might address information literacy goals using other methods or in other courses.)

Reflections: I regard the research/information literacy component of this course to have been much more successful than were my previous efforts. For that I credit both Rebecca Graff’s class (which she has done before, but she and I both had a clearer sense this time of what students needed) and the fact that in applying for this stipend, I thought things through more thoroughly than I had in the past, and still had time to think them through again in the week or so before distributing the assignment.

**About search strategies:** During in-office conferences in which I worked with students on their projects, it became clear to me that neither the students nor I remembered some of the less intuitive ways that Rebecca had taught us for entering information into the search boxes, through which she was able to get better results than the ones most of us otherwise stumble into. For next time, I will ask Rebecca (if she has time) to produce a guide to the major search strategies for the MLA bibliography, the on-line catalogue, and other databases she showed us. Useful information to have in writing: What are the wildcard characters for different databases, and when should one use them? What are the best ways of combining search terms to achieve a desired result?

**About the quality of sources:** Mostly among the three or so weakest and/or laziest students, I observed a tendency to include inappropriate sources in the bibliography such as non-scholarly (journalistic) film reviews (without any scholarly articles about the film or director to counterbalance them); scholarly sources from inappropriate disciplines (e.g. contemporary sociological studies or government documents on domestic abuse for papers that discussed domestic abuse in Brontë novels); book reviews in scholarly journals rather than the book itself, or in lieu of an article. In many cases it became clear from this component of the course that the students did not understand or were careless about implementing stipulated bibliographical form (MLA).

**Next steps:** After the course was over, I compiled the following list of things to keep in mind for next time. Some of the items on this list are things I was already doing, but others involve making changes to the timing of the assignments and reminding myself, based on last semester's experience, what each component should emphasize.

1. Make the bibliography due **BEFORE** fall break. This will then give students more time to write a proposal, which can still be very short—even just a paragraph.
2. When assigning articles for class discussion, pay special attention to the following: how the author sets up a context (whether historical, contextual, or something else); show how he or she uses sources, stressing the **dynamic rather than static approach to the sources**—that is, discuss how the sources are quoted, paraphrased, analyzed, disputed, etc. Show how critics *assemble* some of their sources into some kind of **frame or context**, whether historical or conceptual (approach-driven, genre-centered, etc.), or something else.
3. To reinforce these skills in reading criticism: Make the second short paper in the first part of the course a response to a piece of criticism about one of the novels in which the students articulate its thesis and the kind(s) of approach involved, and assess the persuasiveness of the argument. Or if there is a pair of articles taking different sides, have students engage with the debate. (Distribute a modified version of the questions I used to ask for the annotated bibliography assignment.)

4. In the short proposal as well as on the initial bibliography, have the students articulate what *genre* of paper they envision—e.g., contextual; using one of the “approaches”; reception; book history; about genre;--etc. –Or what combination of approaches.
5. Optimally, make the first draft of the research paper due earlier than before T’giving. It doesn’t matter that they may still have unread primary texts.
6. Make clear that this paper is a very different *kind* of paper from a close-reading; it is a different genre that (in most cases) will build a contextual and/or conceptual and/or critical platform from which to *launch* a close reading.
7. Make the first draft worth more than 3 points. Maybe give it a grade and count it for a percentage—possibly as much as 15, or at least 10 (otherwise some students won’t even write it). But make clear that the grade does not mean “this is what you would get on a longer paper that looks pretty much like this.” It means “this is what you earn for having satisfied various criteria.” I will need to specify them. Perhaps I can modify my current rubric.
8. For rough drafts: instruct students to include a works cited even though it’s a draft.

**Appendix** (This includes the assignment sheet, rubric if used, and example(s) of student work.)

- Appendix A (pp. 7-11): the assignment sheet, modified after the semester was over as noted on the sheet itself
- Appendix B (pp. 12-15): Example of a student’s bibliography
- Appendix C (pp. 16-28): Example of a student’s research project

**Minimally annotated bibliography—due October 25 (note that I have pushed this back one class)**

**Choose**—*provisionally*--a research topic, with the idea that you may (or may not) end up writing about it for your final paper. Choose something that interests you. Consult the list of topics distributed earlier. (It is attached to this document as page 4.) Read ahead to the *kinds* of projects I have sketched out (page 3, below).

**What are the purposes of this assignment?** To teach you how to find sources relevant to a literary topic. To teach you about the ways that scholarship proceeds through scholars building on the work of other scholars—that is, *how scholarship takes place as a conversation*. To get you thinking about possibilities for the final paper.

**Note: don't do this as a last minute thing.** You will want to give yourself time to look for a whole bunch of things and *skim* them. So do not leave this for the night before!!

**What items go into this bibliography? And how many do you need?** You will need to find **15 items** drawn from the following. (Not everyone will use all of the kinds of sources listed below, and some may need to use *other* kinds.)

- Articles in peer-reviewed (scholarly) journals.
- books and/or book chapters in scholarly presses (university presses or Palgrave, Routledge, and a few others).
- book chapters in collections of essays intended to introduce a topic or literary era to students and scholars, such as those published by Cambridge, Oxford, Blackwell's, etc.
- Entries in good glossaries or encyclopedias of literary terms, or literary theory, etc., or essays about literary-critical approaches. Sources include the *Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Criticism and Theory*, or *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory* M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (available in the library); the essays by Ross Murfin that introduce the various approaches in the back of the *Jane Eyre* edition we used in class.
- Biographical studies of one or another Brontë.
- Books and/or book chapters on some aspect of nineteenth-century society or culture related to some aspect of a Brontë novel.
- If you are writing about an adaptation, you should include the adaptation itself.

**How recent must the articles and books be?** That partly depends. In general, scholarly sources you consult should be mostly from within the last ten or fifteen years. But note that I said *mostly*. If you are looking at a particular approach, you may want to look at earlier statements. Or you may well want to read something famous that other critics have responded to. Or if you are writing about a context, it may be that a really useful book is from the 1980s. It's possible!

**How closely related to your general topic should the items be?** Some should be close, but some should be general. Bear in mind that you are not likely to find 15 articles or book chapters on a topic like "alcohol abuse in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*." And what would be the point, anyway? What you *would* want to do is know something about the ways in which *Tenant* has generally been understood. That means you need to "read around" in *Tenant* criticism—looking for some of the more famous statements. And you would need to read some books about ideas about alcohol in the nineteenth century. You would probably need to learn what search terms to use.

**[-note: yellow is stuff I highlighted last time. Pink is stuff I want to change.]** I also encourage you to find scholarly articles/book chapters/whole books about a theoretical or critical approach that you might bring to bear on one or more Brontë texts, such as discussions of disability studies; animal studies; Victorian religion; Victorian rituals and customs surrounding death; gender (feminist theory and criticism; gender theory); sexuality; class;—*etc.* (See

**What format should you use?** --Use MLA format, and alphabetize the entries as you would. But number them, which you would *not* ordinarily do, so that I don't have to count.

**Provide a title for your bibliography that identifies for me (and you and anyone else) what your topic is. Make the title descriptive, not creative. For example: “Jane Eyre and Disability Studies.” “Education, Gender, and the Brontës.” Or whatever. Your title or subtitle should also make clear which kind of paper you imagine yourself to be writing, drawing from the list on the next page of this document (“Looking ahead to the final project”). (A combination of kinds is possible.)**

**Put the bibliographical material for each source in boldface, to separate it from the other stuff that will go in, as detailed next.**

**What else goes into this bibliography, aside from a complete and properly formatted bibliographical entry:**

- A one- to two-sentence description of what the item is about, as far as you can tell from spending a few minutes **[for future iterations: change to “fifteen or twenty minutes”]** with it (unless you need to request it from interlibrary loan). You might even be able to locate a thesis statement and transcribe it. If not, just get a general sense of what the item is about, and convey that.
- The source (database, bibliography, reference in another piece of scholarship) where you found the reference.
- **For something you need from interlibrary loan: say something about why you think it will be useful to you. (You may be able to get it within 24 hours.) If a book needs to be recalled, say why you think it's relevant and make a note of that fact. [For future iterations: stress that acquiring the items must be done in advance—make a note under “last-minute thing” above.]**
- If a source is referred to by your other sources and you know that, include that information (e.g., “Referred to in Schmo, Joe, ‘Yada Yada in Charlotte Brontë’s *Blabbety Blah.*”) What you are trying to do is keep track of the way scholars refer to other scholars.
- **Above all, make some note of how the item might be useful to you.**

**How will you accumulate these items?**

1. Through the MLA bibliography. This is mandatory.
2. Consult the *The Brontës in Context* and other books I put on reserve. Use the techniques covered in our library class.
3. **Look at the Works Cited and/or footnotes** of some of the articles that most interest you, work backwards. That is: see what articles come up again and again in the citational apparatuses of the articles you originally located. These are likely to be important works on a particular Brontë or Brontë text. Also: having located such article titles and authors, you can skim the body of the *citing* article to see if a *cited* article is of interest to you.



## Looking ahead to the final project

There are several kinds of papers you can write for the end of the semester. They are not as distinct as I am suggesting in the list below. They overlap. But these are ways of thinking *generally* about the options. **Note that whatever approach you choose, you will want to get a general sense of how the text on which you focus has been understood by others. That means you will want to look at several works of criticism about that text, especially the ones that seem to have become influential, judging from the fact that they are cited by others.**

Keep in mind: essays written for this class are eligible for a \$500 reward from the library for “depth and breadth in the use of library research materials and clear evidence of thoughtful command of these resources.” See <https://www.smu.edu/CUL/About/Research-Award>. So that you can get a sense of what is possible, I encourage you to look at the papers posted to that site, most of which are humanities papers. The winner for 2016 was a student in Professor Wheeler’s Chaucer class.

1. **Contextual approach:** you find some aspect of nineteenth-century society that is connected to the Brontës, or their novels (or poems or juvenilia), and find out more about it so that you can understand the text more fully. But don’t think about simply “explaining” the text. You will be making an argument about how text *x* or Brontë *y* engages with whatever it is. *You will still be interpreting the text.*
2. **Formal or generic approach:** you think about your text in terms of genre or a subgenre or literary mode such as *realism; romance; domestic fiction; the gothic*. In this case, you’ll want to read what literary critics, literary theorists, and/or literary historians have said about what realism is, or romance, or whatever; and you consider what your Brontë text is “doing” with that mode.
3. **Critical modes approach:** You decide on a particular kind of literary approach that interests you. Examples: *feminist and/or gender studies; Marxist criticism; material culture (the study of things, objects, stuff); disability studies; postcolonial criticism; psychological criticism; psychoanalytic criticism--etc.* You read up on that approach. You find out what other critics have said about your text using that approach. You try to elbow your way in to the conversation, perhaps by focusing on something that hasn’t been explored, or by combining two approaches, or by disagreeing with some general tendency, and making sense of things in a different way.
4. **Reception and biographical matters:** We have already seen that the documents in Appendix C of our edition of *Wuthering Heights*, those two documents by “Currer Bell,” are often believed to have influenced the ways the three sisters’ work was assessed. How have later critics and biographers dealt with Charlotte’s writings about Emily and Anne? How do *you* read them? OR: Is Barker right that the poems Charlotte selected for the second edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* emphasized Anne’s piety over her expressions of doubt? Did she misrepresent her? OR did she misrepresent Emily by the way she presented *her* poems? OR: how was your favorite Brontë novel read during a particular time period, and what does that tell us about the time period in question?
5. **Book history:** Can you learn something about the material forms of a particular work over the course of its “career”? What does this tell us about how the book has worked as a cultural object?
6. **Juvenilia:** What can we learn about any of the Brontës by reading their youthful or “juvenile” writings? Choose one. There is criticism on some of it. Here you will surely want to think about contexts. See #1 above. Or, you might want to see how their ideas about gender matured, or how they understood class or politics or global conquest (empire) when they were young, in order to connect them to a later, mature text.
7. **Poetry:** See me if you are interested.

- 8. Adaptations: alternative versions of a Brontë novel, or twentieth- or twenty-first-century novel based on the lives or works of the Brontës.** This can include films. There are many *Jane Eyres* and several of *Wuthering Heights*. (There is a mini-series based on *Tenant*.) There are also a lot of novels—from Daphne DuMaurier’s *Rebecca* to Jean Rhy’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* to the recent *Branwell’s Barber’s Tale* with much in between. See me if you are interested. *The point would be to think about how the text is re-read at a later time and from a different point of view; how the adaptation is itself an interpretation.*

## Topics for discussion and research

I invite you to bring your own knowledge of and interest in any of the topics below to bear on the reading. This list may also give you some ideas to narrow down for your bibliography and/or final project.

- Alcoholism
- Animals and animal studies; the “post-human”
- Childhood
- Death—attitudes, representations
- Disability
- Domestic violence
- Empire, imperialism
- Families; mothers; fathers; siblings
- Femininity
- Film versions and other adaptations
- Genre matters: realism; gothic; romance; development of the novel
- Governesses and the governess problem of the 1840s
- Later writers’ use of one of the Brontë novels
- Law and . . . (A Brontë novel; a Brontë?) –or some narrower category, such as marriage law, inheritance law, etc.
- Marriage
- Masculinity
- Material culture: objects, things
- Medicine; illness; disease
- Money; economic issues
- Play
- Queer readings/queer issues
- Race
- Reception and the “Brontë myth”
- Region; the north of England; being outside of the mainstream
- Relationship to previous writers
- Religion; religious doubt
- Representations of Englishness and its “others”; national identity
- Representations of madness
- slavery
- Social class
- Work

\*You may have other ideas. Please talk to me.

Ashley Park  
The Brontës  
ENGL 4341  
October 25<sup>th</sup>  
Newman

### Adaptations of *Jane Eyre*: Annotated Bibliography

1. Atkins, Elizabeth. "Jane Eyre Transformed." *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1993, pp. 54-60.
  - . This article explores the successfulness of Aldous Huxley, Robert Stevenson, and John Houseman's attempt to convert *Jane Eyre* into a screenplay in 1943. It argues that monetarily, the film was successful, but the edits, alterations, and simplifications the screenplay writers made to the plot of *Jane Eyre* made it detrimental to portraying the novel's theme. This source was found through JSTOR.
2. Bachleitner, Norbert. "Jane Eyre for Young Readers: Three Illustrated Adaptations." *Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, edited by Margarete Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 273-286.
  - . This articles looks at three illustrated adaptations of *Jane Eyre* in the comic book form and how world classics played an important role in distributing world literature among young readers. The comics were controversial because some of the topics were said to have been bad for children. Nevertheless, the *Jane Eyre* comics continued to be used for educational purposes and can track societal messages that were conveyed to children. This source was found through EBSCOhost.
3. Bernhart, Walter. "Myth-making Opera: David Malouf and Michael Berkeley's *Jane Eyre*." *Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, edited by Margarete Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 317-330.
  - . This essay studies an opera adaptation of *Jane Eyre* that had successfully premiered in 1993. It provides the background of the opera and its composer and points out the fundamental differences between the opera and the novel and their meanings. This source was found through EBSCOhost.
4. Bresel, Michaela. "Jane Eyre Illustrated." *Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, edited by Margarete Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 287-296.
  - . This articles looks at four early attempts at providing illustrations for *Jane Eyre* and argues that illustrations fill the deficiencies in the author's brief

book descriptions without interfering very strongly with the interpretation of the text by the reader. This source was found through EBSCOhost.

5. Dole, Carol M. "Children in the *Jane Eyre* Films." *Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, edited by Margarete Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 243-257.
  - . This essay considers the function of the child characters and the extra-textual influences that helped shape that function within the five films that represent the major feature-length English language productions of the sound era. This source was found through EBSCOhost.
  
6. Dunn, Richard J. "Out of the Picture? Branwell Brontë and *Jane Eyre*." *The Brontës in the World of the Arts*, edited by Sandra Hagan and Juliette Wells, Ashgate, 2008, pp. 31-44.
  - . This article explores why Charlotte refused to illustrate the third edition of her novel, despite being asked by the publishers to do so, having a visual imagination, and having a brother who was a painter. This article was referred to in Karen Laird's book, *The Art of Adapting Victorian Literature*.
  
7. Ferreira, Aline. "Paula Rego's Visual Adaptation of *Jane Eyre*." *Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, edited by Margarete Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 297-313.
  - . This articles argues that Paula Rego's series of lithographs inspired by *Jane Eyre* show visual renditions of Brontë's characters that take a life of their own and suggests further interpretations of Brontë's novel. It also creates a new universe of representation and an alternative narrative that both connects and converges with the original text. This source was found through EBSCOhost.
  
8. Laird, Karen. "Upstairs, Downstairs: *Jane Eyre*'s Transatlantic Theatrical Debut." *The Art of Adapting Victorian Literature, 1848-1920: Dramatizing Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, and The Woman in White*. Ashgate, 2015, pp. 17-44.
  - . This article reexamines the Victorian popular theater's dynamic culture of literary adaptation and its important legacy in silent cinema. It argues that Victorian playwrights who first adapted *Jane Eyre* were fascinated by the economies of the novel, especially with the working woman's just inheritance, so their plays extracted thematic emphasis on socio-economic disparities. The source was found through SMU's library catalog.

9. Laird, Karen. "Adapting Melodramatically: *Jane Eyre* of the Silent Screen." *The Art of Adapting Victorian Literature, 1848-1920: Dramatizing Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, and The Woman in White*. Ashgate, 2015, pp. 45-74.
  - . This article examines the rare adaptation of *Jane Eyre*, called "Happy Days at Thornfield Hall", at a time when early films were made with new technology of modern pictures. The screenwriters explored *Jane Eyre's* relevance to modern life by restituting the novel into contemporary settings. This source was found through SMU's library catalog.
  
10. Lee, Soyong. "Jane's Progress in Three Film Adaptations of *Jane Eyre*." *Feminist Studies in English Literature*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2002, pp. 277-307.
  - . This article was referred to in the Introduction of the book, *The Brontës in the World of the Arts* but is not available online or in the SMU library. An interlibrary loan is required. The book in which the article is referenced in states the source as helpful in the critical study of Brontë-based films.
  
11. Mead-Willis, Sarah. "'Negotiating with the Dead': *Jane Eyre* in the Postmodern." *Literature/ Film Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2010, pp. 29-38.
  - . This article delves into the miniseries BBC produced in 2006 that was a four-part adaptation of *Jane Eyre*. It observes the ways in which the adaptation belies its producer's claims to originality and fidelity and ultimately believes the film is not a faithful return to the text, rather, it is a negotiation between the desire for such a return and its impossibility in a present-day context. This source was found through JSTOR.
  
12. Nudd, Donna Marie. "Rediscovering *Jane Eyre* through Its Adaptations." *Approaches to Teaching Brontë's Jane Eyre*, edited by Diane Long Hoeveler and Beth Lau, Modern Language Association of America, 1993, pp. 139-147.
  - . This source was found through SMU's library catalog. Unfortunately, the book has already been checked out, but the title seems promising in its relation to the research topic. The book should be returned to SMU on November, 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
  
13. Parkinson, Kirsten L. "Mrs. Rochester's Story: Franco Zeffirelli's Adaptation of *Jane Eyre*." *Literature Film Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2015, pp. 18-33.
  - . The main argument of the article is that Zeffirelli's adaptation of *Jane Eyre* results in a profound rereading of the novel that questions Jane's reliability and undercuts the dominant representation of her as heroic, proto-feminist literary figure. It also argues that Bertha's portrayal in the movie lets viewers

see her not as a savage like in Bronte's books, but as a complicated, rational character. This source was found through EBSCOhost.

14. Stoneman, Patsy. *Jane Eyre on Stage, 1848-1898: An Illustrated Edition of Eight Plays with Contextual Notes*. Ashgate, 2007.

- . This book shows the ideological importance of popular culture when studying the play adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and marks *Jane Eyre* as a text that possesses richness and complexity which generates widely different readings in different communities. This source was referred to in Karen Laird's "Upstairs, Downstairs: *Jane Eyre's* Transatlantic Theatrical Debut."

15. Wehrmann, Jürgen. "Jane Eyre in Outer Space: Victorian Motifs in Post-Feminist Science Fiction." *Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, edited by Margarete Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 149-165.

- . This article studies the various published science-fiction novels that have been adapted from *Jane Eyre* since the mid-1980s. The author calls these works "post-feminist science-fiction novels" because the authors concentrated on exploring unconventional gender systems in worlds that are different from the historical conditions that determine Jane Eyre's story. This source was found through EBSCOhost.

Stephen Chamberlain

English 4341—The Brontës

Models of Masculinity in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

One cannot think of the early Victorian period without immediately thinking of social change. A. J. Drewery observes that “In this time of ferment, of revolution abroad, rebellion at home; of slave emancipation, Chartism, Owenism, Millenarianism, the Great Electoral Reform, Corn Law Debates, the Industrial Revolution, the Brontës lived, thought, and wrote” (339). Whether it is in the irreconcilable romance of Heathcliff and Catherine, or the eventual marriage between Jane and Rochester, each Brontë offers her own perspective on the changing realities of class and gender. In the preface of the second edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Anne Brontë writes, “I wished to tell the truth,” but that “she who undertakes the cleansing of a careless bachelor’s apartment will be liable to more abuse for the dust she raises, than commendations for the clearance she effects” (Brontë 3). As her prefatory metaphor implies, the “errors and abuses of society” (3) that Anne attempts to humbly reform through *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are those related to the masculine privilege enjoyed by Victorian men. Similarly to her novel *Agnes Grey*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is relatively uninhibited in its exploration of the dangerous implications of masculinity, which manifest themselves in her second novel as adultery, neglect, household domination, vice, and even domestic abuse. Through the life of protagonist Helen Lawrence/Huntingdon/Markham, Brontë communicates the evolution of gender, and what direction she believes it must head before women can even dream of safe and healthy marriage and domesticity. This perspective on Anne’s intent in writing *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* perhaps inflames the most controversial aspect of the novel: Helen’s marriage to



Gilbert Markham, who displays some troubling aspects of masculinity condemned throughout the novel. The marriage of Helen and Gilbert, however, doesn't imply that Gilbert is the possessor of the ideal masculine virtue. Far from it, Gilbert's gender goes through a complex development over the course of the novel, rivaled only by the development of the character of Helen herself. This evolution however, is what allows the marriage of Helen and Gilbert to create an example for the Victorian reader, whether they are male or female.

To follow the evolution of gender throughout the novel, let us begin with how Anne explores positive and negative aspects of masculinity as it changes and remains the same from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century as portrayed in the characters of Gilbert Markham and Arthur Huntingdon. Historian Josh Tosh explores this evolution in depth in his book *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Central, yet parallel to this transition of masculinity is industrialization and the rise of capitalism in England. Masculinity "through the lens of class" can be concentrated to "the transition from genteel masculinity grounded in land ownership, to a bourgeois masculinity attuned to the market" (Tosh 63). Tosh explains that this transition, as it relates to actual occupation, can be understood as "a steady occupation in business or the professions, instead of receiving rents or trading in stocks" (63). Along with this capitalist transition, as Tosh sums up from the book *Family Fortunes*, comes "the elevation of work as a 'calling', and the moralizing of the home as the focus of men's non-working lives" (63). The enhanced conviction with which men perform their jobs is an understandable product of capitalism, while an increased focus on domestic life is related to capitalism indirectly through the growing understanding that "domestic steadiness was conducive to success in business, while the rigours of bread-winning were rewarded by the comforts of home" (63). As the new middle-

class masculinity began to take hold, “the expansive sociability, luxury and sexual laxity associated with the aristocracy had become a vestige of the past” (64).

Certain aspects of masculinity, however, remained the same from one century to the next. R.W. Connell terms these enduring forms of masculinity “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 603). Connell’s original idea of hegemonic masculinity refers to the tenants of masculinity “which serve to sustain men’s power over women in society as a whole,” (Tosh 88) which Tosh boils down to “household authority and sexual predation” (68). Household authority in particular clashes with the Victorian idea of separate spheres, in which men and women are relegated to the public and domestic spheres respectively. Ideally, “the theory of middle-class domesticity might be based on marital harmony achieved through complimentary roles, but the reality had to take account of men’s continuing insistence on mastery of the home” (66). Tosh points out that “in real life male domesticity was often a recipe for marital conflict, since the husband who was constantly at home was more likely to impose himself in matters of domestic management and thus antagonize his wife” (70). Additionally, men feared that the time they spent with women in the domestic sphere would ultimately lead to their emasculation (Hunt 250-251). This led to what Tosh calls the “binary opposition” between domesticity and homosociality (Tosh 70). The “home-loving man was losing out on all-male conviviality – both its social pleasures and the business contacts which it oiled” (70), creating a difficult tension between men’s need for masculine affirmation and need for the moralizing influence of the home. The other aspect of hegemonic masculinity, sexual predation, is seen to persist in practice, though not promotion as masculinity shifts from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. A common term for male sexual exploration during this period was “sowing wild oats” and Tosh points out that in the eighteenth century, this practice was “often commended not only by a well-born young man’s

companions, but by his parents also” (67). A century later, “the life of the libertine” was not supported by “the standards of nineteenth century bourgeois masculinity” (67), though this fact led to no change in actual practice. Tosh observes that although these sexual exploits were not socially condoned, young men “were under pressure to lose their virginity, and repeated ‘conquests’ were a form of display intended to impress other males” (67).

Arthur Huntingdon is an interesting character in that he attempts to assume the role of a middle-class bourgeois man of the nineteenth century, while maintaining the masculine features of a man from the century prior. Take, for example, his frequent and extended trips to London. Arthur claims these trips are for “business” (Brontë 184), a duty every good nineteenth century man should attend to, however, the reader quickly realizes that he’s actually spending his time in London in his club. Judith Pike explains that “these clubs become a retreat for middle-class men looking to indulge in less than respectable behavior without the close scrutiny of family, friends or the local vicar,” in short, “a homosocial space to gamble and drink without sacrificing their respectability” (Pike 117). Mike Huggins attributes this to “the anonymity possible in larger urban areas” like London. He goes on to explain that in many major cities, “dandyism survived from the Georgian period... based on temperament and style” (592). This surviving dandyism is often “politically right wing, and associated with a fondness for luxury and gambling, but with an anti-bourgeois morality” (592). Further examples of Arthur’s masculine expression maintain a strict adherence to hegemonic masculine features with the startling boldness characteristic of Anne Brontë’s writing. Arthur’s displays his domination of the domestic sphere by forcing Helen to entertain guests she detests and controlling the hiring and firing decisions of the household staff. His sexual predation on women continues past his club days and into his marriage when he has an affair with Annabella Lowborough in his own home. Household authority and sexual

predation converge when Arthur refuses to allow Helen to educate their son, and hires one of his mistresses to serve as their son's governess.

Helen's eventual decision to leave Arthur and escape with their son, despite the confiscation of her meager savings and destruction of her precious painting equipment, comes with the attempted corruption of little Arthur by his father's insistence on "including their son in his debauching fraternity" (Pike 117). As Arthur begins to teach his son the art of domestic debauchery, Pike points out that Anne seems to be conveying "her observation of Victorian society, where corrupting models of manliness from one era reappear in the next, transmitted from father to son" (118-119). Pike's observation can be applied directly to antiquated eighteenth-century models of masculinity that seem to ignore the importance of domestic morality and respectability as well the hegemonic ideals of masculinity that have been demonstrated as insidious to domestic steadiness. At its most extreme form, we see this corrupting education when Arthur calls his son down from his "old nurse and cursed fool of a mother" to "encourage in him all the embryo vices a child can show ... in a word, 'to make a man of him'" (Brontë 296). Little Arthur is encouraged to "[learn] to tipple wine like papa, to swear like Mr. Hattersley, and to have his own way like a man and [to send] mamma to the devil when she [tries] to prevent him" (Brontë 296). We see a remaining glimmer of hope, however, when little Arthur asks why his mother is wicked. Confused, Helen questions her son to find the origin of his strange question. In the boy's innocence, he interpretes his father's lesson of "mama be damned" (Brontë 308) as an assertion of her wickedness, meaning that he still interprets the world around him through the moral lens his mother has provided him. In order to keep the hope of a healthy and virtuous son alive, Helen is led to defy both the law and cultural tenants of femininity by taking her son and deserting her husband in favor of an independent lifestyle.

The start of Helen's new life means the introduction of a new man, Gilbert Markham. Gilbert, in a sense, is the inverse of Huntingdon in that his occupation as a gentleman farmer is economically more typical of the mid eighteenth century, while his dedication to his work and domestic propensities seem to align more closely with new models of nineteenth century masculinity. Gilbert's occupation, however, is one that he inherited rather than chose by inclination. Gilbert records that his father "exhorted me, with his dying breath, to continue in the good old way, to follow in his steps, and those of his father before him... and to transmit the paternal acres to my children in, at least, as flourishing a condition as he left to me" (Brontë 10). This transmission of masculine responsibility is one drastically different from that which Arthur Huntingdon attempts to convey his son. Where Arthur attempts to indoctrinate the importance of the hegemonic aspects of traditional masculinity and how they can be used to derive pleasure, Gilbert's father prioritizes the bourgeois masculine ideal of hard work and family; evoking the idea of what Terry Eagleton refers to as the "traditional yeoman economy" (Eagleton 403) of *Wuthering Heights*, rising from the eighteenth century and prior. However, through the guise of this seemingly outdated occupation lies new modern conceptions of masculinity; and one that Helen seems to affirm after some hesitation. Although Gilbert's father is portrayed as a gruff man, his last wishes combine the bourgeois emphasis on duty to work and what Pike points out in Tosh's essay as the important, yet so often overlooked topic of Victorian of masculinity: "fatherhood" (Tosh 69).

Judith Pike claims that critics often fail to give Gilbert credit for his "paternal sensibility and touching interactions with Arthur" (120). Additionally, through her development of Arthur throughout the novel, Brontë frequently twines together Gilbert's attention to work with his affection for family, providing affirmation for the bourgeois model of masculine domesticity.

Take for example the scene in which Gilbert encourages little Arthur to come take a seat on his “knee” where the two being “surveying with eager interest specimens of horses, cattle, pigs, and model farms portrayed in” (Brontë 126) a farming magazine. Unlike previous images of little Arthur sitting on a man’s lap, this instance is one of a positive education that Helen eventually comes to trust. Even when working in the fields, Gilbert still carries the same paternal instincts; Anne describes him as “enjoying [the singing of summer, and hope, and love, and every heavenly thing] and looking after the well-being of [his] young lambs and their mothers” (Brontë 51).

In this first half of the novel, however, Gilbert is still seen to subscribe to the same privileges provided by hegemonic masculinity, though possibly to a lesser degree. An example can be noted in his relationship with Eliza Millard. Although Gilbert is described with a fair amount of sexual inexperience, his abandonment of affection for Miss Millard in favor of Helen represents a water-down practice of the same sexual predation Arthur is guilty of committing. Gilbert’s household authority is made clear as well, though he uses it more for his passive enjoyment than active tyranny. His position as the first-born son and therefore sole heir of his estate puts him in a position of luxury, where the women of the house, his mother and sister, cater to his needs and desires. Unlike Arthur, however, who eventually becomes peevish as soon as Helen denies him even the slightest comfort, Gilbert expresses at least some desire for a reciprocation of provided comfort. When Rose complains to her mother of her expectations of self-denial for the comforts of men, Gilbert humorously takes her side against Mrs. Markham, saying that if “Rose did not enlighten me now and then; and I should receive all your kindness as a matter of course, and never know how much I owe you” (Brontë 50). He goes on to say “when I marry, I shall expect to find more pleasure in making my wife happy and comfortable, than in

being made so by her” (Brontë 50). These claims give credit to Arthur’s domestic amiability, but their assertion still carries an heir of immaturity and uncertainty of conviction.

Judith Pike adds the “partaking of a blood sports” (Pike 119) to Gilbert’s list of masculine offences. She is referring to the scene early on in the novel, when Gilbert goes for a hunt and decides that to “turn [his] arms against hawks and carrion crows” (Brontë 20), who he blames for a lack of better game. Pike interprets Gilbert’s “depredation” (Brontë 21) as “gratuitous violence” because it is “neither true sport nor gastronomic fare and thus appears more as gratuitous violence” (Pike 199). However, this scene may not be a manifestation of “unmanly aggression” (Pike 199) in the sense in which Pike sees it. Charlotte Brontë mentions *Bewick’s History of British Birds* by name in her novel, *Jane Eyre*, and resorts to using avian adjectives to describe the personalities of her characters. She was not the only Brontë sister, however, to have access to this book. In her essay on *Bewick’s History of British Birds* and its influence on the work of Charlotte Bronte, Susan Taylor notes, “the Brontë children were avid readers and copiers of Bewick’s work” (Taylor 6). We can see it’s presence in the Lapwings of *Wuthering Heights*; and so too can we see it in this scene with Gilbert. The book, authored by Ralph Bielby, describes how the Goshawk “feeds on mice and small birds, and eagerly devours raw flesh; it plucks the birds very neatly and tears them into pieces before it eats them, but swallows the pieces entire” (Bielby 24). As for the Carrion crows, “they feed on putrid flesh of all sorts; likewise on eggs, worms, insects, and various sorts of grain” (Bielby 68). These descriptions gain further significance when Gilbert approaches Wildfell Hall; there, he “saw no change – except in one wing, where the broken windows and dilapidated roof had evidently been repaired” (21). The provocative use of the word “wing” invokes the metaphor of Wildfell Hall as a injured and vulnerable victim, ready to be torn apart by a keen-eyed hawk. In this sense, Gilberts act of

“depredation” (Brontë 21) isn’t an act of predation for its own sake, but for removal of predators mirrored in Gilbert’s later actions in the defense of Helen Graham. We see it in his rebuke of Eliza Millard’s gossip as well as in his violent assault on Mr. Lawrence.

This metaphor’s ripples in the plot of the novel accentuate the essentially violent and problematic nature of Victorian courtship. At the beginning of her journal, Helen records how her aunt compares the process to a battle in which the heart of a woman is a “citadel”(111) that is to be surrendered once it has been “fairly sieged”(111). Overlapping with the past metaphor, Gilbert arrives at Wildfell Hall just as little Arthur is peeping his head over the wall. The young man spies Sancho. In attempting to climb over the wall to play with the dog, he falls into the clutches of a tree, which “caught him by the frock” (22). Judith Pike expounds upon this scene, explaining how a frock is the mark of a young man who has yet to “doff his frocks and petticoats for breeches, leaving behind the nursery and his infancy to enter into the male sphere” (113). His juvenile clothes represent his baby feathers; the fledgling has fallen from his nest. The mother bird quickly swoops in, retrieving her child from the stranger she perceives to threaten it, “her black locks streaming in the wind” (22). Gilbert goes on to describe her energetic ferocity, and her “large, luminous, dark, eyes – pale, breathless, quivering with agitation” (22). To him, Helen is a wonderful and fearsome specimen, but before he can get close enough, she vanishes in the mist of her “proud, chilly look that had so unspeakably roused my corruption” (Brontë 23). Here, indeed, Gilbert’s sensual desire for Helen is at its most grim.

The first portion of the novel is the hunt. Gilbert beats off the competition of the other predatory birds, attempting to keep his prize to himself and quite literally stalks his prey to try and earn its trust. For months he creeps closer and closer to the bird, only to have it vanish when he gets within range. With time however, Gilbert is able to corner his prey, and even toy with it.



After befriending Helen, Arthur condemns her for her supposed affair with his competitor, Mr. Lawrence. Eager to regain her only friend's regard, Helen desperately approaches Arthur, who claims to have "felt glad to have the power to torment her" (Brontë 104). Helen rebuts by telling Arthur that "my confidence would be misplaced in you – you are not the man I thought you" (Brontë 104-105). Helen's use of the word 'man' brings the reader to once again consider Gilbert's masculine identity. Although Helen has seen the goodness of his hard-working, domestic masculinity, she has now caught sight of the destructive elements of hegemonic masculinity that lie closest to his heart and come forth from desire. Still though, Helen gives Gilbert her journal in an attempt to clear her name.

By giving Gilbert her journal, she is giving him a glimpse of herself at her most vulnerable. It's a dangerous decision, but it reveals to Gilbert the horrors of her past and the strength of her character. Through the development of her backstory, reader and Gilbert alike see the enormous growth Helen underwent over the course of her marriage; and the development of her independence is traced, climaxing not with her departure from Grassdale with her son, but with her refusal of Mr. Hargrave's marriage proposal. Concerning the event, she records in her journal:

I never saw a man go terribly excited. He precipitated himself towards me. I snatched up my palette-knife and held it against him. This startled him: he stood and gazed at me in astonishment; I daresay I looked as fierce and resolute as he. I moved to the bell, and put my hand upon the cord. This tamed him still more. With a half-authoritative, half-deprecating wave of the hand, he sought to deter me from ringing. (Brontë 303).

More than any other scene in the novel, here Helen exhibits her masculine power. She violently subverts gender dynamic between herself and Hargrave through the force of her independence,

contained in the phallic symbol of her palette knife, which represents her ability to provide for herself as an artist. Hargrave's horror rises from the loss of his masculine authority as his nonconsensual advances are met with active power resistance of passive weakness. Defeated, he backs off, and accepts the humiliation of his failure to assert his masculinity over a woman. From here, Helen's escape to Wildfell Hall is the downhill run.

Once Arthur has returned her journal, he learns to tame his fierce desires for a woman who is married to another man, no matter what her marriage may be. Strangely, though, we see a continued repression of Gilbert's behavior after Arthur's death. It isn't until the end of the novel, when he thinks that Helen has married Mr. Hargrave that he runs to Grassdale. Relieved to find that she has not married after all, he allows himself one glimpse of her home before attempting to depart, only to get discovered, and welcomed inside. The scene that ensues is one in which Brontë's completes her subversion of gender. Gilbert feels he must now restrain himself from handing over his "affections . . . unsought" (111). It is Helen who makes the proposal, offering Gilbert the rose, which he still feels he cannot accept. Gilbert writes that in this moment "I dared no speak, lest my emotions should overmaster me" (411), placing him at the opposite end of the masculine to feminine dichotomy of "rationality against emotionality" (Tosh 69) that was expected of Victorian men. Frustrated with what she perceives as his indifference, Helen takes back her rose and throws it out the window. In a final symbolic act of humility, Arthur jumps from the window and retrieves the rose, retuning it and "imploring her to give it to [him] again" (Brontë 412), instead of seeking to obtain her heart on his own.

At the close of the novel, subversion has reached a balance in the marriage of Helen and Gilbert. It is only after Helen has overcome the passivity of female gender norms in favor of masculine independence, and after Gilbert has tamed his masculine aggression and pride in favor

of humility that they are ready to receive one another in marriage embodying the “the theory of middle-class domesticity ... based on marital harmony achieved through complimentary roles” (Tosh 66). They reach this role, however, not from relegation to their assigned places of gender in society, but by sharing the power and virtue of each in equilibrium.

## Works Cited

- Beilby, Ralph. *History of British Birds: The Figures engraved on wood by T. Bewick. Vol. I. Containing the history and description of land birds.* Newcastle, 1797.
- Connell, R.W.. "The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History." *Theory and Society*, vol. 22, no. 5, 1993, pp. 597-623.
- Drewery, A. J. "The Tenant of Wildfell Hall: A Woman's Place?" *Brontë Studies*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2013, pp. 339-347.
- Huggins, Mike. "More Sinful Pleasures? Leisure, Respectability and the Male Middle Classes in Victorian England." *Journal of Social History*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2000, pp. 585-600
- Hunt, Margaret Rose. *English urban families in trade, 1660-1800 : the culture of early modern capitalism.* Dissertation, New York University, 1986.
- Pike, Judith. "Breeching Boys: Milkshops, Men's Clubs and the Modelling of Masculinity in Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*." *Brontë Studies*, Vol. 37, no. 2, 2012, pp. 112-124.
- Taylor, Susan. "Image and Text in Jane Eyre's avian vignettes and Bewick's History of British Birds." *Victorian Newsletter*, 2002, pp. 5-12.
- Tosh, John. *Manliness and Masculinity in Nineteenth Century Britain.* Pearson Education Limited, 2005.